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ALCATRAZ INTRODUCES NEW ART INSTALLATION FROM NELSON SAIERS

(San Francisco, CA – June 6, 2016) --- Alcatraz, best known for the historic federal penitentiary and occupation by the Indians of All Tribes, also has a long tradition of welcoming artists to provoke thought about freedom and incarceration. Starting in mid-July, the National Park Service and Nelson Saiers—artist and math Ph.D.— are opening an installation called "*Shortening: Making Irrational Rational.*" The exhibit will be installed in the New Industries Building, which will be open from 15 July, 2016 to 15 January, 2017, 11AM to 2PM daily. Access to the exhibit is included in the ferry price and can be purchased at Alcatrazcruises.com.

Shortening: Making Irrational Rational incorporates properties of the number Pi, prison vernacular and NFL football jerseys to weigh in on the "irrationally" long prison sentences given for minor, nonviolent drug offenses and the need to shorten those sentences. The installation will show the first 200 digits of PI on 100 NFL football jerseys.



In prison, long sentences are often referred to as "football numbers" because the duration in years resembles numbers on a football jersey. An irrational number is one that never ends nor repeats—like the vast majority of numbers, Pi has this property. The number on the football jerseys that was formed by truncating Pi's infinitely long string of digits down to its first 200 is rational. Hence, by shortening Pi we have

turned it from an irrational to rational number and by analogue by shortening these "irrationally" long prison sentences we will be making them "rational." The jerseys will be "hung out to dry" (they will be attached to hemp line with clothes pins), which is an appropriate description of society's unfair treatment of these offenders. The choice of Pi (and its inherent relation to the circle) also points to the cyclical nature of prisons and poverty.

While there have been some recent reforms, the United States (with only 4.5% of the world's population) incarcerates approximately 22% of the world's prisoners, leading the world's incarceration rate, an ironic statistic for the "Land of the Free." It costs the country over \$74 billion—some of which goes to private prisons with quotas. Despite being closed for over 50 years, Alcatraz is the most visible and recognizable prison in the USA, attracting media coverage, filmmakers and tourists.

"The Rock" is best known as an inescapable island designed to imprison military and federal convicts. It was viewed as a place that would protect us from villains who would not abide by society's laws. Unfortunately, today's highly privatized and oversubscribed prison system imprisons many for durations that are disproportionate to the crimes they have committed. Most of these are not career criminals but often people with few options who made bad decisions—after becoming felons, they often have no options and the cycle continues. This highly visible and striking installation, in the unique context of Alcatraz, would shine a powerful lens on the issue.

Other elements of the installation are designed to give visitors an opportunity to learn more about this storied venue. The first 200 digits of Pi include the number 85 which is shown on a Chicago Bears' jersey. It turns out 85 was the prison number of Al Capone who rose to infamy as boss of the famous Chicago Outfit. Native American activism plays an important part of Alcatraz's storied history and one that Saiers chose to highlight by painting over the derogatory word "Redskin" on Washington football jerseys.

For more information about the exhibit and to book access to Alcatraz Island, please visit www.alcatrazcruises.com.

Alcatraz Cruises is the National Park Service concessioner of ferry service to Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. Alcatraz Cruises hosts nearly 1.5 million visitors annually. Alcatraz Cruises designed, built and operates the first hybrid ferry in the United States. The Hornblower Hybrid's revolutionary design has reduced fuel consumption by 75% and has already begun to be implemented in other parts of the country. For more information visit: www.alcatrazcruises.com.

Nelson Saiers is an artist based in New York City. Saiers previously worked in finance, where he managed a hedge fund. He earned his Ph.D. in Mathematics from the University of Virginia at the age of 23. Saiers lived through wars in Ethiopia and Afghanistan and uses his math-based art to address life's mysteries. For more on his artwork, visit www.nelsonsaiers.com.