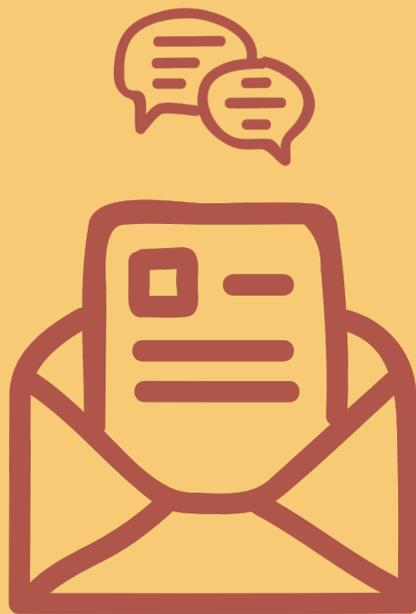


IDEAS AND TIPS FOR
ORGANIZING
Letterwriting Events



by Survived & Punished
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Sincere appreciation and gratitude to Lauren Taylor for their work on this toolkit. Thanks also to the SUPPORT HO(ES) Collective and Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration (MUAVI) for offering ideas and input for this resource. This resource was designed by [Danbee Kim](#) who we also thank. S & P is a grassroots, volunteer-run project and we rely on individual donations to do our work. If you find this resource to be valuable, please consider contributing to us: <https://survivedandpunished.org/donate>.

INTRODUCTION

Writing letters is a critical tool to overcome the isolation and erasure of people who are incarcerated. Gathering in a group to write can be a way to take collective action, to show solidarity, and to support people who have been criminalized for surviving violence. Such events can also support folks on the outside in learning more and stepping into more active support roles for those behind bars.

This toolkit is designed for anyone interested in organizing a letter writing gathering to support incarcerated survivors of violence. It will provide a concrete set of steps, lists of materials, and considerations when putting together an event, picking a date, selecting a venue, and planning for responses to your letters.

WHY LETTER-WRITING?

from Survived and Punished Letter Writing Action page

LETTER WRITING IS TRANSFORMATIVE

Isolation is central to the persistence of domestic violence, sexual violence, and incarceration.

Writing letters to criminalized survivors helps to dismantle this isolation, creating pathways for connection, collaboration, and coalition. Currently & formerly incarcerated survivors have stated again and again how important letters of support are to relationship building and their well-being.

Letter-writing is essential to building relationships with incarcerated survivors, respecting their self-determination, and building movements that are accountable to their leadership. It can also be a form of harm reduction, or an approach that reduces risk and harm while centering the dignity, expertise and autonomy of the person being supported. While it won't in and of itself break down the prison walls or liberate someone from jail, letter writing can reduce some of the harms that prison causes. In particular, it reduces isolation, erasure and vulnerability to violence. We hear often that just receiving letters signals to guards that the person has a support network, one that might respond if any violence or harassment should occur.

WHY HOST A LETTER-WRITING GATHERING?

Intentional events to write letters can be a way to publicly remember survivors of violence who have been removed from their families and communities and placed behind bars. They allow us to commemorate important dates – like survivor’s birthdays, court dates, holidays or events that honor those who have survived gender violence and/or struggled for their liberation.

People can get stuck when they try to write letters on their own, especially when writing to someone they’ve never met. Letter writing gatherings can provide support, encouragement, guidelines and even sample letters.

Writing together also encourages collective accountability to incarcerated survivors. It is critical to remind the group of the importance of honesty, self-awareness, and not making promises you can’t keep. By taking action together, we can move from anonymity to a space of transparent and collective action (and follow up).

Bringing people together can also be an opportunity to build community and learn together. You create an entry point for folks who are interested, but don’t know how to take action. And it’s a space for political education -- you can incorporate a short talk or video into the event, or even an additional activity.

Letter-writing can help guide movements and conversations by centering survivors of state and intimate violence.

VALUES THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

ACCOUNTABILITY AND CARE

There is a significant power difference between those of us on the outside who are sending letters in, and people receiving letters behind bars. This makes it particularly important to follow through on commitments and not overstate what you're able to do.

