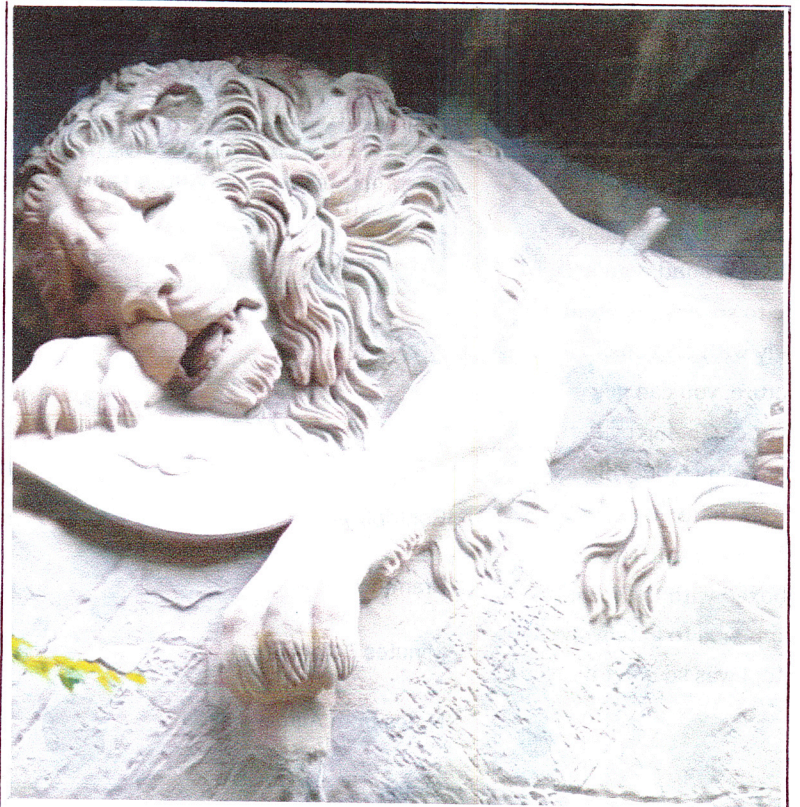


THE SWORD

ISSUE #2

FREE

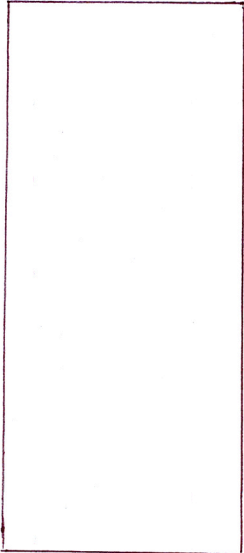


STRENGTH IS IN THE STRUGGLE...

Midwest Books to Prisoners
1321 N Milwaukee Ave PMB 460
Chicago, IL 60622



Todd (Hyung-Rae) Tarselli BY-8028
175 Progress Drive
Waynesburg, PA 15370



editor's log

Greetings!

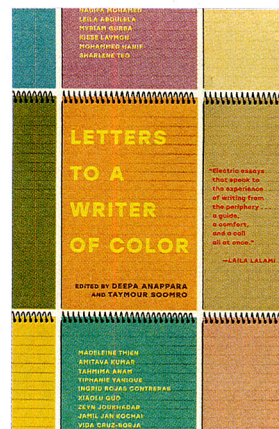
First-and-foremost, let me apologize for the fact that the information contained in the last issues of both The Sword and The TRUTH, specifically as it pertains to reaching-out to me, is no longer valid. My voicemail service was shut-down, and my email was apparently flagged by Gmail (Google) as a place of suspicious activity because (I believe) I had too many people trying to monitor and maintain it! Unfortunately, it has been very difficult finding and working with a single dependable person to help me manifest this brainchild to present to you something special, so I was trying the more-the-merrier approach..! In other words, if I couldn't find one individual to volunteer time assisting me - then, maybe, I could get several to volunteer a little time and get things done by committee! LOL! The silver-lining of it all is the fact that, in addition to working on completing these second issues, I am in the process of preparing for my release, so - sometime in the near future - manpower will no longer be a hurdle for me to have to overcome because I'll be able to do all the necessary work on my own! That includes actually being able to dive into the specific goals, or missions, that I had originally set for both zines. So, hopefully, the next issues that I release will provide you with much more specific, intentional content!

Until then... Please enjoy!

Respectfully,

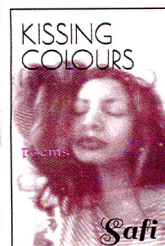


Toola Taylor
3205 Kiya Ct. #C5
Peoria, IL 61604
Email: toola.the.writer@gmail.com
Instagram: @toolathewriter



Suggested Reading:
Letters to a Writer of Color
(Random House, March 2023)
edited by Deepa Anappara
and Taymour Soomro

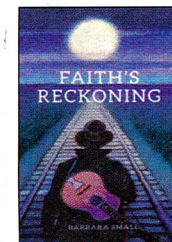
Encouraging readers to reevaluate the codes and conventions that shape assumptions about how fiction should be written, and for whom, this collection of essays covers more than the writer's craft. In essays by authors such as Kiese Laymon, Sharlene Teo, Madeleine Thien, and Tiphonie Yanique, as well as a conversation between Nadifa Mohamed and Leila Aboulela, *Letters to a Writer of Color* offers the start of a more inclusive discussion about storytelling. Taymour Soomro cautions writers—and readers—to resist rigid stories about who they are; Tahmima Anam writes about giving herself permission to be funny; and Deepa Anappara describes the importance of writing through conditions that impede the creation of art. “We need more stories from more cultures, races, communities, and nations to dismantle structures that suppress difference and to challenge the perception that difference is failure,” the editors write. “This book is not, and shouldn’t be, the last word on the subject.”



