

Lucia Geng



*This is a screenshot of my podcast tracks from Audacity, the audio editing software I used.*

For my final project, I created a podcast episode that explores the questions of “*what does mass incarceration mean in this moment?*” and “*what can we, as people (and UChicago students) who care about the issue, do about it?*” I started off the episode with clips of news anchors talking about the coronavirus crisis within jails and prisons, so that the listener could get a general idea of how bad the situation is, especially if they haven’t really thought about mass incarceration before. (I pictured my listeners being mostly people my age who care about injustice, but don’t necessarily go out of their way to think about the injustice of mass incarceration.)

Then, I interspersed audio clips from interviews I did with three people who do work related to mass incarceration. The first person I talked to was Keri Blakinger, a reporter for The Marshall Project, a nonprofit newsroom that does journalism about the criminal legal system. She is also a formerly incarcerated person, and we talked about how the stay-at-home orders have been terrifying and miserable for her, since she’s been getting flashbacks to her time in solitary confinement. We also talked about what prison conditions are like on the inside right now, since she’s been getting lots of jail mail from currently incarcerated people, and also talked about the power of the press to effect change.

The second person I talked to was Alex Ding, an organizer with Parole Illinois, a group that organizes with incarcerated people to raise awareness of Illinois’ broken parole system, and to strive for a more humane system. She talked about how Parole Illinois, along with the Illinois Prison Project, have been sponsoring clemency teach-in trainings open to anyone. Alex is also a filmmaker, so she also discussed filmmaking’s imaginative powers.

Finally, I talked to Orlando Mayorga, a re-entry coordinator for Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation, on the South Side of Chicago. He talked about how he got interested in doing re-entry work as a formerly incarcerated person, and also about the importance of helping people who are re-entering society at a time like this get their IDs so they can acquire employment and transition back smoothly.