

# CREATIVETIME



The Fortune Society  
BUILDING PEOPLE, NOT PRISONS

## Free Passes to *Bring Down The Walls* Now Available

**100+ Collaborators bring to life a school for radical thought turned nightclub using house music as a lens to examine the prison industrial complex. Featuring Soul Summit, MikeQ's House of Vogue, Brujas and Papi Juice.**



*Bring Down The Walls*. Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Photo: Adam Newport-Berra.

— Open Every Saturday of May 2018 —

**All programs are free, but advance registration is encouraged. Nighttime programs are 21+**

(New York, NY — April 20, 2018) — **Creative Time**, in partnership with **The Fortune Society**, artist **Phil Collins** and over 100 collaborators, is excited to announce the programming for ***Bring Down The Walls***, a three-part public art project which turns an unconventional lens on the prison industrial complex through house music and nightlife. Located at Firehouse, Engine Company 31, a historic, decommissioned fire station in Lower Manhattan, *Bring Down The Walls* will be **free and open to the public** each Saturday in May starting **May 5**.

*Bring Down the Walls* consists of a communal space that functions as a school by day and dance club by night, as well as an album of classic house tracks re-recorded by formerly incarcerated vocalists and electronic musicians.

During daylight hours *Bring Down The Walls* operates as a school for radical thought and political exchange featuring conversations, workshops, and convenings led by people directly impacted by the prison system and those working to change it. The curriculum represents the broad spectrum of perspectives and voices in the struggle for justice, offering new ways to build deeper knowledge around mass incarceration and prison abolition. Throughout the day, discussions exploring the history of house music are threaded into the dialogue. Direct services will also be available for free counseling on civil, legal, and housing issues. Daytime collaborators include **Baz Dreisinger**, author of *Incarceration Nations*, **Black & Pink**, an organization of LGBTQ prisoners, and **Rise and Resist**, a direct action group committed to opposing, disrupting, and defeating any government act that threatens democracy, equality, and civil liberties.

By night, the space will transform into a dance club and performance venue, celebrating both the political and communal aspects of house music, and embracing the history of nightclubs as sanctuaries of shared intimacy, solidarity, and liberation. Nightlife programming is developed in collaboration with [Nowadays](#), a gathering place and party space in Ridgewood. Each week will feature new takeovers by collectives, DJs and performers representing New York City's current, vibrant nightlife community, including Soul Summit, House of Vogue, Brujas, and Papi Juice.

For more information on daytime programs, nighttime lineups and how to register for your free passes, visit [creativetime.org](http://creativetime.org) or call 212-729-3481.

**FOR MEMBERS OF THE PRESS:** If you are interested in attending, please contact Marcella Zimmermann ([marcella@culturalcounsel.com](mailto:marcella@culturalcounsel.com)) to discuss coverage opportunities.

## PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

### Week 1 | Saturday, May 5

#### 2-9PM | School for Radical Thought: Origins of Control

Setting the stage for *Bring Down The Walls* this first week we look at the origins of the prison industrial complex, inviting global, historical and personal perspectives that question how and why our current culture of systemic control and punishment exists. Conversations will introduce the framework for an abolitionist perspective, as well as explore the intrinsic links between the current prison industrial complex and America's history of racial exploitation, economic discrimination, and other oppressive cultural practices.

Participants include Baz Dreisinger, author of *Incarceration Nations*, a global investigation of prison conditions; The Rikers Island Debate Project, dedicated to teaching people at Rikers Island the skills of competitive debate; professor and ethnographer Reuben Miller, who follows recently released individuals on their journeys back home, and many more.

#### 10PM - 6AM | Nightclub: Soul Summit

*Bring Down The Walls* nightclub opens with The Soul Summit Music DJs. Soul Summit Music is a New York institution, known for "throwing one of the best house music jams in the city, with their free summer dance parties in Fort Greene Park. The Soul Summit Music Festival combines dance, food, and family, and has developed a loyal following over the years, making it one of the most anticipated events of the summer. The festival highlights artists from various backgrounds including DJs, dancers, filmmakers and photographers. Soul Summit Music will bring their high-energy soulful house experience to this rare indoor occasion.

### Week 2 | Saturday, May 12

#### 2-9PM | School for Radical Thought: The Carceral Continuum

The second Saturday of *Bring Down The Walls* examines the expansion of punitive and carceral practices and the ways they have been codified to extend beyond prison walls, including immigration policy,

surveillance, drug laws, and bail requirements. We introduce some of the campaigns and organizations focused on dismantling these practices.

