



EJP students in the chapel at Danville Correctional Center for the program's fall convocation, on August 24, 2017.

EJP Receives Million Dollar Grant!

BY REBECCA GINSBURG, EJP DIRECTOR

The Education Justice Project has received a million-dollar grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. We expect to accomplish much good with these funds. Continue reading to learn about our plans, and why we absolutely need *you* to be part of them.

How Did EJP Get the Grant?

The Mellon Foundation is a New York-based foundation that promotes the humanities and the arts. It was founded by the children of Andrew Mellon, an American businessman and banker, in 1969. In recent years, the Foundation has started funding higher education in prison programs. Its first grantees were Cornell, Columbia, and the California Community College system. We're grateful that our reputation in the field was such that, in early 2017, a program officer from the Foundation expressed interest

in visiting Illinois to consider the advisability of funding the Education Justice Project. We didn't solicit this attention, and were frankly stunned to hear that the Foundation was considering EJP.

We were invited shortly thereafter to submit a formal proposal to Mellon. Fortunately, a couple of years earlier EJP had engaged in a strategic planning process through which we identified 7 primary objectives. Thank goodness! We had only a couple of months to write the proposal, and it helped greatly to have a set of priorities that we'd already agreed upon.

They included developing comprehensive evaluation processes; creating better awareness of EJP in particular and issues around penal incarceration and higher education in prison in general; promoting the

voices of systems-involved scholars and family members; and advancing academic excellence at Danville Correctional Center.

We submitted our proposal to Mellon in August 2017, had news of acceptance in September 2017 (this was expected, since it was an invited proposal), and received the first installment of the funds in October 2017.

What Will the Grant Cover?

The Mellon Grant provides about 3 years of funding. See the box on the next page for the main items it supports.

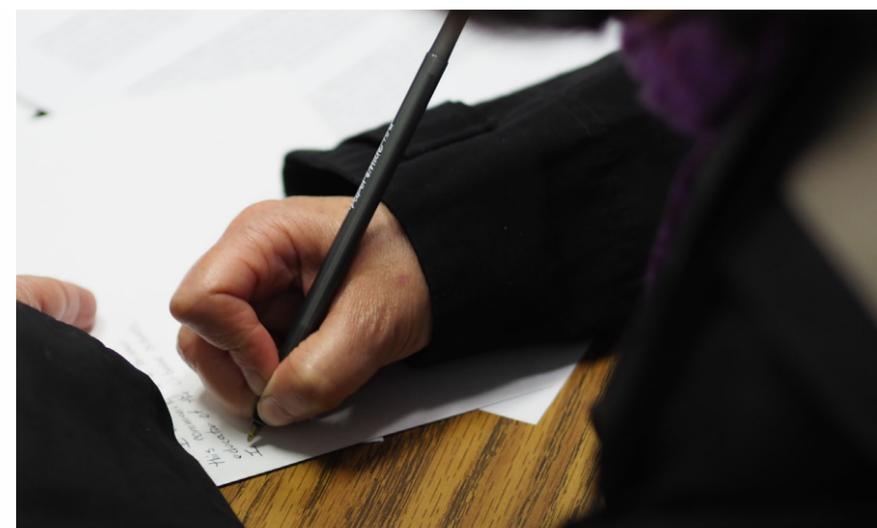
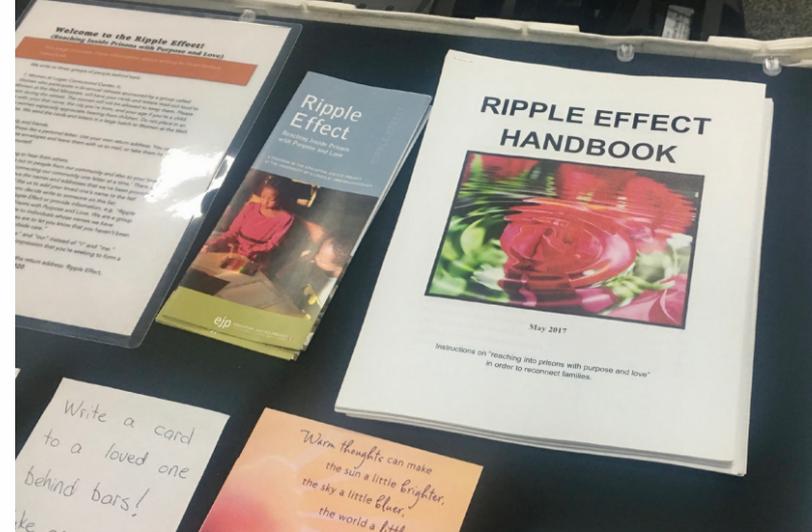
What Difference Will the Mellon Grant Make?

To appreciate the impact of this grant for EJP, you have to understand where EJP has come from.

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Our Mellon Grant supports:

- more University of Illinois courses offered at Danville Correctional Center;
- hundreds more volumes for the **EJP library** at the prison;
- updated equipment for EJP's **computer lab** at the prison;
- a **comprehensive evaluation process** that will take us beyond the logic of recidivism in explaining the value of higher education in prison;
- three **national workshops**, helping us to build stronger communities of learning and support among prison education programs in the U.S.;
- new EJP **videos and websites** that promote our students, the EJP program, and issues we care about;
- **online national directory** that will make up-to-date information about prison education programs more readily available to families and researchers;
- **instructional materials** for EJP programs at Decatur women's prison;
- support for the **Illinois Coalition of Higher Education in Prison** (IL-CHEP), which EJP helps to facilitate.



