LSA PRISON CREATIVE ARTS PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

University of Michigan PCAP Publication

October 2026

The PCAP newsletter aims to keep incarcerated artists, writers, and performers informed of what the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is doing and how to be involved. If you know someone who would like to receive this newsletter, please have them write to us.



Artwork created at PCAP Paint Out events, where visitors illustrate their messages of hope, love, and support for individuals incarcerated in Michigan.

Update from the Director

by Nora Krinitsky

Greetings, Prison Creative Arts Project artists, writers, performers, and community members! We are just about a month into the fall semester here in Ann Arbor and it is finally starting to feel and look like fall. The trees outside my office window are starting to change and students are already getting anxious about their upcoming midterms. It also means we will start our travel to all of the Michigan prisons soon for art selection visits for the *31st Annual Exhibition of Artists in Michigan Prisons*. I feel lucky to get to attend all of the visits this year as I step in to help with art selection during Emily's leave. So if you are a visual artist, I will see you soon!

In the last newsletter, I shared a bit about a favorite visual artist of mine, El Anatsui. I thought in this edition I might share a bit about writers who I admire as a complement to that last article. I've tried to highlight authors here that you might be likely to find in the prison library (popular writers whose work is widely available).

One of my absolute favorite writers is Stephen King. He is of course most well known for his horror writing–*The Shining* and *IT* are some of his most widely-read books. But Stephen King has written over 70 books and they span horror, science fiction, fantasy, and memoir. My favorite of his novels is *11/22/63*, a science fiction/time travel thriller about a man who tries to prevent the assassination of JFK. The premise is incredibly intriguing and the plot will draw you in quickly. But King's character development and the emotional nuance of his writing is just as stellar. Another of his books that I recommend is *Under the Dome*. It's another science fiction book about a town in Maine that is suddenly confined underneath a giant invisible glass dome. It's a really interesting exploration of what happens to a community under confinement.

Another author that I love is Emily St. John Mandel. She is also a science fiction writer of sorts, although sometimes her books are called "speculative fiction," a broad category that describes writing that incorporates futuristic, counterfactual, and fantastical elements. Her best known novel is *Station Eleven*, about the world after a global pandemic (written before the covid pandemic, oddly enough!). The book explores how society continued after the global collapse. It features a group of Shakespearean actors who continue to perform for post-apocalyptic audiences. In many ways, it is a testament to something we know very well at PCAP–that art is essential no matter the circumstances. The group's mantra–"survival is insufficient"—always stays with me. Mandel's books *Glass Hotel* and *The Sea of Tranquility* are also favorites of mine, although you are probably most likely to find *Station Eleven* in your prison's library. Along with her fascinating plots, Mandel's writing is beautiful and intricate.

Like all art, excellent fiction helps us imagine lives very different from our own and forces us to examine our own values, judgements, and assumptions. Reading great writing is also one of the best ways to improve your own writing. Elsewhere in this issue you will find updates about a new initiative we have to feature PCAP writers in a podcast/radio project. I hope that this article and that opportunity will motivate many of you to read new authors and try writing new styles as well.

Call for Submissions: *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*

PCAP's *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* showcases the talent and diversity of writers incarcerated in Michigan. The journal features writing from both beginning and experienced writers. It strives to provide a platform for writing that is earnest, unique, well-crafted, and lively.

Editor John Buckley leads a committee of volunteers from the University of Michigan and local communities. These volunteers meet periodically through the academic year (September through mid-December, and then January through mid-April) to read each submitted work carefully and multiple times in order to provide each author with thoughtful, constructive written feedback.

The *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* accepts handwritten or (preferably) typed submissions of poetry, prose, or drama from people currently incarcerated in Michigan. It accepts these submissions on a rolling basis throughout the year. Each submission should include any pen name the author wishes to use, the author's Michigan Department of Corrections or Federal Bureau of Prisons ID number, and the author's current address.

Each submission can include prose (fiction or non-fiction), poetry, drama, or a combination of genres. Please submit no more than twelve (12) pages at once, to avoid bogging down an already long and meticulous editorial process. Prose pieces should be double-spaced. Poems should be single-spaced. For dramatic works, please use single-spacing within dialogue and stage directions, but double-space between instances of dialogue or stage directions.