SELF-DETERMINATION AND AUTONOMY

A key component of survivor support and organizing is respecting the choices and direction of the survivor. To this end, we are careful not to share or disclose details about the case, particularly open cases. We follow the survivor's lead regarding how they name their experience.

NO PERFECT VICTIMS

In the legal system, survivors of violence are only recognized and supported if they have not been criminalized. We reject this framework, and provide support to survivors who have been targeted by the criminal

punishment system. For more, see S&P's analysis - <https://survivedandpunished.org/analysis/>

NO SAVIORS

In organizing to decriminalize sex work, we demand "rights, not rescue." Similarly, rather than someone else deciding what's best for survivors, we support survivors in having more options and more support to do what's in their own best interest.

NO ONE BELONGS IN A CAGE

When we write to incarcerated survivors, we don't throw other people under the bus, or justify the caging of other people. Though this can be a tricky tension depending on the survivor's own beliefs and experiences, it's important that our efforts don't exceptionalize survivors in a way that legitimizes the incarceration of others.

We understand prison and incarceration to also be forms of gender-based violence - from sexual violence that is part of standard searches, to isolation and vulnerability, to physical and emotional violence at the hands of guards.

Please see Principles for Writing Letters for more information!
<https://survivedandpunished.org/guide-to-writing-letters>

BEST PRACTICES FOR WRITING LETTERS

Make sure to read through this list, and provide it or similar guidelines for participants at the event. The technical guidance is particularly important so that letters aren't rejected by the prison and sent back unopened.

The Support Ho(s)ie
Collective's

LIST OF BEST PRACTICES, HOW TO'S, RESOURCES & LEARNED LESSONS FOR CORRESPONDING WITH COMRADES INSIDE

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND BEFORE YOU BEGIN WRITING:

These letters are important gestures, but they can do work beyond that. Receiving mail can be a form of harm reduction, it signals to the prison guards that your comrade has people on the outside who are concerned with their well-being. It can also signal to fellow incarcerated folx that there are support networks out there to be tapped into.

Don't let the cruel and arbitrary prison mail room policies scare you into not establishing relationships with folx inside. Yes, it's frustrating and infuriating, don't give up.

Always double check the prison's website for any changes or updates in mail restrictions. It's a good practice to check monthly at a minimum if you're writing with regularity. Every prison mail room is different and their policies frequently change.

FIRST THINGS FIRST, BANNED/ CENSORED MATERIALS TO REMEMBER:

The following things seem to be censored at most prisons, so you should refrain from using them to ensure your mail has the greatest chance of making it to your comrade inside:

- Thick, multi-layered greeting cards (especially made of cardstock)
- Colored paper of any kind (including construction and computer paper)
- Stickers, glue, confetti, glitter, ribbons/ additional items on greeting cards
- Oversized envelopes (Try to only mail standard sized envelopes, legal-size paper and preferably 8 ½ x 11 max)
- Drawings on envelopes (unfortunately, your art might be considered "graffiti")
- Crayon and colored markers (this one really hurts because kid's drawings are frequently rejected)
- Tape on envelopes in general, clear scotch tape or otherwise
- Peel and press envelopes, and envelopes with metal brads that press down.

BEST PRACTICES WHEN WRITING:

- ☑ You must have a complete name and return address on all mail, **including post cards**. They'll be returned or possibly thrown away if not!
- ☑ Remember to set **boundaries and expectations** if you're beginning a pen pal relationship. Let survivors know how often to expect to hear from you, and what kind of pen pal relationship you have the capacity to be in. They'll be able to assess if this works for them too. From *Survived & Punished: Please be aware of the scarcity of resources for incarcerated survivors and the power differential that creates — do not make commitments or promises that you cannot keep.*
- ☑ If you want, or are open to, a **direct reply**, put your name and preferred mailing address in the body of the letter and/or somewhere written inside your card, as sometimes envelopes are damaged or destroyed by mail room prison guards.
- ☑ If you're writing a several page letter and are including multiple sheets of paper, make sure you don't exceed the amount of pages allowed by the prison per envelope. On every separate page, write your comrade's name and "prison ID number" in the top right hand corner, it's also a good idea to write the date and number every page (ie page 1 of 5, 2 of 5, 3 of 5 etc).
- ☑ Send a photograph of yourself if you're beginning a pen pal relationship. Make sure you write your comrade's name and their "prison ID number" on the back of the photo. List the photo on a cover sheet that you make for your letter that lists all contents (ie 1 three page letter, 1 photograph).
- ☑ Consider where folx are coming from in terms of vocabulary/language accessibility. From *Survived & Punished: Please keep in mind the mixed literacy levels among incarcerated people and try to respond appropriately — ask questions to help assess what the survivor needs and what is the most accessible way for them to receive support.*
- ☑ Don't forget to check the formatting of the prison address when addressing the envelope, it's gotta look the way the prison wants it or it's likely to be discarded.
- ☑ Remember, your mail is being read by prison guards. They can deem any kind of content reason enough to reject your letters. Don't out people in letters; take cues from your pen pals. From *Survived & Punished: Remember that letters will be opened by prison staff — ask survivors to let you know what they are comfortable sharing and discussing by mail.*

LINKS TO
ORGANIZATION
SPECIFIC
RESOURCES ABOUT
LETTER WRITING
AND PEN-PALING

<https://survivedandpunished.org/guide-to-writing-letters/>
<https://freebresha.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/201503051048.pdf>
<https://prisoner-correspondenceproject.com/faqs/>
<https://www.blackandpink.org/penpal-sign-up>
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MnzYrjGirNZBG16ah-g0n488fEJ05g4Hgr84srG95As>

CONSIDERATIONS IN ADVANCE

CAPACITY

Do you, or does your group have the time and energy to organize, publicize, and follow up after a letter writing event?

RETURN ADDRESS

All mail that goes into jails and prisons must have a return address, otherwise it will be rejected by the mail room. In our experience, it's best to give people who attend a letter writing event the choice to use their own personal address OR an organizational address. Often the sponsoring organization will use their office or PO Box. If you don't have a sponsoring organization yet, is there a group you could partner with who could offer their mailing address and commit to sharing mail back that they receive?

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Before you host the letter writing event, you'll need to decide what you plan to do with responses to the letters you send in. Longer term correspondence allows us to build relationships across prison walls, both one on one, and as part of a larger movement. What is your plan for distributing and responding to any letters you receive in response?

WHAT KIND OF EVENT?

Will this letter writing gathering be part of an ongoing campaign? Will it help launch a new organization? It does not need to do either, but it's important to have a plan either way for responding to letters. It's important to be honest and clear about this, and ensure participants make their intentions clear in the letters they send.

GETTING STARTED



RESEARCH WHO ELSE IS DOING SIMILAR OR RELATED WORK IN YOUR AREA. Bail funds, sex worker organizing and outreach programs, and immigration bond funds in your area might know about specific people that could use support. Groups that send books to incarcerated people, support political prisoners or LGBTQ prisoners might have established relationships with incarcerated survivors. *(For more specific organizations and contact information, See Appendix E of the Research Across the Walls Guide.)* Reproductive justice organizations and groups with a queer, Black feminist analysis might be good to partner and co-host with.



GATHER A TEAM: can be small, can also involve groups doing related work. By working in a team, you share knowledge and skills with each other, and build your collective sense of purpose and vision as you pull off a specific event. You also experiment with ways to collaborate, see what more you could build together, and see where you need to make adjustments.

*“nothing that we do that is worthwhile is done alone” –
interview w/ Mariame Kaba by Eve Ewing*



CREATE A ROUGH TIMELINE of the event, and necessary steps to take in pulling it together.

GETTING STARTED

SELECTING A DATE

Many groups like to host gatherings prior to major holidays, or as a way to remember important historical events and anniversaries.

