



**PEN America’s Writing for Justice Fellowship will commission six writers—emerging or established—to create written works of lasting merit that illuminate critical issues related to mass incarceration and catalyze public debate.**

The PEN America Writing for Justice Fellowship aims to harness the power of writers and writing in bearing witness to the societal consequences of mass incarceration by capturing and sharing the stories of incarcerated individuals, their families, communities, and the wider impact of the criminal justice system. Our goal is to ignite a broad, sustained conversation about the dangers of over-incarceration and the imperative to mobilize behind rational and humane policies. As an organization of writers dedicated to promoting free expression and informed discourse, PEN America is honored to have been entrusted by the Art for Justice Fund to engage the literary community in addressing this pressing societal issue.

**Applications Open:** April 1, 2019

**Deadline to apply:** May 15, 2019

## **GUIDELINES**

*Please read the following closely, as our application requirements have changed.*

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The Writing for Justice Fellowship is open-genre, and proposed projects may include—but are not limited to—fictional stories; works of literary or long-form journalism; theatrical scripts; memoirs; poetry collections; or multimedia projects. The most competitive applications will demonstrate how the proposed project will engage issues of reform, fuel public debate, crystallize concepts of reform, and facilitate the possibility of societal change. As part of our mission to stimulate discussion, emphasis will be placed on proposed projects that show strong promise for publication. Fellows must commit to contribute actively to bringing attention to their work and that of other Fellows. The Fellowship is open to writers at any stage of their career. Currently and formerly incarcerated writers are highly encouraged to apply, and special provisions will be made for incarcerated writers to participate through alternative methods.

Fellows will receive an honorarium of between \$5,000-\$10,000, based on scope of project. Modest expense budget requests up to \$2,500 will be additionally considered. Fellows will be paired with a mentor to serve as a source of guidance for the project, and the cohort will convene in person twice during the course of the Fellowship. PEN America will draw on the Writing for Justice Advisory Committee, as well as its network of agents, editors, publishers, partner organizations and outlets in order to assist efforts for publication and dissemination of the work of the Fellows. Opportunities for sharing the created work through public forums will be organized in New York City at the PEN World Voices Festival, in the Fellow’s home community, and possibly additional locations.

## FELLOWSHIP TIMELINE

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The first eight months of the Fellowship are designed for Fellows to research, create, and connect with mentors and the cohort, working toward submission of a polished final product that is ready for publication. The final four months of the Fellowship will focus on placing the works for public dissemination and opportunities for Fellows to present their work publicly.

**April 1, 2019:** Application opens

**May 15, 2019:** Deadline to apply

**Late September 2019:** Applicants notified of final application status

**September–May 2019:** Fellows work on their projects, meet with mentors

**October TBD 2019:** Cohort meeting #1 (NYC)

February, TBD 2020: Cohort meeting #2 (Location TBD)

**Early May 2020:** PEN World Voices Festival event featuring works in progress

**Late May 2020:** Work completed and submitted for publication

**May–August 2020:** Placing work and local public presentations

## ELIGIBILITY

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### To be eligible for this Fellowship, the applicant must be

- 21 years of age or older.
- An individual writer. Collaborative projects are acceptable, but only one project lead may apply and participate in the Fellowship's activities.
- A United States resident.
- Available to participate actively in all dimensions of Fellowship programming, including mandatory gatherings and public programs. (The Fellowship will cover costs associated with these events, separately from the Fellowship honorarium and travel/research budget.) Currently incarcerated writers and formerly incarcerated writers restricted by parole will participate through alternative means.
- Able to demonstrate a track record of successful projects brought to completion on time.

Membership in PEN America is not required. Please see FAQs below for more information.

## SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

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Fellows will be selected on artistic merit, the project's approach and potential for impact, and the feasibility of project to be fully completed and in polished, publishable form within the given time frame. Applications will be reviewed by PEN America and expert advisers through an anonymous process.

Applications close May 15, 2019. Fellows will be announced in fall 2019.

