

**TEXAS
AFTER
VIOLENCE
PROJECT**

IMPACT REPORT 2024
TEXASAFTERVIOLENCE.ORG

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A Letter from our Executive Director

GABRIEL SOLÍS



Friends,

2024 was yet another successful and pivotal year for TAVP.

We continued our vital mission to document, archive and share stories, records, and artworks of loss, survival, and resistance in the aftermath of violence. We deepened our commitment to centering directly impacted communities in our practices and strategies. We listened, learned, created, and shared new resources, research, and collections.

We grew and improved our After Violence Archive with a focus on infrastructure upgrades and digital security. In addition to our core community programs, such as our Visions After Violence community fellowship program and artist/writer residencies, we launched new projects such as Archival Belonging and Keepsakes to continue our close work with incarcerated people and their loved ones to document, archive, and share their stories and creative works. Our interactive exhibit *Archives is a Sacred Word* featured these stories and works, and encouraged reflection on deeper questions about the urgency of liberatory memory work inside jails, detention centers, and prisons. We continued to lead the Community Archives Collaborative, an emerging global network of groups and organizations dedicated to preserving cultural memory historically excluded from institutional archives. We expanded our Access to Treatment Initiative trainings across the U.S, and joined coalitions to close youth prisons in Texas and to urge President

Biden to commute all federal death sentences. And so much more...

With a growing staff in Hawaii, California, Texas, Utah, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Puerto Rico, TAVP continues to evolve to be responsive to communities doing liberatory memory work to fight against white supremacy, the prison-industrial complex, and the erasure of narratives and cultures of survival and resistance. As the urgency and scope of our work and mission continues to expand - and as the demand for our expertise grows - we understand that we must both deepen our work in Texas and embrace a more expansive, borderless mission in order to meet the moment we are in. 2025 will see horrific violence and cruelty against BIPOC communities, immigrants, women, children, queer and trans people, and their allies. There will be attacks on organizations like TAVP that fight everyday for justice, abolition, healing, and liberation. We are not scared. We will work hard to listen, learn, share, plan, and be prepared.

I say it all the time, I am honored to do this work and to be a part of this extraordinary team.

Thank you, as always, for your support and solidarity.

Gabriel Solís
Executive Director

A Letter from our Associate Director of Programs and Strategy

HANNAH WHELAN



This year came with so many significant changes to our organization and to our work. With these changes came many opportunities to re-envision our practices, to tend to our collaborations, and to continue unlearning and relearning ways to do this work together.

I came to work at TAVP because I was deeply inspired by the many individuals in our community—both new collaborators and long-standing allies—who are dedicated to reshaping how we construct individual and collective memories of state violence. It is an honor to reflect on these collaborations and the new directions they moved us in this year, especially as our expanding team allowed us to be more responsive to our communities—both inside and outside of prisons and jails—who were asking us to tell stories with them.

This year, that work included the production of our first documentary film, made with one of our oral history narrators who told us he wanted his story to “go further.” This film delves into the far-reaching, intergenerational impacts of capital punishment, the need for sites of commemoration, and the profound ways that communities come together in search of answers. We also collaborated with family members, artists, and activists who are involved in creating physical sites of commemoration for themselves and their loved ones. This included holding public vigils to mourn those who have died in Texas prisons, as well as private ceremonies to honor individuals whom the

state has attempted to forget or dismiss.

We worked with determination and intention to dismantle power in sites of captivity and caging by teaching classes on personal archive-building in a Texas jail and then sharing this curriculum publicly. We studied—individually and as an organization—what it means to do this work within the non-profit structures and systems we exist in. We diverted funds, created resources, and stood in solidarity with others doing this work from the ground up.

