

PJP SPECIAL PROJECT: WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE YOU?

One of the goals of Prison Journalism Project is to de-stigmatize the incarceration experience by introducing people who are untouched by incarceration to perspectives and stories from behind and around the walls. We want everyone to see you and connect with you as fellow humans.

In this project, we invite you to take a piece of blank paper and anonymously answer the question:

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE YOU?

You can answer the question however you want as long as it's honest and true.

This project takes its inspiration from the Strangers Project in New York, where an artist asked anyone walking by to take a blank piece of paper and reveal a truth about themselves. The result was an amazingly and inspiring collection of stories. Some of them wrote about losing their one true love. Some wrote about how they took a job transporting dead bodies at a hospital morgue during the pandemic. An autistic teenager wrote about why she loved being autistic. The anonymity allowed people to show their truth without worrying about judgement, stigma, or regard to socio-economic or professional status.

What we hope to show is that all of us — whether we're incarcerated or not — are just human. We make mistakes, we fall in love, we care about our families. We also hope that the project will give readers emotional insight into the realities of incarceration, and that the submissions will reveal deep truths without the pressure of having to put your name on it.

One request from us — **please answer the question directly.** Imagine you're sitting next to someone at the airport lounge or a bar, and write as if you're talking to them. Don't try to persuade people about a point of view. Just share a little bit about your world. **What is it like to be you?**

DIRECTIONS:

1. Take a blank sheet of paper (white paper is preferable if you have one, but any paper is ok)
2. Answer the question "**What is it like to be you?**" You can write it like a journal entry, letter, poem, song, art — however you want to express yourself. If you want to put your name and location on it, you can, but you don't have to.
3. At the bottom, write down your state, age and connection to incarceration. If you would like, mention how long you have been incarcerated.
4. (OPTIONAL) In the back, write your name, prison ID# and contact address, so we can add you to our mailing list. We will not publish this. We will use it to send you resources and updates about PJP.
5. If you can, please ask your cellie or your friends to also participate. You can send their responses together with yours. THIS PROJECT ONLY WORKS IF WE GET A LOT OF ENTRIES.
6. SEND IT to: **PJP Special Projects**
3501 Southport Ave., #204
Chicago, IL 60657.