

Bannan's Grant Application

1 November 2005

"Shakespeare in San Quentin"

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**Aldo Billingslea
Theatre & Dance**

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Bannan Center for Jesuit Education
Bannan Grant Proposal

1. Tentative Project Title

“Shakespeare at San Quentin: Santa Clara Students Performing Shakespeare for and with inmates at San Quentin State Prison”

2. Statement of the Problem

While Santa Clara has long sought to stimulate the moral imagination of its students by direct contact with the poor and marginalized, our programs have often overlooked an important and steadily increasing segment of society, the inmate population. While serving out their sentences, prisoners lack mental stimulation. Subject to boredom and isolation, they often experience despair, both at their situation within the prison and the daily evidence they see that the world outside their prison walls cares little or nothing for them. These inmates know that most people outside the prison gates will avert their eyes and bracket these souls from inclusion in the human family. As Kant reminds us, “It is...a duty not to avoid the places where the poor who lack the most basic necessities are to be found but rather to seek them out, and not to shun sick-rooms or debtors’ prisons and so forth in order to avoid sharing painful feelings one may not be able to resist.” This grant will help Santa Clara students to connect with those individuals and assist San Quentin State Prison in achieving their mission as they strive to “assist our clients in achieving successful reintegration into society”, by reminding those clients that there are individuals who are concerned about their well-being.

Last Summer in the pilot program for this project I discovered how incredibly grateful the prison population was simply to have us there. Their appreciation for the work and the impact of their thankfulness was overwhelming for our students. These incarcerated individuals brought themselves to the theatrical encounter in ways that were startling, amusing, joyous, and above all, irresistibly human. For our students, the experience of attaining a level of theatrical solidarity with these men was a unique and powerful event, one that everyone felt was invaluable.

3. Methods

The class will have a max enrollment of 16. It will be listed as both upper division and lower division. Upper division students as a prerequisite will have Acting I as a prerequisite. These students will be required to perform several monologues, sonnets and an additional scene. Lower division students will perform one monologue and one scene and will have no prerequisite. The course will fulfill a Fine Arts requirement.

The course has two distinct components: the Santa Clara University student component and the San Quentin inmate component. While I teach and prepare students by introducing scansion and meter, Constantin Stanislavski’s Method of Physical Actions and Scott Kaiser’s *Mastering Shakespeare* to Santa Clara students, Jonathan Gonzalez of

the Marin Shakespeare Company will be working with the inmates at San Quentin. Mr. Gonzalez is Director of Education at Marin Shakespeare and is also holds a 'Brown Card' that allows him to bring as many as twenty guest with him for an event on the prison grounds. The vital and most expensive part of this project is the ability of Mr. Gonzalez to educate inmates within the structure of San Quentin. It is imperative that he meet regularly with them to allow them to have the confidence to perform for their peers. The Marin Shakespeare Theatre is supportive of the endeavor, but cannot afford to lose the services of Mr. Gonzalez without compensation. The success of the project is tied to our ability to bringing his students together with ours. We will combine the groups twice, once for rehearsal and once for the final performance.

Students will be briefed on San Quentin regulations and be given a list of visitor guidelines. The following is an excerpt from the San Quentin Visiting Guidelines regarding attire.

Visitor Attire

It is recommended that visitors dress conservatively and with the following guidelines in mind.

Inappropriate attire will be reason to deny a visit. Any alteration to clothing once a visitor is inside the visiting area will be grounds for terminating the visit.

Prohibited Attire

- Clothing which, in any combination of shades or types of material/fabric, resembles California State-issued inmate clothing, blue denim or chambray shirts and blue denim pants.
- Clothing that resembles law enforcement or military-type clothing, including rain gear.
- Hats, wigs or hairpieces (except with prior written approval of the Visiting Sergeant).
- Clothing that exposes the breast/chest area, genital area, or buttocks.
- Dresses, skirts, pants, and shorts exposing more than two inches above the knee, including slits when standing.
- Sheer or transparent garments.
- Strapless or "spaghetti" strap tops.
- Clothing exposing the midriff area.
- Clothing or accessories displaying obscene or offensive language or drawings.
- Brassieres with metal underwires or any other detectable metal are not permitted.