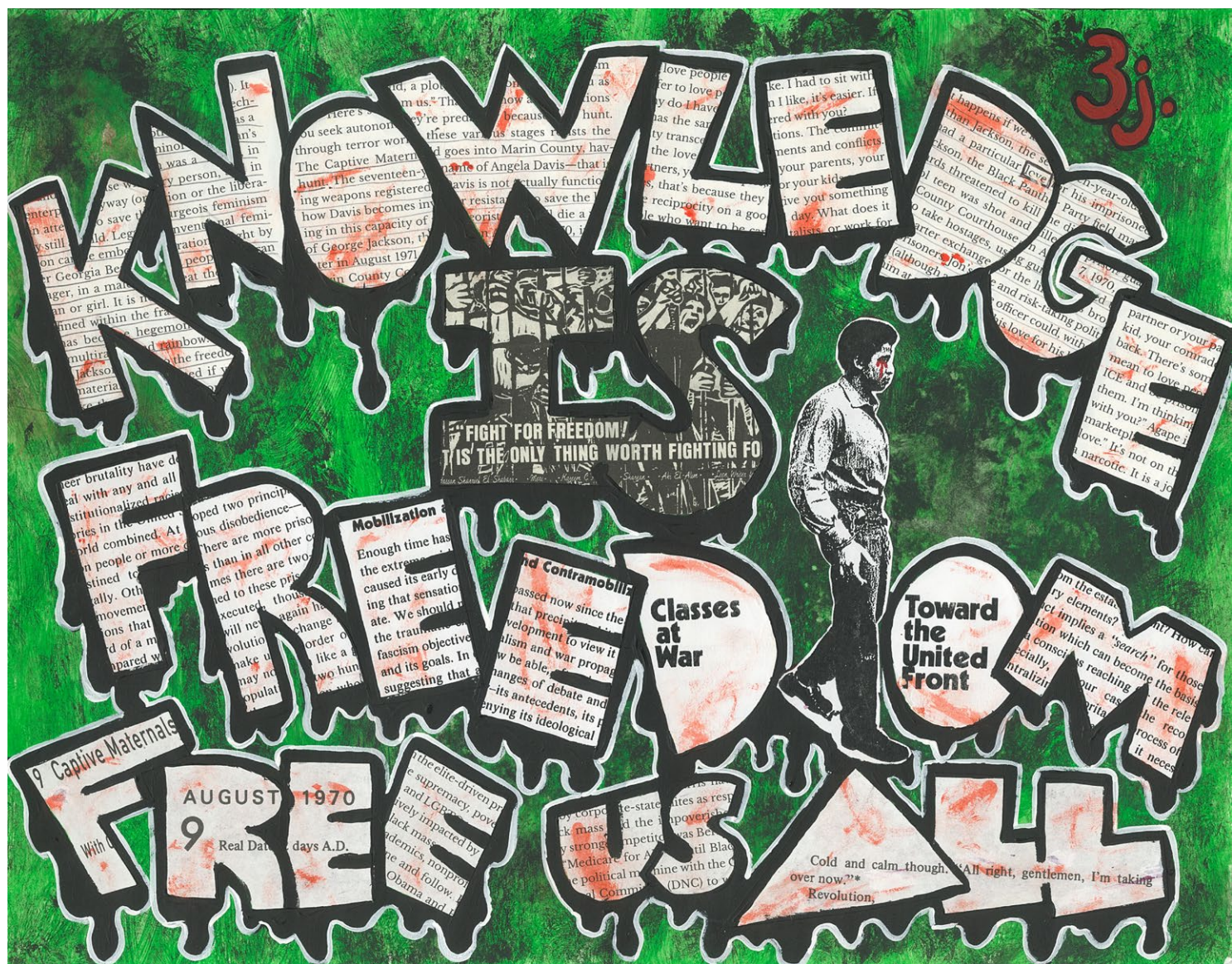
I am proud of what we accomplished in 2024. We will continue to witness the importance of our collaborations with students, educators, activists, and memory workers who also believe that we should honor narratives about state violence shared by those who have been targeted. We know that the coming years will not be easy, but we also know that together we are strengthening our abilities to subvert state violence, to rewrite the narratives used to legitimize violence, and to ensure that stories of survivors go further.

Thank you for all that you do to support us in these efforts.

Hannah Whelan
Associate Director, Programs and Strategy

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

By tying together documentation, archives and community events, Community Programs deepen our relationships with directly impacted community members, narrators, interviewers, and creative practitioners while also refining our understandings of accessibility, sustainability, and care. The iterative and flexible structures that emerge as a result carry over into every corner of our work. 2024 offered another year of collaborating with our Visions After Violence Community Fellows and Artists and Writers in Residence, and new storytelling and archives opportunities with memory workers who are currently incarcerated.



“Knowledge is freedom,” a collage work created by TAVP’s writer in residence James “Rocko” Jones

Visions After Violence Artist and Writer in Residence

For the first time, we hosted an open call to select our 2024 Visions After Violence Artist and Writer in Residence. This new process allowed us to refocus and renew our commitments to accessibility, clarity, and creativity, and opened the door for creatives across the U.S. to work with our After Violence Archive. We were thrilled to select Tiffany Ike and James D. Jones (Rocko) as our 2024 Visions After Violence Artist and Writer in Residence. Tiffany is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist and scholar from Houston, Texas who utilizes spoken word poetry, theater, visual art, and filmmaking, to explore ideas of faith, history, and liberation. Tiffany's work explores the ways television procedurals inform popular ideas of justice and investigates perceptions of crime, morality, and justice and plans to create art that showcases these observations into a new kind of TV Guide, which considers media history in relation to the prison industrial complex and copaganda. James D. Jones (Rocko) is an incarcerated organizer, writer, and artist from Decatur, Illinois. Over the past few years, Rocko has had the privilege of doing affirming, healing work with organizers from across the country who are also committed to shedding light on and sharing light within the



"Where is Revolutionary Love?," a collage work created by TAVP's Writer in Residence James "Rocko" Jones

carceral system and the communities it impacts. He has created many pieces of artwork and written poetry as a part of his residency with TAVP with the hope of gathering them into a collection, tentatively titled *Love Unconditionally*, in the new year.



Visions After Violence Community Fellow Cyrus Gray (center) with Visions After Violence mentors Mandi Zapata (left) and Robert Lilly (right)

Visions After Violence Community Fellowship

The third cohort of our Visions After Violence Community Fellowship program offered another year of meaningful and engaging oral history and archival projects. The 2024 VAV Community Fellows Cyrus Gray, Robert Lilly, and Mandi Jai Zapata dedicated their time, energy, and spirit to creatively and meaningfully undertake projects focused on policing in Hays County, Texas, challenges faced by the Latino/Latina community related to incarceration and immigration, and the full spectrum of experiences with incarceration, including the experiences of those left behind or overlooked. Cyrus, Robert, and Mandi guided the vision for a community event as the culmination of their fellowships. *The In-Between: Visions After Violence* took place in Austin in October and invited the public to explore their own connections, expectations, beliefs, and assumptions about retributive ideas of justice. At this event, Cyrus, Robert, and Mandi spoke of their lived experiences and shared zines, poetry, live music, and a collage connected to oral history interviews they conducted as part of the fellowships. These creative activation pieces serve as a portal into the kaleidoscopic realities of their community memory work projects.



