



California Association for Bilingual Education

MEMORANDUM

TO: CABE Board

FROM: Francisca Sánchez, Immediate Past President

DATE: November 21, 2015

SUBJECT: **Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline: A Proposal for Partnership with Yerba Buena Performance Center, Bryonn Bain, CABE, and Alameda COE.**

Background

There is overwhelming evidence that current educational policies and practices result in large numbers of Latino and African American students, including English Learners, ending up in the juvenile justice system and eventually in the adult prison system. In fact, significantly larger percentages of these students end up in the justice system than in the university system. This directly impacts our ability to fulfill our CABE vision of biliteracy, **EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**, and 21st century success for all. Our mission speaks to our intent to “implement priorities, initiatives, and services targeted to teachers, administrators, parents, and others designed to dramatically increase California’s capacity to create culturally-diverse and competent 21st century learning environments of high intellectual performance for all English Learners and other language learners and **to graduate all English Learners college, career, and 21st century ready and prepared to live their lives to their full potential.**” We cannot do this if large numbers of our students are effectively channeled into the prison system rather than the university system. This is considered by many the civil rights challenge of our era.

Proposal

We have the opportunity to partner with the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, the Alameda County Office of Education, and internationally-recognized educator, activist, and spoken word poet, Bryonn Bain to sponsor an event on Saturday, March 26, at the end of the CABE 2016 conference, focused on Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline and shining a light on the devastating impact on English Learners and other students of color. In collaboration with Alameda County Office of Education, we have an opportunity to approach a local educational foundation to secure funding to support this event. The event would include a performance of Bryonn Bain’s one-man show, *Lyrics from Lockdown*, followed by an interactive session with Bryonn and possibly Anna Deveare Smith, Harry Belafonte, and Pedro Noguera to explore issues and solutions.

Potential Impact

This is an opportunity for CAFE to take an active and central role in what is being characterized as the civil rights challenge of our era, and to form new partnerships to address this challenge. CAFE 2016 attendees, already in San Francisco, would be able to attend the event and have their presence felt and their voices heard.

Fiscal Costs

It's estimated that the event would cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000 to produce. If CAFE approves pursuing this partnership proposal, we would collaborate with the Alameda County Office of Education to seek foundation funding to cover the costs. As its contribution, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts will provide the facility at no cost or at a reduced cost.

Connection to Strategic Plan

This proposal is aligned directly to Strategic Goal 2.2, Professional Development.

Action Requested

It is requested that the CAFE Board of Directors approve moving forward to explore this potential partnership and to explore securing foundation funding to support the proposed event. It is also requested that the CAFE Board of Directors approve the allocation of up to \$5,000 to support the event if only partial foundation funding is secured AND if the Alameda County Office of Education is able to provide comparable funding.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS AND PARTICIPANTS

The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

The YBCA believes that culture — the collection of art, traditions, values, human experiences, and stories — is what enables us to act with imagination and creativity, to act socially, politically, and with conviction. Culture manifests place. Culture instigates change in the world.

YBCA believes that more and different kinds of people need to be defining culture today and more people need to have access to cultural experiences that are relevant to their lives and their communities. We need new definitions and new experiences that bring people together regardless of their differences in order to make the diverse, inclusive, and equitable culture we need today. We believe that the arts should be on the front line of change and that cultural institutions exist to spur and support big societal movements.

Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to kindling inclusive culture that cultivates empathy, awakens personal and societal transformation, and reaches for a world fueled by inspiration. The need has never been stronger than now; and there is no better place than YBCA to answer the call.

Alameda County Office of Education

The Integrated Learning Department of the ACOE promotes project-based learning to improve student engagement, understanding, and performance across subject areas. We train and support new and veteran teachers to infuse creativity, technology and service learning during in-school and afterschool programming. Our department also collaborates with school districts and community partners to build and sustain positive and healthy school environments.

Integrated Learning Department staff includes experts in arts integration, youth development, student wellness, school culture, service learning, after school programming, alternative paths to teacher credentialing, and innovative technology integration.

Bryonn Bain and Lyrics from Lockdown

In "Lyrics From Lockdown: One Man. One Mic. 40 Characters," acclaimed actor, author and hip-hop artist Bryonn Bain weaves together spoken word, calypso, classical music and the voices of more than 40 characters to tell the story of his own wrongful imprisonment and to explore the issue of widespread racial profiling and mass incarceration in the United States.

Bain, a Nuyorican Grand Slam Poetry Champion, was wrongfully arrested and jailed by the New York Police Department in 1999, when he was in his second year at Harvard Law School. He later sued the police department and won. He has given performances and lectured on hip-hop, spoken word and the prison crisis at more than 100 college campuses and correctional facilities nationwide.

