

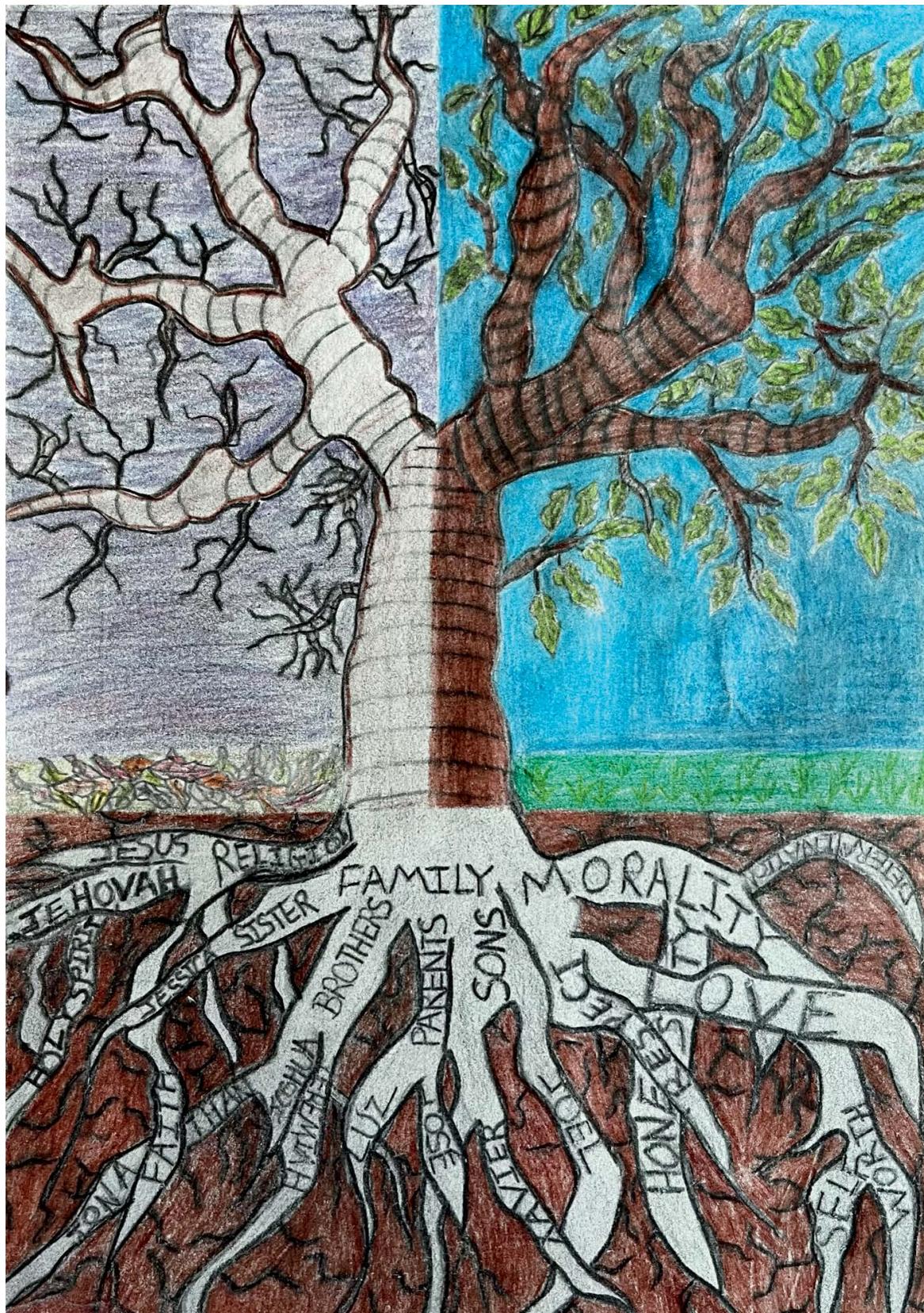


RTA®
REHABILITATION
THROUGH THE ARTS



ANNUAL REPORT

18 Months of Excellence: January 2023-June 2024



"Inner Struggle" by Joseph Perez, RTA Participant at Woobourne Correctional Facility

Cover Photo: Spring Spectacular curtain call at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

Letter from the Board Chair



Dear Friends of RTA,

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Board of Trustees to share with you this Annual Report covering 18 months in the life of Rehabilitation Through the Arts.