Visions After Violence Community Fellow Mandi Zapata

Narrative Threads: Navigating Stories of Pain and Power

In June, six people who participated in oral history projects with TAVP, Rikers Public Memory Project, and The Visiting Room Project met in New York City to share insights on how lived experience with state violence becomes lived expertise, how to better understand the value of what it means to share your story, and how to collectively challenge narratives of criminality and punishment in our communities. An invitation to listen, to learn, and to weave together narrative threads from New York, Texas, and Louisiana, the panel was moderated by Kandra Clark of Exodus Transitional Communities. TAVP was beautifully represented by narrators Community Advocacy Manager Jennifer Toon and Lovinah Igbani, a longtime collaborator, former VAV Community Fellow, and Community Advisory Council member.

[👉 Link to video](#)

Archives is a Sacred Word

Inspired by six workshops facilitated by TAVP's archives and programs staff at the Travis County Jail in the spring of 2024, Archives is a Sacred Word showcased the artwork and ideas co-created by artist collaborators incarcerated at the jail. The exhibition was designed to invite the public to engage with questions our artist collaborators wrestled with over the course of six workshops: *What is a document? What is memory? What is the value of storytelling?* The exhibition encouraged attendees to go further, to ask ourselves what responsibility we have to care for the memories and stories of incarcerated people

Archives is a Sacred Word centered questions not only around what we hold sacred — but how we can honor it across forced separation of incarceration.



Attendees at TAVP's "Archives is a Sacred Word" exhibition in Austin, Texas



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

Community Programs is excited to continue many cornerstones of TAVP’s work—inviting a new Community Fellow to create their oral history project, collaborating with Tiffany and Rocko, and offering workshops for those currently incarcerated. Alongside both Documentation and Archives and Advocacy, we will build upon our understandings of accessibility, sustainability, and care. But we will also focus on sharing these understandings as well as creative activation projects, like zines, toolkits, and curriculum, with creatives, memory workers, and others doing this work. The goal: To connect and commiserate in ways that tend to these ecosystems on the inside and outside who are devoted to new ideas of justice, storytelling, and memory work that present themselves every day.

PUBLICATIONS



Bad Boyz, Bad Boyz

Visions After Violence Community Fellow Cyrus Gray created a zine, entitled *Bad Boyz, Bad Boyz*, about police brutality and abuse in Hays County. *Bad Boyz, Bad Boyz* also highlights the interconnections between events, people, and policies impacting the lives of Texans.

Centering Abolitionist Principles of Community Care, Safety, and Wellness in Archives

Executive Director Gabriel Solís and Associate Director of Programs and Strategy Hannah Whelan co-authored a chapter in *Archivist Actions, Abolitionist Futures: Reimagining Archival Practice Against Incarceration*. In it, they examine TAVP's efforts to “create a culture in which family and community relationships that have been torn apart by state violence—including incarceration, police brutality and execution—can create their own narratives about loss and survival in the aftermath of violence.”

[📄 Link to zine](#)

ARCHIVIST ACTIONS, ABOLITIONIST FUTURES:

Reimagining Archival Practice
Against Incarceration



Alison Clemens and Jessica Farrell, editors

Curriculum for Memory Workers on the Inside

This curriculum, set to be published in 2025, is based on workshops created in 2024 to offer memory work conversations, archives classes, and documentation dreaming to collaborators on the inside. As an offering for our extended community, this curriculum provides definitions, exercises/activities, and even a script so as to present multiple access points for anyone interested in facilitating their own workshops about memory, storytelling, and more.

Death row families are the hidden victims of the US death penalty

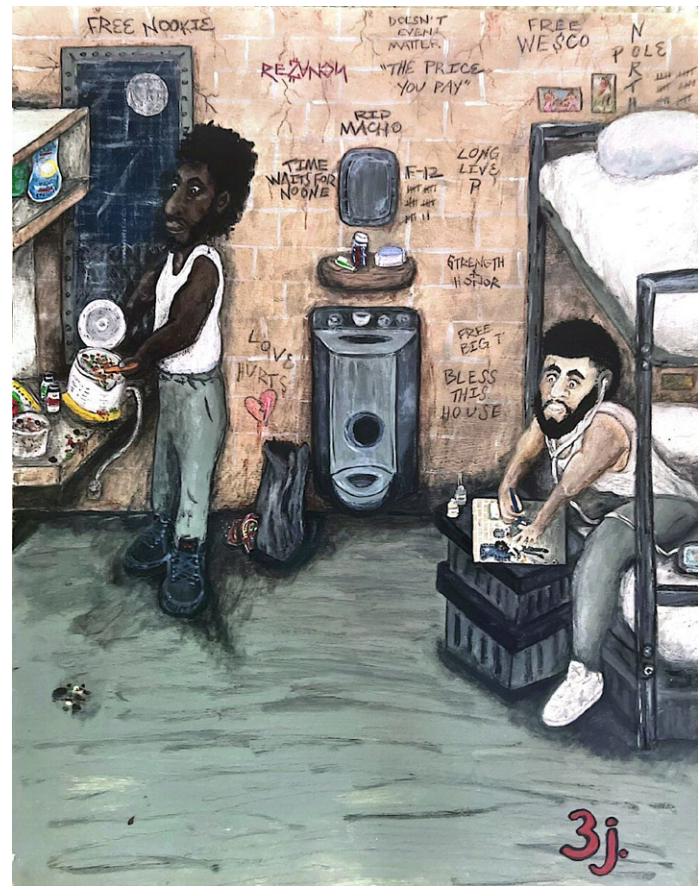
In August 2024, *Prism* reporter Sophia Laurenzi detailed the realities of how loved ones of those on death row deal with disenfranchised grief, shame, and isolation and their need for care and support. Highlighting the work of our Access to Treatment Initiative (ATI), *Prism* spoke with ATI Director Susannah Sheffer, who explained TAVP's goal to connect family members with understanding mental health care providers. "Someone who is a family member of someone already executed has all the experiences and feelings that the family member of someone [currently] on death row has," Susannah said. "And now, they have the traumatic loss. They have the aftermath."