KISSING COLOURS
By Safi
Amazon KDP

Dreamy, sensuous, romantic, and visionary. Lush with paradisiacal dreamings. Poems blooming and blossoming amidst feminine angst, despair, and desires. Harmonizing the subconscious with the conscious and the superconscious. A perpetual flowering of wonder in a world of fears.

www.amazon.com



Faith's Reckoning
By Barbara Small
Coyote Moon Paperbacks

Set in the South, this multigenerational novel traverses time between the 1930's and the 1990's. Through parallel storylines, the complex relationships between a Black family and a White family reveal two Americas intimately intertwined, yet worlds apart. At its core, *Faith's Reckoning* is about reparations for racial injustice and the individual restitution we must make in our personal lives.

www.faithsreckoning.com

SURVIVE THE DARKNESS

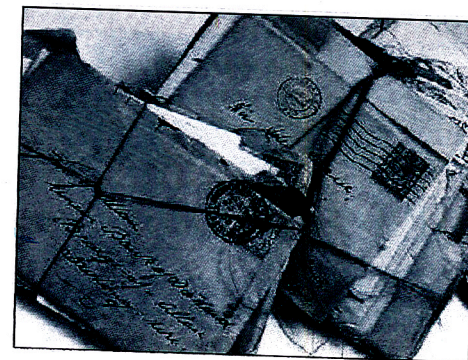
Finally, be sure to check the deadline of/for the application. If you miss the deadline, the list will close, and you will need to wait a-year-or-more before you can apply again.



"On Doves' Wings," pencil sketch by Gary Stroud, Gulf Correctional Institution Annex, Wewahitchka, FL. "This artwork depicts how my life has changed during my incarceration," Mr. Stroud wrote. "It best shows how my spiritual well-being has grown and ultimately how the Lord has shown me that I can achieve and prosper after my release from prison."

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MY LETTER ON CONSCIOUSNESS

by

Erik Schoenecker

So is consciousness more than a human experience and what does consciousness look like from others?

WE NEED TO VIEW HUMAN AS THE OBJECT!!!

What does a human look like to a faucet? To a broom? Let's imagine that the broom is observing me; I don't understand its consciousness and it doesn't understand mine, but what do I look like to it:

This broom sees a being inhale and exhale smoke while seated. Its fingers are moving on a rectangle and its upper member (head) bobs occasionally. So i described me viewing me from a broom but what made the human object conscious? How would a broom see other consciousness?

I'm still not answering what consciousness is... Is it being alive? Is it suffering? I think we agree at this point those two need each other.

So alive. What's alive? The broom doesn't have a pulse, heart, blood, etc.; but, neither does a tree, and we consider the tree alive... Is the tree conscious though? They can communicate and they have similar things humans have in the form of roots and branches. We all bow down to the earth.

Are ants conscious? They always crawl on me and i ask them kindly not to but they don't care. I help spiders and bugs make their way outside so they don't get killed. Do they know i care about their life? Do they know i want to see them live? Do they feel anything toward me? I want to think about them as human but they aren't. They are ants... Do i have to make believe ants consciousness..? Yes. We need to do this thought experiment.

So, an ant. Bug. Insect (Latin term). 6 legs. Colony. Visual. Touch. Scent. It eats, shits, breathes, and reproduces. Do they all reproduce, or just certain ants?

Moreover, once you get your voucher, most landlords will also do their own criminal background checks. This is one of the reasons why felons have such a hard time securing housing, even if they already have a Section 8 voucher. Many landlords prefer to play it safe, and turn down applications from felons. However, you should not be discouraged from applying. When you go to an interview with a prospective landlord - just be honest about your past. Focus on the fact that you have rehabilitated yourself. If a landlord happens to personally like you, he may be willing to rent you an apartment, house, etc., etc.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO APPLY
SECTION 8 HOUSING

This is a general list; some HA's may request additional paperwork from you.

- Standard Application
- Proof of citizenship/legal status
- Birth Certificate
- Social Security number
- Pay stubs
- Bank statements
- Criminal background check
- Credit Score Check
- Completed tax forms
- Statement from government agencies about benefits such as welfare payments or food stamps.
- Proof of current residence
- Addresses and contact information where you've lived in the past five years

WAIT TIME FOR A SECTION 8 VOUCHER

You should be prepared for a long wait before finally obtaining your voucher. Section 8 is very popular, and in many places, people have waited 5 - 6 years. The average wait, however, is 2 - 4 years. In some areas, the wait can be as short as 8 - 12 months. You should call the HA's where you plan to live/apply to find out the estimated wait time. It is also a good idea to apply to as many local HA's as possible; thus, you will have a much higher chance of getting a voucher.

Chasing your dreams as an urban or African-American author? Want to hone your craft, self-publish, find a publisher, find an assistant, promote & market your book, build your platform and/or create your fan base?! Learn how by purchasing your copy of Urban LIT! Info, contacts, reviews, resources, contests, and more! Send \$7.00 to: Toola Taylor, 3205 Kiya Ct. #C5, Peoria, IL. 61604.

SB 3680 | HB 5432

**Fact Sheet:
DV and SV Survivors**

Community Safety through Stable Homes Act
Support SB 3680 (Sen. Villa) and HB 5432 (Rep. Gong-Gershowitz)

Survivors of domestic and sexual violence often need to contact emergency services for their safety. Ordinances that penalize tenants when emergency services come out to their property or when "crime" is committed at their property disproportionately affect survivors of violence and push survivors out of our communities.

Crime-free housing and nuisance property ordinances (CFNOs) make survivors afraid to call the police.

Survivors of violence face numerous barriers when fleeing and recovering from violence. CFNOs inhibit survivors from seeking help from law enforcement and allow perpetrators of harm to create housing instability for survivors by violating CFNOs while the survivor suffers the consequences. This chills 911 calls, skews crime reports, and undermines relationships with law enforcement.

Exemptions for survivors from CFNOs fail to protect survivors from harm.

CFNOs force survivors to choose between their housing and their safety.

CFNO violations lead to eviction and require survivors to make life-threatening choices between calling for emergency assistance or putting their housing at risk. Once learning that they can be evicted for violating the ordinance, survivors often sacrifice access to emergency services and law enforcement protection.

The Community Safety through Stable Homes Act aligns with protections for survivors under Illinois law and the Violence Against Women Act ("VAWA").

- CFNOs are often inconsistent with Illinois protections for survivors, which explicitly prohibit municipalities from penalizing tenants who contact the police or other emergency services, including charging fees, revoking a rental license, or terminating a residential lease agreement.
- CFNOs also conflict with VAWA protections for survivors because events that trigger CFNOs are often related to gender-based violence and therefore covered under VAWA.