Why 18 months? The first six months of this year have been so chock filled with events around our programs and the film *Sing Sing* that we couldn't wait another year to report on all that's happening.

I'm proud to serve alongside a devoted and hard-working group of Trustees. Our focus in 2023 and into 2024 was to engage in a strategic planning process with the staff to envision our future. The result was a clear, compelling vision and strategic priorities that will guide our governance and programmatic work for the next several years.

Those are:

Expanding our Horizons in New York and Beyond
Strengthening Our Core
Improve Continuously through Evaluation and Iteration
Explore a National Arts Rehabilitative Network

Over the next three years, RTA will boldly expand our arts programming beyond New York, reaching more participants and communities than ever before. We'll strengthen our organizational structure, implement rigorous evaluation and iteration processes, and build the field through strategic partnerships and collaboration, ensuring effectiveness and sustainability every step of the way.

By investing in RTA's key strategic priorities, we will center humanity over punishment and foster personal and societal transformation to break the cycle of incarceration. We are continuing to research the field, build detailed growth plans and financial models that will inform how we achieve these priorities. None of this work is ever in isolation. We count on our donors, our network of teaching artists and field colleagues to help us carve a pragmatic path forward. Most of all we count on our growing number of program alumni who are out in the world making a difference. We seek their input as we build our future courageously and responsibly.

You will see many familiar names in our 2023/2024 donor list. But I wanted to offer a special acknowledgment to the Tow Foundation who increased their giving meaningfully this year. This additional support has enabled us to highlight RTA alongside the distributor A24's promotion of their film *Sing Sing*, and we've made hundreds of new friends all over the country as a result. Stay tuned for more exciting funding news this Fall.

Finally, I'd like to thank my fellow Board members for their unflinching support, the Staff of RTA and Leslie Lichter, our Interim Executive Director who has led the organization with passion and grace.

Your support these past 18 months has meant the world to us. Thank you for believing in RTA, its mission, and its members inside and outside the carceral system. The life-changing work we engage in every day would not be possible without you.

With deep gratitude,
E. Annette Nash Govan

Our Mission

RTA helps people in prison develop critical life skills through the arts, modeling an approach to the justice system based on human dignity rather than punishment.

Our Vision

RTA envisions a world where the arts serve as a powerful catalyst for personal transformation and societal change within the criminal legal system.

We aspire to create a society where every incarcerated individual has the opportunity to unlock their potential, rebuild their lives, and contribute positively to their communities.

Letter from The Executive Office



Dear Friends of RTA,

Serving as the Executive Director of RTA, during this time of transition, has been one of the great honors of my life. Each day, I am fortunate to work with a dedicated team, centering our approach on each person's dignity, and helping individuals find the life that's possible for them.

The work has been life-changing for me, and I hope it has been inspirational for each of you as well. I thank you deeply for your support which enables us to do our work every day.

This report reflects my tenure at RTA. The past 18 months have been transformative for our participants, and our organization.

- We have expanded our footprint and now operate in 10 correctional facilities in New York State. Over the past 28 years, we've grown our reputation and impact. As a single example, after the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) asked for our assistance with a Celebrate Your Children event, the leadership at Collins Correctional Facility, asked us to do more, and we began offering arts workshops, establishing a hub in Buffalo, NY.
- Reimagining Myself® (RM), our reentry program, piloted and then officially launched in two medium security facilities for men. Independently conducted post-program research reported that after participating in the program, men felt more prepared to return to society, increased ability to address conflict in a healthy manner and creatively problem solve when something doesn't go as planned. RTA was asked to add arts programming in the one newer facility and DOCCS chose two additional facilities for RM's next steps so that this Fall we are launching the program in Greene and Otisville Correctional Facilities.
- Our presentation of RM at the National Conference of Higher Education in Prison resulted in being invited to provide RM services in California and we are now bi coastal.
- We conducted 97 arts workshops over the past 18 months and produced two plays: *Twelve Angry Men* at Sing Sing Correctional Facility and *Thoughts of a Colored Man*—which was recently on Broadway—at Green Haven Correctional Facility. A film maker and their crew filmed our activities in Green Haven for a soon-to-be released documentary.
- NYS DOCCS invited members of our team to join advisory groups deepening our partnership with the leadership in Albany and with our peer organizations.
- We presented to the national industry leaders at the American Correctional Leadership and Corrections Leadership Association conferences and are now in conversation with states and potential partners, on expanding RTA's footprint.