[👉 Link to article](#)

Digital Feminist Care Ethics: Assessing the Web of Archival Relationships

Frequent TAVP collaborator and UCLA researcher Dr. Michelle Caswell published this essay in *Brand-New-Life*, an international art criticism magazine, that reflects on her years of research with TAVP and other community archives.

[👉 Link to essay](#)



"Portrait 2" by TAVP 2024 writer in residence James "Rocko" Jones

The World Has a Gun To My Head, But I've Got the Bullets

A collection of poems by Visions After Violence Community Fellow Robert Tyrone Lilly created while incarcerated, *The World Has a Gun To My Head, But I've Got the Bullets* also includes reflections and thoughts about reentry, parole, and his approach to his Visions After Violence Community Fellowship project.

We Are What Remains

Visions After Violence Community Fellow Mandi Jai Zapata's poem, "We Are What Remains," is a patchwork quilt of her oral history interviews with Latinos and Latinas directly impacted by state violence. Drawing inspiration from each of her eight conversations, the poem represents both the individual and collective experiences she learned about as a Visions After Violence Community Fellow.

'We Bounce Off Each Other's Vibe': The Importance of Symmetrical Intersubjectivity between Interviewer and Narrator

In *Oral History Review*, UCLA researchers Dr. Michelle Caswell and Anna Robinson-Sweet share findings from TAVP's Visions After Violence Community Fellowship program and the value of peer-to-peer interviewing. What they call, "symmetrical intersubjectivity," points to the essential relationship between interviewer and narrator and looks at the ways traditional power dynamics of interviewing are unmade when two trusted individuals can remake an interview space with a foundation of trust, safety, and rapport.

👉 [Link to article](#)

Paying it Forward: The Prefigurative Politics of Record Creation

In *Kula: knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation studies*, UCLA researchers Dr. Michelle Caswell and Anna Robinson-Sweet share additional findings from TAVP's Visions After Violence Community Fellowship program, particularly how community archives creators are motivated by the need for representational belonging, radical empathy for their communities, reciprocal archival imaginaries, and to have their stories used for activism and advocacy.

👉 [Link to article](#)

Polaroids and ephemera collected during TAVP's 2024 Visions After Violence event, *The In-Between*.



DOCUMENTATION & ARCHIVES

Our After Violence Archive (AVA) holds oral history interviews, art, correspondence, and poetry collected over the last 16 years that help shape our individual and collective memory related to state violence, survival, and healing. These interviews and materials offer insight into the ways survivors of state violence reclaim narrative power in a system that marginalizes and silences them. They also offer us critical frameworks for envisioning futures free from punishment and retribution.

Over the past year, we have expanded AVA through collaborations with community storytellers, students, activists, and educators from Texas and beyond. We also continued to refine our documentation and archival practices, and launched new projects that will continue into 2025, including a redesign of AVA, a new oral history collaboration focused on stories about dismantling state power, and continued partnerships with descendants of individuals harmed by state violence to create access protocols for records concerning their loved ones

AVA Descriptive Practice Review

In collaboration with our 2024 archives intern, Aviv Rau, we identified and replaced outdated or misrepresentative language in our collections' metadata. This review acknowledges that our work, along with the language we use to describe it, has evolved over the past eighteen years, and will continue to evolve. We believe that collaborative evaluations of our archive are essential to better care for and share sensitive stories of survival and healing after state violence.

Virtual Belonging

TAVP continues work on the collaborative project “Virtual Belonging: Assessing the Affective Impact of Digital Records Creation in Community Archives,” which involved a partnership between TAVP, the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), and the UCLA Community Archives Lab. This project provided training and funding to

fellows who collected oral histories within their respective communities. In addition, this resulted in the creation of a toolkit written by Dr. Michelle Caswell and Anna Robinson-Sweet that guides readers through constructing and activating peer-to-peer oral history projects.

Archival Belonging

Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Archival Belonging develops tools and resources to create and activate community oral history projects. This project, guided by former Visions After Violence Community Fellows who serve as mentors, focuses on empowering narrators—the individuals sharing their stories. It offers training and workshops on topics such as archival practices, digital preservation, copyright, and community archives. The program also highlights the value of shared experiences within a supportive cohort setting

Storytelling and Collaborative Archiving

As part of our *Keepsakes* project, TAVP staff worked with students at Travis County Correctional Complex to explore archives and storytelling, work that led to the creation of personal archives through artwork and poetry. This program was collaborative and tender; community members and student volunteers from the University of Texas at Austin worked together to create meaningful archival practice imbued with care and respect.

