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CREATIVETIME



The Fortune Society
BUILDING PEOPLE, NOT PRISONS

Creative Time and The Fortune Society Announce
Bring Down The Walls

***Public art project turns unconventional lens on the criminal justice system through house music.
To feature a civic space, album and films with artist Phil Collins and over 100 collaborators.***



Bring Down The Walls will be located at Firehouse, Engine Company 31 in Lower Manhattan. Photo by John Custodio.

(New York, NY — March 2, 2018) — **Creative Time**, in partnership with **The Fortune Society**, is proud to announce ***Bring Down The Walls***, a three-part public art project with artist **Phil Collins** in collaboration with over 100 individuals and organizations located at Firehouse, Engine Company 31, a historic, decommissioned fire station. *Bring Down The Walls* will be **free and open to the public** each weekend in May.

Born out of years of research — including Collins' work with men incarcerated at Sing Sing Correctional Facility — *Bring Down The Walls* is a profoundly collaborative project featuring contributions from individuals who have experienced incarceration, criminal justice reform experts, community activists, and

educators. Inspired by the ethos of early house music venues, in which nightclubs often functioned as hubs of political engagement as much as spaces for personal liberation and collective transcendence, *Bring Down The Walls* convenes musicians, performers, DJs, and other influential contributors to New York City's current club scene and the historic house era.

The project consists of a venue for daytime programming and a nightclub, as well as an album and a series of short films. More information below.

FROM THE PRESENTERS

From Creative Time Acting Director Alyssa Nitchun:

"Creative Time has been on a journey with Phil, an artist we deeply respect and admire, to pursue questions of justice and freedom around incarceration. Following this vision has been a time of intense learning, listening, and transformation for everyone involved. We are honored to join Phil and all of our collaborators in sharing *Bring Down The Walls*, coming together in fresh and unexpected ways to address one of the most intractable social and political issues of our time."

From artist Phil Collins:

"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 criminal justice system, which sentences discriminately and disproportionately, but impacts us all. Even after their release, people remain confined and punished by often 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."

From Stanley Richards, Executive Vice President of The Fortune Society:

"*Bring Down the Walls* is incredibly important to me not only as a passionate advocate, but personally, as a formerly incarcerated man of color. Its unique focus on liberation and freedom will give voice to those who have been silenced by the justice system and allow their special talents to shine. We are proud to partner with Creative Time on a project that will liberate us as artists, celebrate our humanity, and unite us as advocates."

SCHOOL BY DAY, DANCE PARTY BY NIGHT

Surrounded by the institutional pillars of the criminal justice system, including the Manhattan Detention Complex and New York City's courthouses, *Bring Down The Walls* will occupy Firehouse, Engine Company 31, a historic, decommissioned fire station in Lower Manhattan run by Downtown Community Television Center.

By day, the space will offer new ways to engage with and learn about issues of mass incarceration and house music culture, including workshops, discussions, and classes. In addition to talks with advocates working in the field of criminal justice reform, workshops will be led by individuals who have experienced incarceration, upending conventional hierarchies around who is the expert and who is the educator.

Programs will be held on topics ranging from policy reform, life on the inside, and the challenges of parole to broader subjects like love, relationships, and freedom. Classes will also explore house music, dance, ballroom culture, music making, and DJing. Lastly, organizations will offer a variety of free legal services.

By night, the space will transform and function as a dance club and performance venue, celebrating house music as a communal experience and embracing the history of nightclubs as sanctuaries of togetherness and liberation. Nighttime programming will feature both live performances by the vocalists and musicians behind the album, as well as takeovers by individuals and collectives that represent New York City's current, vibrant nightlife community.

A full schedule and list of participants is forthcoming.

THE ALBUM

Released in conjunction with the project, the album pairs vocalists who have experienced incarceration with cutting-edge electronic musicians to produce covers of the most enduring house hits.



“Being formerly incarcerated, myself, I am keenly aware of the therapeutic power of music and knew this project would be an opportunity for me to utilize my talent in a constructive way. I believe the people closest to a problem are best positioned to solve it,” said ***Bring Down The Walls*** vocalist **Cameron Holmes**.

Featuring classic house tracks from the mid-to late-80s, such as “Promised Land,” “Your Love,” and the project’s namesake, “Bring Down The Walls,” the album reimagines songs that are as much political anthems as odes to desire, connection, yearning, and physical action.

