

Women Behind Bars: Breaking the Stigma
WILL/WGS Capstone 2018

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Introduction

This year's Women and Learning and Leadership (WILL) Capstone class at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) focused on women in the criminal justice system. We created our activism project as a campus wide project that included multiple events.

We wanted to educate individuals about the realities of women in prison as it is a topic that is either considered taboo or overlooked. The stigma surrounding incarcerated women, predominantly women of color, is based on unfounded biases and skewed media reporting. To combat this, our project centered around diverse women's standpoints and individual lived experiences as no single incarcerated woman has the exact same experience as another.

Mission Statement:

Through this activism project we hope to increase awareness of the criminal justice system in America. We hope to educate individuals about the realities of women in the American prison industrial complex. Additionally, we hope to specifically bring awareness to the lack of treatment and resources provided to the women in these prisons and bring light to their stories. By having a week of diverse events, we hope to have an open dialogue and educate students about the reality of others.

Target Group:

As a class we have decided to keep the target population for our project as the TCNJ student body. With events such as a panel of professors, a speaker, letter writing, VR simulation, and a movie screening, the TCNJ community will have the opportunity to not only participate, but also have access to the information we have compiled. Through our project we also hope to benefit the local Trenton community through our letter writing/pen pal event.

Events & Activities

In order to bring awareness to the criminal justice system and promote discussions about various aspects of women's' experiences, we hosted several on-campus events that took place from April 16 to 19, 2018. See Gallery for pictures taken at each event. Along with our events, we had a bake sale that allowed us to raise money for the Brooklyn Community Bail Fund for the National Bail Out. Furthermore, we engaged in discussions about the criminal justice system specifically focusing on women with the TCNJ community through social media, panels, conversations, etc.

Event #1: Movie: Babies Behind Bars

To start off our week of events, we hosted a movie night to focus on how the experiences of women are different from those of men. At this event we hoped to bring awareness about the ways in which pregnant women are treated in jails and the lack of health services available to them. Additionally, this movie showcased the hardships pregnant women face when they have to give up their child 24 hours after giving birth. This experience is unique solely to the experiences of female prisoners and this event demonstrated the negative effect it has on women.

This documentary follows pregnant women, or mothers, in the Indiana State Prison's, pilot Wee One's baby unit which allows women to keep their baby in jail with them during their sentence. It provides a lens into the experience of pregnant women during their prison sentence.

The purpose of this event was to inform the general public about the complex nature of women in prison and within the criminal justice. This movie screening hopes to debunk myths and provide clarity surrounding the criminalization of women.

Location: Monday, 4/16 Library Auditorium 8:30pm

Budget: \$25 (refreshments: drinks, cookies)

Event #2: Virtual Reality & Bake Sale

Our second large scale project was a virtual reality simulation of solitary confinement in prison through the use of enhanced vision goggles. The video, a nine-minute long account of one's experiences in a solitary 6x9 cell, encapsulates the physical, psychological, and emotional effects of confinement. With sights and sounds that replicated the unique experiences of solitary prisoners, the project was designed to be uncomfortable and disorienting.

Crafted with the TCNJ student body as its primary audience, the simulation was done alongside a bake sale. The proceeds of the bake sale were given to National Bail Out to help financially ease the burdens of imprisonment for mothers and to bail them out for Mother's Day.

The purpose of this project was to raise awareness about the solitary confinement experience. Standpoint is a pivotal pillar of feminist epistemologies, which is why TCNJ students needed an in-depth, firsthand account of an experience that they may never encounter otherwise.

Location: Tuesday, 4/17 Alumni Grove 11 AM-2 PM

Budget: \$70 for virtual reality glasses

Event #3: Speaker: Ceyenne Doroshow

Ceyenne Doroshow is a black trans activist whose activism is grounded in the empowerment of sex work and the freedom of all people to choose what to do with their bodies. A survivor of incarceration and violent policing, Doroshow exhibits how our criminal justice system policies and punishes trans women of color for pursuing sex work. Trans women of color deal with heightened violence due to their gender, sexuality, and race, and an intersectional glance at prisons show that trans individuals are often housed in cells based on their assigned sex at birth.

