

Fall 2015

Adopt an Inmate



Art by California inmate Allen Fong



Welcome to the first edition of Adopt an Inmate's Quarterly Newsletter. This publication is for you - the family members, friends, and advocates of prisoners. Within these pages you will find useful resources for inmates; artwork, stories, and messages from both adopters and adoptees; and news from the staff.

This organization is really a love letter from our family, to my brother Rick, whose idea is now a reality, thanks to his compassion and direction. We are continually inspired by his resolve to remain positive in the face of anguish, and his desire to turn an injustice into something that, with your help, might just change the world.

My hope is that we can, at the very least, help some of these people get through their time without collapsing, and maybe make a little headway in letting the world know that these prisons are full of human beings.

As of today, we have 250 prisoners on our waiting list. We are working on our outreach to adopters (*grazie di cuore* to Pope Francis for his recent visit to a U.S. prison), and you can help by printing, posting and emailing this [flyer](#) on any and all public bulletin boards – in schools, churches, coffee shops, post offices, and break rooms; and by liking and sharing our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts.

My gratitude goes out to Gloria Killian, who invited me on her podcast "Women Behind the Wall" on [8/20/2015](#).

You are the heart and soul of Adopt an Inmate, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts and souls.

Much love and peace,

Melissa

She-EO, Adopt an Inmate
melissabee@adoptaninmateorg

I love the rebelliousness of snail mail, and I love anything that can arrive with a postage stamp. There's something about that person's breath and hands on the letter. — Diane Lane

Stamp Campaign



The picture above shows letters we received from prisoners in one six-week period. Each letter is logged, filed, and replied to as it comes in. This takes an enormous amount of time and effort by a very dedicated, all-volunteer staff, who currently provide stamps, ink, and stationary supplies from their own pockets.

We recently [launched a campaign](#) to raise funds for postage, and ask that you please share the link far and wide.

Fun and colorful stamps can be purchased at your local post office or online at [USPS.com](#), and make incoming mail for prisoners even more appreciated.

Both stamps and cash donations are always welcome.
Mail physical stamp donations to:

Adopt an Inmate
PO Box 1543
Veneta, OR 97487

Or donate funds by visiting our website
[AdoptAnInmate.org](#) - click on the [donate](#) button.

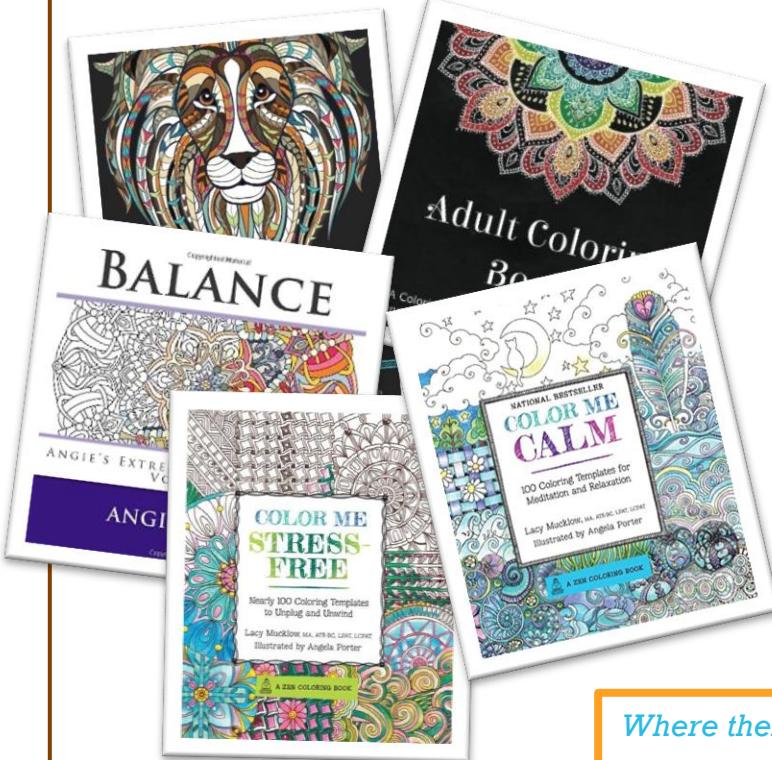
All donations are tax-deductible.

Art in Prison

“

Art allows you to think differently... so you behave differently... so that you can get different results. To me, that's the definition of 'rehabilitation'.