Archival Care Statement

This year we created the first TAVP Archival Care Statement in collaboration with our Community Advisory Council and intern Aviv Rau. The statement prepares archive visitors to engage with the sensitive stories and encourages thoughtful reflection. Our goal is to help users develop intentional relationships with the stories in our archives while maintaining a mindful awareness of their own relationships to storytelling, witnessing, and healing.



From "Archives is a Sacred Word" exhibit in Austin, Texas.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

The Documentation and Archives team is excited to continue our work in the coming year under the leadership of our new Documentation and Archives Director, Jennifer Arévalo Ferretti. In collaboration with our vibrant community of storytellers, educators, students, and advocates, we will continue to prioritize collection care and activation, and are also excited to embark on a redesign of AVA. This redesign aims to better highlight the stories within our archive by improving accessibility, enhancing user experience, refining aesthetics, and implementing more collaborative archival descriptions and access practices, all developed in partnership with survivors of state violence

ADVOCACY

TAVP advocacy is rooted in collective and individual memory work in a way that amplifies the voices of those directly impacted by state violence. We recognize the impact mental health support has in disrupting cycles of trauma. As such, we prioritize mental health access in our advocacy efforts. TAVP firmly believes that ending state violence requires not only documenting narratives, but also community-building and actively pursuing policy changes



TAVP advocates with members of the Finish the Five team

Finish the Five on Youth Advocacy Day

TAVP joined the Finish the Five coalition to close the remaining five youth prisons in Texas and reinvest in community care. System-impacted youth and advocates led powerful discussions about raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction, decriminalizing youth-specific policies, and reducing detention time. Participants also gained hands-on experience with legislative advocacy as they worked to craft testimony, and navigate the lawmaking process. At Youth Advocacy Day in July, TAVP provided storytelling training to help youth amplify their voices to influence policy.

Holiday Card Writing Campaign for Incarcerated Youth

TAVP partnered with Girls Empowerment Network and other incredible organizations to bring volunteers together in solidarity with justice-impacted youth. Reflecting our commitment to dignity and connection, we organized holiday card writing parties for youth in Texas juvenile facilities, collected hygiene products for youth incarcerated at the McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility and donated books to support family connections. These efforts are part of our larger mission to center care, humanity, and community in our advocacy work.



TAVP Community Advisor Julieta Suárez Calderón (far left) and TAVP Advocacy Manager Jennifer Toon (center) with members of the Girls Empowerment Network



Día de Muertos

In November, TAVP participated in a Día De Muertos event to honor lives lost to state violence in Texas. Collective altars created spaces for grief, remembrance, and resilience. TAVP’s altar honored Seth Michael Anderson, who died after being exposed to inhumane prison conditions and a lack of mental health care. This event reminded us of the humanity at the heart of our work and the importance of centering healing in advocacy.

Sanctuary Fridays

Recognizing that advocacy work often comes with emotional and mental fatigue, TAVP launched *Sanctuary Fridays*, a monthly restorative gathering held at our Austin office. These gatherings are part of TAVP's ongoing efforts to expand community healing practices, creating intentional spaces where advocates can recharge, reconnect, and find solace. Through art, music, and open dialogue,

Sanctuary Fridays creates an environment of mutual support and resilience, helping to sustain those engaged in the challenging work of systemic change.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

As Texas enters its 89th legislative session in January, TAVP remains unwavering in its mission to amplify the voices of system-impacted people and drive meaningful, transformative change. For TAVP, this work goes beyond surface-level reforms. True change is about addressing the root causes of systemic injustice, actively dismantling oppressive structures, and, most importantly, reimagining systems to center dignity and healing.

In 2025, we will focus on key priorities, including addressing inhumane prison conditions, abolishing youth prisons, ending the death penalty, and advancing peer support initiatives rooted in community care. These initiatives are guided by the voices, experiences, and leadership of those most directly impacted by these systems of harm.

TAVP will expand its storytelling training series to continue strengthening coalitions and building collective power. By equipping system-impacted people with the tools and skills to share their lived experiences with confidence and clarity, we aim to shift public narratives and ensure that the realities of impacted communities drive the solutions to state violence. These training sessions will empower people to tell their stories ethically and effectively for advocacy.

Additionally, TAVP will deepen its Sanctuary Fridays. By collaborating with community partners, we will enhance these restorative gatherings to ensure they are trauma-informed, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of advocates, organizers and system-impacted people. These gatherings will be vital for sustaining those engaged in the difficult work of advocacy and for making healing the pillar part of our movement.

To further support the well-being and sustainability of our community, we plan to host a mid-year retreat for advocates, organizers, and system-impacted people. This retreat will offer a dedicated opportunity for personal wellness, reflection, and the cultivation of sustainable advocacy practices. By providing a space to recharge and connect mid-year, we reaffirm our commitment to building a resilient and enduring movement

LETTER TO PRESIDENT BIDEN

In December, TAVP shared two letters urging President Biden to commute the death sentences of all 40 people currently on federal death row. The first was a coalition letter we joined as a signatory alongside other activist and advocacy organizations. The second letter – from TAVP Founder Walter C. Long and Executive Director Gabriel Solís – went to President Biden directly. On December 23, President Biden commuted 37 federal death sentences.