Please avoid sending works that aren't in English, since the editorial committee may not be able to translate non-English works successfully. Also, because the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* gathers works of creative writing, the editorial committee of this literary review will prioritize evaluating the written works within each submission, not any art, musical notation, or design elements that may accompany the submitted pieces of writing.

Upon publication, the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* takes a nonexclusive license to publish work in print and online in perpetuity, and requests that the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* is formally acknowledged as the first publisher in any reprints of accepted work.

Each new volume of the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* is typically published in the early spring of each year. Contributor copies are typically mailed in early summer.

Please send submissions to the following address:

Attn: John Buckley
Prison Creative Arts Project
1801 East Quad
701 E. University
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1245

MRPCW Volume 19 Launch Event: Special Audio Recording

This year's launch event for Volume 19 of the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing* will feature a special audio recording to memorialize the event and showcase the talents of authors published in the volume! U-M faculty and students will record authors' works being read aloud to a live audience during the launch event in March. The recording will be edited and made publicly available through a podcast over the internet, and pitched to local radio stations. If your work is being published in the next volume, you will hear from PCAP in the coming months asking if you are willing to have your piece read and recorded for public broadcast. We hope that this recording will help new audiences find PCAP authors and expand the reach of our writing program.

Opportunity to Collaborate with a new U-M PCAP Course

In addition to our recording of the Volume 19 launch event, radio producer and U-M professor Sylvia Ryerson will be teaching a new PCAP course this spring titled *U-M in Incarcerated America: Producing Knowledge Across Prison Walls*. The course will offer U-M students the unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience with audio production and public storytelling. This is where PCAP creative writers come in! The students will produce a radio/podcast series that features the writing and voices of PCAP authors. If you are interested in working with students to develop and share your work specifically in an audio format, we'd love to hear from you! Please accompany your written submission with a note that expresses your interest in having your work included in this audio series, and read through this Q&A for more details:

What is the deadline for submitting new works to be considered for this audio special?
All submissions to the audio special must be postmarked by January 15th, 2027. At this time, we cannot accept audio submissions after this deadline.

If I submit a piece to be reviewed for the audio special, will it also be considered for inclusion in the Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing?
Yes, all ***new*** works submitted to the audio special before January 15th will also be reviewed for inclusion in Volume 20 of the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*. We also welcome re-submissions of older works that have already been published, but that you would like to remake into an audio piece. However, if the audio submission has been previously published in writing, it will not be considered again for publication in the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*.

Will all pieces submitted for the audio special be included in it?
No. The editorial team will decide which submissions will be the strongest fit for this audio special based on length, format, and how well they will translate into a powerful audio piece.

What are you most interested in?
We are especially excited about pieces that have a sonic dimension to them, such as:

- **Spoken Word, Rap Lyrics, or Poetry** submissions that have a rhythm or a beat, or a strong sense of timing, space, and breath.
- **Songs** that the singer/composer would be interested in recording via phone call
- **Audio Dramas** where character voices are combined with recorded sound effects

- **A Short Story or other Creative Writing Pieces** that could be enhanced in an audio format in creative ways such as: a poem or story that is meant to be read aloud by two different voices, or combined with a natural soundscape (i.e., a poem being read over the sounds of a running brook, or children playing outside, a noisy city street), or other creative sonic approaches—we welcome your creative ideas!
- **An open "audio letter"** that is meant to be read out loud. This can be addressed to one person in particular (a parent, a child, a sibling, a friend, a former teacher, etc.) or to a larger audience (to all my sister/brothers behind the wall, to the people of X town, to all my PCAP friends, etc.) **If your letter is to a specific person, make sure they are comfortable with you sharing it publicly. See suggestions on the following page for how to approach composing an "audio letter."

If selected, will I receive feedback and support in creating this audio piece?