If you're hoping to send letters and would like people to receive them before a major holiday, i.e. Mother's Day, New Year's, etc., make sure to host your event several weeks before the holiday. Prison mailrooms get especially backed up during the winter holidays. A few states like Pennsylvania have outsourced mailroom processing, further extending the time it takes letters to reach loved ones on the inside.

Alternately, you can plan a letter writing gathering to commemorate a significant day or month, such as domestic violence awareness month, Black August, or the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. If you plan to highlight a particular survivor's case, you can host the event prior to an important court date and send letters of encouragement, or on an important anniversary or birthday.

Give yourself plenty of time to plan and get the word out!

FINDING A VENUE

Finding a place to host an event can be difficult. There are many things to consider, and it's not always easy to find a place that can host without cost. To the right are some things to consider when selecting a place.

Is the space accessible?

Is the space located near public transit and/or near free or low-cost parking options?

Does the organization require staff to be there for the event? Do they require security? Do they have to be there during the event? Will they require people to show an ID upon entering? Are there ways around this?

Is it a relatively neutral space? (Who is likely to feel at home in the space? Who is likely to feel like they don't belong or not show up due to the host organization?)

Will it be possible to use amplified sound during the event? Or show a video? Will you need to bring your own equipment? Is there wifi available? How is it accessed?

Is it possible to bring in outside food?

Is the space open to the public, or will it be locked and require a key or special access to enter? Who would be available to open the doors and close up the space?

Are the bathrooms gender segregated? Is there a single stall option? Will the host organization allow you to make bathrooms gender neutral or otherwise label bathrooms? (Will other people be using the bathrooms in addition to your group?)

ACCESSIBILITY

“Access for all community members takes time as well as commitment.” -
SINS INVALID DISABILITY JUSTICE PRIMER

Creating an accessible space means many things, and this list is far from exhaustive. It can range from making sure space is comfortable for participants with visible and invisible disabilities, to being a practical option for people coming from work and or bringing children. In your event flyers and online outreach, it's helpful to let people know what access needs you've already planned for, and to invite people to share what else they might need to participate. Below are a few tips to creating a more accessible space.

For further reading and more in-depth guides, check out the Sins Invalid Disability Justice Primer - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/g085gbu0hbdg7gk/Sins-Invalid-DJPrimer.pdf?dl=0>

A FEW BASIC COMPONENTS OF A WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE SPACE:

- Doorways and aisles are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair.
- There are ramps or elevator access in main entrances (not a service elevator) and along the way to bathrooms.
- The distance between parking or public transit options and the venue is short.
- Food and signs are placed at a height appropriate for anyone using a wheelchair.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH VISUAL OR HEARING IMPAIRMENTS:

- Assume people with hearing loss will participate. Amplify sound with microphones, if possible.
- Explore providing ASL interpretation.
- Ensure the font of printed materials is no smaller than size 14 (in Arial), or some other easier to read font.
- Only use darker colored markers when writing (on a dry-erase board or butcher paper) for a group: black, brown, blue, green, etc. (and low-scent).





Assume some people will not have ID and/or will not be comfortable with private security when planning the event.



If at all possible, provide food at the event, particularly if it's during mealtime. It can be snacks, or an entire meal. Be sensitive to dietary restrictions, allergies, cultural significance of food, etc.



Will interested participants need childcare to participate? Are there people in your network who might be able to provide childcare during the event?



Alternately, how can you make your event more welcoming to children? Bring supplies, such as coloring books and crayons for kids who might show up.



Gender segregated bathrooms can be unsafe and inaccessible for trans and gender-variant people. Find out if there are single occupancy bathrooms, and/or if it's an option to change the gender markers on bathrooms that are available. Check to be sure that gender neutral restrooms are accessible by wheelchair. (If you're the only group using the building at the time, you can tape your own signs over the pre-existing ones.)



Would more people be able to participate if you provided translation or interpretation into a language other than English? Can you arrange for the spoken and written components of the event to be translated into another language?



