UC Santa Cruz Institute of the Arts and Sciences (IAS) is pleased to announce its upcoming exhibition Barring Freedom, opening at San José Museum of Art. Featuring the works of important U.S. artists whose work engages the criminal justice system, Barring Freedom is organized by curators Rachel Nelson and Alexandra Moore for the IAS in collaboration with San José Museum of Art.

Barring Freedom will be on view at San José Museum of Art October 23, 2020 through March 21, 2021.

Barring Freedom brings together work by some of the most influential contemporary artists in the United States to challenge the ways in which people see and understand the complex nexus of policing, surveillance, imprisonment, and detention that makes up the nation’s prison industrial complex. With more than two million incarcerated people, a majority of them black or brown, virtually all of them from poor communities, the prison industrial complex reveals a troubled vision at the heart of the United States. Barring Freedom considers the strategies artists use to reveal this vision and to imagine alternatives to our fundamentally flawed criminal justice system.

On October 20, 2020, Visualizing Abolition, conversation between Angela Y. Davis and Gina Dent, will be the first of an online series of speaking events organized with Dr. Dent in conjunction with Barring Freedom.

Barring Freedom reflects Professor Emerita Angela Y. Davis’s enduring legacy at UC Santa. In the decades that Dr. Davis has been a powerful voice for prison abolition, she has consistently named the long image history of policing, prisons, and
courtrooms as a profound obstacle to abolishing racist injustices in the United States:

"The prison is one of the most important features of our image environment. This has caused us to take the existence of prisons for granted. The prison has become a key ingredient of our common sense. It is there, all around us. We do not question whether it should exist. It has become so much a part of our lives that it requires a great feat of the imagination to envision life beyond the prison." (Angela Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete?, 2003)

Barring Freedom and the accompanying events assemble artists and creative practitioners who challenge the visions of white supremacy that maintain the U.S. criminal justice system. In this way, Barring Freedom answers Dr. Davis’ call not only for different images of the prison industrial complex, but for “a great feat of the imagination.”

First COVID-19, with its unequal consequences, and now the horrific deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade (and many more…), have put the spotlight on structural racism and its brutal effects. Barring Freedom and related programming aims to keep that attention focused, while also emphasizing the importance of artists and creative practitioners in imagining a world beyond prisons.

**Artists:** American Artist; Sadie Barnette; Sanford Biggers; Keith Calhoun and Chandra McCormick; Sonya Clark; Sharon Daniel; Maria Gaspar; Ashley Hunt; Dee Hibbert-Jones; Titus Kaphar and Reginald Dwayne Betts; Deana Lawson; Sherrill Roland; Dread Scott; jackie sumell; Hank Willis Thomas; Patrice Renee Washington; Levestor Williams.