

Précis of current work

Over the past few years, I have expanded my attention from promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in primarily Black communities,¹ to protecting the intellectual property rights of people in underserved communities (Whitman, 2015), particularly in prisons (Whitman, 2024), to providing greater public support for engaging prison residents in creative work. I work as an unfunded, independent researcher and my work appears in the Creative Prisons Project website.²

In my book, *Prisons of Creativity* (Whitman, 2025), I propose a national carceral creativity policy to support creativity in prison, protect the intellectual property of creators, facilitate making their products available to the public, and provide a way to compensate creators.

Toward this end, I offer a policy brief through the Scholars Strategy Network,³ am drafting model legislation for national and state carceral creativity policy support (to include support for prison libraries as well), and have prepared a protocol for registering copyright from prisons.⁴ In reference to legislation, I am learning about recidivism (and how it is problematic), because of its importance to legislators/policymakers.

I am now exploring how arts-in-corrections (AIC) programs can be offered together with poverty reduction educational programs in order to prepare residents for upward social mobility after community re-entry. To facilitate access to such programs, I am building directories of AIC and poverty reduction programs.⁵

I am working on program and evaluation designs that focus on desistance, resulting in lower rates of recidivism.

Part of my effort includes establishing a federal credit union to serve the unbanked or underbanked justice involved, including currently incarcerated people.⁶ As a former credit union board director, my sense is that this type of financial organization is well suited.

I have another book in progress, essays on what I am discovering through my research on incarceration.

¹ See the Museum for Black Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which I founded in 2011: <https://mbiedc.org/>, cited 15 December 2024..

² See Creative Prisons Program: <https://creativeprisons.org/>, cited 15 December 2024.

³ See Unfetter Creativity in Prisons: <https://scholars.org/contribution/unfetter-creativity-prisons>, cited 15 December 2024.

⁴ See Prison Copyright Registration Protocol: <https://creativeprisons.org/resources/CopyrightProtocol-2024-1.pdf>, cited 15 December 2024.

⁵ See: <https://sites.google.com/view/arts-in-corrections/home> and <https://sites.google.com/view/poverty-reduction-education/home>, cited 15 December 2024.

⁶ See: <https://www.firststepalliance.org/>, cited 15 December 2024.

Here are some research topics and projects on which I would welcome some assistance, if possible:

1. How to develop a scalable model to strengthen and measure desistance through AIC and poverty reduction education programs with evidence-based evaluations.
2. Examining leading textbooks in professional corrections education and engaging textbook authors in a dialogue on the role of AIC, poverty reduction, and libraries in prisons.
3. Compiling examples of agreements or contracts between prisons and AIC and/or poverty reduction education programs.
4. Preparing case studies of prisons that productively engage AIC and poverty reduction education programs.
5. A description of the role of volunteers in providing services to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.
6. How to find funding for a federal credit union for the justice involved.
7. How to use big data research like that by Opportunity Insights to better understand the role of communities in incarceration and desistance.⁷

References

- Whitman, J. R. (2015). An entrepreneurship approach to achieving IP social justice. In L. Mtima (Ed.), *Intellectual property, entrepreneurship and social justice: From swords to ploughshares* (pp. 33-63). Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.
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- Whitman, J. R. (2025). *Prisons of creativity: Artistic innovation during incarceration*. Routledge.

⁷ See: <https://opportunityinsights.org/>, cited 15 December 2024.