An increasing number of people have sensitivities to fragrances and chemicals. Reducing scents in a space can make it possible for more people to participate, and reduce the likelihood that someone may become ill because of exposure. More on reducing scents at events [here](#), and more on reasons why [here](#).



Keep in mind many people have a variety of different learning styles. Include a mix of approaches to sharing information and connecting with others. Have fidget items, possibly drawing or doodle supplies.



Consider using an RSVP form. This allows you to estimate attendance, and ask questions about what kinds of support people may need at the event (from childcare, to specific food restrictions). Include an open-ended question like, "What would you need to fully participate in this space?"

TRAUMA AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Assume many participants in your event will have experienced trauma, whether in the form of sexual and/or domestic violence and/or incarceration. As a consequence, some may feel overwhelmed or triggered by the event. Create a space for people to take a break, whether a meditative space, aromatherapy corner, altar space, etc. Encourage people to take care of themselves and take breaks as needed.

If possible, it can be useful to have people present at the event who are ready to support anyone who feels overwhelmed or triggered by the event and material. While professional or academic experience is not necessary, it is helpful if individuals on the support team have experience with trauma-informed or crisis support. In particular, experience supporting survivors of gender violence and/or state violence is useful. Invite emotional support people to introduce themselves at the beginning of the event so everyone knows who they are and how to find them.

SXHX: "DON'T LET THE CRUEL AND ARBITRARY PRISON MAIL ROOM POLICIES SCARE YOU INTO NOT ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FOLX INSIDE. YES, IT'S FRUSTRATING AND INFURIATING, DON'T GIVE UP."

TASKS, ROLES AND SUPPLIES

Planning the Event: TASKS

- Create a program
- Plan and organize food
- Set up childcare
- Arrange interpretation (ASL, Spanish/English) and necessary supplies
- Create a safety and support team, gather list of local resources
- Reach out to possible sponsors and partner organizations
- Advertise the event online
- Outreach by phone and in-person
- Create an online RSVP form (i.e. through Google or EventBrite)
- Design and distribute a flyer

ROLES FOR THE DAY-OF

- Set Up
- Cook, transport, and serve food
- Welcome participants, register / sign-in
- Emotional support and safety team
- Emcee / facilitator
- Speakers
- Take notes
- Photography
- Provide childcare
- Interpreters
- Clean-up and tear down
- Review & send mail

MATERIALS

- List of names and addresses of survivors to write letters to
- Stamps
- Envelopes
- Paper / Stationery / Cards
- Pens / pencils
- Clipboard and sign-in sheet, etc.
- Petitions / postcards for freedom campaigns if relevant (i.e. commutation, parole, release from ICE custody, etc.)
- Printed individual bios of incarcerated survivors, can be table tents
- PA or speakers to amplify sound, mic, extension cord
- List of local domestic violence and sexual assault resources
- Projector for a video, relevant adaptors and cords
- Tape
- Dry erase or permanent markers & butcher paper

OUTREACH

Decide if you'd like to have a large turnout, or would prefer a smaller group. For a larger turnout, create an online event announcement and invitation (Facebook, EventBrite, etc.)

Make co-sponsoring organizations co-hosts on the event page, and ask them to help get the word out. In order to beat the Facebook algorithm (that determines what people see in their news feed), be sure to respond to any comments and encourage your members of your team to share the event on their own pages.

Create an RSVP form that has questions related to people's dietary restrictions, needs for interpretation or childcare, as well as anything else that might support someone in fully participating. Do you have limited space? Encourage people to RSVP as there are limited spots available. Make sure to reserve some spaces for participating orgs and directly impacted folks.

Design flyers for both online and in person distribution. Even if you haven't done a lot of graphic design, canva.com is a free resource for creating online shareable images. Share printed flyers with individuals and groups. Place them in public spaces, cafes, or community centers — particularly ones frequented by those you'd like to invite.

