

PPTG is *a grassroots program* developed *by* and *for* incarcerated persons and communities in a *maximum security prison*. It is *a transformative theatre community* which utilizes theater to reconnect incarcerated people to their *full humanity*. Experiences gained through PPTG significantly increase incarcerated peoples' chances of transcending the negative labels and histories of criminality that define them within the greater society.

PPTG LOGO LEGEND

- PPTG letters overlaying kindling represents the foundation for *transformational processes*
- The rising phoenix represents incarcerated persons and community *reborn to their humanity*
- The flames and ashes represent *rehabilitation* and *increased self-awareness*
- Drama masks within the phoenix's wings represent *dramatic arts as a tool for transformational rehabilitation*
- Dark colors (bottom) to light colors (top) represents darkness of *incarceration* and *social isolation* to the lightness of *transformation/freedom/redemption*

Current facilitators:

- **Mariana Amori**, has a Masters in public policy & trained with the Theatre of the Oppressed in Brazil
- **Nick Fesette**, is a theatre-maker & Ph.D. student at Cornell University
- **Norm Johnson**, Ithaca College Professor specializing in movement, scene study, Rasa Boxes & Characterology
- **Bruce Levitt**, theatre Professor & former chair of the Theatre Department at Cornell
- **Judy Levitt**, an Instructor at Ithaca College specializing in Acting & Improvisation
- **Chris Seeds**, is a composer, performer, & theatre-enthusiast
- **Alison Van Dyke**, retired Senior Lecturer from Cornell, specializing in Acting, Voice & Speech

Current members:

David Bendezu	Michael Rhynes
Larry Green	Adam Roberts
Sheldon Johnson	Jim Ryant
Philip Miller	Leroy Taylor
Demetrius Molina	Raymond Van Clief
Nathan Powell	

The artwork for the PPTG logo was done by an anonymous incarcerated artist in Auburn Correctional Facility.

PHOENIX PLAYERS THEATRE GROUP



PPTG Motto:

We are a community of transformation.
Through the power of self-discovery,
we create the opportunity
to know and grow into ourselves.

*The PPTG motto was written by
Michael Shane Hale.*

Auburn, New York

We ... believe in the redemptive flame of rehabilitation. We affirm that we live in the dark ages of prison expansion and the warehousing of souls.

While our legislators and the courts debate how many souls can be stuffed into a single prison cell, we have embarked on a quest to become better human beings and productive citizens.

We seek atonement for catering to our base nature, because we acknowledge that the choice to do right or wrong has always been within our power. We wish to atone for those human beings for whom we've caused so much pain and suffering. We wish to atone to society for not living up to our organic contract by loving and caring for our neighbors. We wish to atone to our families for failing to reach our potential and their dreams for us.

We who are PPTG make a conscious decision to walk into the flames of your pain, suffering suspicions of our motives, disbelief of our goodness, your downright anger, and your grief, in hopes of being recreated in your loving, compassionate, and empathetic images....

We seek not to make every man in this prison a professional dramatist, but to reconnect us to society, our communities, and our families, by learning through drama how to love, what it feels like to be compassionate, to forgive and be forgiven, to reach into the depths of our beings and bring forth our humanity.

We don't come to you as beggars but as men with hopeful hearts, along with the vision of changing this dark, dank world into a kaleidoscope of hope, where the diseases of idleness and worthlessness are banished forever.

From "Flames,"

by Michael Rhynes, PPTG Founding Member

PPTG's Story

The group was started in 2009 by a small group of incarcerated men dedicated to the idea that theatre work, combined with group inner healing work, is a true opportunity for all of us to connect and to become more fully human.

The group blends therapeutic work and theatre work, each of which is an equally important component to PPTG's unique success.

"Every night that I attend PPTG, I always gain something, whether it's an emotional, spiritual feeling or just a laugh, I always learn something new about myself, too. It's a place where I escape the detrimental thoughts running through my head."
- A PPTG member

Original facilitators:

- **Stephen Cole**, a retired theatre professor from Cornell who has worked with many Hollywood actors and has taught at the IM School of Healing Arts
- **Paula Cole**, a theatre professor at Ithaca College who specializes in teaching and practicing rasaboxes
- **Bruce Levitt**, theatre professor and former chair of the Theater Department at Cornell

Founding members:

- David Bendezu
- Kenneth Brown
- Jason Calkins
- Efrain "Dee" Diaz
- Michael Shane Hale
- Michael Rhynes
- Clifton Williamson
- Clifton "Skye" Williamson