Yes! Radio producer and U-M Professor Sylvia Ryerson will lead a team of U-M student volunteers who will work with all selected contributors to bring their audio piece to life. This will be a collaborative process. The team will offer thoughtful feedback and support, and will assist in the recording and editing of all final pieces.

Where will this audio version be broadcast/shared? Will I be able to hear it and share it with my family & friends?

With the permission of all contributors, the completed series will be made publicly available on mainstream podcast apps, pitched to local radio stations, and posted on the PCAP website. We will send the details to collaborators via JPay so they can share them with friends and family. We are working on a way to share the audio series with collaborators.

How do I submit a piece for the collaboration?

All submissions will be received and reviewed in written format only. **Please address your submission to ATTN: Sylvia Ryerson - Audio Project (see full address below), and write "Review for Audio Program" at the top of your submission.** Again, submissions can include new works as well as works that have been previously published by PCAP or other outlets. Pieces submitted for this audio collaboration must be postmarked by January 15th.

Please send audio submissions to the following address:

Attn: Sylvia Ryerson - Audio Project
Prison Creative Arts Project
1801 East Quad
701 E. University
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1245

On Composing an open "Audio Letter" - A Creative Guide

Translating a written letter into an audio recording is a powerful way to use SOUND to bring the person/people you are writing with you into a particular scene, feeling, or place.

Your letter can be addressed to one person in particular (a parent, a child, a sibling, a friend, a former teacher, etc.) or to a larger audience (to all my sister/brothers behind the wall, to the people of X town, to all my PCAP friends, etc.)

If your letter is to a specific person, make sure they are comfortable with you sharing it publicly.

Here are some ideas for how to incorporate sound into your "audio letter":

1) What is a specific memory you would like to share? Where did this memory take place? What did that place sound like?

> This can be a memory from before the time of your incarceration, or during it.
>
> This could be a memory from a **natural environment**, of going to the beach, of walking in the woods, of being outside in the prison yard...
>
> Or it could be from a **human-made environment** - from being on a city street, or inside a favorite restaurant, or sitting in a family members' kitchen, or at a basketball game...
>
> Or it could include **music** that brings you back to this location, or evokes the feelings of it - this could be an instrumental track, a favorite hit song, a church choir singing...

Tell the story of this memory to the person you are writing, and note in parenthesis ( ) the different sounds you would like to be included in different moments.

2) Think about a place that is very special to you, that you would like to remember and share with someone. Envision it, and describe it in detail. What does it smell like? What does it sound like? How does being there make you feel? What memories does thinking of this place bring back for you? How do you imagine it being, if you are able to go back to this place with the person you are writing to? What are your hopes and dreams for this place?

Write about this place and note in parenthesis ( ) the different sounds you would like to be included in different moments.

Hello, Fellow Creators!

by Shelly Lyons Mac, multidisciplinary artist, Linkage Community member, and Strategic Advisory Committee Member

Getting involved in the arts changed my life and the way I experienced prison. My journey began inside Women's Huron Valley, in creative writing and poetry classes. I got a few things published, and I was hooked. Ten years after coming home, creativity is still my anchor.



If you can relate, I've got some good news! Linkage Community grew out of PCAP and became its own organization last year with a little over 100 members across Michigan. Today we have close to 300 people who know what it means to face barriers and stigma, and who are building lives around the things they love to create.

Linkage isn't a magic pill, and building a creative life isn't easy. But it is a pathway to artistic fellowship, exhibitions, teaching artistry, publishing, performance, and so much more.

We hold weekly virtual meetings with coffee, conversation, and a whole lot of creativity. Some of my biggest ideas found their legs in those spaces. People show up. They help turn somebody else's idea into something real. That's what community looks like.

Honestly, we're still figuring out what membership looks like for creators inside, and we want to build it with you. What could support your creativity right now? We genuinely want to hear it. Linkage is for us, by us. That includes you.

If you're interested in joining, or you just have ideas to share, write to PCAP or to us directly:

Attn: Linkage Community
Mama Akua Community House
2431 Ferry Park St.
Detroit, MI 48208

Once you reach out, we can keep the conversation going through our new JPay connection. You can also find our table at Reentry United Conferences across the state.

