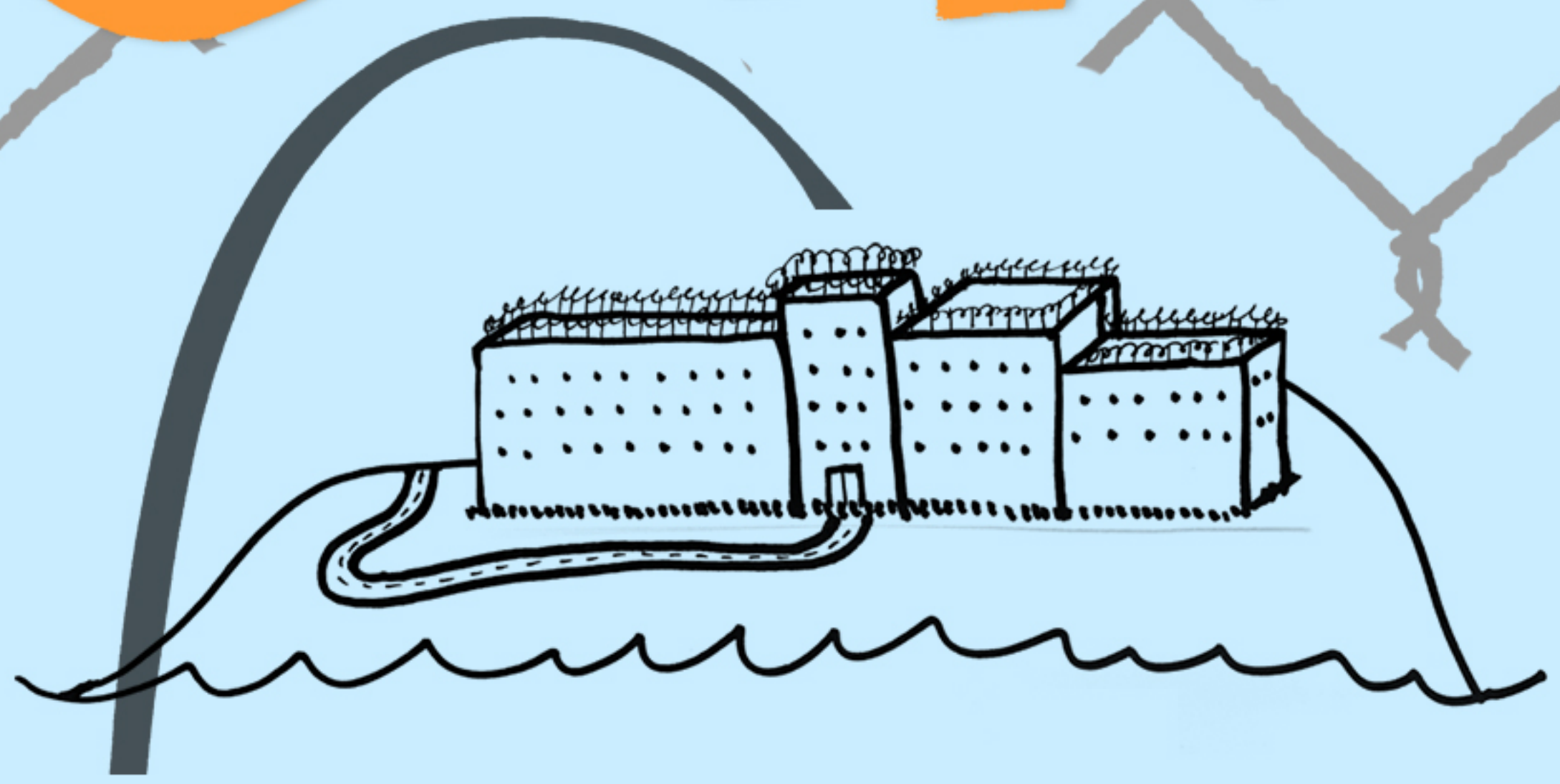
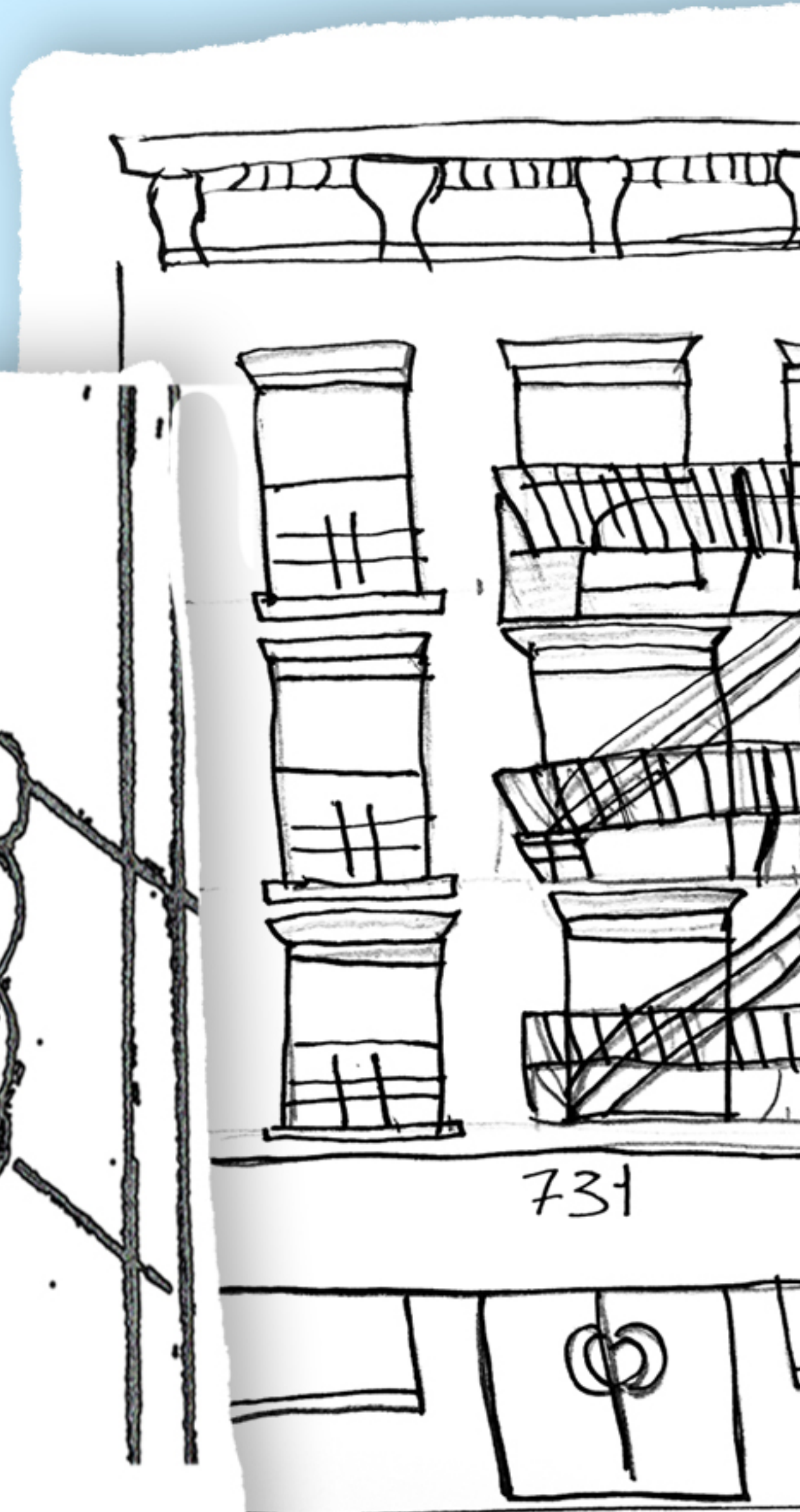