Participants include Derrick Cain of the Brooklyn Bail Fund, an organization that pays bail for New Yorkers who can't afford it; Abou Farman of the New School Sanctuary Coalition, a collective of undocumented and international students, allied students, faculty and staff; and House Lives Matter, an education forum focused on the House Ballroom Community and intersectional issues that impact it.

#### **10PM - 6AM | Nightclub: House of Vogue (+ MikeQ)**

House of Vogue is a monthly ball in Brooklyn dedicated to underground ballroom culture and the vogue-house communities of New York City, hosted by one of the leading figures of the scene, DJ and producer MikeQ. The second Saturday of *Bring Down The Walls* is a House of Vogue takeover, featuring a ballroom competition with cash prizes, MCs, special guest performances, plus music courtesy of MikeQ and members of his label, Qween Beat Records.

#### **Week 3 | Saturday, May 19**

##### **2-9PM | School for Radical Thought: Social Violence**

Week 3 at *Bring Down The Walls* considers the radial impact of social violence and how vulnerable communities are impacted by the justice system. We will unpack the ways in which the effects of the prison industrial complex extends into our everyday lives, and particularly brings pervasive harm to women, people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, and people living with mental health challenges.

Participants include Survived and Punished, working to end the criminalization of domestic and sexual violence survivors; Five Mualimm-Ak, a human rights and mental health advocate who spent five years in solitary confinement; Critical Resistance, building an international movement to end the prison industrial complex and challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe; and Black & Pink, an organization of LGBTQ prisoners and "free world" allies who support each other.

#### **10PM - 6AM | Nightclub: Brujas**

Brujas, "a radical collective of activists, skaters, musicians, healers, and hustlers" convenes a night of local hosts, performers and DJs for the third Saturday of *Bring Down The Walls*. Brujas is an urban, free-form, creative and autonomous organization of born-and-bred New Yorkers that seeks to build radical political coalition through youth culture; expressing community through skateboarding, art and political organizing. The night's lineup is inspired by their new spring collection *Seize Bellevue* that calls for a compassionate and radical reconception of one of our more insidious carceral institutions – the pharmaceutical industry and mental health crisis system.

#### **Week 4 | Saturday, May 26**

##### **2-9PM | School for Radical Thought: Radical Futures**

On our final weekend, the conversation at *Bring Down The Walls* looks toward the future, inviting participants to boldly imagine a society without prisons. We will propose visionary ways of evolving beyond punitive justice, and consider the most forward thinking approaches to achieving real change.

Participants include the Bronx Freedom Fund, a revolving fund to pay bail for people accused of misdemeanors; Common Justice, fostering racial equity and identifying new solutions beyond the spectrum of incarceration; and Rise and Resist, a direct action group committed to opposing, disrupting, and defeating any government act that threatens democracy, equality, and civil liberties.

#### **10PM - 6AM | Nightclub: Papi Juice**

Closing out *Bring Down The Walls* with an all night bash is Papi Juice, an art collective composed of DJ/producers Oscar Nñ and Adam Rhodes, and illustrator Mohammed Fayaz, that aims to celebrate the lives of queer and trans people of color. Structured around curated events, Papi Juice lives at the intersection of art, music, and nightlife. For the past five years, the collective has been changing the face

of nightlife in New York City and beyond with intentional platforms for artists of color including panels, artist residencies, performances, and, of course, fabled DJ sets and legendary parties.

### **LEGAL ACTION CENTER**

In addition to our daytime programming, Legal Action Center (LAC) will be present to provide free counseling on civil, legal, and housing issues for *Bring Down The Walls* attendees, during the hours below. LAC is the only non-profit law and policy organization in the United States whose sole mission is to fight discrimination against people with criminal records, histories of addiction, or HIV/AIDS, and to advocate for sound public policies in these areas.

LAC will be on-site May 5 from 6-9PM, May 12 from 3-6PM, and May 19 from 3-6PM.

The Legal Action Center will be providing help with a variety of issues, such as:

- How to apply for Certificates of Relief or Good Conduct;
- Whether to obtain a copy of your NYS RAP Sheet and how to do so;
- Information about one's rights when seeking a job or license with a criminal record;
- Information about NYC's Fair Chance Act – the "ban the box" law;
- Initial screenings for sealing eligibility; and
- Other reentry services.

LAC can also help with questions relating to discrimination based on HIV or drug/alcohol addiction, privacy rights relating to HIV or substance use treatment records, and access to insurance coverage for addiction treatment.

