cradle to cage: confronting the premature institutionalization of the children of the incarcerated

jen fell
Virginia Commonwealth University

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all that can be observed in society is "a series of expressions, each partial and incomplete, of the same underlying structure, which they reproduce in several copies without ever completely exhausting its realities."

Claude Levi Strauss
Design is in everything we make, but it’s also between those things. It’s a mix of craft, science, storytelling, propaganda, and philosophy.

Erik Adigard
it takes a village...
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cradle to cage:

confronting the premature institutionalization of the children of the incarcerated.
American prisons are swollen and distended. Over 2 million Americans sit in jail or prison today. About 2/3 of the incarcerated are parents. They parent approximately 2 million children in America today who are separated from mom or dad because of incarceration. Their children suffer from poverty, inconsistency in caregivers, separation from siblings, reduced opportunity to health and education and increased risk for substance abuse, alcoholism and incarceration themselves. Children of the incarcerated are seven times more likely than their peers to become incarcerated as adults.

Many of these children are unable to visit their parents. Over half the mothers in prison today live over 100 miles from home. Children who visit their parents are unable to touch them. 42% of the incarcerated today had a parent who was incarcerated, nearly half grew up families that received welfare benefits, and 42% had a substance-abusing parent. Familial poverty, alcoholism and crime set up a subsequent cycle of generational recidivism.

This thesis proposes that the normalization of the prison or jail environment while visiting with parents contributes to the generational cycle of recidivism. Coupled with a lack of opportunity before parental incarceration and ineffective parental rehabilitation, these children return to the facilities as adults. Can families be restored and rehabilitated through education and health opportunities in an environment devoid of an institutional feel? Could an urban university partner with the Department of Corrections to administer such a program? What environment and program model is a viable alternative to reunite these families both during incarceration and as a re-entry that is meaningful and enduring? Can we arrest the cradle to cage cycle?

This thesis outlines such a project and facility located in context of Richmond, Virginia. Theoretically, programming will be offered by Virginia Commonwealth University. Statistics and facts will be set within the Richmond environment.
Today’s prison numbers are startling.
As of June 30, 2006:

2,245,189
prisoners in
American prisons or jails,

about 1/3 of those prisoners
are parents,

about 60% of women in
state prisons are mothers,

on average, those parents serve 6 to 8
years.

One of the many lessons that one learns in prison is, that things are what they
are and will be what they will be.
Oscar Wilde

Statistics courtesy U.S. Department of Justice:
http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/press/iptc.pr
the incarcerated as children:

\[42\% \text{ had an incarcerated parent}\]

\[68\% \text{ grew up in single parent homes.}\]

\[42\% \text{ of their families received public assistance}\]

\[42\% \text{ had an alcoholic or substance abusing parent}\]

Statistics courtesy U.S. Department of Justice:
http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/press/iptc.pr
Unfortunately, rehabilitation today remains dubious, at best. Of the fifty state correctional institutes in Virginia, less than half offered meaningful substance abuse and vocational rehabilitation. Approximately 68% of the incarcerated do not have a high school diploma when they enter prison. And while recidivism drops by 40% when educated while incarcerated, only about one quarter of prisoners without a high school diploma complete a GED program while incarcerated.

Substance abuse and mental health remain as grim. Conservative estimates identify about 1/3 of prisoners as alcoholic. Recovery rates remain very low. About 41% of persons on probation are required to participate in an alcohol and/or substance abuse program. Only about 17% of all those ordered to participate report completion of such a program.

And for those leaving our prison systems, according to the Report of the Re-entry Policy Council: Charting the Safe and Successful Return of Prisoners to the Community, nearly 650,000 people in the U.S. are released from prison each year, and over 7 million are released from jails. The report found that three out of four jail inmates have a substance abuse problem, but only 10 percent in state prisons and three percent in local jails receive formal treatment prior to release. A larger share of individuals in prison and jail participates in self-help programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous (20 percent of both state and federal prisoners and 8 percent of jail inmates). 42 percent of untreated prisoners went back to prison within three years of their release.

http://www.namiscc.org/News/2005/Winter/PrisonerRe-entry.htm
Makita Lewis is director of a women’s re-entry program housed at the North Richmond YMCA. The program is funded through a federal grant from the Department of Justice for the recovery of women as a result of the tough on drugs policy making over the years. This program provides a 12 week transitional group for women and free child care at the YMCA day care program. Qualifying women must be convicted of non-violent, non-sexual offenses.

The services provided are designed to help offenders re-enter their communities and work and live peacefully and effectively. Assistance is provided with coping skills, post-trauma intervention, decision making skills, cognitive and behavioral skills, hygiene and some arts and crafts therapy. Women are encouraged with job training and placement with assistance in resume writing, e-mail setup, dress and interview skills. Bus cards are provided to get women to interviews and to and from work. This program partners with Goodwill and Crossover Ministries, and makes referrals to organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Some issues that the women face that are obstacles to re-entry include the social stigma of being ex-offenders, lower education, being victims of abuse, and substance abuse. About 80% of the women in this program report a substance abuse history.
Lisa Thomas is director of New Vision, a non-profit located in the Fredericksburg, Virginia area. New Vision describes itself as “a grass roots 501(c) 3 prisoner reentry initiative in the front lines of the struggle against crime, poverty and prisoner recidivism in the Rappahannock / Fredericksburg area.” New Vision cites that the Rappahannock area has the highest number of women offenders who are mothers trying to re-enter society. New Vision cites many of the dilemmas facing women ex-offenders are farther reaching than those obstacles facing men. According to New Vision’s web site, some hardships facing mother ex-offenders because of accommodating their children. For example, finding a home means space for children, finding a job means securing childcare. Many mothers have been separated from their children by the state and must fulfill social service demands for health and safety of her children in order to be reunited with them. Typically, mother must demonstrate that she can stay sober and maintain a safe home and employment.

New Vision offers re-entry through instruction of life skills, partnership with community resources, and physical resources such as clothing and food via local food bank. They also administer a residential program of 12-18months for 6 women. Here women are instructed in parenting, nutrition, office etiquette, health and beauty care, GED classes, financial counseling, support for rebuilding relationships, etc.

There were many considerations for the development of the residential program. They included location, and its associated zoning issues, and special use permit, which Ms. Thomas described as a long, tedious process. There was need to hire a 24hr residential manager and provide a security system, to assuage concerns from authorities and neighbors, as women are released to New Vision directly from incarceration.