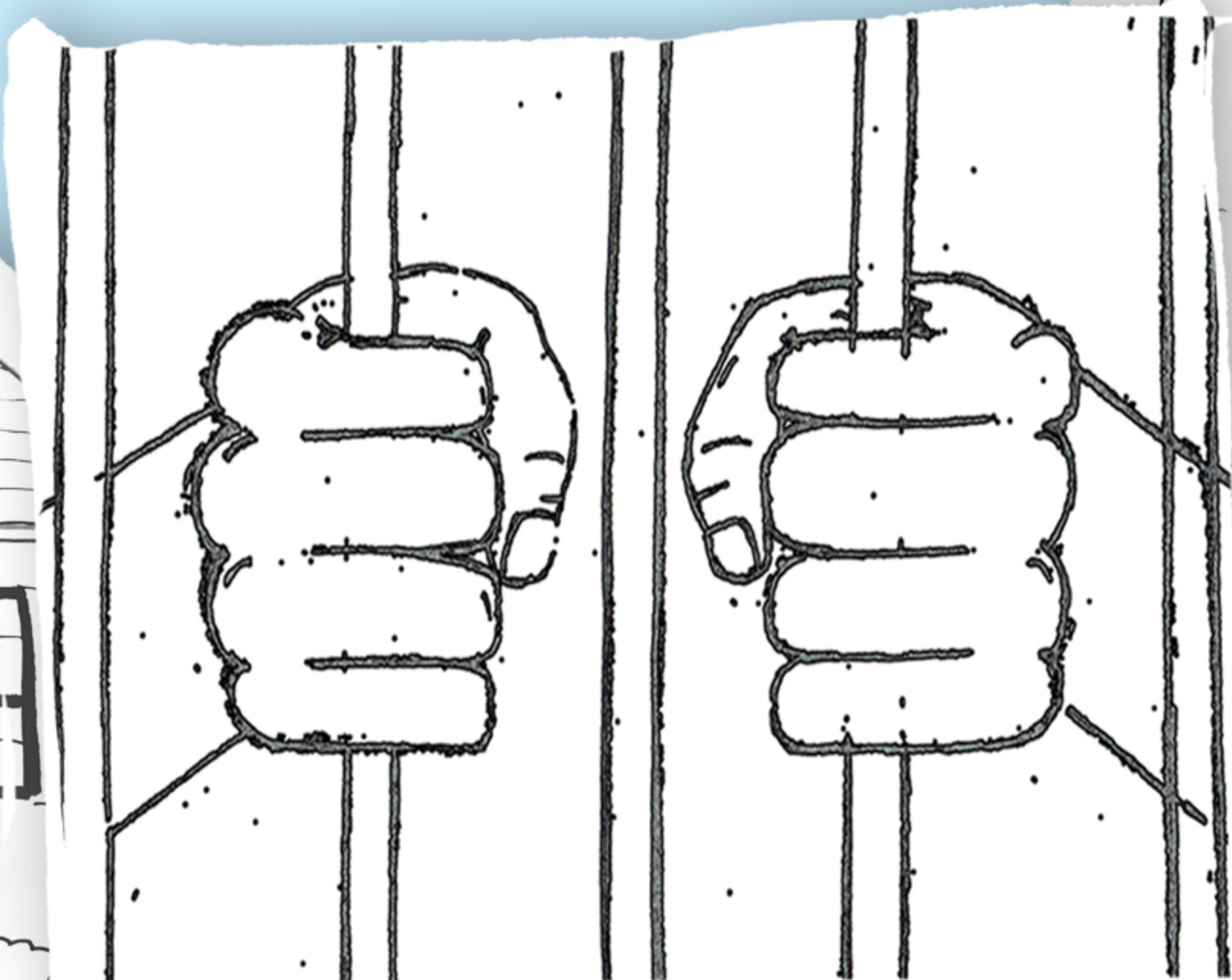