While detailing her own lived experiences with an introspective, enlightening discussion, Ceyenne prioritized the need for education and activism without losing or speaking over the voice of trans women of color. Her experience with police violence, societal condemnation, and imprisonment made her an excellent speaker and educator about the internalized and overt biases that all people have about sex work and trans women.



Event #4: Justice Panel



Holly Muhammad: Master Probation Officer in Trenton NJ. Has twenty years of experience working with young girls and women in the juvenile justice system.

Adriana Abizadeh: Executive Director for the Latin American Legal Defense and Education fund (LALDEF).

Dr. Leigh Ann Francis: Professor from TCNJ's African American studies and Women and Gender and Sexuality Studies departments.

Sample Questions from Panel:

1. Do you think women involved with the criminal justice system are given a sufficient amount of attention and resources?
2. How have women in the criminal justice system been impacted by the current Trump administration?
3. How does gender, race, sexuality, and class intersect to determine the experiences of certain women within the

criminal justice system?

Panelist Advice:

- Recognize and utilize your privilege- some people have better chances at having their voices heard than others.
- Focus on and challenge both federal and local policies
- Continue educating your communities and raising awareness about these women
- Envision alternatives to policies and actions (ex: what can I do besides calling the police?)
- Don't underestimate power of a single conversation
- Volunteer and give your time
- VOTE

Panel Takeaway:

- Incarcerate women are human and should be recognized and treated as such regardless of legal/criminal status
- Depending on a woman's social identities, she may have an easier or more difficult experience navigating incarceration and reentry
- Women are overwhelmingly under resourced and are not provided with the necessary gender conscious probation and reentry programs needed to combat entry and recidivism

Committees

To ensure efficiency throughout this project, there were seven different committees. Three of the committees were considered “general committees,” each with an essential function. The remaining committees were “event committees,” which were each responsible for one of the main events/activities. Everyone was encouraged to join at least two committees whether it was general or event based. This way we could make sure that each individual was able to share ideas, collaborate, and carry out the various duties assigned. The committees are as followed:

General Committees:

1. Handbook Committee: This committee was responsible for creating the handbook. Specific tasks included assigning various parts of the handbook to people, compiling the information, editing, and finalizing the handbook.

Members included:

- a. Zainab
- b. Brittany
- c. Maggie

2. Fundraising Committee: In order to ensure that the costs associated with the overall project were taken care of, this committee planned different ways we could fundraise. These various ways included having a bake sale by selling Krispy Kreme donuts on campus. Once we raised all that money we decided to donate it to a non-profit organization in New York that assists women in prison.

Members included:

- a. Rosa Alvarez
 - b. Rebeca Jomarron
 - c. Jahnvi Upreti
3. Publicity Committee: This committee was responsible for creating materials that would bring awareness to the Women Behind Bars project and its events. To publicize the events around campus, the committee designed and posted flyers (See Social Media section) in various buildings such as Bliss Hall. In order to further spread awareness about the project, the committee publicized on various social media platforms, specifically Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The committee created our Facebook page titled Women Behind Bars: Breaking the Stigma, where they posted flyers, created events, and shared relevant information in regards to the project. By the end of the project, the Facebook page had INSERT # OF LIKES “likes.” On the Twitter account, @WGSBehindBars, the committee encouraged others to realize the ways in which prison affects women and the pain they suffer. Additionally, through the Twitter account, we were able to share pictures from our events and share the events to on campus students. We also created a website <https://women-behind-bars.weebly.com> that went live and showcased the purpose of the event, images from the various events, flyers, as well as bringing awareness to the lives of women in prison through the use of images and statistics.
- Members included:
- a. Zainab - website
 - b. Madina- Instagram

- c. Angelica- Twitter
- d. Brittany- flyers for each event
- e. Maggie- Facebook

Event Committees:

1. Panel Committee (4/19)

This committee was in charge of putting the Justice Panel together. In doing so, they contacted several speakers they believed could speak to the experiences of women in the criminal justice system. In doing so, they invited a TCNJ professor, a LALDEF representative, and a probation officer to speak about what they have noticed, the injustices that go on, and how it affects the lives of young and old women.