COVERING COSTS & WORKING WITH A SHOE-STRING BUDGET

The vast majority of Survived & Punished's work, as well as the myriad of survivor defense committees, do not have funding or paid staff. They are volunteer-run and led, and rely on in-kind donations (donated goods or services) from individuals and organizations.

If you are also working on a tight budget, you'll have to plan. Make a list of supplies you need. Ask your team what in-kind donations each person can provide, and leverage your connections. Find out who in your network has access to organizational resources, whether that's printing, food, or access to an event-space. If you use an RSVP form, you can invite people to volunteer or offer in-kind or financial donations on the form as well.

Finding an event space is often the first resource puzzle to solve. Public libraries, places of worship, and academic institutions often host for free or at a low-cost. Additionally, someone in your planning team might have access to their workplace after hours, or have a connection with a local café or restaurant.

Encourage donations at the letter-writing event itself. This can go to cover basic food costs and the costs of mailing supplies. If you have additional money, donate it to the commissary accounts of the people you're sending mail to.

PROGRAM

There are many ways to structure your gathering. Below you'll find a sample program, links to possible audio and visual clips you could use, as well as a list of ways to bring the voices of incarcerated survivors into the room.

SAMPLE PROGRAM:

- Welcome and opening: Thank those who helped organize the event, the host organizations, co-sponsors, and those doing the often unseen or unrecognized labor of childcare, cooking, etc. Acknowledge the movement work, intellectual work, and leadership of mostly Black women and women of color to create this framework (INCITE, defense committees, Survived & Punished chapters in CA, NY, Love & Protect in Chicago).
- Announcements: bathrooms, childcare, food, access needs, interpretation, emotional support and follow-up support.
- Grounding: consider an activity that invites people to be fully present in the moment.
- Share the program overview and schedule, have it in writing and on display as well.
- Show a brief video / sound recording (options below), invite responses and a brief discussion.
- Share fact sheets or background material if relevant.
- Share tips for letter-writing, both technical (relevant mail restrictions) and ideas for getting started. Let people know if they'd like to get a response to write their own return address.
- Give the group time for letter writing – allow at least an hour.
- Announce next steps, ways for people to stay involved or become more active.
- Official closing



MULTIMEDIA

- Poem: video of Nikky Finney reading her poem, “Flare”
- Videos: 5 min video of 2017 No Perfect Victims Convening in Detroit, brief interviews with participants of the convening; brief videos about specific criminalized survivors and campaigns to fight for their freedom, excerpt of Survived & Punished conference



WAYS TO BRING THE VOICES OF INCARCERATED SURVIVORS INTO THE ROOM:

- Read letters from incarcerated survivors out loud, with permission of course
- Play a recording of an interview or talk
- Schedule a call-in with an incarcerated survivor
- Display prisoner artwork
- Involve family members of the incarcerated survivor
- Invite a formerly incarcerated survivor to come speak (offer an honorarium if at all possible)



DOCUMENT THE EVENT - BUT ONLY WITH CONSENT!

Photos can be a great way to document support for incarcerated survivors and spread the word on social media as well. You can even send photos of the event to incarcerated survivors to share more about the event. However, it's important to check in with people prior to taking, and in particular, prior to posting their photos online.

There are many ways to do this: you can ask people at the registration desk when they come in, and invite people to wear a sticker on their nametag or arm band if they'd prefer not to be in any photos. You can also find ways to take photos that don't feature people's faces or other identifying information. Alternately, you could have photos occur only in a set aside area. For example, you could set up a photobooth in one corner of the room, and have a poster or sign with relevant hashtags, i.e. #FreeMarissa, #PrisonIsNotFeminist or #FreeThemAll.

SAMPLE TIMELINE

A sample planning timeline is below, just to get a sense. You know best what would work well where you're organizing an event.

8-12* WEEKS BEFORE

- Research groups in your area doing relevant work. Reach out to individuals in those groups and gauge their interest, and possibly invite them to the planning meeting.
- Invite people to a meeting to plan a letter writing event together.
- Start looking into venues that could accommodate the event & are accessible.