# FROM CELLBLOCK TO YOUR BLOCK



As NYC prepares to close Rikers Island, who decides where new jails get built?

SP





# FROM CELLBLOCK TO YOUR BLOCK

In March 2017, New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio pledged to close the Rikers Island jail complex within 10 years and introduced plans to build four new “borough-based” jails in the city.

Who decides where new jails get built? How do jails impact surrounding neighborhoods? How do jails impact the incarcerated, their families, and their communities?

CUP collaborated with Teaching Artist Stephen Kwok and public high school students from Life Sciences Secondary School to investigate these questions. Students created public art interventions, surveyed community members near the Manhattan Detention Complex, and interviewed key stakeholders working on the issue. This booklet is a guide to what students learned about NYC's jails and their impact on local communities.



## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JAIL AND PRISON?

Prisons are run by the federal and state governments. Prisons hold people who have been convicted of a crime and usually have sentences longer than one year.

Jails are run by the local government and usually hold people who are awaiting trial.

In reality, there are many different places where people can be detained. In New York City there are over 40 detention sites. These include juvenile detention centers, immigration detention centers, and medical and psychiatric centers.

In 2017, the daily incarcerated population in New York City averaged around 9,000. The vast majority of this population is held on Rikers Island.



To see a map of NYC detention sites and other criminal justice facilities, visit [urbanomnibus.net/2017/11/map-location-justice/](http://urbanomnibus.net/2017/11/map-location-justice/)



