



EJP alumni, family members, and allies at a recent FACE meeting in Chicago

## Outside the Walls

BY REBECCA GINSBURG, EJP DIRECTOR

EJP's programs at Danville Correctional Center are scheduled to resume in June 2015!

We have hired a fabulous new Director of Academic Programs, Suzanne Linder, and can now continue with our academic offerings, which had been suspended due to staffing needs since November 2014.

We are overjoyed about our return to the prison. However, this issue celebrates the essential dimensions of college-in-prison that take place *away* from the prison.

Our academic offerings are central to EJP's work, and the heart of what we do. However, they're only part of the story.

EJP's mission includes demonstrating the positive impacts of higher education in prison on families, communities, and society as a whole. Those impacts mostly happen through our released EJP students, whom we term "alumni."

EJP alumni typically return to their home neighborhoods, and there they

continue the learning, scholarship, and engagement that distinguished their lives as EJP students. They may enroll in night courses; get connected to local non-profits (or start their own); speak out about prison reform; or support youth who need the encouragement and discipline they feel was missing in their own lives.

We facilitate our alumni's desire to be agents of positive social change in several ways. We offer scholarships to support their ongoing education; training to help them support family members who are going through what their own family members once experienced; and create networking opportunities to assist their re-entry.

At FACE Open Houses, EJP alumni have the opportunity to reach large audiences and inspire others facing the challenge of re-entry.

It's through EJP's FACE (Family and Community Engagement) program that we make all that happen, and much more, including our exciting new international partnership. I hope you enjoy reading about them.

## 25% in 10 years

Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner has pledged his determination to reduce the number of people in Illinois' prisons by 25% in the next 10 years.

This is a bold goal. Decarceration, as it's termed, is a goal that EJP can get behind. We're all for moving assertively, thoughtfully, and intentionally towards such a positive end.

Any serious plan to decarcerate Illinois will include programs proven to support re-entry and reduce recidivism. Those include prison education programs and supportive pathways to continuing education upon release.

Decarceration is an important step, though not the only one, towards meaningful prison reform. We look forward to monitoring Illinois' efforts and participating in them, and hope they set a path that other states can productively follow.

# The FACE Scholarship Program

BY ROHN KOESTER,  
EJ RADIO COORDINATOR

Incarceration impacts families. In recognition of that, EJP's Family and Community Engagement (FACE) program has been offering \$500 needs-based scholarships since 2010. The program recently expanded, and now provides scholarships in the four following categories:

- family member of an EJP student,
- family member of a Danville Correctional Center staff member,
- family member of someone incarcerated at Danville Correctional Center who is not an EJP student,
- individuals released from an Illinois state prison in the past 5 years.

Higher education is a social good. We hope through programs like this to increase access and expand opportunity.

“*The fact that my dad continues to be a U of I student and works hard at it motivates me to be a scholarly person as well. His advice and his continuous support and belief in my abilities are some of my motivational tools I rely on.*”

—Emily Rosas,  
daughter of EJP  
student Otilio Rojas



Karl Rand, with his mother, and Judith Knight, far right, with her grandmother, at the 2011 EJP Awards Ceremony at Danville Correctional Center.

FACE Scholarship winners attend college with a variety of goals. Tiffany Sansone, a 2014 award recipient, enrolled at the University of Evansville to focus on communications and psychology in the hopes of one day working for Disney. 2011 scholarship winner, Karl Rand, enrolled in Friends University and expects to graduate this spring with a double major in Zoo Sciences and Field Biology. He hopes to become a zookeeper specializing in primates.

Scholarship winners always have an inspiring story to share. Judith Knight, another 2011 recipient, writes, “I will be the first one of my immediate family to finish college and graduate with a degree.” 2014 award winner Emily Rosas states, “Being in school again has allowed me to peer into a better future.”

Karl Rand, brother of EJP student Chad Rand, offers, “No matter what setbacks people have, whether it be financial (as is my case) or incarceration (as is my brother’s), education should never be out of reach.”

Scholarship applications are available on the EJP website.



Clockwise from top left: members of FACE Uganda engaged with an income-generating craft project; Francis Ssuubi speaking to FACE members in Chicago in 2014; students and staff at the Wells of Hope Academy in Uganda; FACE Uganda members pose for a recent photo in Kampala, Uganda

## FACE in Uganda!

Mass incarceration may be an American phenomenon, but even in countries that practice penal incarceration on a more modest scale, those families left behind often suffer. Wells of Hope (WOH) is a Ugandan-based non-profit that works to mitigate such suffering among families of the incarcerated in that East African nation. It also works with men and women on death row in Uganda's prisons.

We're proud to announce that Wells of Hope is EJP's new international partner!

WOH's signature program is a residential school for children with incarcerated parents. It provides free education to over one hundred youth from throughout Uganda. The incarcerated parents have reported to

WOH staff that they often observe their family members in tears in the prison visiting room. They have long wished that their respective loved ones could meet outside of the prison to encourage one another.

Enter FACE Uganda!

WOH's executive director, Francis Ssuubi, attended a FACE event in Chicago in April 2014, and was so moved by his interactions with EJP families that he convinced WOH's board to implement the model in Uganda. FACE Uganda, named after EJP's program, was launched in October 2014. This new initiative organizes domestic partners and mothers of incarcerated men for mutual support and training.

Extreme poverty is the greatest challenge that these families face. Accordingly, the program has focused on providing skills such as soap-making that allow the impacted women to generate revenue.

In the future, Francis explains, the expectation is that FACE Uganda will be in a position to request financial support for families from local and international charities.

Future plans for EJP's partnership with WOH include study abroad trips to Uganda for UIUC undergraduates and travel and teaching opportunities for EJP alumni and family members in Uganda's prisons. We look forward to mutual learning from our Ugandan partners.

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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.



Amanda Hwu, center, facilitating a meeting of the Prison Justice Project on the University of Illinois campus

## Prison Justice Project - Working with Youth

BY AMANDA HWU, PJP OUT-GOING PRESIDENT

How can undergraduate students support justice-involved individuals?

EJP requires that its members have at least a Bachelor's degree, and those who teach for-credit courses at the prison must have the same qualification they'd need to teach on the Urbana campus.

Fortunately, there's now a way for undergraduates to become involved in this important work. -- EJP's undergraduate partner organization, the Prison Justice Project (PJP).

PJP was formed in Spring 2013. During our first year, we focused on growing our membership base, hosting monthly lectures about social justice topics relating to incarceration, and piloting a mentoring program for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

In April of 2014, PJP won the Women's Resources Center's Student Program of the Year Award AND the Office of Diversity and Social Education

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*Congratulations to the  
Prison Justice Project  
on their recent awards!*

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Education's Outstanding Student Organization of the Year Award for our advocacy work around decarceration.

Today, PJP has a general membership of roughly 200 students. We work with over 30 youth involved in the juvenile justice system at READY Alternative School and Champaign County Court Diversion Services through our mentoring program, C.U. Succeed. We

also host monthly lectures and bi-weekly general meetings; organize fundraisers for local organizations that address incarceration issues; and publish articles about incarceration news through our writing platform, Justice Projects.

We welcome all at our activities on campus!

*Editor's Note: Amanda Hwu received the 2015 Patricia E. Askew Leadership Award in recognition of her work with the Prison Justice Project, which she founded, and PJP received the Outstanding YMCA Student Program of 2014-2015. Congratulations, Amanda, and best of luck as next year as you embark on graduate studies in Social Work at the University of Chicago!*

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