**Finding a venue and building a team and/or coalition are often the most time-intensive parts of planning an event. If you have easy access to an accessible, neutral space, and already have a group you plan to work with, the time frame might be shorter. If you don't have a space in mind, and want to reach out to people you haven't worked with before, give yourself more time.*

6-8 WEEKS BEFORE

- Hold a meeting with interested individuals and organizations. At the meeting, share a draft proposal and invite feedback. Depending on collective response, proceed.
- Decide upon date and time for the event.
- Decide upon a location. Make sure the venue is as accessible as possible.
- Divvy up tasks among your team.
- Decide if you plan to provide childcare or interpretation (Spanish-English, ASL, etc.) for the event, reach out to necessary people.
- Create a budget for the event, make a plan to raise money or ask for contributions from individuals / sponsoring organizations. At a minimum, you will need enough funds to cover postage and snacks for the event.
- Invite organizations to co-sponsor, plan to ask for specific commitments from co-sponsors (i.e. do outreach to invite people to the event, share speaking or facilitation, promote online, contribute to costs of event, make food, arrange childcare, etc.)

3-4 WEEKS BEFORE

- Confirm details with venue, esp around access to building (keys, who will open the space), any technology (do you need wifi), bringing food, etc.
- Work on the program, decide on an emcee and speakers, as well as any multimedia you'd like to use.
- Make a list of roles for the day-of, start to divvy up.
- Make a list of needed supplies for the event, assign or divide up among the team. Make a plan for either providing funds up front or reimbursing for costs of materials (or asking for in-kind donations).
- Decide who you will be writing to, which addresses you'll offer.
- Create short bios (or print existing ones) for survivors.

1 WEEK BEFORE

- Post updates on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to keep the event in people's news feeds; post relevant articles, or information about a particularly public campaign you plan to support at the event.
- Look up survivors addresses online, confirm they have not recently been transferred (use state Department of Corrections website "locators," federal Bureau of Prisons website, or Vinelink for the relevant state).
- Printing – bios of survivors, domestic and sexual violence resources, fact sheets, sign-in sheets, petitions

2-3 DAYS BEFORE

- Phone call or text reminders, if applicable
- Reminder email / FB message to those who RSVP-ed

DAY OF EVENT

- 1 hour early – arrange tables and chairs
- Posts signs on doors directing people to appropriate room
- Ensure all tech, multimedia, etc. works
- If using simultaneous interpretation, test transmitters and receivers, replace batteries
- Set up food
- Use table tents with information about specific people
- The event!
- Clean-up and tear-down

FOLLOW UP

- Look over envelopes, ensure they are stamped, addressed appropriately and will be delivered;
- Drop the mail off at the post office!
- Send follow up message or email – thank folks for coming out, let folks know next steps for getting involved in longer term campaign work on penpal correspondence
- Organize debrief call or meeting with group that organized the event
- What went well, what didn't, what would you do differently next time?
- Any next steps or ongoing activity?
- Plans for responding to letters that you receive back

Note: sometimes people will bring up issues that are coming up with their own legal case, and/or urgent issues regarding the conditions of their confinement. Look up organizations in your own community who provide legal advocacy and support.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

