

Jade Kastel
Community Engagement Report
LIS5937 Human Rights and Libraries

At the beginning of the semester, I chose the Maroon Poetry Festival or TransSOCIAL, Inc. as two options for my F2F community engagement report and discussion. Reaching out to TransSOCIAL, they suggested I attend TransCon at Barry University, a day-long free conference for the trans & non-binary communities, including resources for family members and allies. TransSOCIAL recommended this event as a way to engage with many leaders in the trans & non-binary communities and to learn of relevant resources and issues facing the communities.

For each workshop I attended at TransCon, I listed the workshop's description as it appeared in the TransCon program and included my reflection, notes, what I learned, and my engagement in the workshop.

TransCon
March 10, 2019
Barry University, North Miami, FL

Spanish Interpretation Available

ASL Interpretation Available, limited # of interpreters

--I included the interpreter services to highlight the accessibility this conference offered to participants.

Trans Prisoner Rights and Criminal Justice Reform for the Trans Community
Daniel Tilley, Esq. ACLU
1:40pm-3:00pm

This workshop will discuss the rights of transgender individuals who are incarcerated, particularly in the context of access to medical care and freedom from physical abuse. The workshop will also discuss ongoing efforts to reform the criminal-justice system in Florida and their impact on the trans community.

Reflection:

This workshop reiterated the absurdity of the prison industrial complex and its disregard for human decency and rights. ACLU attorney Daniel Tilley highlighted cases the ACLU litigated for incarcerated trans individuals and he provided resources to get involved with the ACLU, Black & Pink, and Better Justice Florida.

This workshop reminded me of Michelle Alexander's book, [The New Jim Crow](#). At every level of the justice system, people of color face discrimination, harsher prison sentences, higher fines and court fees, and they are more likely to be stopped by police or enter the

school to prison pipeline. Likewise, the prison system disproportionately harms the LGBTQ community by not allowing gender expression, mis-gendering and mis-naming individuals, placing trans individuals in the incorrect prison for their gender, conducting body searches of trans and non-binary individuals with prison guards of a gender assigned by the prison's interpretation of the trans individual's gender, lack of medical care such as hormones, Hepatitis C treatment, STI treatment or prevention, PrEP, access to condoms, and sex education for minors in prisons.

Keohane vs. Jones

This case highlighted the exhaustive internal process inmates have to go through before having their abuses heard by a court of law. This case went for two years of internal complaints and grievances before the ACLU could sue, and even when they did bring suit, the DOJ said the person had not gone far enough and needed to still file more grievances before seeking legal grounds.

What is extremely upsetting is that the person is in a horrible situation when they are filing the grievances and they have to wait years for action on their case. Meanwhile, they can't seek hormones, are mis-gendered, bullied, and may likely be in the wrong prison for their gender. Often we see the law move very slowly in trials where the case is for an event that occurred in the past, like a suspected murder, or a car accident. Cases take a while to make its way through the legal system. It's inhumane to see people in horrific living conditions in prisons and to see no expediting of the legal process. Daniel explained this was related to the extreme back log of court cases at the state level.

Naber vs. Jones

Stacy Naber sought hormones and a name change.

The ACLU filed suit on the grounds of these amendments:

8th medical care

1st compelled speech – mis-gendering and desiring a name change

14th Due Process Charge, denied the right to change their name

Sadly, Stacy committed suicide before while the ACLU was providing representation.

Although the right to vote was restored to individuals who have served their felony sentence, **if you had a felony, you still cannot serve on a jury, serve in public offices, or legally change your name in Florida.** The push to restore voting rights to citizens who have served their sentence is a step towards pushing for these other rights to be restored. With the right to vote restored, individuals have leverage to petition and change these other barriers hindering citizens who have served out their sentences.

Daniel also highlight HIV criminalization and driver's license suspensions as additional injustices to keep on our radar as we push for criminal justice reform. Once a trans or gender variant person enters the prison system, even at a low level of fines or tickets, their possibility of discrimination, barriers, and unjust treatment is disproportionately greater than a cis-gender or gender conforming individual.