-- Kenyatta Hughes, Sing Sing prisoner and participant in [Rehabilitation Through the Arts](#)



Adult Coloring Books

It is common practice in prison to use pictures from coloring books as a pattern for artwork, which is then turned into cards and drawings to send to loved ones, or to trade for items or other services. Rather than children's coloring books that are available through commissary, for \$5 - \$12 you can send a prisoner one of these lovely [adult coloring books](#) available through Amazon or other booksellers. Most facilities offer colored pencils through their approved commissary vendors.



Where there is ruin, there may also be treasure - Rumi

For Writers

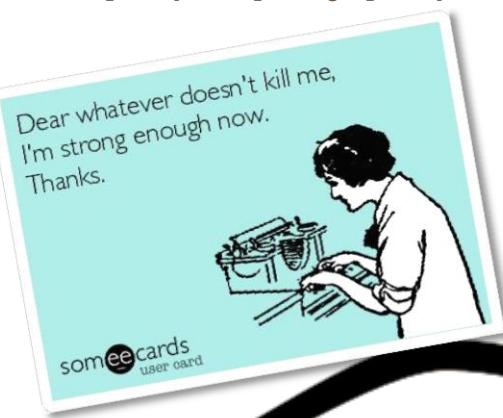
PEN's *Handbook for Writers in Prison* features detailed guides on the art of writing fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and screenplays as well as information on punctuation, cover letters, and a list of recommended magazines and journals that consider work for publication. This is an invaluable resource to any incarcerated writer and is provided free to prisoners. [Click here.](#)

For Readers and Writers

The Sun Magazine is an independent, ad-free monthly magazine that publishes personal essays, short stories, interviews, poetry, and photographs by emerging and established artists. [Free subscription offered to prisoners.](#)

Also accepts submissions. For subscriptions, write to:

The Sun
Subscription Department
P.O. Box 5837
Harlan IA 51593-1337



Book Recommendations

Most facilities require that books for inmates be sent directly from the bookseller (Amazon is always safe). If you're thinking of sending a book this month, consider one of the following:



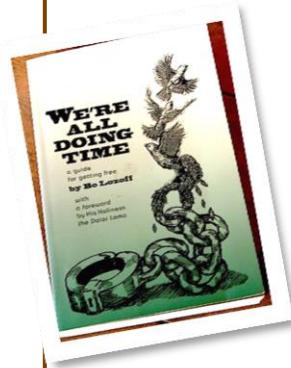
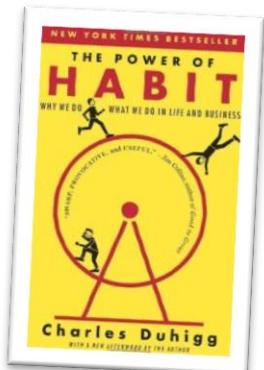
[Just Mercy by Brian Stevenson](#). What can we say, except we love this book. See Rick's [review](#) of Just Mercy on our website, and [hear audio](#) of him talking about staying up all night reading it. Recently out in paperback, and available at participating Starbucks for \$10.40, with 100% of profits going to Bryan Stevenson's non-profit, the Equal Justice Initiative.



[The Power of Habit by Charles Duhigg](#) should be on every prisoner's books-to-read wish list. Forming good habits, changing old habits, reducing bad habits – are all much easier when you understand how habits are formed in our brain stem's ancient "lizard brain" area beyond conscious awareness.

Habits are not formed or changed the way most people believe. You will be fascinated by this useful book.

Prisoner Review, Sing Sing Correctional Facility, Ossining, NY



[We're All Doing Time by Bo Lozoff](#). Often called the "Convict's Bible," this book is relevant and important to any spiritual seeker. Interfaith wisdom, divided into 3 sections: *The Big View* describes Bo and Sita Lozoff's life of activism and spiritual exploration; *Getting Free* is a section of detailed instruction in classic spiritual practices; and *Dear Bo* is correspondence between Bo and dozens of the inmates he has challenged, encouraged, and loved. This is an amazing book, which has moved people to great extremes. Bo's organization, The Human Kindness Foundation, produces a [newsletter](#) three times a year, free to prisoners.



*Be Courageous,
Adopt an Inmate*

Pope Francis Visits Philadelphia Prison 9/27/15



“

All of us have something we need to be cleansed of, or purified from. May the knowledge of that fact inspire us to live in solidarity, to support one another and seek the best for others.



For Adopters of Inmates in TDCJ

About half of the prisoners on our waiting list are serving time in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Rules vary, but the following information is fairly typical. Visit each state's DOC (Department of Corrections) website for specifics about mail, commissary, visitation, etc.