Alongside such practical concerns were psychological considerations that directly promote rehabilitation and successful re-entry. Prison mentality must be changed: must have incentive and mentorship. Again, the stigma of being an ex-offender is cited as one of the largest obstacles to confront. Incentive to grow and change must be constant until women can see the benefits of living a new way of life.

http://www.newvis.org/
In 2002, 724 parolees live in Richmond. A city with highest state percent of parolees, Richmond has twice national average poverty rates.
Richmond has grown immensely thanks to the city’s real estate rehabilitation program. This incentive program grants property owners generous tax breaks for rehabilitating any building greater than fifteen years old. An immense success, the program has cost the city millions since its inception in 1995; last year it cost a loss of six million dollars in annual tax revenue. The plus sides are the millions of dollars attracted in investment and a resurgence of professional residents and the services that accommodate them. Last year the abatements were scaled back to structure as young as ten years old. But not all residents meet with success in this program. For every tax dollar saved by affluent investors, low income residents owe more as their property taxes triple and quadruple as the result of their investor neighbor’s improvements. What’s worse, this trend is steeped in Richmond’s race-based discrimination, which began as early as the New Deal Era. Part of the New Deal package was to create the U.S. Housing Authority and the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation. The idea was to create programs to help wallet stricken homeowners in targeted neighborhoods from foreclosure.

But assistance was based on assigned neighborhood grades: A through D, with “A” meaning most desirable to save. Grades were assigned through color-coding on a map. A look at the historical map of Richmond detailed the same black, impoverished neighborhoods that exist today as receiving the grade of D. In fact, every single African-American neighborhood received a D, regardless of income. One Richmond neighborhood in the East End was described on a form to be “bad for whites,” but “fair for darkies.” In essence, the federal government condoned and fostered racism, segregation, and the impoverished condition of many neighborhoods that exists today.

\[I \text{ think there are some very evil things about gentrification.}\]
\[Jim McKay\]
This type of policy exists still today, in the lack of incentives available for low-income Richmonders to rebuild, compared with the tax relief offered to their affluent counterpart gentrifiers. New programs like the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Hope VI program are also devastating. Designed to eliminate public-housing projects created by the U.S. interstate system in the 1950s, in theory, the replacement “mixed neighborhoods” provide enhanced opportunity. In reality, Hope IV causes public housing complexes to be bulldozed. The majority of displaced residents are denied re-entry into the new neighborhoods due to strict residency requirement rules, such as banning those with any criminal background. Richmond’s Blackwell community lost 440 units to this Hope IV redevelopment. The new facilities have 583 units, but only 153 will be available for subsidized public housing. State Bass and Dovi: “The push to create “better opportunities” for public housing residents has often meant simply pushing them out” (italics mine, Style Weekly, April 15, 2007). Displaced residents lose more than their homes. Displaced low-income families lose access to their local resources for childcare, jobs and transportation. Concerned VCU faculty Michela M. Zonta, assistant professor of urban studies, comments: “In their little social microcosm, it’s devastating. They don’t have child-care facilities. They don’t have transportation. They rely on a very limited social network. I don’t think it’s just to simply forget about them. Are we playing chess with these people? What’s going to happen to them?” (ibid).

http://www.styleweekly.com/article.asp?idarticle=14169
There Goes the ’Hood: How one of the city’s most lauded urban-renewal programs is re-enforcing Richmond’s racial divide.
Scott Bass and Chris Dovi

http://www.styleweekly.com/article.asp?idarticle=14249
King of the Hill: VCU plans to push its empire into Oregon Hill, despite its promises.
Crime has been an on-going issue at VCU since its inception with the marriage of the former Richmond Professional Institute and the Medical College of Virginia in 1968. Since then, VCU’s heart, Harrison and Grace Streets, maintain a long history of violence and crime. Beginning in the 1930’s, Grace Street developed from a primarily residential neighborhood into a commercial district. After VCU’s creation in 1968, Grace Street “became a cultural potluck of retail and restaurants that was, all at once, a Bohemian and artist enclave, punkster hangout and a retreat for Interstate-bound bikers”. Restaurants, stores, bars, artist and punk hangouts abounded. And with the increase in retail spots, there was an increase in both violent and non-violent crimes.

Rents dropped in the student area, and a booming pornography industry took hold on Grace Street beginning in 1965. The Lee Art Theatre (today’s Grace Street Theater) showed rated X and live burlesque shows, strip clubs and seedy joints peppered the street. Prostitutes made the corner their regular home.

1981 changed Grace Street from a one- to two-way street to alleviate traffic congestion in rush hour along Broad Street. Parking became more difficult and the identity of Grace Street began to shift.

In the mid-1990s, VCU began to expand northward. This came in response to the aggressive opposition of Oregon Hill residents when VCU attempted to expand into its borders to the south. Grace and Harrison now sat in the middle of the VCU campus, instead of at the northern fringe. VCU began in earnest to develop student housing around this corridor, soliciting major commercial developers and food chains to set up shop. These factors have driven the cost of real estate and rents upwards, thereby chasing off many of the seedier tenants of the past. This has been done in an attempt to squelch crime in this area, although the progress has been very slow. VCU’s president, Dr. Eugene Trani, is known for his “corporate-like management of the university (that) has attracted plenty of developers. In large part, the university’s expansion along Broad enticed Kroger Co. to build a supermarket in Carver in 2003, an impossible notion 10 years ago, and ultimately led to Ukrop’s Super Markets moving into the former Community Pride at Harrison and Grace streets last year, another major coup” (Style Weekly, November 8, 2005).
The more upscale development has not been enough to reduce crime. In 2005, VCU received much negative publicity about the kidnapping and murder of VCU student Taylor Marie Bell. Ironically, the Taylor Bell case stands apart from the typical growing crime in the neighborhood. Most neighborhood crime is associated with the clientele at Club 534, a hip-hop joint located on Harrison Street adjacent to Ukrops and across the street from the VCU Harrison Street parking deck. VCU police report having confiscated some 30 weapons since May 2006 — including AK-47s and semi-automatic pistols — some from vehicles of 534’s patrons, many of whom police suspect are drug dealers and gang members. After hours, between 1 and 2 AM, primarily on Friday and Mondays, many club patrons are involved in violent disagreements. In summer 2005, a man’s car was shot repeatedly, although police officers stood nearby. In 2004, one VCU police officer was injured by a gunman after the officer chased the gunman down, following the gunman’s assault on another man. VCU police created Operation Power Shift to eliminate guns and drugs from the street. The special unit of five to seven police officers targets the Grace and Harrison Street zone. Power Shift stopped following the Taylor Bell incident, as VCU police attempted to place every available officer on that case in an attempt to ease student and parent concerns. And the violent crime continues. In August 2005, a man fired seven rounds from an AK47 into a crowd on Ryland Avenue (one block west of Harrison.) In October 2005, a gunman attacked a cashier in Jamaica House, on Harrison Street. VCU continues to attempt to restore its public relations with the area and crime. Millions of state tax dollars and private investors are involved in the VCU expansion along Broad Street. Solutions must be found, as VCU, the state’s second-largest university with more than 29,000 students, has accommodated growth by moving into historically crime-ridden areas of the city.
VCU’s expansion has been met with opposition from many Richmonders. Residents of Oregon Hill have battled university sprawl for decades. In 1990, VCU issued a promise that development would not enter the historical Oregon Hill, an historic registered landmark neighborhood. Under President Trani’s direction, in response to vigorous community complaint to the Oregon Hill plans, expansion turned instead to the Broad Street corridor and north into Carver neighborhood. Much of the development has been applauded. New retail, like Ukrops and Kroger, has moved into the Carver area. Many dilapidated homes have been restored or torn down and replaced. And now, despite promises to not develop south of the highway in Oregon Hill, new plans are slated for VCU’s new swimming facility and tennis area to be constructed in Oregon Hill. Residents are again dismayed and outraged. “That’s too bad. But tennis centers and swimming pools can go in a number of places. There is only one Oregon Hill and it is fragile,” writes Edwin Slipek Jr. in Style Weekly (April 9, 2007).

