



**For Immediate Release**  
Miriam Taylor  
Ogden Museum of Southern Art  
504-539-9604  
mtaylor@ogdenmuseum.org

**OGDEN MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN ART IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UNO'S MIDLO CENTER  
PRESENTS *STATES OF INCARCERATION:*  
*A NATIONAL DIALOGUE OF LOCAL HISTORIES*  
April 6 - April 30, 2017**

**NEW ORLEANS – March 9, 2017**

The Ogden Museum of Southern Art is pleased to present, *States of Incarceration: A National Dialogue of Local Histories*, the first national, traveling multi-media exhibition and coordinated public dialogue to explore the history and future of mass incarceration in the United States. The Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies and the Department of History at the University of New Orleans partnered with a New School-led coalition of 500 university students and formerly incarcerated individuals from 20 cities to create the traveling exhibition, which launched in New York City in April 2016.

The exhibition and project, the culmination of two years of planning and discussion between the communities, is a national public reckoning with one of the most pressing issues facing our country. Using many tools of truth and reconciliation processes, the 20 communities explored the deep historical roots of incarceration, shared personal stories related to the issue, and strategized ways of enacting policy change. In each location, the traveling exhibition and public programs will focus on an issue of incarceration that is unique to that community. UNO's contribution to the *States of Incarceration* focuses on the history of the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola and the convict lease system in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, UNO students conducted a postcard exchange with those currently incarcerated at Angola, which culminated in the online exhibit [Stories from Prison](#).

Over the past year, with support from UNO's History Department, the Midlo Center produced public programming for *States of Incarceration*, in collaboration with community partners including Voice of the Experienced (V.O.T.E.), Ashé Cultural Arts Center, Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, WWNO's *Unprisoned* series, *The Beat Within*, local schools, and local artists.

"For me the most important thing was designing programs that engage those most directly affected by mass incarceration and incorporating young people's creative ideas for alternate solutions to the problem." says Benjamin D. Weber, Midlo Center Visiting Scholar and co-leader of Louisiana's contribution to *States of Incarceration*.

Alongside the traveling exhibition, the project will also present *Picturing a World Without Prisons: Young Artists Confront the Carceral State*, an exhibition of young people's artwork exploring the theme of incarceration and reflecting on a future with fewer prisons. The pieces were created in a series of artist-led workshops for local students, including those at the Travis Hill School in the Youth Studies Center, a youth detention center in New Orleans.

“We wanted to showcase the creative output of young people—both those within and outside of prison—alongside the work of university students exploring the historical roots of this social crisis. Together they create a vital space for reflection on an issue that affects our community everyday,” says Mary Niall Mitchell, Midlo Center’s co-director.

The two-part exhibition will be housed on the first floor of the Ogden Museum of Southern Art.

### **The Traveling Exhibition**

Designed by Brooklyn, N.Y.-based design firm [Matter Practice](#), the *States of Incarceration* exhibition features interviews with formerly incarcerated people, corrections officers, and policy advocates; images capturing the evolution of crime and punishment in different contexts; and data demonstrating the explosive growth of incarceration and its impact on American society.

*States of Incarceration* also includes a web platform, [statesofincarceration.org](http://statesofincarceration.org); public dialogues; and a “[Shape the Debate](#)” mobile campaign. Designed by Picture Projects, a Brooklyn, N.Y.-based studio, these elements expand on the traveling exhibition and provide a medium to connect communities across the country.

“We can’t fix the criminal justice system in any meaningful or transformative way without properly diagnosing its many problems,” said Khalil Gibran Muhammad, professor of history, race and public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School. “Knowing how we got to this point is critical, to be sure. But so too is changing the culture of punishment by building a shared understanding of the past. I can’t think of a more powerful way to achieve these goals than a public history project as remarkable as *States of Incarceration*.”