The premiere and release of the film *Sing Sing*, based on our theater program and featuring a cast of RTA alumni, has been thrilling and we continue to work to leverage this opportunity to increase awareness, gain supporters and grow our program and network. *The New York Times* critic Lisa Kennedy called RTA, "... the movie's other star ...".

We are working so that arts-in-corrections programs provided by RTA and organizations we connect with, will be available to more correctional facilities and more incarcerated individuals. We regularly witness the impact of RTA's programs and *Sing Sing* has now brought a wider audience behind the walls to see and be inspired by that as well.

For all that is happening outside the walls of correctional facilities, the most important work is happening inside. One of our longtime Teaching Artists, Margaret Ables, recently said, "[Most of] RTA's work [are] these little magical reckonings that happen that no one but the 12 members of that classroom and the teaching artists will ever see. It's not the day that *Twelve Angry Men* goes up at Sing Sing, and everybody comes and applauds. It's the constant transformation that's happening, 12 men or women at a time..." Participants and alumni regularly tell us that we have changed their lives. Being able to do that consistently requires the financial stability provided by our community of supporters. This report of impact and lives changed, is thanks to you.

Of course, I am incredibly grateful to our Staff, Teaching Artists and Board, for their leadership and partnership.

In gratitude,

Leslie Lichter
Interim Executive Director

About RTA

Launched at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in 1996, Rehabilitation Through the Arts (RTA) has grown from a single theater workshop to a comprehensive program in multiple prisons in New York State, and is a world leader in arts-in-prisons programming. Our unique programs unlock creative potential, fostering personal growth and community building.

RTA demonstrates that an approach based on human dignity is vastly more successful than one based on punishment. **Less than 3% of RTA participants return to prison, compared to the national recidivism rate of 60%.**



RTA participants in the music composition workshop at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The workshop is in partnership with Musicambia.

Who We Serve

Operating in Dutchess, Erie, Greene, Orange, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties, RTA is expanding its transformative work to prisons throughout New York, and in 2024, California.

Bedford Hills
Maximum-security women

Collins
Medium-security men

Fishkill
Medium-security men

Greene*
Medium/maximum-security men

Green Haven
Maximum-security men

Otisville*
Medium-security men

Sing Sing
Maximum-security men

Taconic
Medium-security women

Wallkill*
Medium-security men

Woodbourne*
Medium-security men

Sierra Conservation Center*
A state prison in Jamestown, California

*Facilities where Reimaging Myself® is operational.



Clockwise from top left: RTA's *Spring Spectacular* at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, *Twelve Angry Men* at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, Knitting workshop at Taconic Correctional Facility

Reimaging Myself® workshop participants and a still from the RM Lived Experience video

Our Programs

Our dynamic range of **Arts Workshops**, from theater to visual arts, music, dance, and writing, create a supportive environment where participants build new skills, boost empathy, accountability and self-esteem, and prepare for life after release.

These workshops range from single-session master classes to year-long projects.

Regardless of length, each fosters a strong commitment to a peer community, are guided by a steering committee of incarcerated members at each facility and are facilitated by skilled and trained RTA teaching artists.

Our newest initiative, **Reimagining Myself®** (RM) is a reentry program that directly addresses the social and emotional

challenges of release. RM is designed to be taught to incarcerated people within two years of release to help them repair family relationships, build a support network and adjust attitudes and behaviors necessary for survival inside prison, but are counterproductive on the outside.