Indigent inmates in TDCJ are provided the following:

- Weekly: 5 tiny bars of soap (smaller than you would get at a motel), 1 roll of toilet paper (+1 razor for men)
- Monthly: 5 envelopes (1 stamp is applied to each envelope by TDCJ personnel at time of mailing)
- Every 3-4 weeks, 1 comb and 1 small tube of toothpaste
- Monthly (Women): 1 pack of low-quality menstrual pads + 6 light-flow tampons

Shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, lotion, etc., are **not** provided, and can *only* be purchased through commissary. Texas prisoners are also not paid for any of their work, whether it is in the field squad (hard labor in often very hot temperatures), laundry, kitchen, as a janitor, or in the specialized Braille Transcription department at the Mountain View Unit. The only way inmates are able to purchase additional hygiene or food items is if a friend on the outside puts money on the inmate's "books," known in TDCJ as their "Inmate Trust Fund Account." If an inmate owes restitution or medical (there is a medical co-pay of \$100 per year), a portion is deducted from any deposits until it is paid in full.

Many facilities, including TDCJ have one or more approved vendors that anyone on the outside can use to purchase items that will be sent directly to the inmate, without being subject to restitution or medical owed. The only approved vendor for TDCJ is [Ecomm Direct](#). Purchases are limited to \$60.00 per calendar quarter, per inmate, for the first three quarters (January-March, April-June, July-September), and up to \$85 for the last quarter (October – December).

The [Inside Books Project](#) sends free books and educational materials to TDCJ inmates. They also provide a robust resource guide with hundreds of resources for prisoners and their advocates. There is both a printed version that is sent free of charge to inmates (the inmate needs to make the request via snail mail), and an online version. Click [here](#) for either version.



Art by TDCJ inmate Cassandra Stone



My Side of the Wall

by Connie Bergstrom

Since 2001 I have found myself on a journey that has tried all my patience, stressed me out beyond reality, and put me on an emotional roller coaster. If I did not stop and take time for me now and then, I am sure I would be in a mental hospital.

When you are supporting an incarcerated loved one, it is imperative to also take care of yourself. This is not a selfish act. If you are the main source of support for your loved one, where would they be if you weren't available and healthy?

These are some of the ways I tend to my own needs.

JOURNAL

It may be a prayer journal that you write in daily, a diary, or just a notebook. It is always cathartic to get all your thoughts down on paper - the good, the bad, and the ugly - so your mind can let go and you can relax. A journal also acts as a record of experiences that you can read back through and realize, "I made it through that," empowering you to keep moving on.

SUPPORT

When you need to vent (and you will), choose friends who truly have your best interest at heart, who will give you honest feedback, and won't gossip to others about your situation.



Epsom Salt Bath Soak

Large Batch:

In a large bowl, mix 4 cups Epsom salts, 4 cups baking soda and 40 drops of your favorite essential oil (good choices are lavender, eucalyptus, orange, or peppermint). Store in a large glass container (a Mason jar works great). At bath time, add 1-2 cups of your salt mix to your bath water.

Single Use:

Mix 1 cup Epsom salts plus 1 cup baking soda with 10 drops of your favorite essential oil(s) to your bath water.

Frequency

Soak at least once a week for 20-40 minutes.

- You can also use this as a foot soak.



RELAX

Make it a priority to have some regular "me" time - whether it's a spa day, a road trip, a hike in the woods, a day at the park, or a walk on the beach. It can be simply locking the door and sinking into a bubble bath. This time is about you - all alone, no kids, no prison, no work.

HEALTH

Keep yourself medically current. Get your flu shot, get necessary blood tests, eat right, and get exercise. Address health problems that come up as soon as possible and don't put problems on the back burner for another time. Depending on the severity of the problem you could end up in the hospital, with a bigger problem than you started with.

LISTEN

You know yourself better than anybody. Use your intuition. If something doesn't feel right, don't do it. Don't take on more than you can handle. Try not to get wrapped up in other people's business; you have enough drama of your own. It's ok to say yes to people, but it's also ok to say no. Remember to ask for help when you need it.

BE POSITIVE

Surround yourself with positive. Do things you like to do. Go to church, do yoga, spend time with positive friends. Choose to be happy. Take up new hobbies. Be creative - it is said that creative activities such as painting can lower your blood pressure.

There is only one of you. Take care of yourself, love yourself, be good to yourself, breathe and take it one day at a time.