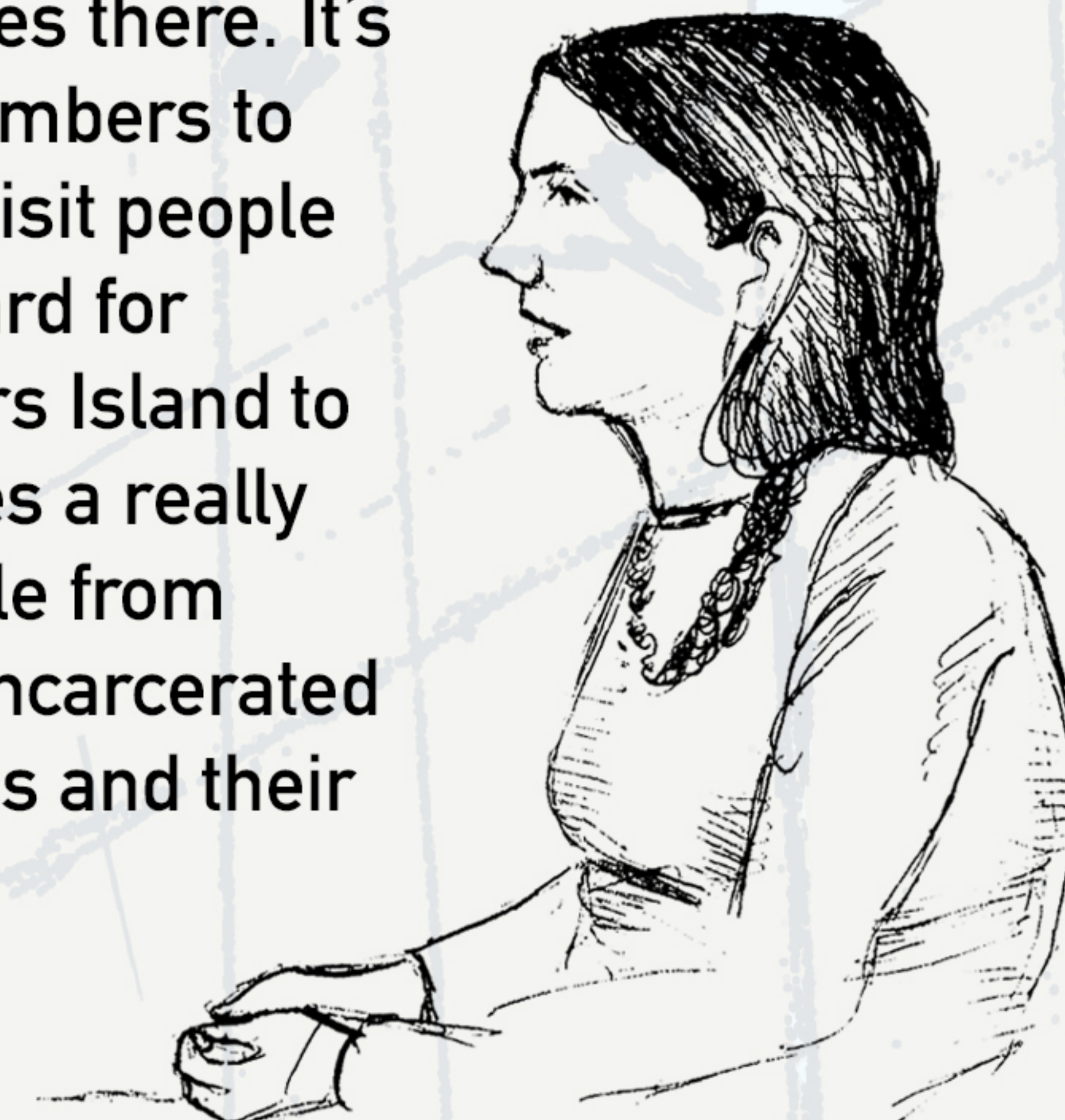
Rikers Island incarcerates about 9,000 people a day in 10 jail facilities. An average of 100,000 people are admitted to Rikers annually.



