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Hello, my name is Laura and I'm currently serving my 50-life sentence in the largest women's prison in the world, CCWF. When I committed my crime at 24 years old, I was totally ignorant to our justice system and the conditions of confinement people face in jail and prison. I ~~is~~ have a terrible knack for learning things the hard way.

I'm 29 now, and next year when I turn 30 I'll have both ~~an~~ an elderly parole date and a youth offender parole date. Either way I know I must earn my freedom, and I work towards that every day. I'm uncomfortably aware of the psychological control games and policies I must live under, and I don't want to be an 'institutionalized ward of the state for the rest of my life. I like to believe I'm not a disposable human being. I want to prove I'm so much more than the worst moment of my life, so I do my

best moving forward, living my ammends.

I do pay attention to how prisoners are portrayed in the media, the general ideas are so naive its both laughable and annoying. No, I don't belong to a "prison family", I'm not physically or romantically involved with anyone in here and I have no desire to be. I'm clean and sober, I still have only the two tattoos I came in with (which aren't visible unless I choose them to be), and I have no fears of walking around here on my own. I don't have debts to my peers and I don't care for contraband, I just want to live right & be rehabilitated so I'll be found suitable for parole someday. I know this will take time and effort, challenge accepted.

I take recovery groups for my mental health issues, my past history of substance abuse, and to address my trauma associated to being a survivor

of domestic violence and sexual abuse - my victim was my abuser. I'm working to continue my college education, I have a job in maintenance (plant operations) to build a reputation for having a good work ethic and to acquire skills I may need to depend on to gain employment in the free world some day. Working a job that requires physical labor helps me to cope with my time, but I am concerned for my long term physical health. The material living conditions combined with the daily long term stress of incarceration isn't a healthy recipe. Most of my peers have health problems that are only made worse while being here, I'm very worried to become injured or ill. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

I do what I can to keep my mind active; I read books daily, I'll watch world news and lots of PBS, I do drawings and write often. I maintain my sense of humor, I try to positively engage my peers,

and help those who aren't as articulate and literate as I am to navigate this bureaucratic maze from hell that is CDCR.

I feel incredibly lucky and blessed to have outside support, prison would be infinitely more difficult to live in without the emotional and financial support I have.

I'm drawn to contribute to A.P.W.A. because I think there isn't anywhere near the public exposure needed for our society to fully and responsibly address the issues surrounding mass incarceration. It took a lot of reassurance and time for my ~~other~~ significant other in the free world to understand what prison was really like, because the available information was so scarce. I hope my contributions can be of service to as many people as possible, I feel a profound sense of duty to positively impact my community, because I know I've been a source of pain, anger and hate.