

 **communityworks** presents:

Community Works engages youth and adults in arts and education programs that interrupt and heal the far-reaching impact of incarceration and violence by empowering individuals, families and communities. For more information about this production or Community Works' other Restorative Arts programming, please call 510-486-2340 or visit our website: community-works-ca.org.



communityworks

phone: 510-486-2340

www.community-works-ca.org



Man. Alive.

Stories from the edge of incarceration to the flight of imagination

Thursday, October 1, 6:30pm

Friday, October 2, 8pm

Saturday, October 3, 8pm

University of San Francisco's Studio Theater

Man. Alive. is a project of Community Works in collaboration with community and professional artists and the University of San Francisco. Community Works (CW) is a non profit organization that provides programming to youth and adults impacted by incarceration. CW is committed to the principles of restorative justice, that sees crime as harm against individuals and communities and not the state. It is therefore the obligation of the offender to be accountable, to heal the harm he/she caused, and for the community to be open to that restorative process. This production provides the opportunity for three ex-offenders to tell their stories. Written and designed by the performers, the personal stories of each are woven together with the experiences of other ensemble members. The stories tell tales of violence, sorrow, pain, hope and redemption. It is a goal of CW to create programming and to find public venues where ex-offenders can interact and honestly reconnect in fellowship with the community. Each of the performers—Reggie, Ivan, AJ and Freddy—have put their heart and soul into this piece. In the last four months there were tears and laughter, self reflection mixed with equal doses of doubt and clarity, but always a commitment to being as truthful and honest to the process as possible.

Great appreciation to the ensemble, including Freddy Gutierrez, who is not an ex-offender but has shared his own story as he helps the others tell theirs.

– Ruth Morgan
Executive Director, Community Works

This performance grew out of a four month workshop. The workshop focused on skills such as voice work, movement, listening, storytelling, improvisation, collaboration and group problem solving. Our process of creation was at times a struggle, but hopefully, like the performance, emphasizes growth, optimism, humor and hope. The process was enriched by the courage and tenacity of the group, as we grew in mutual respect and understanding of each other.

– Amie Dowling, Paul Flores and Natalie Greene
Man. Alive. Co-Directors

This performance is produced by Community Works, in collaboration with the San Francisco Sheriff's Department and USF's Department of Performing Arts and Social Justice.



Man. Alive.

An original production Written and Performed By

Reggie Daniels
Ivan Corado-Vega
Antonio Johnson
Freddy Gutierrez

In collaboration with Co-Directors

Amie Dowling
Paul Flores
Natalie Greene

Additional support from

Lighting Designer - Selina Yu
Stage Manager - Jenny Reed
Stage Manager - Brianna Washington
Costumer - Keriann Eglander
Composer - Eli Nelson
Sound Operator - Ashley Smiley

Please join us for a reception following the performance.

Community Works would like to thank: University of San Francisco, San Francisco Sheriff's Department, Jenna Preheim, Ellie Erickson, Jerry Scoggins, Sunny Schwartz, and the entire cast and crew.

The co-directors would like to thank: Maria Healey, Christi DeMattei, the Flores-Garcia family, performers for their commitment and artistry, and the faculty and staff of the Performing Arts and Social Justice Department.

My First Time Going In

Concrete house. My first time going in. I'm an outsider. I've never known this life.

I know what I think. I know what I've seen on T.V. and movies.

16 men, orange head to toe.

I'm sure I'll be safe.

Their eyes look me over.

Some smile; most don't.

We shake hands.

I told my parents I'd be going in,

Pops said,

“Ahh man. You better be careful with them guys. Te van a chingar. You gotta be careful”

Mom initially thought I said that I was getting locked up. When she realized what I was really saying she said,

“What! Muchacho, tut as loco!”

My father's fiancé, she's a parole officer, with a mix of disapproval and disbelief in her voice, she asked why,

“Why? They don't deserve that. They should do their time.”

It wasn't so bad.

Its hot, damp, smells of sweaty men, leaky ceiling, B O, 1 piece plastic chairs, odd square shaped room, you can't see the sun ~ only orange ~

I want to come back – and learn from the men underneath the orange.

The loner...

“Corado! 10 o’clock visit!” The announcement cuts through the layers of voices of men doing county time. My body becomes aware of my surroundings again and my thought is, “Oh it must be Saturday”. You would think Saturday visits are a time to be happy when you are locked up. It should be a day to look forward to. I get to see the ones that love me even if it is for 30 minutes. A voice brings me out of my head and says, “Hey Ive, you got that good visit coming at 10. Who coming to see you?” It’s my friend, a friend that I made in jail. Jail is an unlikely place to make friends, but he is a friend none the least.

“Corado, Johnson, Jackson, Sanchez...line up for visits” The voice of the deputy begins to cut through the noise again. I make my way past the stainless steel tables clanging with the sound of plastic cups and bowls, hands slamming dominoes on bed sheets to muffle the sound, groups of four playing pinochle and the same to OG’s hang out by the micro wave shooting the shit talking about past beefs that they did time on. I get focused again by the voice that cuts through the noise, “Gentle men don’t cross my line or I’ll cancel your fuckin’ visit, behind the line. Move when I say move only!”