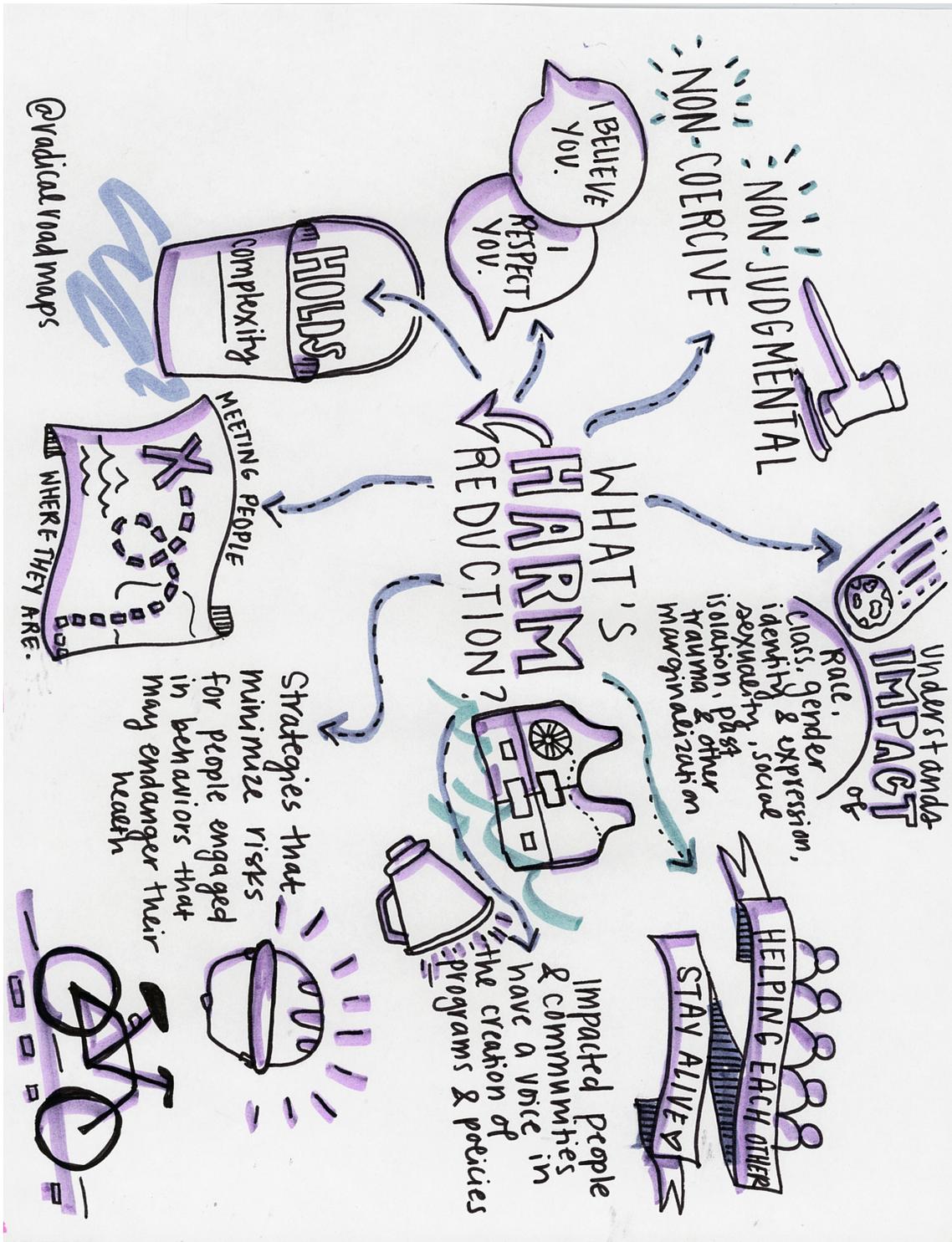


Illustration by Laura Chow

"HARM REDUCTION: DEFINITION

(from the Whose Security Tool Kit and Young Women's Empowerment Project)

Harm reduction is a philosophy of living, surviving and resisting oppression and violence that centers self-determination and non-condemning access to an array of options.

This framework intentionally, holistically and creatively supports people exactly where they are, without preconceived expectations of success while recognizing the impact of violence on our lives and communities.

WE VALUE HARM REDUCTION PRACTICES THAT

AFFIRM the expertise, self-determination, and experiences of [criminalized survivors]

DEEPEN our understanding of the ways in which individuals and communities experience risks, oppression, and violence—and the evolving ways we resist.

CREATE accountability through intentional and [survivor]-led relationship building.

PROVIDE an array of options so that individuals can make informed decisions, guide their own healing process, and practice/teach harm reduction in their own lives and communities.

NOTES:

A series of 20 horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.