- a. Becky Jomarron
- b. Rosa Alvarez
- c. Jahnvi Upreti
- d. Madina

2. Speaker Committee (4/18)

This committee consisted of one individual who put on the Speakers event. To do so, she contacted the Sex Workers Outreach Project to have someone come in and speak about the realities of sex work. Many people have a misconstrued idea about sex work, hence we found that having someone speak about it would not only bring awareness, but also educate those who are unaware.

- a. Paige Owen

3. Movie Screening Committee (4/16)

This committee was in charge of the Movie Screening event. In doing so, they worked hard to find a documentary that focused on the struggles of women in prison. Through their research they found that the experiences of women in prison are much different than men because a lot of women come in pregnant and it affects their lives. They found a documentary that spoke on the Wee One's program in the prison system of how some women, if they are accepted, are allowed to keep their babies in jail with them while others have to give them up within 24 hours.

- a. Brittany
- b. Angelica
- c. Sarah

4. VR Committee (4/17) (Cupcake sale Rosa & Becky)

The girls part of this committee were in charge of putting the virtual reality simulation together. Additionally, during this time we had a cupcake sale where two other students from the class were in charge of. For this event they had to purchase VR goggles as well as find YouTube videos that had a jail simulation that TCNJ students could see.

Additionally, with the bake sale they decided to order Krispy Kreme donuts to sell. With that money they were able to donate it to a Brooklyn based organization that assists women in jail.

- a. Maggie
- b. Sarah

Project Timeline

- **Monday, April 16th:**
 - Movie Screening
→ 8:30 PM, Lib Auditorium

- **Tuesday, April 17th:**
 - VR Solitary Confinement Simulation
→ 11 AM-2 PM, Alumni Grove
 - Bake Sale
→ 11 AM-2 PM, Alumni Grove
 - SWOP Speaker
→ 8/8:30 PM, Social Science Building

- **Wednesday, April 18th:**
 - Co-Sponsoring Jail Simulation with Bonner

- **Thursday, April 19th:**
 - Justice Panel
→ 6PM, Ed 115

Supplies & Costs

Event	Supplies needed	Cost	Donations
Movie Screening	Snacks (cookies, water, etc.)	\$25	N/A
VR	Goggles	\$70	N/A
Bake Sale	Donuts	N/A	Donated \$100 to Brooklyn Community Bail Fund
Speaker	N/A	\$200	N/A
Justice Panel	Water	N/A	N/A
Solitary Confinement (co-sponsor)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Social Media

Flyers

We decided to create several flyers and social media promotion platforms that we could use to advertise out events. With these flyers we placed them around campus that way TCNJ students and faculty would be aware of which events were happening which day. Additionally, we used them throughout our social media platforms and posted them online, that way we could promote it online and make sure we had an online presence.



WGS 496 & WOMEN IN LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP PRESENT:

WOMEN BEHIND BARS: BREAKING THE STIGMA

Monday, April 16th: *Babies Behind Bars* Movie Screening
8:30 PM, Library Auditorium

Tuesday, April 17th: Solitary Confinement Virtual Reality Simulation
11 AM, Alumni Grove

Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) Behind Bars Lecture
7 PM, SSB 324

Wednesday, April 18th: Locked Up Solitary Confinement Project led by Bonner
9:30 AM, Alumni Grove