*States of Incarceration* is a project of [Humanities Action Lab](#), a collaboration between University of New Orleans’s Midlo Center and 19 others, led by The New School, working with issue-based organizations and public spaces to foster new public dialogue on contested social issues, through public humanities projects that explore the diverse local histories and current realities of shared global concerns. Universities partnering in *States of Incarceration* are Arizona State University, Brown University, DePaul University, Duke University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Northeastern University, Parsons Paris, Rutgers University-Newark, Rutgers University-New Brunswick, Skidmore College, The New School, University of California, Riverside, University of Connecticut, University of Massachusetts Amherst, University of Miami, University of Minnesota, University of New Orleans, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University of Texas at Austin, and Vanderbilt University.

“Divisions over how to move forward may be rooted in divided understanding of how we got here. *States of Incarceration* brings people together to question how we got here. Tracing our path to mass incarceration can inform solutions,” says Liz Sevcenko, Director of the Humanities Action Lab. “Together, we hope these stories will build a national public memory of the incarceration generation, and a public dialogue on what should happen next.”

### **The Teen Convening**

On April 8, 2017, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art will also host Teen Convening: New Orleans, a youth-led summit addressing the issue of youth incarceration and mass incarceration in this country and in Louisiana, a state with the highest rate of imprisonment in the world. The goal of Teen Convening: New Orleans is to provide a platform for young people to lead cultural conversations, respond artistically to local and/or national issues, and create connections across our community.

Starting with an exploration of the exhibition *States of Incarceration*, participants from a diverse cross-section of local youth programs will gather to explore the roots of mass incarceration. Working with local artists, teens will create original responses to this issue and collaborate with incarcerated youth to formulate a platform for action and advocacy. The convening will culminate in a public presentation of participants' creative responses to this multi-faceted issue, as well as a set of principles for the future of criminal justice reform.

"The Ogden Museum is excited to present a youth-led summit addressing the issue of mass incarceration in conjunction with the exhibition *States of Incarceration*. After engaging with a variety of local artists who explore this topic in their own practice, the program will provide teens with a unique opportunity to employ their own creative voice and a forum in which to respond to this vital issue," says Ellen Balkin, Education Manager at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art.

This independently organized event is affiliated with the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA) and part of the ICA's Teen Convening.

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About the Midlo Center:

The Ethel and Herman L. Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies at UNO promotes understanding of New Orleans history, politics, culture and public policy issues, particularly civil rights, sponsoring and participating in events that bring together scholars on special topics relating to New Orleans. The Center helps direct scholars to research material about New Orleans, serving as an institutional home for scholars who collect and preserve the history of the city, and who circulate their findings in lectures, publications, performances, exhibits, and documentaries.

About the Ogden Museum:

Located in the vibrant Warehouse Arts District of downtown New Orleans, Louisiana, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art holds the largest collection of Southern art and is recognized for its original exhibitions, public events, and educational programs which examine the development of visual art alongside Southern traditions of music, literature, and culinary heritage to provide a comprehensive story of the South. Established in 1999 and in Stephen Goldring Hall since 2003, the Museum welcomes almost 80,000 visitors annually, and attracts diverse audiences through its broad range of programming including exhibitions, lectures, film screenings, and concerts which are all part of its mission to broaden the knowledge, understanding, interpretation, and appreciation of the visual arts and culture of the American South.

The Ogden Museum is open daily from 10AM-5PM with extended hours on Thursdays from 6-8PM for Ogden After Hours. Admission is free to Museum Members and \$13.50 for adults, \$11 for seniors 65 and older, \$7.25 for children ages 5-17 and free for children under 5.

The Ogden Museum is free to Louisiana Residents on Thursdays from 10AM-5PM courtesy of The Helis Foundation. The Helis Foundation is a Louisiana private foundation, established by the William Helis Family. The Art Funds of the Helis Foundation advance access to the arts for the community through contributions that sustain operations for, provide free admission to, acquire works of art, and underwrite major exhibitions and projects of institutions within the Greater New Orleans area.

The Museum is closed Martin Luther King Day, Lundi Gras and Mardi Gras, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Years Day.

The Museum is located at 925 Camp Street, New Orleans Louisiana 70130. For more information visit [ogdenmuseum.org](http://ogdenmuseum.org) or call [504-539-9650](tel:504-539-9650).