And in Carver Neighborhood, resident sentiment is not much different. VCU has been expanding into the Carver Neighborhood for over two decades. And while rated by city officials as successful, VCU’s development is not without cost to city residents. Many residents have been displaced for the higher values of higher education. Low- and no-income residents along Catherine Street, an alleyway along Leigh Street, anticipate demolition at any time. One fellow told Style Weekly, “I’ll tell you exactly what happened. The people know that they got the right to do anything they want to do to you. Ain’t nothing you can do about it.”

The best thing a neighborhood can do to get their ideas, concerns, and issues on the table - is that they have to organize. There has to be a body, there has to be a unified voice; there has to be the crowd.

Jim Hanson
• Nearly 2 out of 3 black infants and 2 out of 5 Hispanic/Latino babies were born to unwed mothers.

• Nearly three-quarters of Asian/Pacific Islander mothers had at least one year of college education. By contrast, only 26% of Hispanic/Latino mothers attained this level of education.

• Compared to other minorities, black women experienced the highest rate of natural fetal death

• Teenage pregnancy rates were highest among black and Hispanic/Latino youth.

**Non-Marital Births**: The percentage of births to unmarried minority women varied greatly by race and ethnicity. More than 60% (13,707) of black babies were born to unwed mothers. More than 40% (4,413) of Hispanic babies and over a third (55) of Native American births were to unwed mothers. Comparatively, only 22% (15,496) of white births and 7.1% (450) of Asian/Pacific Islanders births were born to unmarried mothers (Chart 5).

![Chart 5: Percent of Births to Unmarried Women by Race/Ethnicity](chart.png)

Source: Virginia Center for Health Statistics
## TABLE 10
Low Birth Weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning District and City/County</th>
<th>Low Birthweight Live Births Under 2,500 Grams</th>
<th>Very Low Birthweight Live Births Under 1,500 Grams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Low Births</td>
<td>Percent of Total Births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth of Virginia</td>
<td>8,674</td>
<td>5,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning District 12</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry County</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick County</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsylvania County</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danville</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinsville City</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning District 13</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brunswick County</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax County</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg County</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning District 14</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia County</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckingham County</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte County</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland County</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunenburg County</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk County</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward County</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning District 15</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles City County</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield County</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockingham County</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanover County</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrico County</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Kent County</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powhatan County</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond City</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>Planning District 16</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>244</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caroline County</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
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</table>

Richmond, Virginia:

Poverty and Education Statistics

Richmond Public Schools

Dropout Rate Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>6.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>5.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>4.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>3.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>2.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>2.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>12.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>15.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>4.41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Truancy Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Students Missing 10 or More Days</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>12727</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5199</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5337</td>
<td>1846</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>23263</td>
<td>3398</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_grade12_2005/
http://www.richmond.k12.va.us/
Richmond, Virginia:

Poverty and Education Statistics

The day someone quits school he is condemning himself to a future of poverty.

Jaime Escalante
Effects of child poverty

**Disease** and disability, low health care services, high **crime** rate, increased **suicide**, increased risk of **violence**, lack of opportunities for employment, increased **discrimination**, lower life expectancy, **homelessness**, susceptibility to death from natural disasters, **drug abuse**, low literacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2000 Total Households</th>
<th>84,566</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Households</td>
<td>44,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below poverty level</td>
<td>7,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Couples</td>
<td>1,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with related children under 18</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Families</td>
<td>6,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Householder, No Spouse Present</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with related children under 18</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Householder, No Spouse Present</td>
<td>5,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with related children under 18</td>
<td>5,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Family Households</td>
<td>40,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below poverty level</td>
<td>8,765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2000 Population</th>
<th>188,116</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below poverty level</td>
<td>40,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 18 years of age</td>
<td>14,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 64 years of age</td>
<td>22,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ years of age</td>
<td>4,038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case for ending childhood poverty can be made for economic reasons, not simply social justice. But there is also an economic case for reducing child poverty. When children grow up in poverty, they are more likely as adults to have low earnings, which in turn reflect low productivity in the workforce. They are also more likely to engage in crime and to have poor health later in life. Their reduced productive activity generates a direct loss of goods and services to the U.S. economy. Any crime in which they engage imposes large monetary and other personal costs on their victims and on the taxpayer of administering our huge criminal justice system. And their poor health generates illness and early mortality that requires large health care expenditures, impedes productivity, and ultimately reduces their quality and quantity of life.

Our results suggest that the costs to the United States associated with childhood poverty total about $500 billion per year, or the equivalent of nearly 4 percent of GDP. More specifically, we estimate that childhood poverty each year:

- Reduces productivity and economic output by about 1.3 percent of GDP;
- Raises the costs of crime by 1.3 percent of GDP; and
- Raises health expenditures and reduces the value of health by 1.2 percent of GDP.

Poverty is the mother of all crime.

Marcus Aurelius
Richmond, Virginia:

Carver Neighborhood

The Carver neighborhood, or Sheep Hill, lies north of Broad Street to the west of Jackson Ward and downtown Richmond. Blue-collar Jewish and German tradesmen originally settled Carver. Carver’s early working class supplied much of the millwork and bricks that built Victorian Richmond. Residents of Carver were among the city’s most skilled laborers. Their houses were mostly attached frame or brick buildings in the Italianate style, with storefront buildings located at or near street corners. In the early 1900s, it became a booming African-American community. Interstate 95, Belvidere Street and Jefferson Davis Highway later cut through Carver’s streets. This caused neighborhood deterioration. Houses became vacant. By the 1950s, Carver sharply declined. Crime increased. Carver became a dangerous neighborhood.

