The American Prison Writing Archive

c/o Hamilton College: 198 College Hill Road; Clinton, NY 13323-1218

http://www.dhinitiative.org/projects/apwa/

Dear _____________________________:

Thanks for your query. These pages will explain what the APWA is, why it’s being built, and how you can contribute.

The United States incarcerates more of its people and employs more prison staff than any other nation on earth. Yet there is no central location where the public, policy makers, students or researchers can benefit from the first-hand experience of incarcerated people and prison workers. The American Prison Writing Archive is an internet-based, digital archive of non-fiction essays offering first-hand testimony to the conditions experienced by incarcerated people, prison employees, and prison volunteers. Anyone who lives, works, or volunteers inside American jails or prisons can contribute to the APWA. We seek authors who write with the authority of first-person experience.

We are open to many styles, but all submitted essays must draw on first-hand experience.

All topics are of interest, including descriptions of sources of stress, ways of coping, health care, causes of violence and ways to reduce violence, material conditions, education, employment conditions, the environment for volunteers, the aging prison population, visions of a better way to operate (personally, politically, institutionally, etc.), reflections on the work of dealing with time inside (for workers as well as imprisoned people), the challenges of physical and psychological survival, the politics and economics of mass incarceration, what works and why it works, and what doesn’t work and why it doesn’t work (i.e. practical views on reform).

We are open to any testimony about the issues that matter to incarcerated people, prison staff, administrators, corrections officers, teachers, and volunteers.

We value writing that takes thoughtful positions even on passionately felt ideas.

The APWA is intended for researchers and for the general public, to help them understand prison conditions and the prison’s practical effects and place in society. All work in the APWA will be accessible to anyone with access to the Internet. The information asked for in the questionnaire is voluntary. The APWA will grow into a massive archive and every added piece of information you offer will help readers to locate essays relevant to their specific interests. This is the only purpose that the APWA intends your questionnaire answers to serve—to connect your writing with readers interested in the topics you write about and the perspectives you bring to your writing. Essays will be included in the APWA even if you choose to reveal little or no personal information. Please note, the APWA does not offer editing or legal services. If your aim is only to get your work before agents and publishers, seek other outlets. The APWA will post previously published work. The APWA is not currently accepting poetry or fiction. We do not post material addressed to third parties, such as legal documents or grievances. Again, we do not offer editing, promotion, or legal services.

All content should be formed into first-person essays addressed to a broad readership.

Once included in the APWA, work will be featured indefinitely unless we receive a written request to remove that work. Contributors can write under pen names (not nicknames) or anonymously, to protect their safety. (If using a pen name, the author’s legal name and address should not appear anywhere on the essay itself.) We reserve the right to edit or reject work that advocates violence, names names in ongoing legal cases, or libels named individuals. A signed permission sheet must be included in order to post work on the APWA. By signing on the signature line below, you are granting us permission to include your work in the APWA. Again, all other information offered is voluntary. Leaving blank lines in the questionnaire will not exclude your work from the APWA; it will only limit the reference points by which readers can access your work. Contributors retain full and unconditional copyright to their work. Please be aware, the APWA is a work in progress; we are backlogged and constantly seeking funding to support our work. We acknowledge receipt of all essays but this can take a few months; it can be longer before essays are posted. Writers need to be patient and should send their work elsewhere if they desire more immediate publication. The APWA will post work that has been previously published as long as writers retain copyright.

Please pass the APWA address and questionnaire to other incarcerated people and prison workers. (Photocopied, handwritten, or re-typed copies of the questionnaire 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. If previously published, please let us know where and when your essay first appeared, in print or on-line. Authors can submit multiple essays. Only one permissions-questionnaire is required from each author.

Non-fiction essays, based on first-hand experience, should be limited to 5,000 words (15 double-spaced pages). Clearly hand-written pages are welcome. We charge no fees. We read all writing submitted.

For more information, write to: APWA, c/o Hamilton College, 198 College Hill Road, Clinton, NY 13323-1218. Parties outside can download the questionnaire at: http://www.dhinitiative.org/projects/apwa/

Sincerely—The APWA Editors
Permissions

**Legal Name** (please print clearly) __________________________________________

**Identification Number** (for incarcerated writers) __________________________ Date of Birth __________________________

**Address** (current and/or most reliable; will not be included in the APWA): __________________________

**Type of crime** of which you were convicted. (This information will not be posted on the APWA website.)

☐ Drugs ☐ Property ☐ Violent ☐ Other (please clarify)

**Signature** (granting permission to include your work in the American Prison Writing Archive):

_________________________________________ Date Today __________________________

Questionnaire  

*Answers are voluntary. All information provided below this point will be publicly available in connection with your essay(s). Leave blank any information you do not want included in the APWA.*

(Optional) Pen Name __________________________________________

*(Name under which you want your essay to appear, if different than above.) This is not a place for nicknames. Use a pen name if you feel this is necessary to protect your safety, and do not include your legal name or prison ID number on the essay itself.*

**Year of Birth** __________________________________________

**Gender** check one: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Trans

and/or other information: __________________________________________

**Sexual Orientation**

check one: ☐ Bisexual ☐ Heterosexual ☐ Homosexual ☐ Other

and/or other information: __________________________________________

**Race/Ethnicity**

check one or more: ☐ African American ☐ Latina/o / Hispanic ☐ Native American

☐ Asian American ☐ Pacific Islander ☐ White (non-Hispanic)

and/or other information: __________________________________________

**Religious Identification**

check one: ☐ Buddhist ☐ Hindu ☐ Jewish

☐ Christian ☐ Islamic ☐ Native ☐ None

and/or other information: __________________________________________

**Do you have children?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Are you a veteran?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Relationship to Prison**

check one: ☐ CO ☐ Staff ☐ Volunteer ☐ Incarcerated ☐ Teacher ☐ Formerly incarcerated ☐ Other (please clarify)

Work you perform inside: __________________________________________

**Facility Type**

check one: ☐ Federal Facility ☐ State Facility ☐ Jail Facility

☐ Public ☐ Private (for-profit)

**Security Level**

check one: ☐ Minimum ☐ Medium ☐ Maximum ☐ Supermax ☐ Death Row

Full name of Facility where you reside or are employed (include City and State) __________

**Do you have relatives who are, or have been, incarcerated?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Do you have relatives who are, or have been, in prison employment?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Age at current conviction or start of prison employment** ______

**Is this your first incarceration?** ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A