We encourage and empower our **Alumni** to continue driving change. Many alumni

pursue careers in social services, working with at-risk youth, carceral reform, the arts and more, paying it forward and furthering the role of arts in social justice and rehabilitation. Several have joined RTA's Board and provide strategic guidance.

Highlights

Every time RTA gathers its community around a performance, a visual art exhibit, a panel discussion, a homecoming celebration or a Gala there is a shared priority about giving voice to those inside and to the transformative power of the arts to change lives for the better.

Winter and Spring 2023



The year always kicks off with our time-honored event, **Homecoming**, celebrating RTA participants who have been released from prison in the last year. Our community of staff, board, family and friends rejoiced in-person for the first time since 2020.

RTA presented "**Fork in the Road**," an exhibition featuring artwork by participants of RTA's visual arts program at the Stone Ridge Library, Stone Ridge, NY. The concept of the exhibition was the vision of the participants at Bedford Hills, Green Haven, and Woodbourne Correctional Facilities.

In-person performances were back after a three-year-long hiatus. **Twelve Angry Men** was performed at Sing Sing Correctional Facility to a packed house of supporters, friends and participant family members. At Bedford Hills, a women's correctional facility, participants brought their most fearless selves to the **Spring Spectacular**, a showcase of scenes from **Electra** by Sophocles, and performed dance pieces to round out the performance.

In collaboration with The Workshop Theater, RTA presented **Words Matter: Renewal** an event that featured the reading of four world premiere one-act plays inspired by RTA alumni. Those same alumni masterfully read and performed each play with a professional actor. The plays were funny, poignant, and at times, heartbreakingly moving.

Summer and Fall 2023



As the summer commenced, a full semester of programming came to a successful conclusion. We ran **18 workshops with our core arts program in six facilities** and continued at that pace for the remainder of the year, each semester.

The full rollout of our newest initiative, **Reimagining Myself**®, an in-prison reentry program, concluded at Wallkill and Woodbourne correctional facilities. The 10-session workshop, which was run for a new group of residents in the fall, prepares them for the social-emotional challenges they are likely to face upon release.

Sing Sing had its world premiere at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival. One review said "more than just a film about prison life. It's a love letter to the transformative power of performing arts."

"THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME REIMAGINE THE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WHERE PEOPLE SHOW UP AND SEE VALUE IN EACH OTHER."

-RTA PARTICIPANT AT SING SING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Highlights Continued

Winter and Spring 2024



Fusing music, spoken word, visual arts, and panel discussion, members of our community gathered at Trinity Church Wall Street for **NOVUS Renewal: The Transformative Work of RTA**.



Sing Sing film won Festival Favorite Award in Austin, TX at the Southwest Film and TV Festival, the Impact Award at the Miami Film Festival, and the Golden Space Needle Award: Best Film at the Seattle International Film Festival.



Bedford Hills and Taconic Correctional Facilities observed Women's History Month with workshops in visual arts, improvisation, knitting, music, acting, and poetry. The work culminated in presentations for the prison population and special guests.



Thoughts of a Colored Man premiered at Green Haven Correctional Facility in May. Keenan Scott, II, playwright of the original Broadway production served as script consultant and attended rehearsals and performances.

"THE WHOLE PROCESS WAS AMAZING. I AM GRATEFUL FOR BEING CO-DIRECTOR. I FOUND SOMETHING THAT I'M GOOD AT. SOMEONE WHO WAS IN THE AUDIENCE SAID, 'WHEN I WENT TO THE PLAY, I FELT LIKE I WASN'T IN PRISON.' AND I TOLD HIM, 'THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE ALWAYS WITH RTA!'"

-RTA PARTICIPANT AT GREEN HAVEN

Thank you for being our partner

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RTA is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

RTA receives support from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

RTA is proud to be a grantee of ArtsWestchester with funding made possible by Westchester County government with the support of County Executive George Latimer.