Recently, Carver has developed. Older homes have been renewed, new houses built and VCU has expanded to the north side of Broad Street. Today, Carver comprises a mix of working class African-Americans and student residents.

Oregon Hill

Richmond, Virginia:

White working class families employed by the Tredegar Iron Works and Albemarle Paper Company established Oregon Hill during the industrial expansion during Reconstruction. The neighborhood name refers to its historical location far west of the city. Today it is only a few blocks south of VCU. Most homes are low rent, so many students fill the block. Oregon Hill is considered a white working class enclave. Many families have lived in Oregon Hill for generations.

As whites, we tend to imagine ourselves at the “normal” center of the world. That we live in a society where racism was never really renounced, just given better makeup, may matter to people of color -- and we may even feel sorry for them -- but we don’t imagine it impacting us. We certainly don’t imagine that it influences us deeply every day.

Larry Lamar Yates
Larry Lamar Yates coins the word “Whitefare” in opposition to the word “welfare.”
What is Whitefare? He uses it as a response to the weapon the word “welfare” becomes as it is wielded against African-Americans in the myth that “they” are stealing “our” resources in the welfare system. The statistical reality is the majority of welfare recipients are white Americans. Concurrent to this myth is the reality that institutional racism promises the best jobs, infrastructure, health care, security, housing, and other benefits to a small leadership group of Americans, comprised primarily of whites. He cites a study in 1994 that found “$104 billion of the federal budget (including tax loopholes) consisted of corporate welfare, that is, fairly narrowly defined direct benefits to business. Welfare for the poor in the same year was $75 billion” (p.7). Whitefare refers to our classical system of racism, the color coding distribution for the have and have-nots.

Yates notes that Whitefare is a belief system, an economic and political system, and a set of behavioral rules. He further states that those in power trick whites into participating in a system that we believe benefits us, and is unconscious; indeed, we do not imagine ourselves to be racists. White privilege has become intrinsic, deeply embedded and pervasive in our systems of living and governance. And while it has enlarged to divide dichotomously whites from all people of color, it lies in its divisive roots of colonial lineage: European versus African-American. Whitefare is our natural expectation to have privilege, as whites. It is our fear that “they” are getting what we deserve. Yates does not see Whitefare as an impossibility to defy. Opposition requires evaluation of our “top-heavy” lifestyle. It requires consideration of the systems in which we operate. It calls for reparation. Discarding the robe of Whitefare means that we begin to look at the systems we create and in which we participate. We must look at our guaranteed access to health, wealth and opportunity, and begin to extend those opportunities through our institutions, to all people. Yates calls for a return to the call of the Civil Rights Movement, where we are asked to be a part of the solution, not the problem.

http://www.reparationsthecure.org/articles/larry1.shtml

WHITEFARE: Breaking the patterns of white dependency on racism
The United States was built on colonial imperialism. Great Britain notwithstanding, the dominant white male elite has strategically placed itself at the helm of our policies of liberty and opportunity for all. The U.S. was built upon land stolen from Native Americans and Mexicans, with labor stolen from African-American slaves, and was ruled to the exclusion of people of color and women. Robert Bullard (1993, p.16) states:

“Generally, people of color in the United States—like their counterparts in formerly colonized lands of Africa, Asia, and Latin America—have not had the same opportunities as whites. The social forces that have organized oppressed colonies internationally still operate in the ‘heart of the colonizer’s mother country’ (Blauner, 1972). Social scientists Omi and Winant state this principle establishes ‘every state institution is a racial institution’ (1986).”

Racial inequality is seen in health, economic and education policies. It is also found in environmental planning and policy-making. The most polluted American communities have decaying infrastructure, poor housing inadequate schools, chronic unemployment, high poverty rates and insufficient health care. (Bullard, p.17). Out of the whole American population, 50% of African-Americans and 60% of Hispanics live in areas with dangerous levels of air pollution, compared with 33% of whites (Bullard, p.17). These above average percentages are attributed to housing segregation and development planning as well as income. Race-based decision making is imbedded in policy that influences housing, education, employment, criminal justice, and municipal services such as garbage collection, sanitation, fire and police protection land use, industrial facility location, and the paths of highways and freeways.

In his study of the Addams area of Chicago, Gerald Suttle notes that the first causation of segregation is ethnicity/race. The local institutions then mirror or bring out opposition to
Racism:

Environmental

the overall structure (Suttle, p.41). Religion and education both become tools to maintain neighborhood solidarity. This solidarity is not based merely upon dislike of others, but also upon the fear of disloyalty to one’s own group, as one’s own people are the only group upon which true reliance is guaranteed (Suttle, p.59). In the absence of trust for external groups, ethnicity and residential unity prove to be the solidifying bonds that guarantee individual protection. But what happens when these unified groups oppose one another in the struggle for survival in the larger, multi-cultural body politic? There is further separation, based on history of power and opportunity, meted out through the institutions created, that maintain boundaries of class. Therefore, each macro level inequality can be evaluated under the microscope, and there the strands of our original colonial racist structure can be found.

Proponents of Reaganomics and other such fiscal conservatives would argue that lack of opportunity is an issue of class, not race. But people of color face these inequities of access or dangerous health and housing conditions regardless of social status. The issue of lead exposure pinpoints race as causation, as opposed to class. African-American children are 2-3 times more likely to have toxic lead exposure regardless of family income. Race is the single separating segment in this statistic, as housing discrimination still determines segregation for both affluent and impoverished African-Americans (Bullard, p.21). Further, employment blackmail prevents many numbers of employees from demanding safe environmental conditions. The majority of non-union contract workers in chemical, nuclear, and oil industries are people of color. Over 95% of migrant farm workers are non-white. The United States’ current separate and unequal communities thrives as much today as it did two-hundred years ago. Bullard states our nation will be unlikely to form lasting solutions to our environmental problems without addressing the underlying systems of racial injustices that permeate still today

In 2002:

10.4% of the African American population between the ages of 24 and 29 is imprisoned.

Black men are 6% of the U.S. population but over 40% of our prison population.

African American women are imprisoned at 5.4 times the rate as white women.

African Americans make up 13% of illicit drug users in the United States. African Americans constitute 74% of people sentenced to jail for drug possession.