The Community Safety through Stable Homes Act, once implemented, will protect survivors from discrimination, help people contact police without fear, and keep survivors in their homes.

For more information on how CFNOs affect survivors:

Jaclyn Zarack Koriath, The Network: Advocating Against DV, jkoriath@the-network.org
Christine Raffaele, Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence, raffaele@ilcadv.org

Does the ability to reproduce the image of Self play a role in consciousness?

Ants do reproduce. But do they all? If they don't, does that effect why they aren't all conscious?

Birds reproduce, and i don't know if they are conscious. They communicate and have families and do human things (human, as an animal, not societal human). They have homes and care about them. They have offspring and care for them. We, as humans, use their cycle of family to explain ours when our offspring leave the nest. Similarities, but not consciousness... What would make a bird conscious..? Aware of suffering? A bird goes through rain, heat, cold, hunger like me - yet I am the only one who can be observed thinking about the suffering, talking about the suffering, conceptualizing suffering, writing about the suffering... A bird chirps... Do they ever chirp because that last worm was a little too sun-cooked? Not the good worm char, but that leaking orafice char that stings your nostrils without the scent ever touching it.

Would a bird take off nest-building because it ate a bad worm ("bad," another concept from consciousness, but can only be seen by acceptance and avoidance, in nature). So, just a worm. What does a bird consciously do if it is aware of its suffering? Does it lay in the nest? Does it take a different type of tree to alleviate the symptoms of dislike, or non-agreeance?

Does it need to communicate with other birds over time how that experience of the worm affected him? Are we different because i want to understand suffering, whereas, a bird just suffers in silence..? (Thank you birds).

We both die. What does it matter if I understand or don't understand? It feels wrong not to look. It feels wrong to awake, protect the nest, collect the rest, rebirth the next, and see it in jest... He doesn't take it seriously..!

I don't take what seriously? Consciousness? Awareness? Suffering? Why would i!? I already feel wrong and right on my own. Now i have to take on others for HOW LONG? Now i have to worry about the next? Why!? I see these birds, not con-

scious in my eyes - LIVING; yet i look non-conscious to them and i can't help but see me as living, as well... The suffering only becomes real when i become I. How do you go on from here? Where is she? My final symbol? Why do i feel like i'm pursuing next for humans..?

Fated to chase self-knowledge i feel selfish... HA! You hate that it was never about you.

You hear that birds? Conscious, or not - i'll be forgot. Let's forage.



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COLLECTIVE PUBLISHING
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Words of Fire

We consider fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and visual art. **Submissions are always open in our PO box or at prisonbooks@gmail.com.** Each piece of writing must be 4 pages or less. Art will be printed in black and white and cannot contain nudity. Submissions may be edited for clarity, spelling, and length. We do not publish more than 2 pieces of the same genre by one artist. We publish only work by those incarcerated at the time of editing. We don't publish works that encourage violence or are racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise target specific groups for hate. We default to publishing full names and locations; tell us if you prefer anonymity. Those who are published will receive 2 copies of the zine—if you expect to be released in the next year and want copies, please provide a backup address. No piece can be returned. Thank you!

very strict rules regarding felons. This is because their goal is to keep crime down in subsidized housing complexes, facilities, etc., etc. Following is a general list of guidelines that can give you a sense of whether or not you can qualify for public housing.

1. If your felony happened more than five years ago, most places will accept your application. However, there are some HA's that have a 10-year requirement on a felony charge. Some HA's may waive the five-year rule, if you have gone through a rehabilitation program. If that is the case, you will need to present a Certificate of Compliance.
2. If you have been convicted of a violent crime, drug dealing or fraud, some HA's may disqualify your application. Call your local HA, let them know what you have been convicted for and find out if you should even bother applying.
3. If you or someone in your household has a documented history of drug and/or alcohol abuse, you may not be eligible. As mentioned before, Housing Authorities work very hard to keep crime down and to maintain an overall safe and calm environment of housing premises.
4. You may be disqualified if you have a documented history of bad relationships with your neighbors. This may include physical or verbal assaults, bullying and other types of peace disturbance.
5. If you have not been consistently paying your rent in previous years, your application may be turned down.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR FELONS APPLYING FOR SECTION 8 HOUSING

When you apply for a Section 8 voucher, you will be required to go through a criminal background check. This is why you should not lie or try to hide your conviction when you fill-out the application.

CAN A CONVICTED FELON GET SECTION 8 HOUSING?

If you have a felony, your housing options are very limited. However, it is still possible in most cases to apply and be eligible for Section 8 Housing. While there are general federal eligibility guidelines for felons interested in applying for Section 8, different state and county Housing Authorities may have their own specific guidelines.

To get started on the process, contact your local Housing Authority (HA) and find out what the guidelines are for applying if you have served time in prison.

Here, I will present to you, for review, the standard eligibility guidelines for Section 8 Housing for someone with a felony.

FELONIES THAT AUTOMATICALLY DISQUALIFY AN INDIVIDUAL FROM SECTION 8 HOUSING

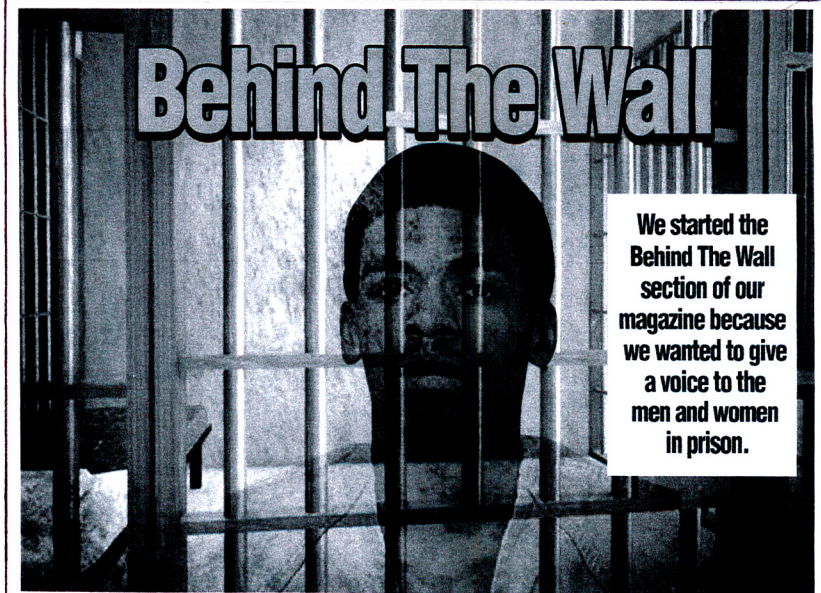
There are 2 felonies that will prevent you from obtaining a Section 8 voucher:

1. If you have a lifetime requirement to register as a sex offender; and
2. If you sold meth anywhere near public housing facilities.