## **HOW TO APPLY**

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Closely review all required materials listed below. Please be mindful of the specific application requests. Failure to follow instructions carefully will result in immediate disqualification. Late applications will not be accepted. We suggest you submit early to avoid technical issues.

There is no fee to apply to the Writing for Justice Fellowship.

All non-incarcerated applicants are required to submit online through [Submittable](#).

Currently incarcerated writers can submit by sending application materials (preferably typed, but clean, legible handwritten applications will also be accepted) to the address below:

Writing For Justice Fellowship

588 Broadway, Suite 303

New York, NY 10012

## **REQUIRED APPLICATION MATERIALS**

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Typed materials should be:

- 11 or 12 pt standard font (Times New Roman, Arial)
- Spaced at 1 or 1.15
- One-inch margins

Currently incarcerated writers should follow formatting to the best of their ability and estimate word count as closely as possible. We will not disqualify applications for being reasonably over count.

### **1. Cover Page:**

Include name, address, telephone number, email address, and title of the proposed project. Online applicants will fill this information out in the Submittable form.

### **2. Project Title and Brief Description (maximum of 100 words):**

Please do not include your name or any other identifying information on any part of the Project Title and Brief Description. Online applicants will fill this information out in the Submittable form.

### **3. Project Proposal (maximum of 750 words):**

Online applicants will fill this information out in the Submittable form. Do not include your name or any other identifying information on any part of the Project Proposal. Please respond to the following questions:

- Describe the project, including genre, relevance to the topic of mass incarceration, and the geographic regions your project addresses.

- Share what is new and significant about your project’s approach and why it matters. What inspired your choices and interest?
- Where are you in the timeline of your project? What work do you hope to accomplish during the eight-month creation portion of the Fellowship? What resources would be most helpful in this process? What form of mentorship would your project most benefit from? (E.g., a writer in your genre, an editor, an expert in an aspect of criminal justice/mass incarceration, etc.)
- What impact do you hope your project will have? What audiences/communities are you writing toward? How do you imagine your project might be used to catalyze conversations on mass incarceration? What change might it spur? Please provide specific examples.
- Where do you imagine this project living or being featured? Share any ideas/connections to publications or other relevant venues that might be a good fit for your work.

**4. Work sample:** 7–10 pages of your written work, or 5 files of multimedia (video, audio, visual). You may submit a combination of both, adding up to the maximum (2 files and 8 pages of writing, for example.) Media files that require watching or listening should be under fifteen minutes in length in total. If you are applying with a project that is already in motion, the work sample content should reflect this. Please do not include your name on any part of the Work Sample, including the file name. Typed work samples should be submitted in the same single file (.doc, .docx or PDF) and formatted with one inch margins and 1.15 or 1.5 spacing. Online applicants will submit as an attachment.

**5. Expense budget** up to \$2,500.

Budgets may reflect costs associated with research travel, a self-directed residency, resources associated with the project’s completion, and/or supplies. Funding is subject to the Fellowship committee’s discretion. Please do not submit an expense budget unless there is a strong case for the impact of this financial support on your project’s completion. This budget is in addition to the project honorarium, which you *do not* submit a budget for. Online applicants will submit as an attachment.

**6. Biographical Context (maximum of 500 words):** Briefly introduce yourself as a creator. This might be an artist/career biography to express past accomplishments, a statement of philosophy and approach, or an overview of your current practice and/or creative mission. Online applicants will fill this information out in the Submittable form.

**7. Optional CV (maximum of 2 pages):** Encouraged, but not required. Applicants who do not include a CV will not be penalized. Online applicants will fill submit as an attachment.

**8. References:** Submit three reference names and contact information that can speak to applicant’s track record of success and completion of past projects. *These are not letters of reference.* This is required for non-incarcerated writers. Incarcerated writers are not required to supply references, but encouraged to do so if possible. Online applicants will fill this information out in the Submittable form.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### What kind of work does this Fellowship support?