White people make up 74% of illicit drug users but roughly account for only one fifth of those serving jail time for drug possession.

http://www.vcuinsight.vcu.edu/stories/spring04/04_vcu_carver_partnership/vcu_carver_partnership.htm
Women in Prison

- About half have immediate family member incarcerated
- 1/3 sexually assaulted as children
- 1/2 committed their crime under the influence
- 20% consume alcohol daily
- 2/3 serving for violent crime
  - victimized a family member

Statistics courtesy U.S. Department of Justice:
Prisons cost more than $32 billion a year. Each year an inmate spends in prison costs $22,000. An individual sentenced to five years for a $300 theft costs the public more than $100,000. The cost of a life term averages $1.5 million.

States are spending more money on prisons than education. Over the course of the last 20 years, the amount of money spent on prisons was increased by 570% while that spent on elementary and secondary education was increased by only 33%.
When women are in prison, communities face the “fiscal multiplier effect.” Women prisoners cost more to house than their male counterparts. Further, they have greater impact on the community, as their children typically end up in the Social Services systems. However, addressing the needs in the community prior to arrest proves more cost effective in the long term than does the current system of arrest and incarceration. By offering substance abuse treatment, improved education and access to health care, devastation to the families of the incarcerated can be reduced and ultimately, prevented.

In 1996, under the direction of VCU president, Dr. Trani, VCU partnered with Carver community to develop youth programs and to assist in the effort to provide affordable and quality housing. The Carver Partnership involves faculty, students and a VCU community-policing program in collaboration with Carver residents and the city. The initiative secured significant federal and foundation grant support and recognition. The Partnership is cited as a national model of university-community partnership that supports student learning, faculty scholarship, and assists in the revitalization of urban neighborhoods.

The goal of the partnership is to unite the community and university. The community-policing component is reputed to have decreased crime rates in the Carver-VCU area. In 2001, the university built the Carver community programs space. Located at 1103 W. Marshall Street, the facility has a multipurpose room, a computer lab and a suite of offices to support community outreach programs. Some programs offered include Americorp’s America reads program, family movie nights, senior computer classes, tutoring sessions for school-aged children, a play, and an art show featuring portraits of Carver neighborhood children.

http://www.vcuinsight.vcu.edu/stories/spring04/04_vcu_carver_partnership/vcu_carver_partnership.htm
http://www.vcu.edu/president/biography/index.html
I interviewed Franklin Wallace, Director of Americorp’s America Reads Program at VCU. Mr. Wallace has a BFA in Printmaking and Painting from VCU and a Masters in Public Administration from VCU. America Reads is facilitated through the Office of Community Programs at VCU. America Reads sends Americorps volunteers into the Richmond City Public Schools to provide reading support to mid-low reading achieving students. These students are passing, non-learning disabled, and are provided services to prevent them from slipping through the cracks. Mr. Wallace would like to see a larger space in the community Programs Office to allow for more education and computer classes. He would like to see an Art Space in the facility as well.
In 1990, the Community Service Associates Program at VCU was established. CSAP supports faculty in contributing time to work directly with community organizations on projects that can be enhanced with faculty expertise. Projects unite faculty, students and neighborhood groups, civic associations, governmental or professional organizations, and non-profit agencies. Each project is individually designed to benefit the organization and the families involved in the scope of the project. Faculty from more than 50 different departments has contributed to more than 250 community-based projects in partnership with about 175 different organizations. Faculty expertise enhances the outcomes of projects. Participating students and faculty gain hands-on experience and real-world application.
AmeriCorps is a national service initiative that addresses identified needs in the community. AmeriCorps volunteers work in public safety, education, human needs and the environment. AmeriCorps nationally sponsors 450 programs. The AmeriCorps program at Virginia Commonwealth University began in 1995. AmeriCorps is directed through the Community Service Associate Program. The primary focus of this program at VCU is literacy. This is in response to the Richmond Community’s identification of reading “as a critical preventative strategy in addressing the health and safety needs of children in the metro area”. The America Reads program is the largest component of VCU’s AmeriCorps program. America Reads attempts to support successful reading strategies by third grade, with the goal of helping improve the literacy skills of local children and families. VCU’s America Reads program works closely with Richmond City Public Schools to reading support to elementary school students who are struggling academically. Reading support is provided at the school sites and in tutoring services at the Carver-VCU Partnership facility.

http://www.americorps.org/
In 1900, a group of nurses and social workers established the Nursing Settlement House to address the health and social needs of the Oregon Hill Community. It was converted to the William Byrd Community House in 1923. The goal of the WBCH was to build stable families. In the 1970s, the WBCH expanded its service area to include other inner-city neighborhoods to accurately serve the diverse population. In the 1990s, the number of clients served more than doubled. Today, the WBCH offers over twenty-four programs for infants to seniors. It is the mission of WBCH to provide programs and referrals to assist individuals and families to transition to self-sufficiency. WBCH is today directed by Reggie Gordon.

WBCH believes that many of the barriers to independence today are the by-product of “societal or systemic barriers that are beyond the scope of any program or service (they) may offer.” As they seek to align themselves with other non-profits, they note “patterns in the cycle of life for low-income residents of our region that have significant importance for regional policy makers and corporate leaders.” Most of the individuals served by WBCH are employed and pay taxes and are, therefore, slow to seek assistance. WBCH states the solution must be a re-framing of our ideas of poverty and the work of non-profits. Non-profits must “function as the safety net when something goes wrong and a child, adult, or family needs some help to rise above their circumstances, get back on track, or stay alive.” WBCH sites this can only be accomplished through a coordinated approach by not “only the nonprofit sector, but also the faith community, foundations, the public sector, and the private sector. Each sector has an equally important perspective, valuable data, and discrete resources to bring to the table. We must carve out time for consistent, joint strategic planning that incorporates candid dialogue about the role of each sector, acting independently or collectively, to ensure a better quality of life for all residents of the region. Our approach has to be strategic, compassionate, and visionary.”

http://www.wbch.org/
Virginia Supportive Housing is a not-for-profit homeless services provider and community development corporation. VSH aims to provide permanent housing and support services to individuals and families who are homeless or who have disabilities in order to initiate and promote their transition from homelessness to independence. VSH collaborates with other community development corporations in Richmond to revitalize abandoned and substandard housing. Much of this work is done in close partnership with area homeless shelters and transitional programs. VSH’s primary goal is to provide a solution to homelessness by providing permanent affordable housing and related support services. VSH seeks to end the cycle of homelessness for willing participants.