I make my way to the corridor leading to the visiting room after the order is given of course. My body is rushing with nervous energy, but my face is holding firm. There might be other inmates being transported so I got to have that look on you know, no time show excitement in here. The voice that cuts through the noise says, “Gentlemen take a seat. You know the rules, stay in your seat, no physical contact, no passing objects across the table. Any one crosses my line your visit will be cancelled! Is that clear?” I tune out the message; I have heard all those lines before. Threatening statements by the voice that cuts through the noise are a daily thing. I really don’t hear them anymore.

The room is a misshaped square with a wall that has the only good mirror in the jail. I sit next to the mirrored wall so that I look at myself and see the changes that happen week to week when you are locked indoors for 22 hours a day. I’m pale, losing weight and they changed my bunk this week so I have not been sleeping well.

The one thing that I do have going for me in here is that meditation class. That is the only time that I can find any sense of healthy solitude in this place. I went to the class Friday night so that is helping me to stay present in this moment right before the visit. The instructor reminded us to learn how to stay with the breath. I’m using my tools so here I am noticing my breath, present in thought among men doing county time. Present in thought as the voice that cuts through the noise says, “Gentlemen you have 30 minutes for your visit.”

Here she is on Saturday like she has been for the last four months. “Hola mi hijo lindo! Como estas?” She always asks me how I am, I see the desire to comfort me and make it all better. “Ya ve, aqui esta su madre como le prometi!” Here she is, my mother visiting my just like she promised at our last visit. She hasn’t missed a week since I’ve been locked up, it’s almost like she wants to be in here with me. In a lot of ways she is. The two of us begin the dance...

How are you

I'm fine really I'm not; this is the most stressful part of my week. She is here to make me feel better and I want to do all I can to make her feel better

I left you some money (I can see the receipt in her hand) I left \$10 from me and \$10 from your grandmother

Thank you but you know that you don't have to do that I want her to stop, she needs the money, I will be ok...

It's alright, if you have extra just be sure to give something to one of the men that has less than you do

I will, I always do. This week I got my friend some coffee. A new man came into the dorm this week and I gave him some food. There are so many men that have nothing so I do what I can. Most of them are too proud to accept the help

That is a good thing son; always think of those who have less than you, even in this situation. Did you buy your phone cards?

Yes I did, I bought three cards this week. I'm tired of calling, I can hear the world passing me by over the phone. I don't want to call, I would rather mediate in class or on my bunk.

Ok, be sure to call the kids, and call your aunt and please don't forget to call your dad. He couldn't make it this week, but you know he is thinking of you. If you still have money on your card then give me a call. I can always come see you if we don't talk on the phone. Call the rest of the family, you that they are busy and it's hard for them to call.

I will.

The Suspect... Detriment

I was 14 years old the first time I fit the description... Young, Latino, Male, Medium Build, Brown Eyes, Brown Hair. That narrowed the population to about 70 percent of all Latino males in the Mission District at that time.

I was walking home that night after a long day of keeping myself safe and off the streets at my afterschool program. The neighborhood was full of drugs and violence but we loved the place. It was home. There had been a fight between a tall Latino male with a shaved head and an African American male with light brown hair that night. I had no part in the fight nor did I fit the description of the two boys that were fighting. Still in the eyes of the officers that stopped me that night, I fit the description.

I was detained for half an hour along with two other friends that were walking home that night. We all lived a few blocks apart and we made it a point not to let each other walk home alone after the program. The other boys and I were searched, questioned and ultimately threatened with detention if they saw us walking together again. Apparently now we fit the description of a gang

We were finally let go, but I will never forget the first time I fit the description. Over the years I have fit many other descriptions as well and I continue to ask myself this question, Coincidence or convenience

The Brown Envelope

It was after dinner.

5:30pm

6th floor D pod SF County Jail

I was at the sink shaving.

It was my second week in jail.

I heard my name being called.

I walked from the sink to the gate of my pod

The deputy handed me a letter-sized brown envelope

labeled Family Court

I took a hold of the envelope

Walked to my bunk and opened it.

The documents stated that

Due to the nature of the charges

Leveled against me

The City and county of San Francisco

found me unfit to be a father.

Therefore full legal and custodial rights

would be given to my daughter's mother.

I read and reread those documents
Till I fell asleep that night.
There must have been something wrong.
I wanted to find an error
But what the documents said about me was true.

How could I let my desire to drink
and use violence
get in the way of holding on
to what I loved most in life?

The only joy I had in life
at that time was my ability
to be a father to my daughter.

There I lay in jail
6th floor
while the City and County of San Francisco
found me unfit to be a father.

I could decide to quit on myself and my daughter
Or change.

What Remains to be Seen

The scent of us remains in the odd shaped square room
must lingers and hot needs rise to surface tensions
 touch is not allowed here
air doesn't blow
and silent moments are breathless
as I leave palmed apprehensions of afternoon reflections
 I can see myself – or who I could have been

our Friday mornings hold shared poetry and homeboy handshakes
shoulders soften just a bit
when palms pat blades on masculine backs
like gentle razors that cut thick stares when eyes blink

sighted memory of black uniformed deputies
dot the corners of sight

the humanizing of this process is captured by the mechanical Cyclops
peering from the ceiling

I leave the B-Dorm Boys and barriers between participants and facilitators
plastic chairs, the circle we sit in, the checkered tiles – the places we stand,
the locking doors – the sound of finality
the 4 deer that watch us go
the gravel beneath the USF van – tiny pangs of smashing gavels
12 weeks and I leave