



Dear _____

Date: _____

If you're getting this letter, it's because you asked for more information, or because we received your letter showing interest in our project. This letter is to provide you with a more detailed description of the project. Hopefully it will answer any questions you may have.

We are a small volunteer-run collective of people in Montreal who started up a letter-writing program in the spring of 2007, for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, gender-variant, two-spirit, intersex, and queer people in prison. We ourselves are made up of queer, gay, lesbian, and transgender or transsexual people. We pair those inside prisons with people outside of prison who are part of the same communities.

The intention behind the project is to be allies to prisoner struggle, to intervene on the isolation of prison life and the added challenges that queer, gay, and trans prisoners experience. We aim to provide a space for personal expression and communication free from homophobia and transphobia. The project does not aim to match people up romantically, but rather to create friendships where those involved can support and learn from one another.

RESOURCES

We also coordinate a resource library of writing on queer, gay, and trans survival in prison. This includes resources on safer tattooing, safer sex, emotional care, safer hormone and drug injection, as well as writing about trans and queer experiences in prisons. All resources are provided free of charge and for you to keep. We will send you a resource list after you return this form to us.

PEN PAL PROGRAM

In order to be matched up with a pen pal, we ask that you submit a short posting of 50-100 words about yourself and what you are looking for from this project. All profiles are posted on our website for potential outside pen pals who have expressed interest to read through. All postings are in a password-protected section of the website—anyone searching your name on the general internet will not be able to find them or what you have written.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind when writing a posting:

- Write about what makes you unique. Write about your interests, pastimes, and what's going on in your life. This increases the chances that the person you get matched with will have similar interests.
- You can request someone who identifies a certain way but know that it will usually take you much longer to be matched up. If you're a man requesting to write to a transwoman, it's likely that you won't get matched at all—we currently have dozens of people who have waited years for this type of match. Requesting a general pen pal will be significantly faster.
- Most outside people who choose to get involved aren't looking for romantic exchanges, so we encourage postings that don't have overtly sexual or romantic tones, and that don't spend a lot of time on physical descriptions. Using explicit language often reduces the likelihood of being chosen by an outside pen pal.

We get a lot of requests for pen pals and can only fill those coming from people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, trans, etc, or who think they might identify in similar ways. If you aren't queer or trans, etc, we can send you a list of other great resources and pen pal organizations that are better suited to match you with a pen pal who makes sense for you.

Please note that there are nearly 2000 people waiting to be matched on our website. While we do our best to make sure that those waiting the longest are prioritized and that there is a steady stream of new outside pen pals, filling out this form is only a guarantee that you will be listed, and not that you will receive a pen pal. It may still be a significant wait, up to several years, before you are matched up.

We hope this description has been helpful in answering any questions you may have had. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any other questions or feedback about the project. We look forward to hearing more from you.

Welcome to the project.

In struggle and solidarity,
Your friends at the Prisoner Correspondence Project

PLEASE FILL OUT THIS SIDE AND RETURN IT TO US

QUESTIONS FOR YOU

Because LGBTQ prisoners are often subject to violence and harassment by guards, administrators, and other prisoners, and because mail going into prisons can be read by mailroom workers or administrators, we want to keep your safety in mind at all times. We have a few questions for you to answer before we can match you up or send you resources:

1. Do you have a chosen name or a name other than your legal name that you would like us to use when corresponding with you?

- Yes, it is: _____
- No.

2. If yes, is this name recognized officially by your prison and can we use it when addressing an envelope?

- Yes, it is recognized, you can use it on the envelope.
- No, it is not recognized, please use my legal name on the envelope.

3. Which of our programs are you interested in signing up for? You can select as many as you want!

- Newsletter (Published twice a year. Please note that the newsletter contains content that is both political and about gay, queer, and trans sexualities).
- Resource library
- Pen pal program (If you're interested, please write your posting in the box at the bottom of the page).

4. Many things in our library have gay/queer/trans content. When you request specific resources, do you want us to include those that are directed at a gay/queer/trans audience, or those that are more "neutral" and don't have content that might reveal your gender/sexual orientation to others who might see it?

- Yes, you can send me resources with gay / queer / trans content.
- No, please don't send any resources with any gay / queer / trans content.

5. Sometimes mail we send gets rejected from the mailroom. Do you want us to challenge the mailroom's decision, understanding that an outside challenge could draw attention to you and whatever it is we're sending?

- Yes, please challenge any rejected mail.
- No, just let it slide. I'll get the next one.

6. What language(s) would you like to correspond in? _____

7. What is your expected release date? _____

8. What is your address? _____

PEN PAL POSTING

Please write your 50-100 word posting in the space below, keeping the guidelines in mind.