Below we share our letter to President Biden.

Dear President Biden,

The Texas After Violence Project is a community oral history organization devoted to recording, archiving, and making available the stories of persons who have been impacted by the death penalty. Our work has been forged in Texas, the United States' most prolific executioner.

Our purpose for writing this letter is to respectfully request that, prior to leaving the office of the Presidency, you reduce the death sentences of all of the remaining federal death row prisoners.

Given the ease with which President Trump closed his prior term of office with a spate of executions aided by a newly compliant Supreme Court and, given his authoritarian tendencies, we expect him to order his Justice Department to assert his Administration's power over life and death early in his new administration. Prisoners' constitutional and human rights will suffer and so will our democracy.

We are mindful of the fragility of the rule of law and the danger that it can be coopted by authoritarianism. We consider law in a democracy to be a foundation for firm agreements and nonviolent resolution of conflicts. Under our system enforcement of the law always entails a measure of state coercion, but it must be a measure agreed to by a free and equal electorate. And, due process clauses notwithstanding, a free society does not codify violence against itself.

The death penalty is fundamentally at odds with democratic law. Entirely unnecessary for public security, America's practice of capital punishment is

an anachronism, a vestige of early modern democracy as it departed from the authoritarian rule of kings. In many parts of the country it arose as an accommodation to white citizen mobs—diverting, legalizing, systematizing, and obscuring their embarrassing violence.

The death penalty today continues to disproportionately punish people of color, the poor, and the disenfranchised, reinforcing deprivations of freedom and equality that our nation—through a couple of foundings (1776 and 1865)—has labored to overcome. When it allowed resumption of capital punishment in the United States in [1976](#), the Supreme Court required sentencing procedures that could exempt individuals suffering from the “diverse frailties of humankind.” Yet our state and federal death rows are full of just such individuals — persons who have suffered extreme poverty and deprivation, mental illnesses, intellectual disabilities, brain injuries, borderline intelligence, and PTSD and attachment disorders arising from chronic childhood abuse. In large part they also are individuals who were vulnerable because of their relative youth and immaturity at the time of the alleged crime.

Albert Camus accurately [called](#) the death penalty child abuse. “Society proceeds sovereignly,” he said, “to eliminate the evil ones from her midst as if she were virtue itself. Like an honorable man killing his wayward son and remarking: ‘Really, I didn't know what to do with him.’” [Studies](#) have shown, in fact, that a very high percentage of people on America's death rows were physically or emotionally abused as children. Government serves as the ultimate abuser in their cases. Notably, this metaphor—executioner state as abuser—is strongly corroborated by our society’s rejection of corporal punishment. Social and legal evolution away from abusive punishment of children in public schools is running slightly ahead of a parallel movement away from abusive punishment of people sentenced to death. [Thirty-three](#) states and the District of Columbia now outlaw physical school punishment, as opposed to only [two](#) when the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. All 23 death penalty abolitionist states have legally or de facto abolished public school corporal punishment. Nine of the twenty-seven death penalty retentionist states also have outlawed corporal punishment, and they account for only six percent of executions since 1976, only three percent if Ohio, an outlier among them with 56 executions, is excluded. This begs the questions: How is legitimized violence in lower levels of society (the school, the family) reflected in our governmental punishment practices at the top? How does the violence of our killing state, that prioritizes punishment over rehabilitation, reinforce familial violence that generates individual

and social instability? Is government responsibly responding to public fear of crime and retributive attitudes by carrying out cruel and violent punishments? Or is it more reasonable to believe, in the light of all evidence, that we have a death penalty and many other inequities in part because we have not finished the task of eliminating child abuse? And that we have child abuse in part because we have not eliminated the death penalty, other cruel forms of punishment, and those other inequities?

We stress that it is not only the prisoner who is punished. The death penalty is anticipatory homicide by the state. A credible death threat, it substantively constitutes mental torture as **defined** by the United Nations Convention Against Torture and U.S. law. Everyone in contact with the tortured prisoner and the system administering that threat is subjected to the emotional pain of the threat and actual execution. Texas filmmaker Rick Linklater succinctly **described** this situation in his 2023 HBO film, *Huntsville*: “The death penalty takes one tragedy, a murder, and expands the pain and suffering to include so many others, all the people involved in the legal and criminal appeals process that get dragged slowly to the death chamber, all the obligatory witnesses, and all the people with various jobs in the system.”

As documented by the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights in a 2016 book, *Death Penalty and the Victims*, capital punishment law plays the role of victimizer in our punishment system. An abusive family is a **trauma-organized system** in which there’s a victimizer who traumatizes victims in a context in which there is no protector or all potential protectors have been neutralized. Same with the **death penalty**. Consider a child’s enclosure in a family or a school that allows him or her to be beaten with no restraint or appeal. Then consider an adult imprisoned (often in solitary confinement for years or decades) and credibly told that he or she will be killed, ultimately without restraint or appeal. Finally, consider all those connected to these situations: on the one hand, family members, school administrators, social workers, and police; and on the other, family members of crime victims and of prisoners, advocates for the state and defense, judges, jurors, wardens, and guards, all living for years within the context of an anticipated state homicide.

