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BUILDING BRIDGES WITH INCARCERATED AND FORMERLY INCARCERATED SCHOLARS

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Through the Fall 2020-Spring 2021 academic year, Dr. Timothy Barnett has guided me through a research fellowship focused on his upcoming edited volume, entitled *Building Bridges and Crossing Borders: From Incarceration to the Front Lines of Justice*. Many incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people are transcending borders and building bridges with communities on the outside, with the collective goal of fighting injustice, imagining a world with plausible alternatives to mass incarceration. The objective of this research project is to provide a much-needed opportunity for prison scholars looking to publish their work and further establish important intellectual and interpersonal connections with those outside, and, perhaps more importantly, for us to learn from the invaluable contributions they have made to academia, one that needs to be further amplified. This book will be both co-edited and written by a collective of incarcerated students. The result of our work is the progress we have thus made on the volume, which I intend to detail in my presentation.

Working with Dr. Barnett on this project, I have grown an understanding of some key elements that go into creating an edited volume. This experience has also strengthened my thesis project, which studies the importances and challenges of higher education programs in prisons. I intend to spend the first part of my presentation introducing the NEIU education program onsite at Stateville Correctional Center, sharing its history and how this experience has impacted my studies. Then, I will highlight some work created by our prison scholars, presenting an overview of the book project and the methods we have used to collect and review proposals by incarcerated writers. I will end by sharing details of how this experience has informed my thesis.