VSH facilitates the HomeBuy5 program. HomeBuy5 is designed to work with families. VSH staff work with homeless families for up to five (5) years to prepare them for the responsibilities of homeownership. VSH also develops housing or renovates substandard or condemned properties. These properties are managed by VSH to ensure clean and well-maintained properties. VSH provides support services to empower residents to maintain their housing. Services are “provided by the Director of Residential Services to residents of New Clay House and South Richmond SRO with assistance from student interns from the School of Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University. Services are primarily directed through the Resident Achievement Program. Services for families for up to two years after move-in. Bliley Manor and Stratford House are operated in conjunction with the VCU Health System with support services provided by the Infectious Disease Clinic at VCU.

http://www.virginiasupportivehousing.org/who.htm
Sheila Thompkins is Director of the Early Childcare Program at the Northside YMCA in Richmond. She holds a BA in Disciplinary Studies in Family and Child Services from VCU, a Certificate in Early Child Care from J. Sergeant Reynolds, and has worked in childcare for 17 years. She has been the director at Northside YMCA for 1 year.

Currently, Northside YMCA has 84 students in its programs, including 66 students in two Head Start programs. VCU and Richmond City Public Schools facilitate the Head Start classrooms. About 98% of the children are African American. Most of the parents at Northside make slightly over minimum wage. About 80% of the families at Northside’s day care facility are single parent homes, Ms. Thompkins states. Of the families at Northside, approximately 93% of these families receive scholarships from the YMCA or assistance from the Division of Social Services for tuition. Of those receiving assistance from YMCA, scholarships come from donations of private families, members, staff, the Greater Richmond YMCA, corporate donations, and federal grants. Corporate donors include Capital One, Dupont, and Phillip Morris. The Northside day care facility was built from a donation from Capital One in 2002.

Northside YMCA is located on North Avenue, off Chamberlain Avenue, in Richmond. The facility is located in an apartment neighborhood that is compromised of lower-income families. Washington Park, a neighborhood of modest single family homes, is adjacent to the site. Several blocks over are very affluent homes in the Ginter Park neighborhood. Currently, the YMCA has a community outreach program geared at soliciting membership from the more affluent neighbors in the community. The hope is to create a more diverse body of membership, combat naturally occurring class segregation, and increase the donor base for the YMCA’s services. Most of the outreach is carried on through mailing campaigns. Catharine Seacress is the head of Community Development at the Northside YMCA.

Northside YMCA has previously had programs sponsored by the Family Lifeline Organization. Some of these programs include parental education, nutrition and home ownership classes, and GED and computer classes. Family Life Organization is not currently sponsoring any programs at the YMCA. Currently, Goodwill sponsors a computer class that includes instruction on finding job postings online, how to interview, and how to dress for an interview, as well as basic computer word processing instruction. Northside is planning to begin a Women’s Offender Club. This club provides free childcare to mothers while they receive basic job training.

Ms. Thompkins would like to see an expansion of programs at Northside YMCA. She is currently working on adding an on site location of a social worker to offer additional support for parents. Many of the adult services Family Life line brought in, such as nutrition, safer homes, home ownership, etc., are classes she would like to see repeated. Attendance at parental support or educational groups has historically been low. Ms. Thompkins sites the nomenclature as the main reason for low attendance. The word “support” is often disliked, as many parents do not like to label themselves as insufficient or compromised. When classes on nutrition or homeownership are held, issues related to parenting techniques are often presented within the context of the class in order to offer that
support in a non-threatening manner. Ms. Thompkins noted that one classroom educational tool at Northside, Al’s Pals, is designed to teach children about wellness, safety and good citizenship. Al’s Pals is taught through puppet shows, songs and activities in the classroom. The program is intended to have follow-up discussion at home. Ms. Thompkins thought home follow-up was infrequent due to parental stress and the weeknight responsibilities of feeding, bathing, and homework support for single parents already tired from working long days for low pay at often stressful or difficult work.

Ms. Thompkins sites the rise of grandparents raising grandchildren and same sex parents as rising issues in childcare in Richmond. She noted a rise in these family types in her previous jobs. She states the need for teacher education in these areas is important to ensure that children are given every opportunity they can have.

Ms. Thompkins felt that the most significant issue preventing many African Americans from finding sustainable incomes was lack of education. She cites reduced quality education, lack of adequate public school funding, uninformed teachers and administrators in issues of learning disability, and the Zero Tolerance programs as chief reasons for inequality of education in Richmond schools. Zero Tolerance programs eliminate students with behavioral issues from classrooms through suspension or expulsion. Ms. Thompkins cites that often children behaving in disruptive ways are learning disabled children who greatly need to be at school, and need more one-on-one instructional settings. Simply eliminating them from the classroom does little to address their special needs, and promotes their continued difficulty or failure in the educational setting.

Ms. Thompkins also states that African Americans lack a voice in the political setting, where many of these issues could be addressed. She feels this is largely due to a cultural unwillingness to vote. She states anecdotally that many of the members of her African American community refuse to vote, as they perceive voting to be a wasted effort since “white people will remain in power anyway.” We discussed ideas for promoting voting through the day care facility. Some ideas were providing polling stations at day care facilities, providing free evening day care for voting parents or free dinner to parents wearing “I voted” stickers.

Ms. Thompkins could pinpoint no dissatisfaction with the physical site. The location includes a secured entrance and lobby, 7 classrooms with restroom facilities, a large open space, an open art room, an open reading room, three private one-person bathrooms and four offices, and a large, fenced playground. The day care shares kitchen and gym facilities with the YMCA.
Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families.

The Head Start program provides grants to local public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies to provide comprehensive child development services to economically disadvantaged children and families, with a special focus on helping preschoolers develop the early reading and math skills they need to be successful in school. In FY 1995, the Early Head Start program was established to serve children from birth to three years of age in recognition of the mounting evidence that the earliest years matter a great deal to children’s growth and development.

Head Start programs promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families. They engage parents in their children’s learning and help them in making progress toward their educational, literacy and employment goals. Significant emphasis is placed on the involvement of parents in the administration of local Head Start programs.

http://www.nhsa.org/
Current
Community
Solutions:
Head Start

Law Enforcement Benefits
Along with improving the health of its children and families, HS benefits its children and society-at-large by reducing crime and its costs to crime victims. HS children are significantly less likely to have been charged with a crime than their siblings who did not participate in HS.

Economic Benefits
Research shows that HS is a wise investment for society. The preliminary results of a randomly selected longitudinal study of more than 600 HS graduates in San Bernardino County, California, showed that society receives nearly $9 in benefits for every $1 invested in these HS children. These benefits include increased earnings, employment, and family stability, and decreased welfare dependency, crime costs, grade repetition, and special education. Properly trained HS parents can decrease Medicaid costs by $198 per family.

http://www.nhsa.org/

Head Start graduates are more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to need special education, repeat a grade, or commit crimes in adolescence.