# WHY ARE PEOPLE CALLING FOR RIKERS ISLAND TO CLOSE?

## ISOLATION

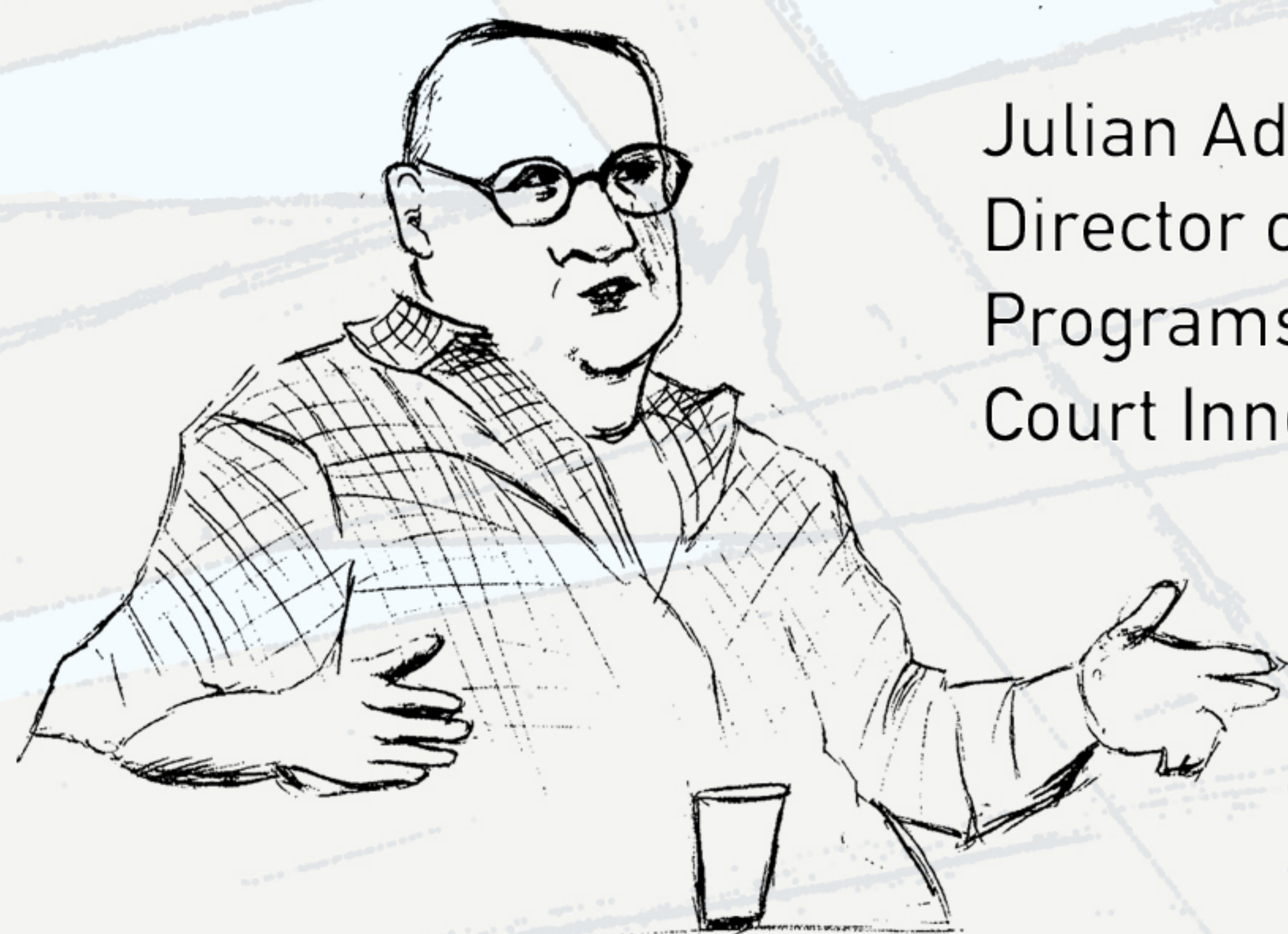
“There’s one bus that goes there. It’s very hard for family members to get to Rikers Island to visit people in detention. It’s very hard for attorneys to get to Rikers Island to visit their clients. It takes a really long time to bring people from Rikers Island who are incarcerated there to their court dates and their court hearings.”



Dana Kaplan,  
Executive Director, Youth and Strategic Initiatives,  
The Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice

## VIOLENCE

“Rikers is an environment where you’re likely to be brutalized, where you’re likely to leave certainly more traumatized and potentially more likely to engage in criminal conduct than when you got there in the first place. You’ve been separated from your family, you’ve been separated from your school, potentially lost your job, maybe you’ve lost your housing, you haven’t seen your kids, they may not have a caretaker and now they’re in foster care.”



Julian Adler,  
Director of Policy and  
Programs, the Center for  
Court Innovation

## INHUMANE CONDITIONS

“[The idea of] ‘out of sight, out of mind’ contributes to the deteriorating conditions of the facilities and treatment we might consider inhumane.”

Keith Powers,  
New York City Council  
Member, District 4



To learn more about the campaign to close Rikers Island, visit [CLOSErikers.org](http://CLOSErikers.org)



# WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO CLOSING RIKERS ISLAND?

IT'S EXPENSIVE TO BUILD NEW JAILS.



"[The estimated cost] is over 10 billion dollars and it's a lot of money... We should not put a pure dollar amount on keeping people safe and offering people actual justice."

- Keith Powers



NYC HAS TO CUT ITS JAIL POPULATION IN HALF.

"There's over 9,000 people in jail right now, which is the lowest its been in 35 years, but that's still a lot."

- Dana Kaplan

THIS INVOLVES CHANGING WHY PEOPLE GET ARRESTED AND PROSECUTED.



"This whole plan kind of hinges on changing the hearts and minds of a lot of people including judges who sit in courtrooms and make decisions about pre-trial detention, prosecutors who make decisions about charging and who ask for **bail**, police in terms of who they arrest...versus writing a ticket to appear in court."

- Julian Adler

"Nationwide, over 60% of the jail population is pre-trial ... They haven't been convicted of a crime. They are sitting in jail, in most instances because they can't afford to pay bail. And in New York City, [that number] is over 70%."

- Julian Adler

To learn more about NYC's bail system, visit [welcometoCUP.org/Projects/UrbanInvestigations/WhoMakesBail](http://welcometoCUP.org/Projects/UrbanInvestigations/WhoMakesBail)

# WHAT'S THE BOROUGH-BASED JAIL PLAN?

WHERE WILL THEY GO?

