

## Voices from Inside and the Power of Art to Transform and Restore

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**Abstract :** Few art programs for incarcerated juveniles exist; however, evaluation results indicate decreased recidivism and behavior problems. This paper reports on an on-going study of a promising art program for incarcerated adolescents with community exhibits and charitable sale of their work. Voices from Inside, a partnership between Franklin University and the Ohio Department of Youth Services, sponsored three exhibits in 2012, 2013, and 2014. In 2013, youth exhibitor survey results (response rate 47%, 16 of 34) showed that 81% cited as benefits cooperation with others, task completion, and increased self-esteem from public recognition and art sales. Community attendee survey results (response rate 29.5%, 59 of 200) showed positive attitude changes toward juvenile offenders, from 40% to 53%. Qualitative responses were similarly positive. The 2014 youth exhibitor sample was larger (response rate 58%, 29 of 50) and showed that 93% cited positive benefits including increase in self-esteem, decrease in stress, pride or recognition of the ability to reach a goal from completing, exhibiting and selling their art to benefit a charity for at-risk youth. This year, the research was able to conduct ten one-on-one interviews inside of the youth facilities, and qualitative responses were even more positive with one youth explaining, "This art represents my joy, my tears, my pain and my hope." Community attendee survey results (response rate 50%, 86 of 170) were transformative in that they indicated significant impression on attitudes toward juvenile offenders and their rehabilitative needs with one attendee stating that the event had an, "Immense impact for me bringing into focus the humanity and value these youth still have for us and society." Future research indicates a need for a correlation study to determine the extent to which these art programs reduce behavioral incidents inside of the facility and long-term reduction in reoffending rates. Generally, further study of juvenile offenders' art for rehabilitation and restorative justice, the power of art to transform, and university-community partnerships implementing art programs for juvenile offenders should continue.

**Keywords :** art, juvenile, incarcerated, restorative justice

**Conference Title :** ICLPJ 2015 : International Conference on Law, Policing and Justice

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** June 28-29, 2015