HIV Criminalization

- 3rd Degree Felony
- Stiffer penalties for sex workers
- Disregards HIV non-transferable status (U=U) and the use of PrEP

Driver's License Suspension

- Often suspended for fines or other penalties unrelated to driving
- South Florida's public transit is minimal, and in rural areas, it's even worse. Taking away someone's license for a fine takes away someone's ability to commute to work, making it less likely that they will be able to pay their fine.
- Clerks who don't impose punitive measures such as license suspension for minor, non-driving related offenses actually have a higher rate of revenue from fines than court clerks that imposed this unjust fining system.

[Black & Pink](#), Letter Writing to the incarcerated LGBTQ+ community

My partner and I were involved with Black & Pink in Milwaukee. We knew there was a chapter in Boca Raton. After hearing from Daniel Tilley how important letter contact is for prisoners, we are looking into resources in the area that serve the prison population and looking at avenues to begin a Black & Pink chapter if there's not already one in progress in the Miami area.

[Better Justice Florida](#)

I'm glad to know about the Better Justice Florida resource and joined their mailing list to start getting involved. I was connected with the Southern Poverty Law Center's, and this list is even more specific providing concrete actions for justice reform in Florida.

Transmasculine Health: Facts, Myths, and Strategies for Self-Care and Self-Advocacy

Dr. Lauren Abern, Dr. Julia Seay & Landon (LJ) Woolston, MSW

3:10pm-4:30pm

There are many barriers to receiving quality physical and mental health care for transmasculine people. Even when individuals have the resources to obtain care, knowing where to go, what to ask, and who to trust is often complex and overwhelming. This workshop will provide a holistic overview of transmasculine self-care, preventive care, and wellness – how and when to get screenings, what to ask providers as we navigate the complexities of physical and mental health care, and how to self-advocate throughout the

process. Though the focus of this workshop will be transmasculine wellness, all are welcome to attend.

Attendees will learn about: 1) Strategies to improve and maintain holistic wellbeing, 2) self-advocacy in health care and mental health settings, 3) Facts and myths around transmasculine reproductive health care and screenings (HRT, contraception, fertility, testing for STI's, cervical cancer screenings), and 4) local resources available for transmasculine people.

Reflection:

This workshop included the most Q&A of the three workshops I attended. The workshop was led by a transmasculine social worker and two doctors, one a researcher and the other a practicing physician. Attendees included four parents with transmasculine sons, allies, and transmasculine people.

I appreciated the honesty of the doctors and their openness to field questions. It was refreshing to hear a doctor admit when they didn't know an answer and to say that they'll look it up and get back to the individual. Sometimes I have felt doctors express an air of superiority and a lack of willingness to field what they may think of as small or ignorant questions. This workshop was open, welcoming, and non-judgmental. I felt it was as inviting as it could be in an open forum to ask medical questions.

Writing Workshop (open to all; healing circle alternative)

Freesia McKee & Sammie Zenoz

Offered as a healing circle alternative, during this participatory, collaborative workshop, we will read writings/poems by trans and enby writers. We will then practice writing/poetry. At the end of the workshop, participants will have the option to share their writing with the group open-mic style.

Reflection:

We read a series of poems by trans and enby writers. Each poem was followed by a discussion of the poem, a writing prompt, and 5 minutes of writing time. At the end of the writing time, participants had the opportunity to share their writing or their reflections on the poem and discussion. The poets included in the workshop were Eli Clare, Alok Vaid-Menon, Joy Ladin, Taylor Johnson, Fabian Romero, and Lori Selke. The poems are also included in the trans anthology [Troubling the Line \(2013\)](#).

I found this workshop helped me reflect on what I had learned and gained over the conference. The opportunity to write and reflect offered therapeutic and meditative qualities that allowed me to consider and return to ideas and themes in the conference.

--I would highly recommend TransCon as a means of keeping up-to-date on the latest relevant resources and needs in the trans and non-binary community.

Conference References:

Daniel Tilley, ACLU

Dr. Lauren Abern, Planned Parenthood

Dr. Julia Seay, University of Miami

Landon (L) Woolston, MSW

Freesia McKee, poet

Sammie Zenoz, writer