Joe Baca
Richmond offers many services to address issues of poverty, lack of health, education and safe homes. These policies are enacted through the city, non-profits, community service agencies and VCU. Many projects are funded through local, state and federal grants. Single parent homes and the disabled are but some of the target groups most in need. Children of those incarcerated currently receive little to no additional resource support during this critical emergency state in their lives. Many of these Richmond children face obstacles in the path of equal opportunity. Social workers in the trenches cite need for still more initiatives. Statistics indicate these services are integral to arresting the cycle of poverty, crime and incarceration. Further, there is a disproportionate amount of African Americans who are socially disenfranchised. Lack of education opportunity, single parenting, low incomes, homelessness, poor health, substance abuse, and neglected neighborhoods stack up, perpetuating a cycle of crime. Once entrenched in the criminal justice system, children of these individuals are thrust further away from resources. These children then identify with the normalcy of having a parent incarcerated, of spending time in the waiting rooms of institutions, or of being removed form parents into a system that is lonely and frightening. This serves to further the perception that this is the available reality they will participate in as adults.

This project proposes the design of an interventive, progressive program. VCU shall facilitate this effort as a civic minded neighbor within its community by expanding and strengthening its current Community Service Associate Program and VCU-Carver Partnership to include a progressive program for incarcerated mothers and their families. The immediate goal of this program shall be to reunite families and assist them into successful re-entry into society. The long term goal of this project shall be to reduce generational recidivism.

A large centralized location would house many of these services and provide administrative space for programs to be enacted. A centralized location would simplify access issues for many clients in need of services. By locating childcare at a site that offers education support and health care opportunities, more families can begin to take advantage of opportunities that foster independence. Children will learn through parental role modelling that education and health are achievable goals, and that community support is a must in today’s world.
Three Phase Program

I. The first phase shall be support services for families caring for a child whose parent is incarcerated. Reduced cost day care and after school care will be provided to ensure caregivers can maintain employment. Families will be eligible for this assistance for up to five years if the incarcerated parent participates in the program as well, and for two years if the parent refuses or remains ineligible to participate. Children here will receive 3 FDA approved meals or snacks per day, Head Start participation and access to gym and library facilities. Caregivers commit to be employed and to participate in 8 hours per month of educational courses for one year. Caregivers commit to participate in 4 hours per month plus 4 hours service and mentorship per month in the subsequent years. These courses shall include health, nutrition, parenting and substance abuse classes. Incarcerated parents shall commit to be sober and shall attend a substance abuse program. Service shall include care of the facilities, volunteer hours, and mentorship of other caregivers.

II. The second phase is for mothers who are incarcerated. These mothers must be serving the last 12 to 18 months of a three to five year sentence. They may not be violent or sexual offenders. They must be at the end of a sentence period to reduce risk of flight. Parents shall be vocationally rehabilitated. They will have two phases of educational courses covering substance abuse, health and nutrition, parenting, job and life skills such as resume writing and checking account management. This progressive program provides them with incentives to spend time with their children on site, utilize the library, computer lab, and gymnasium facilities.

III. The final phase is post incarceration. During this time, for up to two years, children of the incarcerated will remain eligible for subsidized day care in order to facilitate employment and financial self-sufficiency. In order to remain eligible at this point, clients must comply with all requirements of parole and seek gainful employment. They must remain employed and drug and alcohol free. They must participate in 8 hours per month of educational courses and 8 service hours per month. Service hours shall include mentorship of women behind them in this program. These families will remain eligible to use the library, computer and gym facilities.
concept

liminality

*n.* In the liminal state a person transforms from one identity to another. Existing perceptions and behavior are relaxed - a situation which can lead to new perspectives.

*syn.* spaces in-between, threshold
Cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner calls the time between the unknowing and the transformation liminal. Liminal periods occur in ritual when an initiate is removed from his/her previous state of existence to be transformed into his/her next state of existence. In this time, the initiate is “betwixt and between” states. There are no divisions and no categorization for the initiates in this state.

M. Scott Peck says in order for change to happen on the individual level, there must be a membrane, between states, not a clear cut division. There is a requisite membrane through which action may pass for growth to occur.

This space shall be liminal, defying both intrinsic and conscious categorization, segregation and opposition of environment and people. The facility and the program are to be a membrane through which concerted action may occur to transform those in need of service and those providing service, so that mutual awakening and growth may occur.
Le Corbusier coined the term, beton-brut, literally “raw concrete.” Beton-brut is concrete poured and left unfinished, leaving the imprint of the wood or plywood that was its mold. Corbusier’s Unite d’Habite is one of the most notable beton-brut structures known today. Not all Brutalist buildings feature beton-brut. Some are brick or steel structures.

Brutalist buildings feature repetitive angular geometries. Not all Brutalist buildings feature beton-brut, although most do. Some are brick or steel structures, stone or travertine. They are characteristically rough or blocky in appearance, and the expression of its structural materials, forms, and services is located on its exterior.

As a style, Brutalism was interested in expressing social utopia. This is perhaps due to the original use of this style in the Unite and other similar public housing projects, and the subsequent use of the style in educational facilities. The style’s dominant, sturdy geometry and hidden entrances were intended to emulate safety, security and inclusion to those within the space. Brutalist designs also feature exposed function in structure and service features, like Pollak’s exposed pipes, and mechanical work.

Critics complain Brutalism is unfriendly and uncommunicative, not protective. Brutalism is described as disparate from its surroundings; negligent of the social, historic, and architectural qualities of its sited environment.

Despite its utopian ideology, and the resultant popular use in educational facilities, many of the Brutalist style buildings have decayed drastically. Gray, fortress-like concrete is often intimidating. The massive structures are difficult to alter or maintain. Much of the Brutalist style has crumbled. Many of the public housing facilities feature Brutalism have become crime-invested as building conditions have deteriorated. Many Brutalist structures decay due to the difficulty to alter structural needs over time. Pollak is certainly an example of, despite the architect’s attempt to marry its Brutalist style with brick and scale reminiscent of the residential area over which Pollak presides.
I chose the Pollak Building located on 325 Harrison Street. I chose Pollak for its protective courtyard, anonymous entrance, institutional appearance and proximity to VCU. I wanted to redefine what an institutional setting and program might look like. I chose Pollak for its protective courtyard, anonymous entrance, institutional appearance and proximity to VCU. I wanted to redefine what an institutional setting and program might look like. The building was dedicated on Sunday, November 14, 1971. It was named for Teresa Pollak, the university’s first art teacher. Pollak was art instructor from 1928 until 1969. The building was designed by architects Ballou and Justice. The facility is 113,273 square feet of space. It originally housed 60 offices and 27 classroom studios, two reference rooms, a library, and the Glaser Memorial room. At building dedication, the School of the Arts had over 1700 majors and 150 faculty members.

