



# AMERICAN PRISON WRITING ARCHIVE

American Prison Writing Archive  
Johns Hopkins University  
3400 N. Charles St.  
Baltimore, MD 21218

The United States incarcerates more of its people than any other nation on earth. Yet there has been no central location where the public, policy makers, students or researchers can engage with the firsthand experience of incarcerated people and prison workers. The American Prison Writing Archive is an internet-based, digital archive of nonfiction essays offering firsthand testimony to the conditions experienced by people who are impacted by the carceral system.

Anyone who has lived or volunteered inside American jails or prisons can contribute to the APWA. We are open to a wide variety of styles and topics, but all submitted essays must draw on firsthand experience.

Incarcerated people created the demand for the APWA. The APWA evolved from a book project completed in 2014 with the publication of *Fourth City: Essays from the Prison in America*. The submission deadline for that book passed in the fall of 2012, but essays kept coming. The APWA is not a blog or a passing social media site. From its beginning, the APWA has observed the standards in library and archiving technologies to maintain a stable and sustainable platform for sharing first-person witness to prison conditions.

Scanned (photographic) images of submissions are posted on the APWA's website, while hardcopies are filed to assure their long-term preservation. The text of submissions is transcribed by volunteers across the U.S. and in several other countries, allowing readers to search for writing about topics of interest.

People visit the APWA site for a broad range of reasons, but the APWA's intention is to help readers to better understand the social, physical, and psychic effects of American imprisonment from those who know it best—incarcerated people. APWA readers include students, researchers, family members of incarcerated people, and the broad public. Reading APWA essays is regularly assigned to students across the U.S. and abroad, in fields such as political science, sociology, law, and government.

## TOPICS

All topics related to incarceration are of interest. We are open to any testimony about the issues that matter to incarcerated people, their loved ones, teachers, and volunteers. We value writing that takes thoughtful positions even on passionately felt ideas. See the following list for samples of some of the topics previously covered:

- Descriptions of sources of stress
- Ways of coping
- Causes of violence and ways to reduce it
- Physical conditions
- Health care
- Education (self-directed, facility programs, by mail)
- Employment and labor
- The aging prison population
- Experiences in youth detention
- Descriptions of the path to prison
- Reflections on the work of dealing with time inside
- The challenges of physical and psychological survival
- The politics and economics of mass incarceration
- What works, what doesn't work, and why
- Better ways to operate (personally, politically, institutionally)

## FORMAT

- All content should be formed into first-person, nonfiction writing addressed to a broad readership.
- Length should be limited to less than 5,000 words (15 pages typed and double-spaced, or 25 pages handwritten).
- Clearly handwritten pages are welcome. Please use pen, if possible.
- The APWA is not currently accepting fiction, and accepts poetry only when related to criminal justice experience.
- The APWA does not post material addressed to third parties, such as legal documents, letters or grievances.
- Please do not use the full names of other incarcerated people.
- The APWA reserves the right to redact or reject work that advocates violence, names names in ongoing legal cases, or libels named individuals.
- The APWA does not offer editorial, promotional, or legal services. If your primary aim is to get your work before agents and publishers, please seek other outlets.
- Submissions are scanned and posted to the APWA website as photographic images, appearing to readers as submitted. Therefore, please only include information on submissions that you wish to be shared with a broad audience. However, we will not scan and post cover letters mailed with submissions.

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WRITING

Included with this information sheet, you should have received an APWA Permissions-Questionnaire (or "PQ"). For writing to be included in the APWA, we must receive your signed and dated PQ. You may mail us one or more pieces of writing along with your PQ.

The PQ is split into two sections, the Permissions Section and the Questionnaire Section.

## PERMISSIONS

We must receive your signed and dated permission to post your work on the APWA. By signing on the Permissions Section signature line, you are granting us permission to include your work in the APWA.

Contributors to the APWA retain full and unconditional copyright to their work. Once included in the APWA, work will be made available indefinitely unless we receive a written request from the author to remove that work.

The APWA will post work that has been previously published as long as writers retain copyright. If a submission was previously published elsewhere, please let us know where and when your essay first appeared, in print or online.

All submissions included in the APWA will be accessible to anyone with access to the internet. To protect your safety, you may write under a pen name or anonymously by indicating this on the pen name line of the PQ. If using a pen name, your legal name and address should not appear anywhere on the essay itself, or it will be visible on the photographic scan of the essay.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

You do not need to fill out the Questionnaire Section to send your essay to the APWA. Answers to all questions are optional.

Information from the questionnaire may be displayed on the APWA website with your essay. The APWA is a web (internet) based platform. Your essay(s) and any information you choose to provide will be viewable by millions across the world and easily searchable by anyone with internet access. If you do not want an answer to be shown on the internet, leave it blank.

We use the information from the questionnaire to help readers using the APWA website search for essays relevant to their interests. We also use this information internally to assess gaps in representation and where to focus outreach.

The information below will be the only information displayed alongside your essay. However, answers you provide in the Questionnaire Section will be recorded internally and may be accessed through search results to find your essay.

- Author (name or pen name)
- Author Location (state)
- Date
- Genre (essay or poetry)
- Extent (length of essay)

## MORE SUBMISSION DETAILS

- Authors may submit multiple essays at any time.
- Only one Permissions-Questionnaire is required unless your information changes.
- Please do not send postage stamps or a SASE; we will cover postage costs for all replies we send.
- We do not charge fees for submission or inclusion, and we do not offer monetary compensation to authors for inclusion in the Archive. We also generate no profits from your work. The APWA is a non-profit project and is located within a non-profit university.
- We read and acknowledge receipt of all essays but this can take a few months; it can be longer before essays are posted. If you desire more immediate publication please seek other venues.

Please share the APWA address, information, and PQ with other incarcerated people and prison workers. Photocopied, handwritten, or retyped copies of the PQ are acceptable. We seek the widest possible gathering of American prison writing, and we will read, scan, and transcribe essays into the APWA on a continuing basis.

For more information, to request a PQ form, or to make a submission, please write to:

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