"Storytelling may be the most powerful way to shine light on the epidemic of mass incarceration ravaging families nationwide," said Sandra de Castro Buffington, founding director of the Global Media Center for Social Impact. "Bryonn Bain delivers the truth and potential solutions to this critical public health issue through compelling stories of real people."

Anna Deveare Smith

After tackling such thorny topics as the riots after the Rodney King beating verdict in "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992" and healthcare and mortality in "Let Me Down Easy," Smith has turned her attention to another flashpoint, the "school-to-prison pipeline." This is the subject of "Notes From the Field: Doing Time in Education, The California Chapter."

Smith, accompanied by bassist Marcus Shelby, transforms herself into the experts and witnesses she has consulted, including the late educational philosopher Maxine Greene, Councilman Michael Tubbs from Stockton, Taos Proctor, a Yurok fisherman and former inmate, and Dr. Victor Carrion of Stanford Early Stress Research Program. Together they deepen our understanding of the growing number of young people from largely poor, urban and minority communities who are stuck on what reformers are calling "pathways to prison."

As the term "school-to-prison pipeline" has gained greater currency — even the White House is using it — a belated spotlight has fallen on one of the key contributors to mass incarceration in this country. The debate over its source is fueled with controversy, but it's clear that the underlying situation has been exacerbated by inadequate school resources that make it harder for teachers to compensate for the environmental deficits of their students. In addition, "zero-tolerance" disciplinary policies have been criticized for criminalizing student misbehavior and increasing the suspension rates, leaving youngsters more vulnerable to the streets.

In keeping with her minimalist documentary theater style, patented in "Fires in the Mirror" and "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992," two urban mosaics of racial unrest, Smith impersonates her interview subjects by doing little more than finding the trick of their voices. She lets the verbatim testimonies do the talking and rebutting, but her moral authority and compassionate engagement are palpable throughout.

Smith said that she's trying to "paint a very large canvas" and knows that she can "do better" about including more divergent political views. But she did point out that the spokesperson in "Notes From the Field" for the "personal responsibility" position is a black student from West Baltimore who complains about the way boys from the neighborhood wear their jeans pulled down and hang out on the street corners all day. She wants to provide audience members with multiple entry points "if for no other reason that it gives them a chance to say, 'Well, I'm not interested in economics, but I understand trauma because I'm 55 and I still haven't gotten over the way my father beat me.'"

Harry Belafonte

One of the foremost people fighting to end this injustice is musician, actor and civil rights legend Harry Belafonte, who founded the Gathering for Justice, an intergenerational

coalition with the goal of ending child incarceration. A funder of civil-rights actions in the 1960s, Belafonte has been speaking out on the topic of the School to Prison Pipeline. Characterized as “the frontier” of the contemporary civil-rights movement, the criminalization of young people has been cited by Belafonte and others as one of the most urgent issues facing us today. , “Young black, young brown, young poor, young people with a lack of opportunity,” said Agnew, executive director of the Florida civil-rights group Dream Defenders, “I see the frontier, the defining moment of our generation ... to fight back against any ... set of laws that continue to criminalize our youth, funnel them out of educational systems and situations and into prisons.”

The term “school-to-prison pipeline” refers to a set of circumstances that lead to a large number of suspensions, expulsions, and arrests, especially of black and brown students, for mostly minor offenses in schools across the country. In many schools, punishable offenses include truancy or “honor” or “status” violations, such as being noisy in class or talking back to a teacher.

Pedro Noguera

Dr. Noguera is one of our most insightful and passionate researchers actively working to make schools more responsive to our children and families, and thus far more effective in producing high levels of achievement among Latino, African American, and English Learner children.

In the past decade, academic research has come to show what administrators and teachers already know: Suspension may put troubled kids out of sight, but it doesn’t alter their conduct. “It’s not effective at changing the behavior, and it often contributes to higher dropout rates, higher arrest rates, because they’re not supervised,” says UCLA sociologist Pedro Noguera, a leading advocate of restorative justice. Suspension often marks the beginning of a familiar pattern: Left on their own, kids get arrested, convicted of a crime, and end up incarcerated, feeding what researchers and advocates now call the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Here again, the racial disparities are stark.

Co-editor of *Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline* from the Harvard Educational Review, Noguera and his colleagues bring together the voices of scholars, educators, students, lawyers, funders, and incarcerated individuals. With a wide range of perspectives, these authors illuminate the multiple faces of the pipeline and offer real-world, workable solutions.