EJP's RIPPLE Effect program (Reaching Inside Prisons with Purpose and Love) provides a space for community members to gather monthly to write letters and cards to people behind bars. We send encouraging words of support, while sharing stories about the challenges of loving those on the other side of the wall. Bottom right: Al Cleveland, who received cards from Ripple while he was in prison, attended our 2-year anniversary celebration. Here, being interviewed by a local TV network, he explains how much it meant to him to receive mail while in prison. Top left, EJP has produced a handbook for communities that wish to start similar programs.

We have always operated on a shoe-string budget. Last year we had only one full-time staff member, Jamie Hines, EJP's Operations Manager. Our total expenditures were less than \$110,000. How have we been able to accomplish so much with so little for so long? EJP members have always been willing to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Friends like you have always been willing to contribute.

For example, course instructors not only teach at the prison; they also speak about EJP at campus events; math workshop facilitators help with mailings; and all members work events like fundraisers. At the prison, EJP students sacrifice yard and day room time to serve on EJP committees.

This can-do spirit has kept EJP vital and strong for 9 years, and we feel protective of it. We don't want the grant to disrupt treasured aspects of EJP's culture. Still, we need to offer more stable support to those who work hardest to keep EJP going strong. In that spirit, we are happy to be able to hire new staff positions and invest in office systems and equipment that will make their jobs easier.

Thank You, U of I!

The University of Illinois has provided financial, logistical, and strategic support to EJP from the beginning. Now, it has agreed to invest over half a million dollars in the next three years, in recognition of the Mellon investment. These funds will pay for expanded office space and key staff positions.

What's *Not* Supported?

The Mellon grant will not meet all EJP's anticipated expenses. We will continue to apply for smaller grants to meet the shortfall, and we continue to need your support. In particular, the grant does not pay for:

Scholarships. We provide academic awards to formerly incarcerated scholars and to people who have close family members behind bars. We recently added a new category: people 35 and younger who were incarcerated as juveniles. We also want to raise the amount of the scholarship from \$500 to \$1,000.

Reentry Guides. Mellon provides some support for printing and distributing the guides, but not enough to meet demand. This year, we are also producing a guide for people facing deportation upon release, and next year we plan to add two new guides, for women and juveniles respectively. EJP is also working with the government of Uganda to produce a reentry guide for that country.

Instructional Materials. While the Mellon grant budget includes thousands of dollars for this, it will not meet all anticipated costs. We require additional funds for course books and readers.

RIPPLE Effect. None of this program's costs (e.g. stationery, stamps, refreshments) are covered by the grant. For more about the Ripple Effect, see photos above.

Operating Costs. This includes items like computer software, travel to conferences, and printing this newsletter.

EJP needs to raise \$60,000 this fiscal year from individual donors like you. In recent years, donors have given between \$25 - \$35,000 annually, so this amount represents a considerable push. We welcome the challenge!

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

OFF-CAMPUS FUNDERS

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- Champaign West Rotary
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- Harvard University Press
- Laughing Gull Foundation
- Mansfield Family Foundation
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- Pearson Press
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ejp mission

The mission of the Education Justice project is to create a model college-in-prison program that demonstrates the positive impacts of higher education upon incarcerated people, their families, the neighborhoods from which they come, the host institution, and society as a whole.

Turn the page to learn why we're excited about asking for your support!



Most EJP alumni (released students) return to Chicago, where they meet regularly for support and to discuss community engagement. From left: Rasheed Williams, Fabian Harty, Chris Harrison, Malik Muhammad, Willie Fullilove, Jobie Taylor, Elfego Nunez, Chilly Mayorga, Johnny Page.

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We're motivated to ask for your support not only because we truly need the funds, but also because we are clear-eyed about the dynamics of philanthropy. As EJP grows, we will continue to need assistance from large institutions like the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. However, we recognize the moral imperative of staying connected to our base—people like you who are touched and impacted by EJP programs. Without contributions from EJP alumni, former instructors, university faculty, people who attend EJP events, and other grassroots allies of the program, our other funding successes are hollow. **Your donations affirm EJP's accountability to you, and reassure us that the program is valued by those we work with directly.**

Where will EJP be in 3 years?

By 2020, EJP students will be able to take 3 courses a semester (they can currently take only one). More will have earned certificates from the University of Illinois, which will put even more on the track to degree completion, meaningful work, and graduate school. Our data collection will be stupendous, and we'll do an outstanding job of tracking student outcomes and making a convincing case for support of higher education in prison in Illinois and nationally. Through IL-CHEP, prison education will be stronger across the state, and programs will work closely together to advance progressive policies that lead to impactful reform. Our alumni will flourish, and continue to be leaders in their communities upon their release.

And then ...?

The Mellon grant is renewable. We will reassess our needs in 2020 and submit a new proposal that allows us to keep moving ahead energetically. We are driven to continue pursuing EJP's mission of demonstrating the positive impacts of higher education in prison, in pursuit of our vision of a more just and humane world. Thank you for being part of this important work. As we grow, we need you more than ever.

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