"The City has identified four locations [for the new jails]. Three are existing jail facilities in downtown Brooklyn, lower Manhattan, and in Kew Gardens in Queens. A fourth location has been identified in the Bronx."

- Dana Kaplan



Concord Ave / 141 st

The Bronx



Near Kew Gardens

Queens



Brooklyn

275 Atlantic Ave

Chinatown

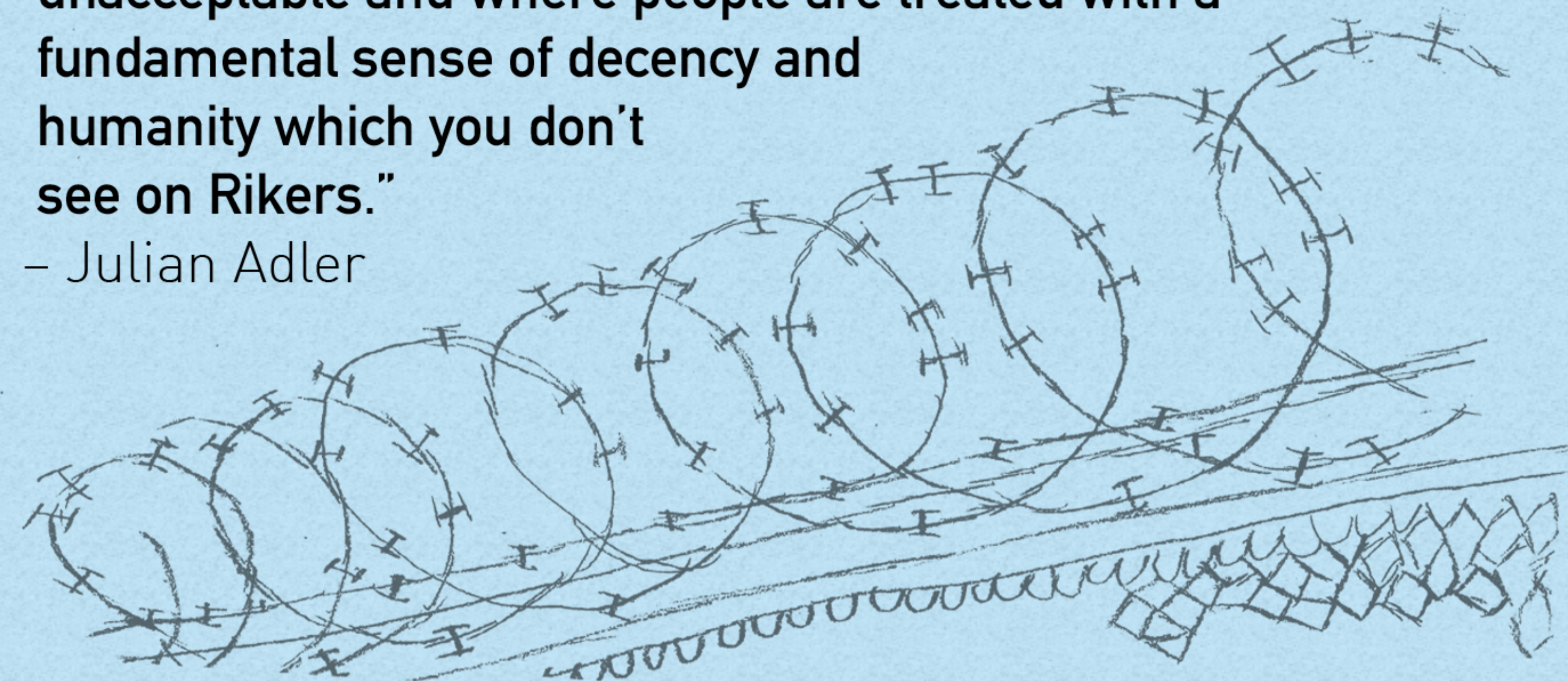
Manhattan

\* Proposed location for new jail

WHY BUILD NEW JAILS AT ALL?

"The idea is to create humane institutions that are close to family, close to court, close to community, and attempt to change the culture of the place to one where violence is unacceptable and where people are treated with a fundamental sense of decency and humanity which you don't see on Rikers."

- Julian Adler





# WHO DECIDES WHERE JAILS ARE BUILT?

“An independent commission called the Lippman Commission recommended doing the four borough-based facilities and recommended using the existing facilities. The Mayor’s Office recommended the four [proposed] locations. Now it’s up to the elected state officials and stakeholders to say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to these facilities and then in the fall put them into a review process by which the elected officials ultimately have to vote on.” – Keith Powers



## THE MAYOR

The Mayor has the power to close existing jails and propose the location of new jails.