Thursday, April 19th: Incarceration Panel
6 PM, Ed 115

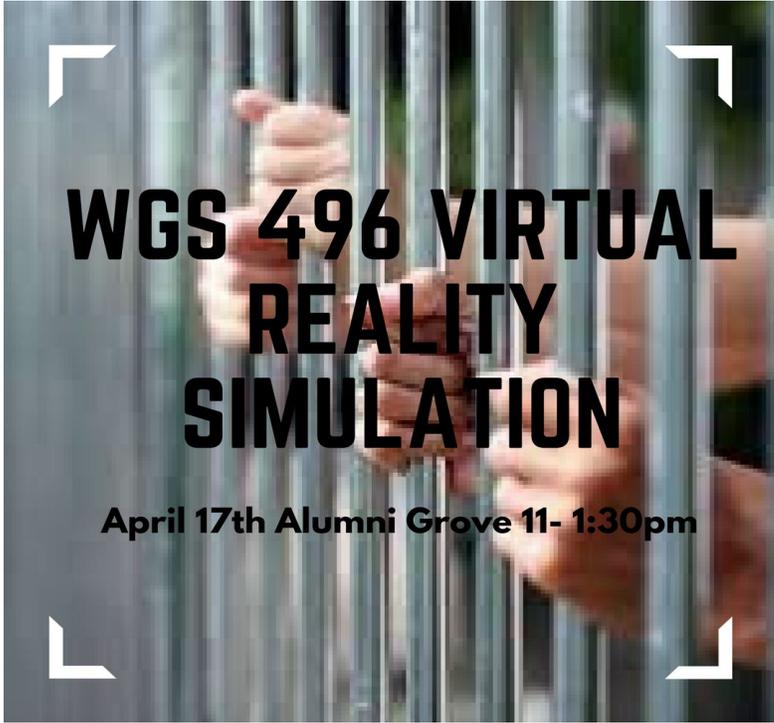
   will@tcnj.edu



Women Behind Bars: Breaking the Stigma
April 17 • 11AM to 1:30PM
Alumni Grove

Krispy Kreme Sale

Proceeds will go to National Bail Out



WGS496 PRESENT'S

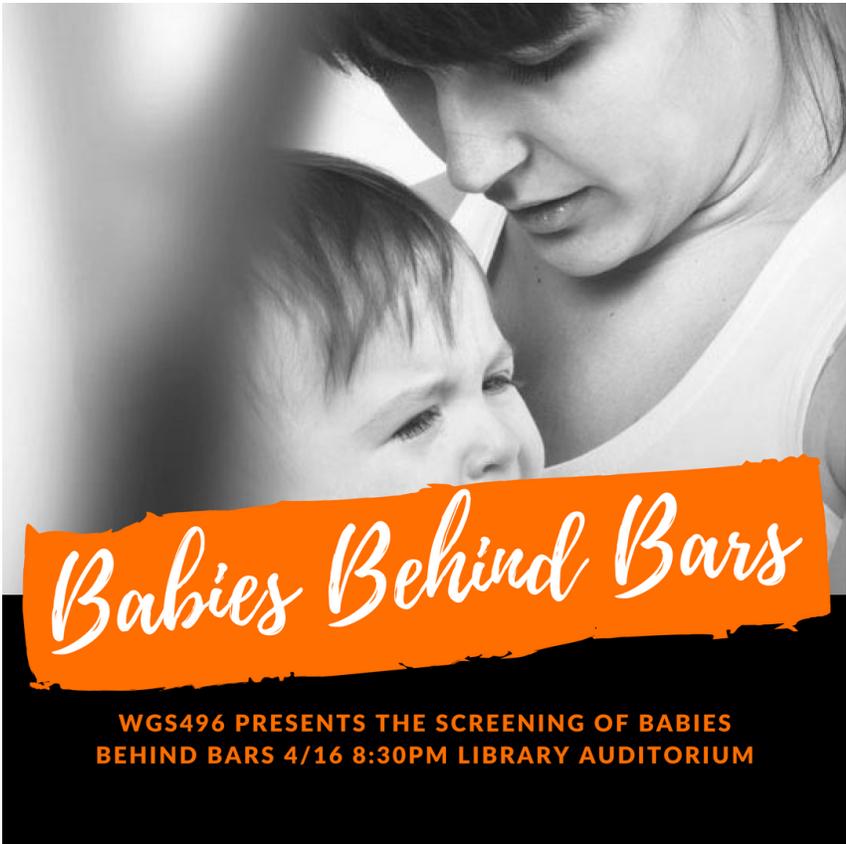
CEYENNE DOROSHOW

APRIL 17TH SSB 324 7PM



**WGS 496
Women Behind
Bars: Breaking
the Stigma
PANEL**

APRIL 19 ED 115 6-9PM



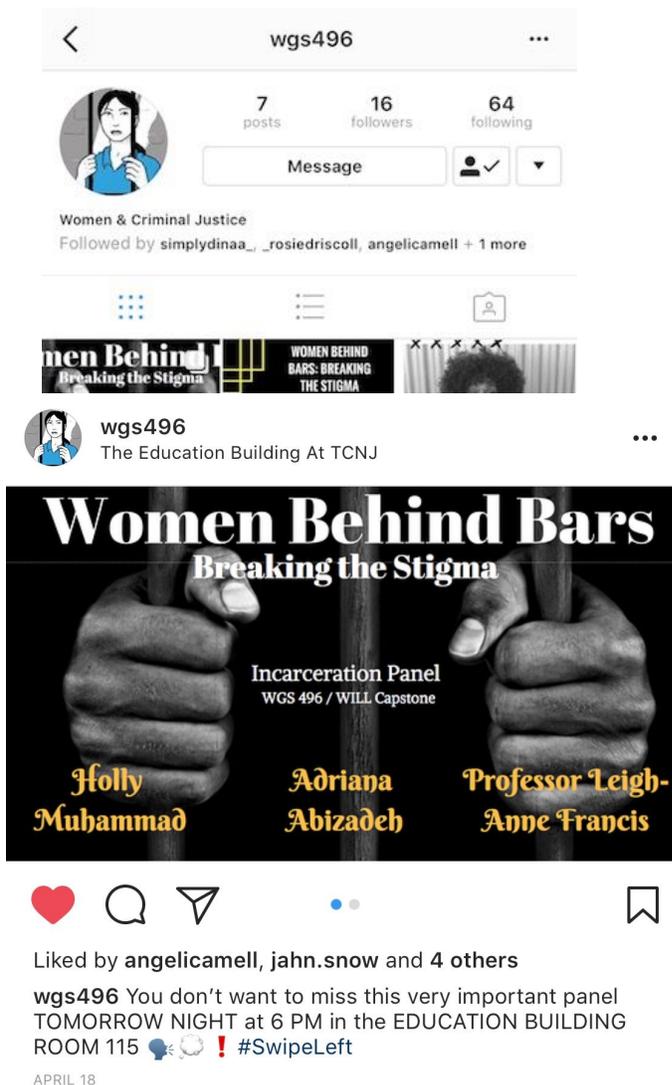
Babies Behind Bars

**WGS496 PRESENTS THE SCREENING OF BABIES
BEHIND BARS 4/16 8:30PM LIBRARY AUDITORIUM**

Social Media Accounts

Instagram:

For Instagram, we made sure to follow several students from the TCNJ student body as well as following students in the class. We also used the Instagram stories during the events to let our followers know what was going on during the event if they were unable to join us. Instagram was a great way to promote the flyers and to let students know when the events were taking place. We also made it a public profile that way anyone that was coming across our page was able to view our information.



Facebook:

171 Reached • 24 Viewed • 10 Responded •



WGS 496 VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATION
April 17th Alumni Grove 11- 1:30pm

EVENT TIPS
Create New Event
Have another Behind Bars: up? Create know about it

English (US) · Español · Português (France) · Deutsch

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APR 17 Solitary Confinement VR Simulation
Public · Hosted by Women Behind Bars: Breaking the Stigma

✓ Going ▾

🕒 Tuesday, April 17 at 11 AM - 1:30 PM
about 1 week ago

📍 Alumni Grove

INSIGHTS SINCE 04/13/2018

275 Reached • 7 in last 7 days

30 Viewed • 1 in last 7 days

13 Responded •



CEYENNE DOROSHOW
Tuesday, April 17th
7 PM
SSB 324

EVENT TIPS
Create New Event
Have another Behind Bars: up? Create a know about it

English (US) · Español · Português (France) · Deutsch

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APR 17 Ceyenne Doroshow Lecture
Public · Hosted by Women Behind Bars: Breaking the Stigma