### **ABOUT THE PROJECT**

*Bring Down The Walls* pulls into focus the dichotomy between the sense of freedom, unity and joy ingrained in house music, and the punitive control and violence—physical, mental and emotional—perpetuated by the U.S. prison system. Set up as a deeply collaborative framework defined by the impulse to meet, listen and cultivate more comprehensive knowledge about mass incarceration, the project is inspired by the ethos of early house music venues, which often functioned as hubs of political engagement as much as spaces of personal liberation and collective transcendence.

At the heart of *Bring Down The Walls* is the pairing of knowledge built from research with that which has been gained by experience, including a wide range of views and a focus on prison abolition. Daytime programs will be primarily led by people who have experienced the system and those working to change it, drawing powerful new connections on the issues and campaigns around decarceration, immigrant rights, ending cash bail, closing jails and prisons, and improving reentry. By night, this communal space will also convene DJs, musicians, performers, and other influential contributors to New York City's current club scene, acknowledging the history of nightlife as a haven of abandon and temporary relief in which divisions of race, class, gender, and sexuality are often crossed in unexpected ways.

The unusual connection between house music and incarceration comes from years in which Collins worked with men serving long-term sentences at Sing Sing in New York. Structured around the formation of an unofficial band, sessions repeatedly turned to a canon of dance floor anthems, which were a formative influence for both the band members and Phil. Deepening this personal connection is the historical context, as in 1980s the exponential rise of mass incarceration in the U.S. coincided with the emergence of a new dance sound coming out of the communities disproportionately targeted by regressive criminal justice policies. This experimental electronic music soon took over downtown Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Manchester in England, where Collins grew up, as well as, in quick succession, the rest of the world.

In the artist's words, "All social interactions are inherently political. Historically, house culture has often been a mode of resistance, opening up new understandings of community and solidarity. Its radical proposition of simply being together offers another way of engaging the conversation around the prison

industrial complex, which sentences discriminately and disproportionately, but impacts us all. Even after their release, people remain confined and punished by invisible barriers — physical, emotional, economic. The very real human cost of systemic regressive policies comes sharply into focus through sharing time and space, and in direct exchange with one another.”

### **ABOUT CREATIVE TIME**

Creative Time, the New York based public arts non-profit, is committed to working with artists on the dialogues, debates, and dreams of our time. Creative Time presents the most innovative art in the public realm, providing new platforms to amplify artists’ voices, including the Creative Time Summit, an international conference convening at the intersection of art and social justice. Since 1974, Creative Time has produced over 350 groundbreaking public art projects that ignite the imagination, explore ideas that shape society, and engage millions of people around the globe. Since its inception, the non-profit organization has been at the forefront of socially engaged public art, seeking to convert the power of artists’ ideas into works that inspire and challenge the public. Creative Time projects stimulate dialogue on timely issues, and initiate a dynamic experience between artists, sites, and audiences.

### **ABOUT PHIL COLLINS**

Phil Collins' films, installations and live events explore the intersections of art, politics and popular culture. Often working with disregarded or marginalized communities, Collins looks past conventional media portrayals, aiming instead for a more nuanced and empathic vantage point. Since the 1990s he has collaborated with, amongst others, disco-dancing Palestinians; Kosovan Albanian refugees; the youth of Baghdad; teachers of Marxism-Leninism from the former German Democratic Republic; a leading anime studio in Tokyo; anti-fascist skinheads in Malaysia; a homeless centre in Cologne; and prisoners, pensioners, school kids, and a symphonic orchestra in Glasgow. Reflecting critical consciousness, immediacy and commitment to myriad forms of experience, Collins' projects question the cut-and-dried meanings of social situations and definitions of language, economic status and locality. Solo exhibitions of his work have been presented around the world, including Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH (2017); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (both 2016); Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (2015); Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2013); and British Film Institute, London (2011). Collins is Professor of Video Art and Performance at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, Germany.

### **ABOUT FORTUNE SOCIETY**

Founded in 1967, The Fortune Society has advocated on criminal justice issues for five decades and is nationally recognized for developing model programs that help people with criminal justice histories to be assets to their communities. Fortune offers a holistic and integrated “one-stop-shopping” model of service provision. Among the services offered are discharge planning, licensed outpatient substance abuse and mental health treatment, alternatives to incarceration, HIV/AIDS services, career development and job retention, education, family services, drop in services and supportive housing as well as lifetime access to aftercare.

### **CONNECT**

Instagram: @CreativeTimeNYC

Twitter: @CreativeTime

Website: [www.creativetime.org](http://www.creativetime.org)

#BringDownTheWalls

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