## CITY COUNCIL

Council Members review input from community boards and local residents on how to use city-owned land and money. The City Council casts the deciding vote on where to build new jails.

## THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

City agencies such as the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice and the Department of City Planning review where new jails could be built and how they should be designed. They send their recommendations to the Mayor.

## COMMUNITY BOARDS

Community Boards review city plans and make recommendations to the City Council. Find your Community Board at [nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml).

## THE LIPPMAN COMMISSION

Made up of judges, law enforcement officials, academics, and community activists, the commission concluded that Rikers Island should be closed forever and proposed new, borough-based jails. To learn more about the Lippman Commission, visit [morejustnyc.org](http://morejustnyc.org).

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Community members can speak at community board meetings, contact their elected representatives, and organize other stakeholders.

This review process is called ULURP. To learn more about ULURP, visit [welcometoCUP.org/Projects/EnvisioningDevelopment/WhatIsULURP](http://welcometoCUP.org/Projects/EnvisioningDevelopment/WhatIsULURP)



# IN THE BOROUGHS: WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“The most challenging part is making sure that there is review and feedback and involvement of many different people, groups, organizations.”

Ifeoma Ebo,  
Senior Design  
Advisor for the  
Mayor’s Office of  
Criminal Justice



In May 2018, students surveyed Chinatown residents near the Manhattan Detention Complex.

“I wouldn’t mind having a jail nearby because I think it could make the area safer. Besides I didn’t even know there was one right here! So it seems like they can blend into the neighborhood.”

- Chinatown resident



## WHAT ABOUT STATEN ISLAND?

“There is no plan to site a jail in Staten Island, and I’m pretty sure that’s because there [was] a lot of pushback from folks who did not want to see a jail in their community.” - Julian Adler

In May 2018, Bronx residents and local elected officials protested at the proposed site for the new jail that would house 1,500 inmates.

“YES to jobs! YES to fresh food! YES to economic revitalization! And NO to the jail at this site!”  
- Arline Parks, Community Activist, at the Mott Haven NYPD Tow Pound, May 1, 2018



Protestors say the community has not been involved in the decision of where to build the new Bronx-based jail.

“Any new site for a jail in this borough must be thoroughly vetted, and the people of the Bronx and their elected leadership must have meaningful say in its selection.”

- Ruben Diaz Jr., Bronx Borough President,  
at the Mott Haven NYPD Tow Pound, May 1, 2018