✓ Going ▾

🕒 Tuesday, April 17 at 7 PM - 9 PM
about 1 week ago

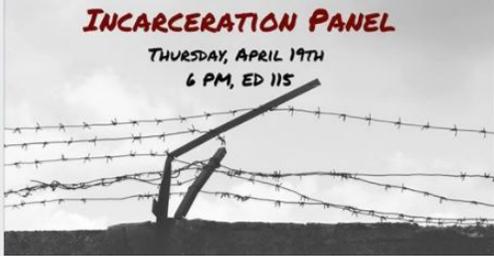
📍 SSB 324

INSIGHTS SINCE 04/13/2018

433 Reached • 57 in last 7 days

58 Viewed • 4 in last 7 days

10 Responded •



INCARCERATION PANEL
THURSDAY, APRIL 19TH
6 PM, ED 115

EVENT TIPS
Create New Event
Have another Behind Bars: up? Create a know about it

English (US) · Español · Português (France) · Deutsch

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APR 19 Incarceration Panel
Public · Hosted by Women Behind Bars: Breaking the Stigma

✓ Going ▾

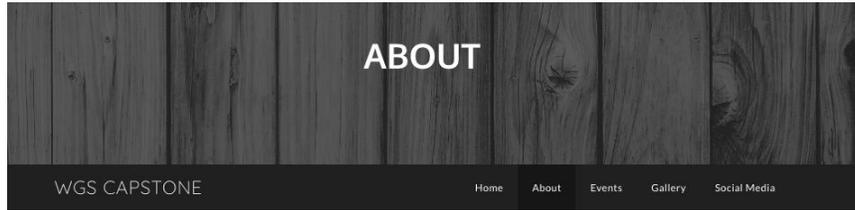
🕒 Thursday, April 19 at 6 PM - 8 PM
about 1 week ago

📍 Ed 115

Our social media presence on Facebook was monumental in gauging and publicizing our week-long events. With both an individual page and numerous events pages to connect students, faculty members, and communities to our capstone class, we successfully worked with cosponsors and professors to spread information and media.

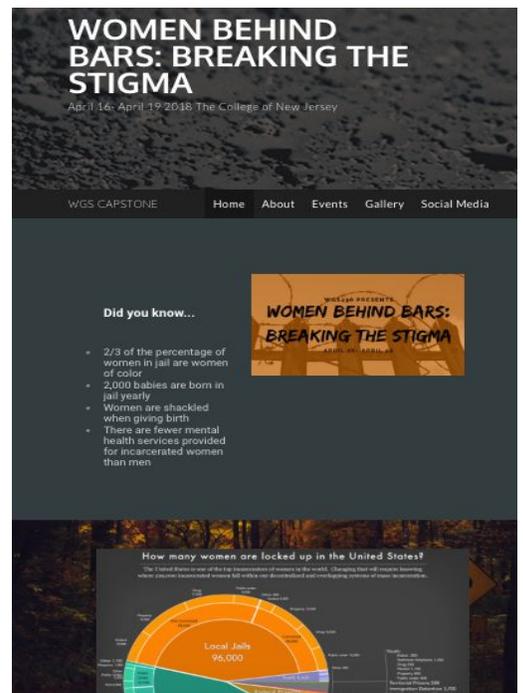
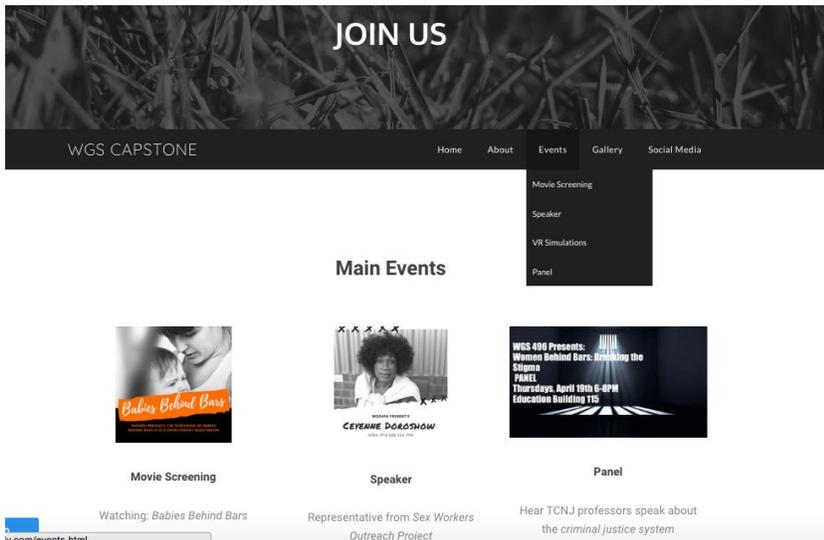
Our events' pages connected us with the TCNJ student community because we posted them in each class year's Facebook group (i.e Class of 2018, Class of 2019, etc.).