Architects Ballou and Justice designed the Pollak building to complement its neighbors in the residential area around VCU. The structure was elevated to provide a vista as the building is sited at the east end of West Avenue. The interior courtyard was intended to provide additional light for the building. Covered areas in the courtyard were intended to provide exhibit and congregation space. The adjacent theater building today obstructs the architects’ vision for a clear vista. Red brick and light trim were chosen to create harmony with the residential row houses. The scale of the brick panels and windows were also designed to speak to the scale of the residences. This design has been replicated in most newer buildings in proximity to Pollak as well as along the Broad Street corridor. The concrete is finished in the beton-brute style that was popular in the 1960’s and 1970’s.
Architectural Context:

Site location Pollak
Architectural Context:

Existing Conditions, Interior
Architectural Context:
Existing Conditions, Courtyard
Concept
Watercolors
Concept Watercolors
Architectural Context:

Site Analysis

public to private (light to dark)

pass through spaces

pass through spaces

approach
Architectural Context: Site Analysis

- Interlocking spaces
- Configuration of the path
- Centralized organization
- Space within a space
Architectural Context:

Ideation

zoning

column patterns

approach
Architectural Context:

Ideation

zoning

zoning

zoning

zoning
Architectural Context:

Ideation
Architectural Context:

Ideation, Preliminary zoning
In order to accommodate a day program for incarcerated women, a secured zone of the building must be established. Entry into the other portions of the building where space is shared, such as the library, requires sally port entries and 14 gauge steel door frames and 12 gauge steel doors to comply with Virginia code for prison facilities. Entry for incarcerated women will be at the building rear where a secured driveway is offered with the block retaining wall. Elevators shall be secured. Public entrance for families shall be at the front of the building. The lobby shall provide reception adjacent to the door for monitored security. Reception shall house visiting children’s museum exhibits to establish check in as friendly and open to all.
Architectural Context:

Zoning and Entry
Architecture
First Floor

lobby niche
The second floor houses gym facilities including basketball hoops, machines, weights, exercise studios for group exercise and health classes, and locker room facilities.

The two main architectural alterations to the Pollak building address its main design flaws. First, the inability to interact with the courtyard is addressed by opening the balconies up into inside space by converting them into hallway. The courtyard is then reintroduced into the hallway in the form of tree like columns that contrast the linear architecture of the panels in the stair towers. The stair towers feature flooding light which is replicated inside the building through the creation of light wells that bring day lighting down through multiple floors.
Architecture
Third Floor
The teen center features a game room with seating for homework completion, a room with ping-pong tables and offices for on-site social workers/counselors, and a “hang out” room with a stage, projection screen, theater seating, “coffee bar” and conversation pit. The design seeks to promote a safe environment for socializing and activities that are monitored by reliable adult role models.

The wall in the entertainment room and the ceiling in the game room feature 3 Form panels that are back lit. These panels speak to the panels of the stair towers and create an imaginative environment. The “tree” columns serve as walls separating the three large rooms from one another.
The library features a light well that brings light down to the stacks and music carrels featuring XM Radio. Both of these features address the major design issues confronting institutional design—light and sound. Too often, institutions are devoid of light and overwhelming with the loud sounds of group activities. Both the lack of access to true sunlight and the overstimulation of frequently negative sound increase irritation, aggression and depression in the incarcerated.

Here, the light well improves light, in the library, Music carrels offer private access to XM Radio as incentive to women as they progress through the educational portion of the program.
children’s section
Security requirements demand that the mezzanines created by the light wells must have translucent floor to screening walls. Incarcerated persons’ visibility for non-incarcerated persons must be limited to prevent flight and passing of contraband. The light wells built on the roof pass through two floors. The intermediate floors’ mezzanines shall be walled off with 3Form, which allows for the passing of light with the glow of color, yet reduces visibility.
There are two classrooms types in the secured portion of the program. With furnishing provided by Norix, rooms become progressively more comfortable and women move through the educational portion of the program. Nicer furnishings offer women the opportunity to feel deserving of nice things and encourages them to care for their environment.
Architecture
Fourth Floor

classroom
Day care facilities are designed to accommodate 84 children, with 21 each in 4 classroom quadrants. Spaces are designed to be imaginative and fun for both preschoolers and after school care. Spaces are designed for 63 children to participate in Head Start, as facilitated by VCU’s education school. The fourth and fifth floors share indoor playground tubes for inside play. Playgrounds are located on the roof of the fifth floor.
The cafeteria features twisted backlit 3Form along one wall, an open serve bar and seating for 84.
The mezzanine in the computer lab opens up to the library below, and has a 3Form wall that runs from floor to ceiling. The cubicles could have birch plywood organic shaped dividers.
The fifth floor features art and music rooms as well as outside roof gardens. These are designed to offer interaction through play and fine arts for families that might not ordinarily have opportunity to do such things.
The fifth floor hallway is a mezzanine above the cafeteria. It features floor to ceiling 3Form walls and wall toys such as Lego stations. The ceiling, walls and floor are free-form shapes made of rubber tile. Here the organic columns give way to their internal linear form.
Architecture

Columns

Evolution of Columns
As designers we are taught to improve human life through environment by indicating a sensitivity for the physical, cultural, and psychological realms. We are responsible for questioning our current world and propelling progressive solutions into place. Our social responsibilities run deeper than simply promoting green design. It is my hope that we may model design equity for all, even the least of our people. This paradigm for design service ought accelerate future design in concert with environmental and technological advances. Indeed, green and technological advances ought be merely the arms for achieving advanced socially conscious design.
Books
*VCU Special Collections: Pollack File. Plans and Scrapbook.*

Websites (including periodicals)
http://www.dudh.gov.bt/Thimphustructural/intelligenturbanism/1.2/1.2.1.html,
http://www.styleweekly.com/article.asp?idarticle=14169
*There Goes the ‘Hood*: How one of the city’s most lauded urban-renewal programs is re-enforcing Richmond’s racial divide. Scott Bass and Chris Dovi
http://www.styleweekly.com/article.asp?idarticle=14249
*Style Weekly: November 8, 2005. “Collision Course.”*
*The Strategic Plan for VCU: VCU on the Move: A Leader Among Public Urban Research Universities*. www.vcu.edu
http://www.vdh.state.va.us/HealthStats.pdf