



## ***Future IDs at Alcatraz***

### **Project Description**

*Future IDs at Alcatraz* is a year-long exhibition featuring identity-inspired artwork by and with individuals who have conviction histories as they conceive and develop a vision for their future self – their future identity. This exhibit aims to amplify the voices and visions of individuals returning to American life after incarceration through an installation and series of public programs on Alcatraz Island.

All ID-inspired artworks were created by project participants/contributors in conjunction with lead artist, Gregory Sale. The installation will take place at the New Industries Building (NIB) on Alcatraz Island and will be accompanied by a series of monthly public programs (performances, workshops, and symposia), co-curated by local organizations, institutions, and community members. The exhibition and public programs are open to all Alcatraz visitors at no additional charge beyond the price of regular admission tickets/ferry to the Island. Some forums may be limited to specific community members or groups directly impacted by the prison system for in-depth experiences and safe space for discussions.

Please check here for the most up-to-date information:

<https://www.parksconservancy.org/our-work/future-ids-alcatraz>

### **New Industries Building (NIB) history**

The exhibition will fittingly be installed in Alcatraz Island’s New Industries Building. In an era when rehabilitative opportunities were scarce, this former manufacturing facility provided jobs and a chance to consider life after incarceration.

On Alcatraz, work was a privilege. One possible reward for good behavior was a job in the New Industries Building, which opened in 1941. Workers here did laundry for military bases all over the Bay Area and manufactured clothing, gloves, shoes, brushes, and furniture for government use. During World War II, prisoners also made cargo nets for the Navy and repaired the buoys that secured the submarine net across San Francisco Bay.

For some prisoners, work was more than a chance to earn a shortened sentence and a small wage; it was also an escape from the boredom and isolation of the cellhouse and for others, it was the value of being useful. For some, though, it was just another punishing routine, an exploitation of prison labor. Former inmate Jim Quillen remembered his job here as “the most frustrating and boring work I have ever done—before, during, or after my release from prison.”

### **More About Alcatraz**

### **Last Day on Alcatraz**



Excerpt from Cellhouse Audio Tour: Thomspson: “And I remember when dey released me. I had been locked up 15 years and during all this time I never had no visits no letters no nothing. And I’m watchin’ the cars whizzin’ by and the people walkni’, everythin’ was, uh, movin’ too fast, and I didn’ know how to move wid it. And I remember how envious I was of these people because dey all had a destination; dey’re all going someplace, and I didn’ know where I was goin’. And I was scared to death.” [sic])

### **From Prison to National Park**

Beyond its notoriety as a world-famous former federal penitentiary (1934-63) that once held criminals like Al Capone, Alcatraz has undergone numerous incarnations that have contributed to its unique and deeply-layered history. First known by native peoples who inhabited the Bay Area more than 10,000 years ago, the island was recognized for its strategic value as a military fortress in the Civil War era and served as the West Coast’s first lighthouse, and later catalyzed the Native American Red Power movement with the revolutionary occupation by the Indians of All Tribes from 1969 to 1971. In 1972, Congress created the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and Alcatraz Island was included as part of this new National Park Service unit. The Island was opened to the public in the fall of 1973 and has now become one of the most popular visitor destinations in the world, attracting more than 1.6 million people each year, as well as a habitat for seabirds.

It is the responsibility of the National Park Service to preserve and interpret all the important resources and themes of the Rock, drawing from its layered history to learn from our past and better understand contemporary issues. In 2017, it received designation as an International Site of Consciousness. The idea for designated sites of consciousness is described on the website as: The need to remember often competes with the equally strong pressure to forget. Even with the best of intentions – such as to promote reconciliation after deeply divided events by “turning the page” – erasing the past can prevent new generations from learning critical lessons and destroy opportunities to build a peaceful future. A Site of Conscience is a place of memory – such as a historic site, place-based museum or memorial – that prevents this erasure from happening to ensure a more just and humane future.

### **Native American Civil Rights Movement**

From November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1969 to June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1971, Alcatraz was occupied by Native Americans. Many different tribes, led in large part by Richard Oakes, adopted the name "Indians of All Tribes" and claimed the Island. Many of the occupiers were college students, recruited through American Indian Studies Center at ULCA. The occupation drew media attention around the world and raised awareness of the Native communities in the United States. Towards the end of the 19 months, public interest in the occupation waned and order among those remaining on the Island began to deteriorate. Soon, little support could be found. In January 1971, President Nixon gave the go ahead to develop a removal plan. On June 10, 1971, armed federal marshals, FBI agents, and special forces police swarmed the island and removed five women, four children, and six unarmed Indian men. The occupation was over.



Because of the occupation, either directly or indirectly, the official government policy of termination of Indian tribes was ended and a policy of Indian self-determination became the official US government policy. President Nixon returned Blue Lake and 48,000 acres of land to the Taos Indians. Occupied lands near Davis, California would become home to a Native American university. The occupation of Bureau of Indian Affairs offices in Washington, D.C. would lead to the hiring of Native Americans to work in the federal agency that had such a great effect on their lives. The underlying goals of the Indians on Alcatraz were to awaken the American public to the reality of the plight of the first Americans and assert the need for Indian self-determination. Alcatraz may have been lost to them, but the occupation gave birth to a political movement that continues to challenge stereotypes and persecution today.