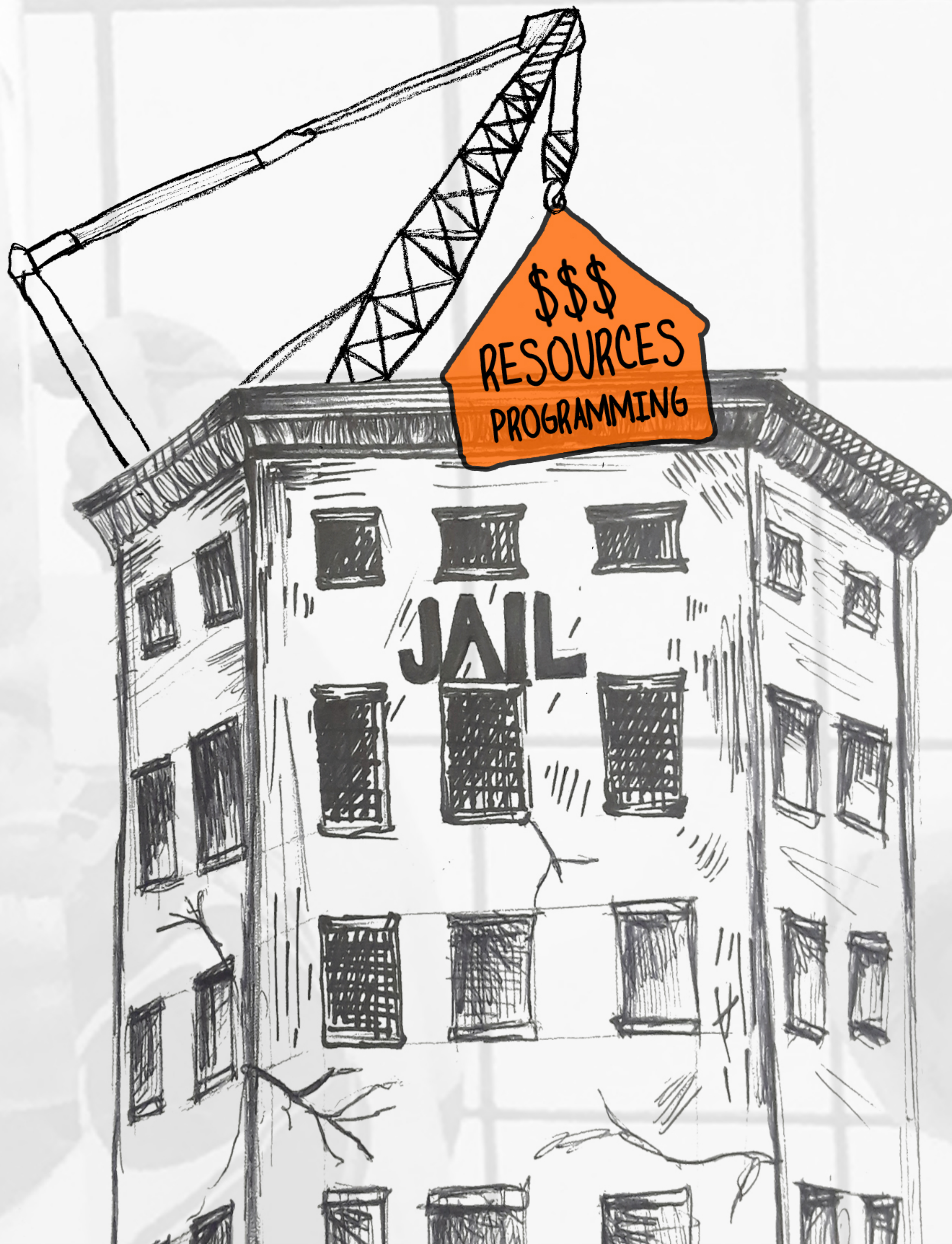


# BEYOND JAIL

Building new jails alone can't solve all the problems on Rikers Island. Here are some ideas to make the criminal justice system more fair and humane.

## INVEST IN WELL MAINTAINED FACILITIES

"As we transition away from Rikers Island we [need to ensure] fair and humane treatment of people that are in our jails; that we have good conditions and good facilities; and that the people working there...are safe and treated fairly." - Keith Powers



## REDUCE INCARCERATION

"In the early nineties there were over 20,000 people on Rikers a day. At the end of [2017] the number dipped down below 9,000...At the end of 2017, crime [was] at an all time low in New York City... Incarceration doesn't equal public safety and you can both reduce crime and incarceration." - Julian Adler

## PROVIDE ACCESS TO RESOURCES

"A safe space is a space where you have access to many different resources [and] it can be used by many people in the community. It could be connected to health and wellness. It could be connected to employment opportunities. It could be connected to recreation and just fun." - Ifeoma Ebo

## KEEP FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES CONNECTED

"We should use incarceration and detention as sparingly as possible, but when there is detention and incarceration, there should still be an ability for people to stay connected with loved ones and the community." - Dana Kaplan



## INVOLVE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN DECISIONS ON PUBLIC SAFETY

"[We need to] help both agencies and community stakeholders and empower them to do this work on their own and to work collaboratively... Research shows that is the most effective way of addressing crime prevention on a neighborhood level." - Ifeoma Ebo





# WHAT STUDENTS SAY

"After conducting interviews with City Council members and the Mayor's Office, I have gotten new insight into how our city serves its people."



Ana Rodriguez

"At first I was against the plan to build smaller jails. I thought they would be a bad addition to the neighborhood. After our research and interviews, I think the new plan is an interesting way to think about incarceration."



Ana Ines Rodriguez

"I am grateful for this program and the awareness of prison versus jails conditions. I never used to think about what the incarcerated go through. This made me want to participate in criminal justice reform in the not-so-far future."



Oumou Bah

"I learned that there are many different people involved in making decisions about where jails are built."



Josselyn Gualpa

"I've learned that in order to be active and engaged in your society, you must acknowledge the problems around you."



Emily Ramirez



Ania Anis

"The incarcerated live a tough life in poor living conditions. I believe everyone should get a second chance."

"Through our research and engagement with community members, I was able to understand multiple perspectives on the issue of incarceration."

Shamsa Roshan



Mariana Rodriguez



"After debating it in together, I now feel the plan of building smaller jails will help decrease the population of inmates in New York and ultimately decrease violence."





**The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)** is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities.

This project is one of CUP's **Urban Investigations** – project-based afterschool programs in which high school students explore fundamental questions about how the city works. Students collaborate with CUP and Teaching Artists to create multimedia teaching tools that reach audiences in the fields of arts and social justice. To learn more about CUP, visit [welcometoCUP.org](http://welcometoCUP.org).

**CUP**

Teaching Artist: Stephen Kwok

Project Lead: Fielding Hong

**Life Sciences Secondary School**

Principal: Kim Swanson

Parent Coordinator: Cecilia Marshall

**Students:**

Ania Anis, Oumou Bah,  
Josselyn Gualpa, Emily  
Ramirez, Ana Rodriguez,  
Ana Ines Rodriguez,  
Mariana Rodriguez,  
Shamsa Roshan

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