It is also important to realize that if you or someone in your family commits one of the above felonies, while already living/residing in Section 8 Housing, they will take away your voucher forever. Also, that person will never be eligible for Section 8 again.

STATE AND COUNTY GUIDELINES FOR FELONS APPLYING FOR SECTION 8

If you have not committed any of the two felonies listed above, you may get a Section 8 Housing Voucher. Keep in mind, that most state and county Housing Authorities have



We started the Behind The Wall section of our magazine because we wanted to give a voice to the men and women in prison.

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TRUE COVID-19 STORIES BY INMATES

I thought it would be interesting to hear the stories of people who had no place to go, who could not isolate themselves and depended on their caretakers to keep them safe, which they did not, or did not have the education or instruction or the means to do so.

People incarcerated had to endure what came to them from the outside.

Think about it, since Covid-19 is transmitted person to person, if you were not exposed you would not get sick. People in prison are not exposed to the outside world except from the people going in and out on a daily basis from home to work, bringing in the virus to people who could not escape or protect themselves. They could not go out and buy masks to wear, they could not stand six feet apart, they could not do anything to stop it. Even now the facilities are still going on lock down as new infections keep spreading in them again and again.

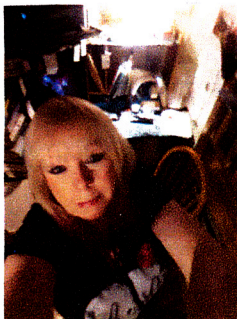
Here are a few stories that were donated to me for this book to share with the world. I hope you enjoy them

Within The Gates Of Hell/True Covid-19 Stories by Inmates. 22.50 its also in hardcover for the same price. Kindle 9.99 Plus tax. On any book orders.

Feel free to email me with any comments at: zling13@comcast.net. Please leave a review on any of my books on Amazon. There is an author's page you can check out. [amazon.com/author/stardragon135](https://www.amazon.com/author/stardragon135)

I am also a digital creator, and you can check out my products at: [redbubble.com/people/stardragon135](https://www.redbubble.com/people/stardragon135)

Thank you, Barbara Jean Nagle (Stardragon)
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WRITE AN ARTICLE OR SEND US YOUR ART!

Would you like to see your art, writing or poetry in *Prison Health News*?

If you want to write an article on something you think is important for prison health, send it and we will consider publishing it in *Prison Health News*. Tell us your story of struggling to receive quality health care, either for yourself or others. Do you have tips and tricks for staying healthy and taking care of yourself behind the walls that could be useful to others in the same position? You can also write us first to discuss ideas for articles. Please let us know if it's OK for us to put your writing or artwork on our website or social media. Let us know if you'd like us to use your full name, first name only, or "Anonymous." Having your name on the internet means anyone can find it. Please keep in mind that we may make small changes to your article for length or clarity. For any major changes to your work, we will try to get in touch with you first. You can submit your work to this address:

Prison Health News
 4722 Baltimore Ave.
 Philadelphia, PA
 19143

Submit by sending work to:

PEN America
 Prison and Justice Writing
 Attn: 2024 Contest Entry
 588 Broadway Suite 303
 New York, NY 10012

Prisoners' Justice Day at Walls Turned Sideways

BY STATEVILLE SPEAKS

An event for Prisoners' Justice Day was held on August 10, 2024. It was sponsored by the Justice for Restricted Citizens Foundation (J4RC) and organized by founder Robert Curry and his partner Barbara Curry. It took place at Walls Turned Sideways, PNAP's new art gallery on the west side of Chicago. One hundred people came to bring awareness to the injustices that burden our loved ones in prison. There was music, food, testimony and fellowship. We heard formerly incarcerated individuals tell their stories of survival and of keeping their promise to help bring more people home. They also rallied behind the Parole Illinois Earned Reentry and Good-Time bills (HB3373/SB2129 and HB5219) and sent letters to legislators in support of these bills. ●



The PEN Prison Writing Awards Guidelines

**PEN
AMERICA**

The PEN Prison Writing Awards was initiated in response to the 1971 Attica Prison Riots as PJW's founding program. Each year, hundreds of writers submit unpublished work in the categories of poetry, fiction, drama, nonfiction and memoir. Winners are published in an annual anthology, are invited to work with a designated mentor, and are awarded cash prizes of \$250, \$150, \$100, and \$25 for first, second, third, and honorable mention places, respectively. Some winners are also featured in Break Out, an annual public celebration of the year's awards winners, staged by well-regarded authors, actors, and activists in the New York City community.

The submission period is August 1 - December 31. Entries are accepted from anyone incarcerated in a federal or state prison, county jail, or other detention center. Submissions postmarked after December 31 will be considered for the following year's awards. Due to the volume of submissions we receive and the capacity of our team, we regret that we are unable to return manuscripts after submission. Authors retain all rights to their own writing.

Submission guidelines:

- Manuscripts should be typewritten or legibly handwritten.
- All submissions should be accompanied by a brief cover letter that includes your name, address, identification number, the genre(s) you are submitting to, and the title(s) of your piece(s).
- Authors may not submit more than one entry in each category, except in poetry, which has a 20-page limit. If you are submitting to drama, fiction, or nonfiction, the maximum page number per submission is 25.
- Only unpublished manuscripts will be considered, with the exception of pieces that have appeared in publications for the incarcerated population only.
- If possible, please send copies of your work, not the originals, as we are unable to return manuscripts after submission.