Website: the website was just another way to compile all of our information together. We used it more as a way to keep track and put our project together not so much of advertising.



Mission: Through this activism project we hope to increase awareness of the criminal justice system in America. We hope to educate individuals about the realities of women in the American prison industrial complex. Additionally, we hope to specifically bring awareness to the lack of treatment and resources provided to the women in these prisons and bring light to their stories. By having a week of diverse events, we hope to have an open dialogue and educate students about the reality of others.

Target Group: As a group we have decided to keep the target population for our project as the TCNJ student body. With events such as a panel of professors, a speaker, letter writing, VR simulation, and a movie screening, the TCNJ community will have the opportunity to not only participate, but also have access to the information we have compiled. Through our project we also hope to benefit the local Trenton community through our letter writing/pen pal event.



Twitter:

This was another site because it only tweet about but also gave us share other incarcerated felt would be educate others on.



great social media allowed us to not our project events, the opportunity to information about women that we beneficial to

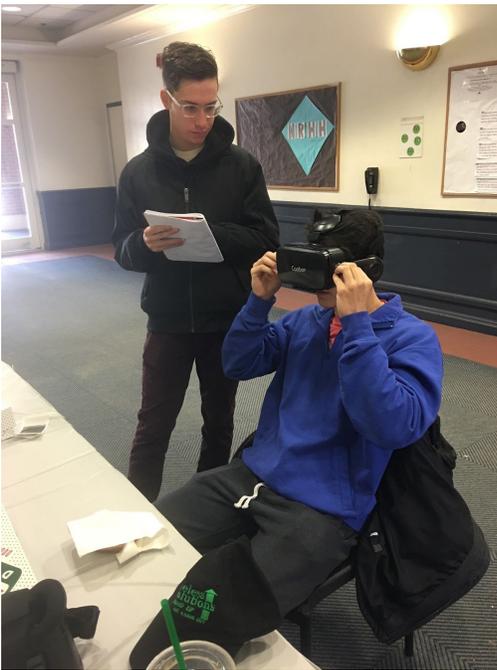


Gallery

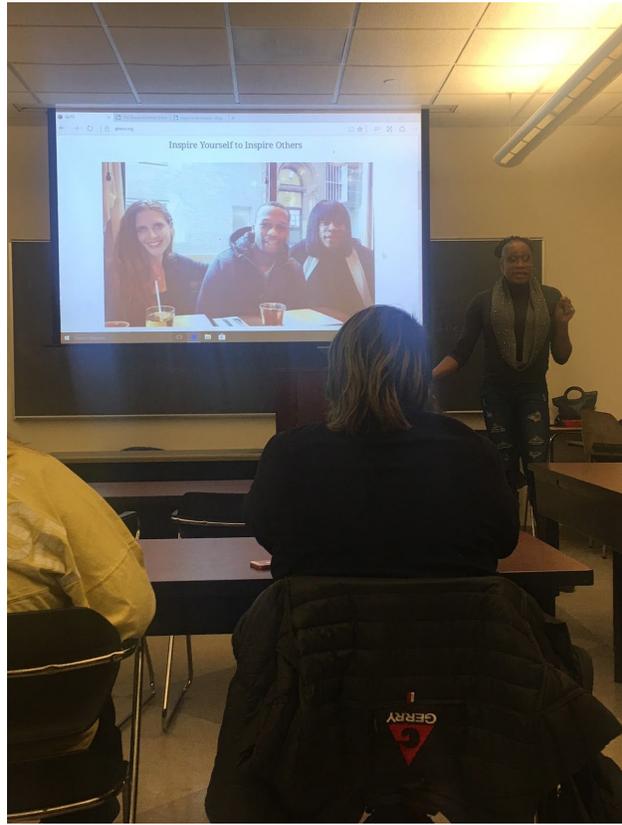
Movie Night:



Virtual Reality + Bake Sale



Speaker



Justice Panel



Celebration of Student Achievement (COSA)



Reflection

For our reflection, each of us from this capstone project reflected on our journey through it. We reflected on what this project taught us, the biggest takeaways from our events, and how this project has changed the way we view the criminal justice system.

“This project made me aware of the injustice that goes on in the prison system. The most shocking was watching the movie and seeing the inhumane ways that pregnant women are treated and forced to give up their children within 24 hours”- Zainab

"Our activism project has educated me on the institutional oppressions that target women in the criminal justice system. I am thankful that it has also forced me to understand that the criminal justice system is intrinsically biased especially when it comes to minority communities."- Rosa

“This project has opened my eyes to a topic that I had very little knowledge on. My favorite event we hosted was bringing in Ceyenne Doroshov to speak on her experience with sex work. I was able to hear a different viewpoint such as the one where sex work is a way of survival for most involved. She really opened my eyes to the extent of harm sex workers go through and I hope that others will be as opened minded as I am when listening to such topics.” - Angelica

“This project further taught me the extent in which the criminal justice system is biased towards marginalized populations” - Madina

“This project truly enhanced my knowledge of the institutional oppressions that drastically affect women and their likelihood of recidivism and/or entering the system altogether. I truly enjoyed engaging in research and working on a great activism project with such intelligent women!” - Becky

“I have learned how an intersectional analysis can serve as a lens for exploring the unique ways by which race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identification shape women’s representations and experiences within the criminal justice system. Racist and classist oppression must be recognized with as much relevance as gender when it comes to understanding incarcerated women’s stories and advocating for reform and change within the criminal justice system.” -Sarah

“I believe that this activism project has exposed the injustices that exist within the incarceration system, especially the ones that are specific to women, to college students who have not been previously exposed to it. Awareness is the first step in reforming the policies and procedures of the incarceration system.” -Brittany

“I think that activism is grounded in acknowledging that all people have unique lived experiences that can’t be classified in just a week-long activism project. After taking part in this project, I know that I want to spend the rest of my life educating myself and listening to different stories and experiences. Our criminal justice system is flawed, and while the work may be difficult and emotional, it is critical.” -Maggie

“Working with a group of passionate and like minded women was amazing and allowed for our success. Something I learned was that sex work can be empowering for women, and is not always a consequence of financial struggle. Additionally, this material can’t just be presented and learned, everyone needs to deconstruct the idea that ‘if you do the crime you do the time’, in order to shed their ignorance and truly understand the intricate oppression forces that reinforce the prison industrial complex.” -Jahnvi

“This project allowed me to explore interests I was passionate about, like sex workers’ rights, while learning more about these topics. I am now able to take the strong feelings I had and put them into words using empirical evidence.” -Paige

Thank You's

The 2018 WGS Capstone Class would like to give a special thank you to our professor: ML Hopps, for her guidance and assistance of Women Behind Bars: Breaking the Stigma. Without your love and support throughout this process, the week would not have been successful!

Another special thank you to all of our speakers and panelists for taking the time out of their day to educate us. Without them our two major events would not have been possible. They taught us about the injustices that are apparent within the criminal justice system and really encouraged us to take action and become more aware. We thank them for their time, effort, and willingness to be a part of this!

One last thank you to all the student organizations that co-sponsored with our week of events. They helped to promote our project and even attended some of them. Thank you for your support!