The death penalty trial and post-conviction process has been **described** as a “sustained catastrophe during which the danger and threats to life and self extend over a period of time . . . [continuing] day after day, year after year with no discernable end.” This experience is fertile ground for moral injury—an aggravated form of PTSD—on the part of all actors: the persons

involved in adjudication and administration of the death penalty, those trying to prevent the killing from occurring, and bystanders. **Moral injury** occurs when “in traumatic or unusually stressful circumstances, people . . . perpetrate, fail to prevent, or witness events that contradict deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.” Nothing more contradicts most peoples’ deeply held moral beliefs and expectations than premeditated homicide. Indeed, “**killing tends to make the mind sick.**”

President Biden, we are aware you no longer will have an opportunity to end the federal death penalty through encouragement of legislative action. However, by commuting all sentences on federal death row now, you can powerfully send our country in the right direction toward the elimination of cruelty in our criminal legal systems and at all levels of our society, down to neighborhoods and families. As a matter of critical importance, you could take away one of the tools that the incoming Administration wants to use to inspire hatred and instill fear among American citizens that is destructive of democratic rule of law.

From **DLP** by former TAVP artist in residence Mark Menjivar



ACCESS TO TREATMENT

Our Access to Treatment Initiative (ATI) highlights the barriers to mental health treatment facing family members of individuals who have been sentenced to death or executed and aims to work with the mental health community to reduce those barriers.

In 2024, the Access to Treatment Initiative trained 87 mental health professionals – most of whom were entirely new to the topic -- through four offerings of our series, “Working in Clinical Settings with Family Members of Individuals Who Have Been Sentenced to Death or Executed.” To our knowledge, ours is still the only available clinical training that focuses on this specific population, and we were excited to reach licensed professionals and clinical interns from a wide range of mental health settings (including a special run of the series, outside of our usual calendar, specifically for staff at a single large agency). Participants called the training experience “powerful, focused, thought-provoking,” said “it made [them] think more deeply and feel more deeply,” and one even declared, “This has been my favorite training in my career.”

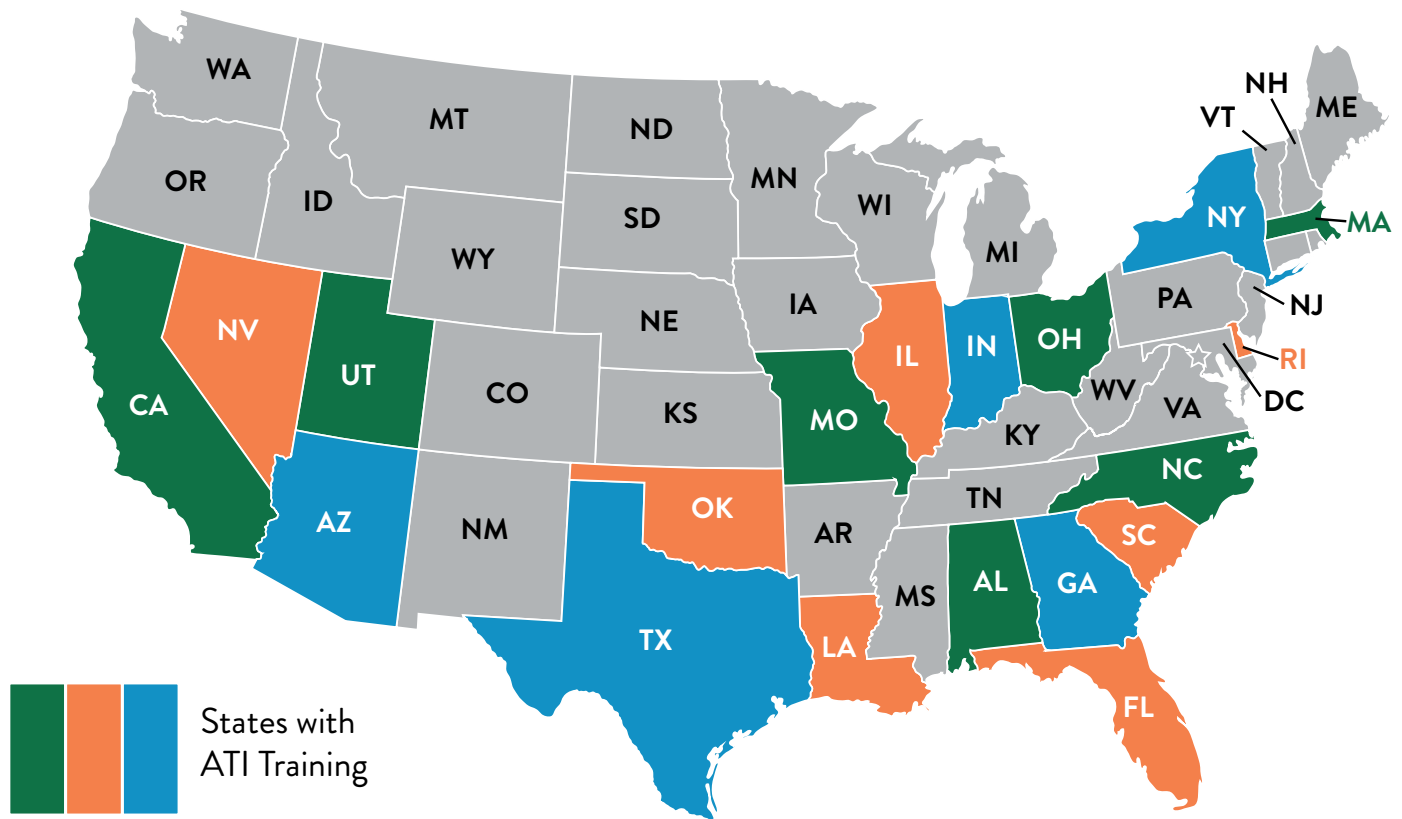
87
mental health
professionals
completed
our full training
series in 2024