RE-ENTRY RESOURCES

Entrepreneurial training programs and other tools can be extremely beneficial for individuals previously convicted of a felony looking to start or grow their businesses — even if they don't necessarily provide free funding. Finding organizations that focus on helping the formerly incarcerated transition back into society through entrepreneurship can be particularly useful.

Here are some available resources:

Help For Felons

The website HelpForFelons.org provides a wide variety of resources for those who were convicted of felonies, as well as other previously incarcerated individuals. Through the site, you can find job postings, legal information and housing options. You can also access lists of personal and business grants, loans and other forms of financial assistance.

Inmates to Entrepreneurs

Inmates to Entrepreneurs is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help people with criminal backgrounds launch their own businesses. The organization offers free online and in-person courses to give would-be entrepreneurs the business education they need to get started.

Defy Ventures

Defy Ventures administers several second-chance programs with the goal of helping formerly incarcerated individuals succeed in their new lives and decrease the rate of recidivism. Through Defy Ventures, potential entrepreneurs can participate in an entrepreneur boot camp or a business accelerator. Through these programs, they gain the skills they need to launch and grow a business.

Refoundry

Refoundry is an incubator program based in Brooklyn, New York. Through this program, formerly incarcerated individuals are taught to repurpose reclaimed materials into home furnishings. As they develop these skills, Refoundry mentors also teach participants how to build a resume, succeed in an interview and start their own business.

Project ReMADE

[Project Remade](#) is an entrepreneurship training program run by Stanford Law School. This program teaches formerly incarcerated individuals basic business skills and introduces them to professionals in the business community.

Between classes, students meet with mentor teams who help them develop a potential business plan. Mentor teams consist of one Stanford Law Student, one Stanford Graduate School of Business student and one Silicon Valley professional.

At the conclusion of the program, entrepreneurs present their business plans before a panel of executives and microdevelopment organizations.

Entre Capital

For entrepreneurs who are still looking for financing, Entre Capital is a [community development financial institution](#) (CDFI), specifically devoted to providing capital to second-chance businesses. The organization only funds previously incarcerated individuals, offering them loans to start or expand their operations.

[Entre Capital](#) also offers assistance with business planning, budgeting and financial reporting, as well as mentorship resources.

Individuals previously convicted of a felony can also get business grants from the federal government, as well as state and local governments. Here are some options to consider:

Grants.gov

[Grants.gov](#) is a database of federal small-business grants available to all types of entrepreneurs, including formerly incarcerated individuals. This database offers access to over 1,000 grants administered by 26 government agencies, such as the Department of Energy, Department of State and Department of Transportation.

To apply, you'll need to register your business using the System Award Management platform and get a unique entity identification number. Once you have your number, you can create an account on Grants.gov to submit your grant applications.

Economic Development Offices

Most states and many cities have [economic development offices](#), which are dedicated to promoting and supporting local businesses. Through your regional office, you'll likely be able to find information regarding government funding solutions, training programs and tax incentives.

Maine's Office of Business Development, for example, provides a variety of grant opportunities, including options that finance recreation businesses, local tourism, agriculture and food businesses, among others.

Amber Grant

Although not designated exclusively for previously incarcerated individuals, the [Amber Grant](#) is another great funding option for women entrepreneurs.

The nonprofit organization WomensNet offers several grant opportunities to businesses that are at least 50% women-owned, including the \$10,000 monthly Amber Grant and the \$25,000 annual Amber Grant.

WomensNet also issues a startup-dedicated grant, a nonprofit-dedicated grant and business category grants. Each month, the organization offers a \$10,000 grant to a company in a specific industry — in January, for example, the funding is awarded to an skilled trades business.

You can apply for all of these grants by submitting one simple application through the Amber Grant website.

NASE Growth Grant

The National Association for the Self-Employed (NASE), provides [growth grants](#) of up to \$4,000 to small businesses on a quarterly basis. To be eligible for one of these grants, however, you must be a NASE member.

The organization offers several different membership options (which include additional benefits, such as expert advice and product discounts) and does not exclude formerly incarcerated individuals from joining.

Once you become a member, you can apply for a grant through the NASE website. Monthly members, however, will have to wait 90 days before they can apply. For the application, you'll need to provide a business plan and explain why you need the funds and how you'll use the money.

Bizee's Fresh Start Business Grant

If you're just starting your entrepreneurial journey, the [Bizee Fresh Start Business Grant](#) (formerly the Incfile Fresh Start Business Grant) can help you legally register your business, as well as cover [startup costs](#).

Grant winners will receive [Bizee's Gold plan](#) for free, which includes incorporation services in your state, free [registered agent](#) services for a year and a free tax consultation. You'll also receive a \$2,500 grant.

To apply, you must complete an online application, create a two-minute video explaining how entrepreneurship will impact your life and submit a sample business plan.

ADVOCACY GROUPS

Amnesty International, 322 8th Ave., New York, NY 10001, (212) 807-8400. Works for reform and human rights. or 5 Penn plaza ny. ny 20005

Campaign for an Effective Crime Policy, 918 F Street NW # 505, Washington, D.C. 20013-2310 (202) 789-2126. Agency works for effective reform. Ask your institution warden to join.

Coalition for Prisoners Rights, P.O. Box 1911, Santa Fe, NM 87504. Their paper is called CFPRN. Free to prisoners.

CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants), P.O. Box 2310, Washington, D.C. 20013 (202) 789-2126. Provides advocacy to bring about prison reform. Write for their address of your state chapter. Newsletter also available.

FAMM Foundation (Families Against Mandatory Minimums), 1612 K Street NW, Suite 1400 Washington, DC 20006 (202) 822-6700. A clearinghouse for current sentencing information. Newsletter available. or 1100 H. Street n.w. oakland ca 94612

Hatcher Center for Human Rights, 120 Amber Road, Hamlet NC #108, Chicago, IL 60613.

Jeff Dicks Medical Coalition, PO Box 342, Beechgrove, Tn 37018. Contact Shirley Dicks with cases of medical abuse. Newsletter, \$5 inmates.

Justice Watch, 1120 Garden St., Cincinnati, OH 45214 (513). Good Newsletters for prisoners.

Middle Ground Prison Reform, 139 East Encanto Drive. Tempe, AZ 85281 (480) 966-8116. Contact Donna and James Hamm for more information. They have a directory of services for prisoners including legal help.