The Hyde and Watson Foundation



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*until June 2024



Our Donors

RTA is not just an organization; it is a movement towards a more humane, effective, and just approach to corrections. Our donors are investing in a proven solution that transforms lives, reduces recidivism, and builds stronger communities. Thank you for your ardent support of this work.

Patron \$100,000+

The Tow Foundation

PATRON \$50,000+

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"THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME REIMAGINE THE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WHERE PEOPLE SHOW UP AND SEE VALUE IN EACH OTHER."

-RTA PARTICIPANT AT SING SING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

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E. Annette Nash Govan

New Yorkers for Arts via Grapevine

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We are grateful to all our donors for their contributions made between January 2023 and June 2024. If your name has been listed incorrectly or omitted, please contact info@rta-arts.org.

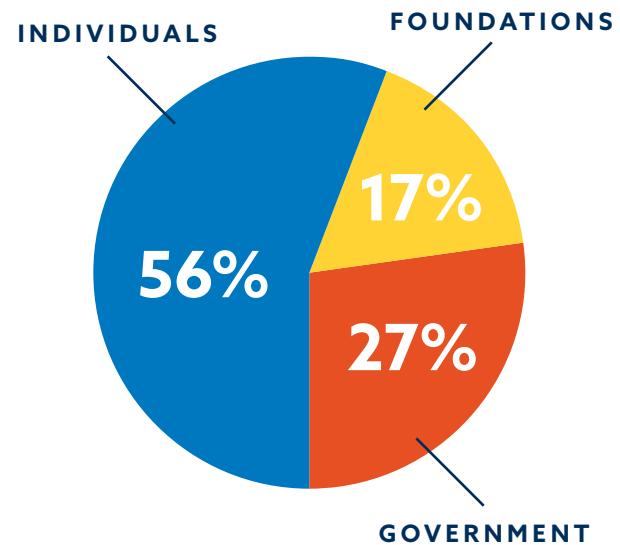


"Untitled" by Allen Haymon,
RTA Participant at Sing Sing
Correctional Facility

RTA Financials

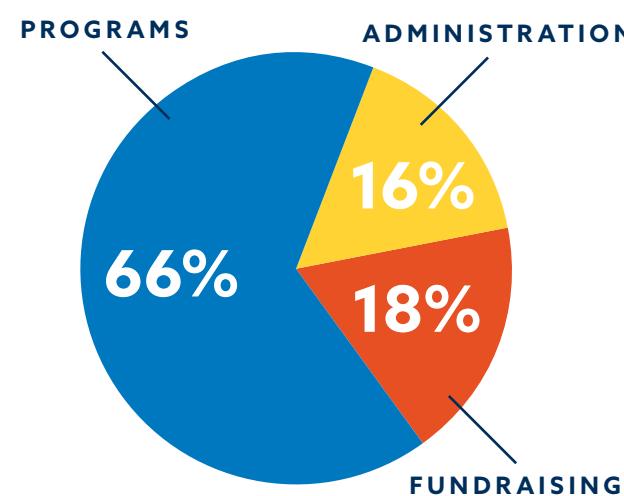
Accrual basis as of 12/31/23

Total Revenue



Total Revenue \$900,042

Total Expenses



Total Expenses \$1,139,788

Total Assets \$1,552,032
Total Liabilities \$98,967

Visit our website for our 2023 annual audit and IRS 990 form.

Prison Communities International Inc. (PCI) is a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to criminal justice issues. Established in 1999, PCI is the parent company under which Rehabilitation Through the Arts operates.

RTA by the Numbers

Snapshot of January 2023-June 2024

Program Participants: **375**

Number of facility visits by teaching artists: **1,576**

Total number of workshops conducted: **97**

1,000+ incarcerated individuals have participated in RTA's programs.

\$1.5 billion in state savings when recidivism is reduced by 10%—RTA's proven impact saves taxpayers dollars.



"Obstacles on the Road" by Fidel Castro Brito, RTA Participant at Green Haven Correctional Facility



735 Anderson Hill Road, Purchase NY 10577

914-251-7540 | info@rta-arts.org

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