We included
participants
who are licensed in
Georgia and North
Carolina for the
first time

Meanwhile, we continued to connect family members of those sentenced to death or executed with therapists who have completed our training, and we created a [short video](#) to let family members know that this support is available. The video includes a testimonial from a family member saying that she found her counselor “open and non-judgmental” and that she is “forever grateful for the opportunity” to receive this kind of support.

2024 also included several one-time presentations that helped us reach all sorts of new audiences – like the webinar we were part of on International Human Rights Day, organized by the International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents, with a co-panelist from Uganda and a moderator from Iran.

STATES WITH ATI TRAINED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

Though we have always been able to welcome participants from states other than Texas to our training series, we are excited to be able to increase outreach to mental health professionals around the US in 2025, and to offer continuing education credit in more and more states. We will work with colleagues in Florida, Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and other states where we hear that there is a need. Because mental health professionals must be licensed in the state where the client is living, it's important to us to train mental health professionals in as many states as possible, so that we can have support available no matter where a family member might live. We will continue to welcome mental health professionals from a wide range of settings (community mental health agencies, private practices, hospitals, schools) to our regular four-session training series. We also look forward to providing one-time presentations and consultations to groups of students, capital defense teams, and others who are interested in learning more about the traumatic impact that the death penalty has on family members of individuals who have been sentenced to death or executed

COMMUNITY ARCHIVES COLLABORATIVE

The Community Archives Collaborative (CAC) is a global peer support and resource-sharing network for memory workers, educators, and activists working to honor long traditions of survivance and liberation. Through mentorship, public programming and knowledge creation initiatives, the CAC advocates for worlds grounded in collective care and remembrance - for our ancestors, ourselves, and our futures.



Community Archives Collaborative steering committee members (left to right) Joan Ilacqua, Hannah Whelan, Hallel Yadin, Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, Imani Altemus-Williams, Andrea Domínguez, and Bacilio Mendez II gathered at the Walter Guzman Retreat Center in Santa Cruz, California.

2024

The Community Archives Collaborative intentionally recruited a seven-person steering committee and was divided into three subcommittees; the skill-sharing subcommittee, the visual identity subcommittee, and the finance subcommittee. In February, the CAC steering committee and TAVP staff gathered in Santa Cruz,

California to collectively deepen the connections that will grow our shared work. The steering committee decided to remain a TAVP program for the next two years as the steering committee lays the groundwork for CAC to transition to an independent organization.

This year, the CAC steering committee created a mission/vision statement, engaged Remedios Consulting to create a strategic plan

that will guide the CAC through 2026, worked with Sierra King as a visual identity consultant on the development of a unique visual identity, and held a series of conversations with previous CAC organizers (Densho, Interference, SAADA) to further inform our work together. In these meetings, steering committee members learned about the early iterations of the CAC, the primary funders of the field, grassroots funding, the challenges of creating membership models for community-based archives since many are under-resourced, and the potential for community-based archives and memory workers to partner on grant opportunities.

In addition, several opportunities have emerged that we did not anticipate. The CAC established a partnership with UC Irvine's Community-Centered Archives Practice: Transforming Education, Archives and Community History (C-CAP TEACH) to co-create key models and templates on reciprocal partnership development with institutions. The CAC built additional connections in the community archives field by attending the Architecting Sustainable Futures @ 5 Conference to build awareness of the CAC and learn more about community archives

needs and the community archives happy hour, which is hosted by Andrew Elder and Carolyn Goldstein of the Mass. Memories Road Show and Roadmap for Participatory Archiving (RoPA) at UMass Boston and Natalie Milbrodt of the City University of New York and Design Dream Lab.

As awareness of the CAC has grown, we received a greater number of inquiries from academic archivists, community memory workers, activists, and academics. To be responsive to these inquiries, each Steering Committee member has had at least one one-on-one conversation with interested parties, sharing more about the CAC, our work, and the field of community archives. These conversations help build trust and credibility for the next phase of CAC's growth, as well as build interest for our upcoming workshops and publication.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

In 2025, the steering committee will develop a comprehensive communications strategy to increase awareness of the CAC's work and mission, and host focus groups of memory workers and community archives. The CAC will also offer quarterly, virtual workshops for community archives and memory workers on a range of issues, including financial, accounting, and operational support for community archives; fundraising, development, and revenue generation; legal resources; and preparing for risks and threats. These virtual community workshops will offer an opportunity for memory workers to co-facilitate discussions to help the CAC gather real-time feedback on community needs and gaps in knowledge that the CAC can help address. The CAC will also develop quarterly publications that highlight projects, current issues, and resources among community archives. CAC Publications may include mini-zines and e-books to provide foundational content to guide new and existing community archives

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and funders for the continued support
of our work and mission*

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