November Coalition, PO Box 309, Colville, WA 99114 (509) 684-1550. Dedicated to educating the public on prison issues.

PARC (Prison Activist Resource Center), PO Box 339, Berkeley CA 94701 or p.o. box 70447 oakland ca 94612

Southern Center for Human Rights, 83 Poplar Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30303 (404) 688-1202. Works to improve conditions in southern prisons and jails through litigation and community education.

U.S. Dept. of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 10th street, Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20503. "Report of prisoners abuse."

AIDS INFORMATION and SUPPORT Aids In Prison Project, Osborne Association, 809 Westchester Ave., Bronx, NY 10455. Accepts collect calls from inmates needing help.

CHC (The Correctional HIV Consortium), 50 California Street, Suite 1500, San Francisco, CA 94111. Support, resources, re-entry.

National Prison Hospice Association, P.O. Box 58, Boulder, CO 80306-0058. Helps develop programs for the terminally ill.

"One Day at a Time", Richard H. Rhodes, #05353-018, U.S.P. Leavenworth, P.O. Box 1000, Leavenworth, KS 660448. AIDS newsletter.

Prisoners with AIDS Rights Advocacy: Offers support, referrals, education and political lobbying for prisoners with aids. P.O. Box 2161, Jonesboro, GA 30237 (404) 946-9346.

What It Boils Down To

By Eric Stephens

Everything I know,
Combined with all that I feel.
It's only just for show,
Since nothing around me seems real.

If I knew a way,
I'd make all of this disappear.
Each and every day,
I face disappointment and fear.

I try to believe,
But everything is false in the end.
Even friends deceive,
And I find it hard to trust again.

My own reflection,
Something I can barely recognize.
So much rejection,
What I once loved, I now despise.

I'm numb to the touch,
Searching for the person I used to be.
It all hurts too much,
This pain might be the death of me.

But I will persevere,
Until the day I take my last breath.
Life must be a lie,
Because in the end, I'm guaranteed death.

At U.S.P. Victorville, Adelanto, CA

Forgotten Men

By Earl Young

Once the gavel slams,
We're ostracized to this disturbia.
Stripped of pig iron and conjugal visit,
We dwell in our insomnia.

Although it was the law
That fastened our neck to the noose,
We're running for the train,
But can't catch up with the caboose.

Most days here are like
An awful, recurring dream,
Blacker than Folgers' coffee
Without a trace of cream.

Ghostly to the world beyond these walls,
As we rot inside this pit,
Hoping this phantasm will be rescued
By the magic of a writ.

No, we're not animals,
Yet we suffer in this den.
I ask the world to pray for
All these forgotten men.

At Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, CA

Georgetown Pivot Program

The [Georgetown Pivot Program](#) is a full-time, one-year program designed to help formerly incarcerated individuals develop the skills to succeed in a business and professional environment.

Over the course of the program, participants will attend classes, receive an internship placement and get the opportunity to develop their own business idea. Each participant will present their business idea at the Pivot Pitch Competition for a chance to win [startup funding](#). In 2022, participants were awarded a total of \$15,000 in grant money.

To qualify, participants must be 25 years or older with a high school or a GED diploma who were last incarcerated within the past five years. Preference is given to Washington, D.C., residents.

The Transform Business Grant

The [Transform Business Grant](#) is open to business owners in systemically oppressed groups, including formerly incarcerated people. In addition to \$1,000 microgrant, recipients will also be awarded a customized, year-long business strategy and development program. The 2024 grant cycles will be announced in February.

LEAP Virtual Entrepreneurial Academy

LEAP is a nonprofit organization based in Florida that works with previously incarcerated women and helps them as they transition back into society. The [LEAP Virtual Entrepreneurial Academy](#) is a program that runs twice per year and teaches business skills to its participants.

Over a three-month period, students attend classes twice per week, and at the conclusion of the program, they pitch a business plan to a panel of entrepreneurs for an opportunity to win cash prizes. Graduates are also eligible to apply for a \$1,000 microloan.

To qualify, you must be a formerly incarcerated woman who has access to a computer. LEAP covers all program costs through funding from its sponsors.

We want to publish your essay, letter, eulogy, announcement, poem or artwork in an upcoming issue! Please try to limit articles to around 500 words and include a short bio. Articles may be edited for length. Due to the volume of submissions we receive, work may not be returned.

If you have a topic or question you would like us to address in an upcoming issue, drop us a line and let us know!

Send submissions to:
Stateville Speaks c/o Justice Studies
LWH 4062 Northeastern IL University
5500 N. St. Louis Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625-4699

Grants for people previously convicted of a felony

Unlike [small-business loans](#), grants provide free funding that doesn't need to be repaid. Grants can be a particularly good option for formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs who don't want to take on debt or have trouble qualifying for debt financing.

It's important to keep in mind that finding and applying for [small-business grants](#) is time-consuming and entries are competitive. If you dedicate the necessary time and effort, however, you may be able to access free capital for your business.

Nonprofit and corporate grants

Formerly incarcerated individuals can get business grants from corporations and nonprofit organizations. Some nonprofits even offer second-chance entrepreneurial programs — in other words, training and funding opportunities designed specifically for previously incarcerated people.