Students will utilize an online journal during the term to reflect on their experience throughout the entire process. The journal entries, particularly the last two will serve the students well as a means of reflection and decompression from such an emotionally overwhelming experience. In anticipation of the need to decompress, immediately after the performance the class would lunch in Larkspur. The pilot program last year found this

'decompression lunch' extremely beneficial and the reflection that took place, most informative.

4. Timetable

14 November 2005 – Begin bi monthly meetings with Education Director Jonathan Gonzalez and Managing Director Leslie Courier to plan the calendar for next eight months.

Mid December 2005 – Submit course description, dates, location and scheduled class times for Summer bulletin.

12 December 2005 – Begin working once a week in San Quentin with select group.

23 January 2006 – Review list of possible scenes and monologues after a month working with inmates.

6 February 2006 – Canvas advisors and RLC's with flyers announcing the class.

6 March 2006 – Submit email to advisors and RLC's announcing the class.

3 April 2006 – Canvas advisors and RLC's with reminder flyers announcing the class.

1 June 2006 – Assess Course Enrollment and Review Scene Selection

22 June 2006 – First Class Meeting

25 June 2006 – Submit Student Roster and Drivers License #'s to San Quentin Security

13 July 2006 – Midterm Monologue Performance

17 July 2006 – Rehearsal with inmates at San Quentin /Lunch Following

24 July 2006 – Tentative Performance Date at San Quentin/ Lunch Following

26 July 2006 – Final Class/Final Journal Submission Due

5. Relevance to Past and Future Research or Teaching

I am a professional actor who has performed twenty-two different plays of William Shakespeare. In addition to teaching acting classes I teach lecture discussion classes such as Multicultural Theatre and American Theatre From the Black Perspective which focus primarily on marginalized voices in American Theatre.

6. Relevance to Bannan Institute Criteria for Funding

A. *The Ignatian ideal of "finding God in all things"* - For the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, all of reality was an arena of God's self-revelation.

In the tradition of the Ignatian ideal, this project serves to remind Santa Clara students that God is indeed in all things and all people, while it serves to remind inmates that God is within them and that there are many individuals outside the prison walls that value them.

B. *The focus on education of the whole person* - which recognizes the full individuality of each person, and seeks to integrate all aspects of that individuality — including the intellectual, aesthetic, moral, spiritual, affective, physical, and social.

The beauty of theatre is that it demands that every aspect of the individuality be integrated in order to communicate clearly. As students work to integrate all aspects of themselves into this work, they must work in concert with other students and inmates, which adds yet another layer of integration.

C. *The practical spirituality of The Spiritual Exercises* - This way of Christian prayer, developed by Ignatius, is premised in the belief that one can discover God's presence in one's life and the freedom to respond to that presence through a series of prayer exercises and personal conversations. Students will maintain an online journal via Angel that will provide an outlet for reflection, help them move toward future action and when necessary, allow them to decompress after some particularly challenging experience.

D. *The commitment to the faith that does justice in the world* - The intellectual aspect of faith in God inevitably drives beyond itself. It necessarily seeks an engagement with persons prevented from fulfilling the divine purpose of full integration by oppressive social systems and unjust structural realities. The inmate in our society is the epitome of the person who, because of their actions, is prevented from fulfilling their divine purpose of full integration due to an oppressive system. I believe this class has the potential of allowing the coldest student to warm to the idea of connecting with the individuals from the grittiest of realities.

7. Grants or Fellowships Received During Past Three Years

Provost Grant for *Seven Guitars*

Dean's Grant to Support Pilot Program for San Quentin

Dean's Grant to Support *Pentecost*

C.M.L. Grant to Attend a Performance at El Teatro Campesino

C.M.L. Faculty of Color Support Grant

8. Publication or Other Results of Most Recent Internal Grant Completed

Provost Grant for *Seven Guitars* –

Full Production BILLINGSLEA, ALDO L. Actor. Floyd Barton *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson.

Directed by Mark Monday, City Lights Theatre Company/Louis B. Mayer Theatre, San Jose/Santa Clara, California September 2005.

Dean's Grant to Support Pilot Program for San Quentin

Led to *THTR 120 Acting Styles: Shakespeare* being taught for the first time in the Summer, and for the first time, in San Quentin.

Itemized Budget

Mid term Lunch \$20 x 18 (16 students and two instructors)	\$360
Final Performance Lunch 18	\$360
Publicity for New Class	\$50
<u>Fee for Marine Shakespeare Company Prison Outreach</u>	<u>\$3000</u>
TOTAL	\$3770