“When I first heard about the project, I was excited because I am a *big* fan of house. But while I love music, I never imagined I’d hear my voice on an album,” said ***Bring Down The Walls*** vocalist **Amanda Cruz**. “This opportunity has helped me overcome my fear of being judged on who I am or how I sound. I plan to take this new confidence everywhere I go.”

Image: Musician Ian Isiah with vocalist Amanda Cruz during a project recording session in NYC.
Photo by Ana Kraš.

THE FILM

The newly recorded tracks will be accompanied by original short films, developed with the album’s vocalists and produced as idiosyncratic music videos. Filmed in locations around New York City, these inventive and intimate portraits of the project’s protagonists highlight the vocabularies of self-representation and creativity that exist in communities disproportionately affected by the criminal justice system.

ADVISORY BOARD

To advise and inform *Bring Down The Walls*, and ensure the project is executed with integrity and thoughtfulness every step of the way, Creative Time assembled an advisory board of experts, ranging from formerly incarcerated individuals to house music historians to experts in criminal justice reform.

Pedro Collazo — Case Manager for We Care Program at FEDCAP; Working to create opportunities for people with barriers to economic well-being, Collazo is also an author, musician, and advisor for Carnegie Hall's Musical Connections program, and was a key member of the band formed with Collins at Sing Sing.

Mary Crowley — Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs, Vera Institute of Justice; Crowley leads Vera's strategic communications efforts, particularly around its core priorities of reducing the use of jails, improving conditions for people who are incarcerated, and securing equal justice in an increasingly diverse America.

Rob DeLeon — Associate Vice President of Programs, The Fortune Society; With over 13 years of experience working with court-affected youth, DeLeon now manages six of The Fortune Society's leading re-entry service programs. His work is deeply informed by his 10 years spent in prison from the age of 17, when he was arrested and charged as an adult.

Dr. Baz Dreisinger — Professor and Founding Academic Director, Prison-to-College Pipeline, John Jay College of Criminal Justice; A Fulbright scholar and author of *Incarceration Nations: A Journey to Justice in Prisons Around the World*, Dr. Dreisinger broadly works to increase access to higher education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Aseanté Renee — Communications and Community Engagement Manager, Common Justice; Hylick is a communications strategist working on alternatives to incarceration and victim services programs, with more than 12 years of experience in facilitation, curriculum design, and culturally inclusive community engagement work.

Reuben Jonathan Miller, PhD — Assistant Professor, University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration; Miller's research examines life at the intersections of race, poverty, crime control, and social welfare policy. His forthcoming book, *Halfway Home*, is based on 15 years of research and practice with currently and formerly incarcerated men and women, and their families, partners, and friends.

Dexter Nurse — Musician; Refoundry Member; MSW Candidate, Columbia University School of Social Work; Nurse is a graduate student, trumpet player, composer, and music instructor, and was a key member of the band formed with Collins at Sing Sing.

Jill Poklemba — Vice President of Development and Communications, The Fortune Society; Poklemba has more than 10 years of experience working in the human services field, with a particular emphasis on public policy analysis and advocacy, fund development, and communications.

Dr. Micah Salkind — Adjunct Assistant Professor of Humanities of American Studies, Brown University; A DJ, sound designer, and cultural historian interested in house music, queer histories, and Afro-diasporic cultural production, Dr. Salkind's forthcoming book manuscript is *Do You Remember House? Mediation, Memory, and Crossover Community-Making in Chicago House Music Culture*.

Also, as Creative Time's Artistic Director and Chief Curator from 2007-2017, **Nato Thompson** has led curatorial direction for *Bring Down The Walls*, stewarding the project from its inception and playing a crucial role in defining the content and form of *Bring Down The Walls* throughout the course of his seven-year involvement in the project. Thompson is currently the Artistic Director of Philadelphia Contemporary, where he will lead the institution's exhibitions and programming and help to found its first permanent building.

PROJECT SUPPORT

Project support for *Bring Down The Walls* has been generously provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, and The Malka Fund of the Jewish Communal Fund.

In-kind support is generously provided by Pioneer Works, Blast Off Productions, and Alpha Omega Theatrical Dance Studio.

Major Creative Time programming support for 2018 has been provided by the Ford Foundation, The Lambert Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, the New York State Council on the Arts, and Athena Art Finance.

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 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.

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.

CONNECT

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#BringDownTheWalls

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