Our main stipulation is that the work addresses issues of mass incarceration in a way that will provoke meaningful discussion and the potential of change. The projects should be of creative merit and must be able to be produced in publishable form within the eight-month creation portion of the Fellowship. We will consider projects of different shapes and sizes and at various stages in the creative process. We are not necessarily looking for projects as ambitious as book-length manuscripts or stage-ready plays, though we will consider such projects if absolutely feasible for completion within the Fellowship time frame.

### What kind of work does this Fellowship NOT support?

- Projects centered on applicant's personal social media or blog page.
- Projects that are purely promotional or educational in nature.
- Work that is solely in relationship to academic degrees.
- Work produced by organizations.
- Book printing, graphic design, or other costs associated with publishing.

### Can my project be almost done at time of application?

We will consider projects at all stages, but keep in mind that a significant amount of work should occur over the eight-month creative portion of the Fellowship and should benefit from conversation with other members of the cohort, mentorship, and/or research.

### Can you tell me more about the mentorship aspect?

Fellows can request mentorship in their field/genre, an expert in a particular aspect of the conversation on mass incarceration, an editor, or other form of support. PEN America will seek a mentor that best fits the needs of the Fellow and will support the pair to meet in person, digitally, or via written communication about five times over the course of the Fellowship.

### What will happen at the cohort convenings?

#### *Cohort Convening #1: New York City*

Fellows who are not currently incarcerated will be invited to take part in a daylong series of roundtable discussions at the start of the Fellowship with partner organizations that can offer deep expertise on issues of mass incarceration. These sessions will focus on spotlighting critical, current debates in the field in order to inform the work of the Fellows and help maximize its relevance to shifting both public opinion and policy. Incarcerated Fellows will receive information from these sessions and will be invited to ask questions of the expert advisers as well as to rely on them for guidance in pursuing their projects.

## *Cohort Convening #2: Location TBD*

The second convening will take place in a state with a high rate of incarceration where PEN America Members are active. This weekend will offer Fellows an opportunity to deep dive into their projects, sharing progress, challenges and resources. Fellows will meet with local affected communities, and be facilitated to mobilize as a cohort of writer-activists to spur greater awareness of mass incarceration across the wider literary and artistic communities. In follow up, they will be able to tap PEN America's seasoned advocacy and policy staff for assistance in considering opportunities for outreach and campaigning.

### What does participation look like for an applicant who is currently or formerly incarcerated?

Currently incarcerated writers will participate in the Fellowship program via alternative methods of engagement. Mentorship will occur via an epistle, letter-based relationship with an identified mentor. Fellows will be invited to pose questions and ideas in advance of the cohort meetings and will be sent materials and notes from the gatherings. If the Fellow has access to telephone, they may also schedule routine calls with the program director for additional support and call into the cohort meetings, to the best of their ability, at a scheduled time. Incarcerated Fellows will receive honoraria as permissible or be able to direct their disposition.

Understanding some formerly incarcerated Fellows might be restricted in various ways, PEN America will work with the Fellows to participate as fully as possible, including supportive interfacing with parole officers or other authorities and making necessary accommodations to support alternative means of engagement.

### Why is PEN America offering this Fellowship?

PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect open expression in the United States and worldwide. We champion the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world. Our mission is to unite writers and their allies to celebrate creative expression and defend the liberties that make it possible. We have a membership of more than 7,000 writers and their allies across the United States and offices in New York, Washington, and Los Angeles.

PEN America strives to encourage the role of the writer and the written word in promoting discourse and discussion of vital societal issues. We strive to elevate the voices of communities too often pressed to the margins and to celebrate the craft and creativity of writers, whether established or emerging. PEN America has for decades supported the work of incarcerated writers through its Prison Writing Program, which provides mentorship and an awards program. The Writing for Justice Fellowship is an outgrowth of this long-standing engagement with the experience of incarceration. The program is generously funded by the Art for Justice Fund.

### Further Questions?

Contact PEN America if you have quick questions regarding the application requirements, submission policies, deadlines, or other Fellowship-related issues at [writingforjustice@pen.org](mailto:writingforjustice@pen.org) or by writing to us at **588 Broadway, Suite 303 New York, NY 10012**