

PRESS RELEASE

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**NJCH Awards 2024 Stanley N. Katz Prize for Excellence in Public Humanities to
Ritual4Return**

*Newark-based organization blends humanities and performance to create a healing rite of
passage for citizens returning from incarceration*

(Camden, NJ) – The New Jersey Council for the Humanities (NJCH) has announced the recipient of the 2024 Stanley N. Katz Prize for Excellence in Public Humanities, as well an honorable mention. Ritual4Return was awarded the top prize in recognition of its program offering an intensive 12-week healing workshop incorporating storytelling, theater, literature, and rites of passage for citizens returning from incarceration.

The program focuses on helping returning citizens shape and share their stories to dispel negative stereotypes about people who have been incarcerated and release the feelings of shame and stigma often resulting from trauma experienced before, during, and after incarceration.

It culminates with a one-time-only public ritual marking and celebrating the end of incarceration and the beginning of an individual's new identity within the community. This rite of passage is the centerpiece of a one-day gathering that aims to extend the conversation to family members, loved ones, and other community stakeholders.

“This project uses deeply humanistic approaches to address a modern crisis. The results are moving and inspiring and make a significant impact on both program participants and on the audiences who bear witness to the participants’ stories,” said Carin Berkowitz, Ph.D., executive director of NJCH.

In addition to the top prize, an honorable mention was given to the Save Ancient Studies Alliance (SASA) for its Archaeogaming Education initiative, which uses video games to make ancient studies more accessible and engaging for a variety of educational audiences.

The Katz Prize is named in honor of Stanley N. Katz, a longtime faculty member at Princeton University and former NJCH Board Chair. The prize carries with it a cash award of \$5,000. It is awarded annually and is supported by private donations. To learn more about the 2024 awardees, the namesake of the prize, and how to support future efforts, visit <https://njhumanities.org/katz-prize>.