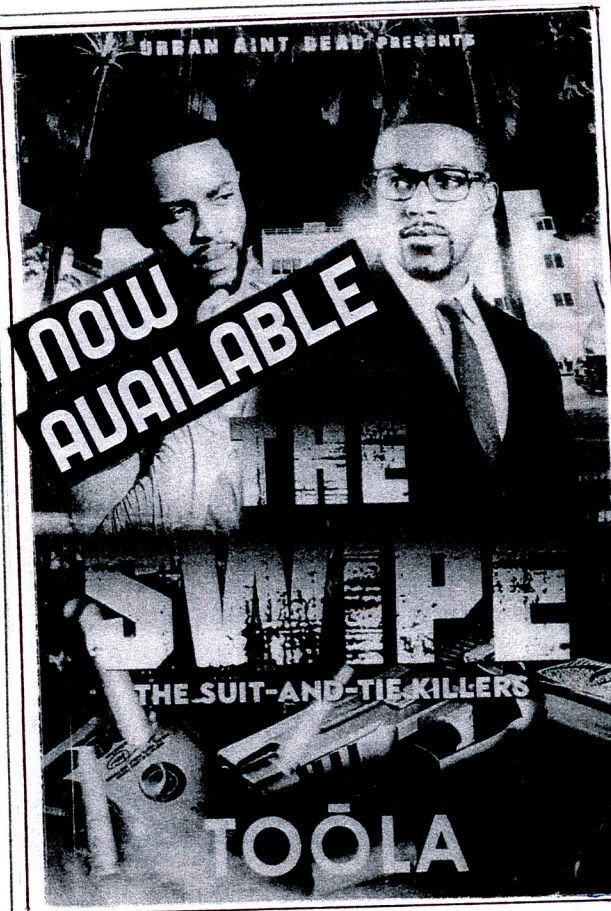
Rise Up, Get Started Grant Program

[Determination, Incorporated](#), a nonprofit organization based in Kansas City, Missouri, that helps formerly incarcerated individuals start and grow their own businesses.

Through the organization's Rise Up, Get Started initiative, business owners can participate in a year-long program where they receive coaching, mentoring and community support. Entrepreneurs will also have assistance writing a business plan and creating a budget.

At the conclusion of the program, participants will have \$300 saved for their business — and Determination, Incorporation will award a \$750 grant on top of these savings.

The nonprofit organization also runs an in-prison Back to Business workshop, which helps incarcerated individuals [develop a business plan](#) so that they can get started quickly upon release.

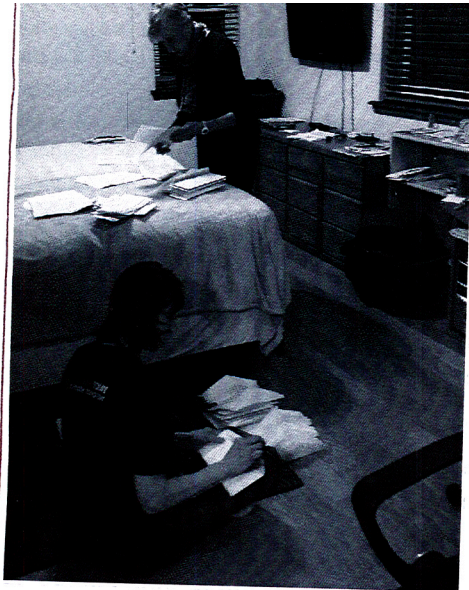


DON'T HAVE TIME FOR SUBMISSIONS?! Need more time to write? Severely limited by your situation and circumstances?! We are in our 30th year, and provide leads, query letters, re-search, proofreading, targeting submissions, and lots more! Currently accepting poetry, short stories, novels/memoirs. We LOVE writers! YOU write, WE submit! Join 60,000+ subscribers to our free newsletter! Contact Writer's Relief, Inc., at (866) 405-3003, or visit our website at: www.writersrelief.com.



ENTERTAINMENT

COMING SOON!! Lethal Weapon Entertainment will be providing opportunities in various groups and contests such as The Ultimate Trivia Inquest (a rewarding chance to test your general knowledge!), Myth & Magick Chronicles (Dungeons & Dragons gameplay by snail mail/email/e-messaging!), Basketball Squareboards, Sports Pools, etc., etc.!! ALL FOR CASH AND PRIZES! Send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Travis Taylor, ATTN: Lethal Weapon Entertainment Games Inquiry, 1637 N. Peoria, Illinois, 61603. Please be patient, as we are still in the set-up phase, so initial replies will take some time!



Prayer in Times of Inadequacy

READ NEHEMIAH 2:1-10

After Nehemiah heard about the desperate condition of the Jews who had returned from exile to Jerusalem, his heart was burdened (Neh. 1:3-4). By getting his attention in this way, the Lord could reveal what He wanted Nehemiah to do. Scripture doesn't spell out the man's reaction on realizing that he was to be a part of the solution, but we can imagine a sense of inadequacy probably engulfed him. How could he possibly help? He wasn't even near Jerusalem, and as a servant of the king, he didn't have the freedom to pack up and leave.

But whenever God puts a burden on our hearts, He will open a door to accomplish His will. In this case, the Lord used Nehemiah's sad expression and desperate prayer to prepare a pagan king to send him on his mission.

How do you respond when you sense the Lord is calling you to a task that seems beyond your abilities? Do you list all the reasons why you can't possibly do it? God already knows everything about you and the situation. He's not asking your permission to proceed; rather, He is calling you to move forward with faith and obedience. He didn't make an error in choosing you for the task, but you will make a huge mistake if you refuse to do it.

EARLY LIGHT

God will equip you for whatever He calls you to do. Because the Holy Spirit dwells within every believer, we have all we need to fulfill the Lord's mission. Instead of letting inadequacy hinder you from obeying, let it drive you to your knees so you can arise with renewed insight and power.

BEYOND BARS

literary journal

Submission Details

Word Count and Length Expectations:

Fiction (Short Stories) and Creative Nonfiction: up to 7,500 words

Flash Fiction: up to 250 words

Poetry: 5 poems up to 10 pages total



At this time, we cannot offer payment but will provide a year subscription and two copies of *Beyond Bars* to contributors.



Submissions are open year-round!

Beyond Bars
Georgia State University
Box 125 Suite 2440
25 Park Place NE
Atlanta, Ga 30303

BeyondBarsMag@gmail.com

Beyond Bars welcomes submissions from those who have been affected by the carceral system and those within the carceral system. We are open to all genres (artwork, rap lyrics, drama, etc.), but work that embraces racist, homophobic, xenophobic, slanderous, defamatory, or offensive language will likely be declined (swear words may be used for a purpose, but we will not publish hate speech). Additionally, we are not looking for genre fiction or scholarly nonfiction.

Small Business Development Centers

Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) are SBA-sponsored centers that provide free or low-cost training and assistance to new and existing businesses. These centers are typically hosted by local colleges or universities, as well as state economic development agencies. SBDCs often maintain lists of funding opportunities in your area and can help you find and apply for the best options for your needs.

Frequently asked questions

Are there grants for those convicted of felonies to start their own businesses?

Yes. Formerly incarcerated individuals may be able to get startup business grants from the federal government and their state or local government. Some organizations, like the National Association for the Self-Employed, also offer grants for startup businesses.