You already have a story. You already have a voice. Bring your ideas, bring your questions, and take your seat at the table. We hope to hear from you soon.

Until then, keep creating.

Call for Writing: *Beyond Bars*

Beyond Bars is a collaboration between Georgia State University editors and graduate student editors both inside and outside prison walls. We publish poetry, fiction, nonfiction, visual art, and other creative work by people whose lives have been impacted by incarceration.

We have published two issues and are currently accepting free submissions for our third. Creative work does not have to be about incarceration or prison life—we welcome work on any subject!

BEYOND BARS

A Journal of Literature and Art

SUBMISSIONS ARE FREE & OPEN YEAR-ROUND

We are looking for work that goes BEYOND the traditional incarcerated narrative.
Send us your thoughtful work, weird prose, experimental poetry, artwork, stories, and more!

WHAT WE ACCEPT

Poetry
Up to 5 poems or 10 pages.

Fiction & Creative Nonfiction
Up to 7,500 words.
Flash fiction/CNF: up to 250 words each.
Submit either 1 longer piece OR up to 3 flash pieces

Visual Art
Please submit:

- 12–18 high-resolution images of your artwork (300 dpi)
- A short third-person biography (50–100 words)
- A first-person artist's statement (up to 500 words)
- An inventory list with each work's title, date, materials, and dimensions
- Your email address, website, and social media handles, if applicable

Artwork may be scanned or photographed and submitted by email. Physical artwork or copies/reproductions may also be submitted by mail. Please do not mail original artwork that you need returned unless you have arranged this with us in advance.

We also welcome drama, rap lyrics, experimental work, and more!

WHO CAN SUBMIT

Beyond Bars welcomes submissions from those who have been affected by the carceral system and those within the carceral system.

THINGS TO KNOW

We welcome work on a wide range of subjects and experiences, including work about incarceration and the carceral system as well as work that explores entirely different subjects.

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.

HANDWRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Handwritten submissions are welcome.
If you are unable to type your work, our team can transcribe handwritten submissions.

CONTRIBUTOR COPIES

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

HOW TO SUBMIT

Please include your name and mailing/return address with your submission so we can contact you and send contributor copies if your work is selected.

Mail submissions to:
Beyond Bars
Georgia State University
Box 125, Suite 2440
25 Park Place NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

Email submissions to:
BeyondBarsMag@gmail.com

We can't wait to read your work!

Call for Writing and Artwork: *Project Mend*

Mend is an online and print journal that celebrates the lives and creative work of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, as well as individuals who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. Our annual publication showcases writing of all types, including fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, as well as visual art. While prospective creators may submit pieces that describe their experiences with incarceration, the publication welcomes contributions on any topic.

Guidelines

- We accept only previously unpublished material.
- You may submit up to five pieces of writing.
- You may submit any number of visual art pieces.
- Written submissions should not exceed six pages (or approximately 1,800 words).

Submission Information

Submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis and may be sent by mail or electronically.

Mail submissions to:
Editors, Mend
c/o Patrick W. Berry
Syracuse University
239 H.B. Crouse Hall
Syracuse, NY 13244

Electronic submissions:
Email your work to mend@project-mend.net.

All submissions should include:
Contact information (mailing address, email, or phone number, if available)
A 50-word bio for publication if accepted
A brief note confirming that you have been impacted by the criminal legal system

Submission Deadline: November 1st, 2026

October 2026 - February 2027

Ongoing

Rolling submissions for *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*

October 2026 - February 2027

31st Annual Exhibition selection visits (contact your Special Acts. for visit date)
Fall weekly creative arts workshops at select facilities (September - December)
Out of the Blue concerts at facilities TBD (December)
PCAP art sale fundraiser on U-M campus (December 4-5)
Winter weekly creative arts workshops at facilities TBD (beginning January)

What would you like to read more about?

Let us know what you'd like to see in future newsletters!
Write to us at the address below.

About PCAP

Mission Statement

The Prison Creative Arts Project brings those impacted by the justice system together with the University of Michigan community for artistic collaboration, mutual learning, and growth.

Contact Us

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