How do you get a business grant as a formerly incarcerated individual?

As a formerly incarcerated individual, you can search and apply for grants related to your business. These grants may be available from the government, nonprofit organizations or large corporations. Before applying, you should ensure you meet all of the eligibility criteria, such as industry, time in business and specific need for funds.

Are there SBA grants for those convicted of felonies?

The SBA doesn't usually offer grants directly to any small-business owners. Instead, it grants nonprofits and community organizations that promote and support entrepreneurship. Alternatively, you might consider an SBA loan. Individuals with a felony record are not excluded from applying but will need to provide a completed fingerprint card.

Business Grants for People Previously Convicted of Felonies



As many as one in three Americans have criminal records. And since most employers run background checks on potential candidates, these records can be a considerable impediment for those previously convicted of a felony.

In fact, according to the Sentencing Project, more than 60% of formerly incarcerated individuals are unemployed one year after being released.

Therefore, starting and running a business may be a suitable way of earning income. Although formerly incarcerated individuals can still face challenges as entrepreneurs, a variety of small-business grants and additional resources can help.

We'll start with a brief questionnaire to better understand the unique needs of your business.

Once we uncover your personalized matches, our team will consult you on the process moving forward.



INVESTING IN SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

SB3470 (Sims)/HB4816 (West)

THE OPPORTUNITY




The Pretrial Fairness Act ensures that pretrial release is determined by safety and justice—not access to money. More people now maintain employment, housing, and connections to loved ones while awaiting trial in the community. Illinois can set them up for success by expanding access to supports and services.

THE VISION

Illinois can reduce pretrial jailing and improve community safety by expanding access to case management, mental healthcare, and substance use disorder services for people awaiting trial.

FUNDING REQUEST: \$15 MILLION

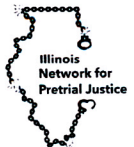
Funding will create a community-based network of care through a statewide grants program administered by the Department of Human Services. Funded services will include:

-  **System navigation** to help people access services that will facilitate pretrial success.
-  **Mental health and substance use disorder assessment, case management, and treatment according to clinical standards**, especially linkages to detox and medication-assisted recovery.
-  **Transportation and child care** to remove barriers to court appearance.

VALUES

- EQUITY:** Supports and services should prioritize the communities historically most burdened by the money bond system.
- VOLUNTARY:** Coerced treatment can lead to increased rates of recidivism—both in terms of criminal involvement and drug use. Voluntary, community-based pretrial supports and services are more effective and far less harmful than mandated or jail-based forms of treatment.
- COMMUNITY VOICE:** Supports and services should be informed by community members, including those directly impacted by the criminal-legal system, and delivered by organizations trusted within the community.
- COORDINATION:** The system of supports and services should be as easy to navigate as possible, avoiding the creation of new bureaucratic barriers to success during the pretrial period.

The Pretrial Success Act has been endorsed by the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice and more than 70 organizations, including some of Illinois' largest health & human service organizations.



A full list of endorsing organizations is available on the other side of this fact sheet.

For more information, please contact:

Becky Levin - rlevin@tasc.org | John Amdor - john@nekritzamdor.com
www.EndMoneyBond.org | www.PretrialFairness.Org

SHINE TOGETHER

FAIR ACT

Funded Advocacy &
Independent Representation

HB 5842 – Rep. Dave Vella, Rep. Justin Slaughter, & Rep. Kevin Olickal

Illinois has a constitutional obligation to provide a vigorous defense to people who cannot afford to hire private lawyers—but it is one of only seven states with no statewide body to ensure it fulfills this duty.

Multiple reports and investigations from 2019-2023 have revealed Illinois' public defense crisis:

- Illinois has not significantly changed its public defense structure since 1949. 14 years before the modern right to state-provided counsel.
- About 60% of Illinois counties have no government office of public defense and instead contract with private attorneys, often on a part-time basis.
- Judges appoint and remove county chief defenders in every county except Cook—despite professional standards prohibiting these practices.



The FAIR Act will:

- Immediately bring Illinois into compliance with American Bar Association (ABA) standards for defender independence from judicial and political interference.
- Allow for a two-year planning process for a hybrid state-plus-county defender system based on client and defender needs and input.
- Maintain state funding to county defenders without interruption.
- Facilitate Illinois' reliable and equitable fulfillment of its Sixth Amendment obligations.

Funded Advocacy

Many individual public defenders currently carry caseloads that should be handled by multiple full-time lawyers while simultaneously performing additional investigation, case management, and administrative duties due to having insufficient support staff. Rural, Black, and Latinx clients are disproportionately impacted by underinvestment in public defense.

The FAIR Act creates an Office of the State Public Defender to:

- Assess, with client communities and local public defenders, client needs and defense office staffing, resources, and workloads around the state.
- Distribute state funds to county defenders and supplement their work with state purchasing and staffing.
- Improve recruitment, hiring, contracting, and training of public defenders statewide.

Independent Representation

Judges have removed public defenders after they spoke out about insufficient office resources and client services. Judicial appointment and removal of public defenders creates a conflict of interest with client needs and prevents defenders from informing the public about the defense crisis.

The FAIR Act creates a State Public Defender Commission to:

- Appoint and remove county defenders independent of the judiciary, in alignment with national standards.
- Provide transparent oversight of the Office of the State Public Defender and defense expenditures.

See reverse for a complete list of more than 45 endorsing organizations

Contact: Sharlyn Grace, Cook County Public Defender's Office:
773-946-8535 or sharlyn.grace@cookcountyiil.gov

ARTISTS and WRITERS

Alternative Arts Alliance, 1432 W. 37th Ave., Denver, CO 80211. Write for more information.

"Caged In", c/o Oberlin Action Against Prison, P.O. Box 285, Oberlin, Ohio 44074. They accept writings from prisoners on prisons.

PEN Writing Program for Prisoners, 568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Ask about writing contest for prisoners.

Ridge Art Association, Inc., 210 Cypress Gardens Blvd., Winter Heaven, FL 33880 Send SASE for contest information.

THE SWORD

ORDER FORM

Name: _____
Inmate #: _____
Address: _____
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State, Zip: _____

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