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ACTIVIST BIBLIOGRAPHY AS ABOLITIONIST PEDAGOGY IN THE AMERICAN PRISON WRITING ARCHIVE

Kirstyn J. Leuner, Catherine Koehler, and Doran
Larson

Content warning: This article discusses rape, assault, medical neglect, dehumanization, and trauma related to incarceration.

Imprisoned in Indiana, Valjean Royal documents her resistance to the serial rape she endured as a transgender woman: “I’ve gained a light of wisdom from the pain of abuse. A light I want to share with others so they can ‘see’ the better choices they can make, even in the dark places.”¹ Georgian Jamil Hayes describes COVID-19 lockdowns and resulting tensions that lead to “C.O’s [correctional officer’s] shooting inmates with paint ball guns loaded with pepper spray. It’s like a war zone.”²

These are voices from the American Prison Writing Archive (APWA), the largest digital archive of nonfiction essays by people writing about their experiences inside US prisons and jails. The archive allows the public to read about the lives that continue behind prison walls and, like other crowdsourced digital archival projects, to contribute metadata as citizen archivists through transcription and tagging.³ More than 3,300 essays, four hundred prison facilities, and one thousand authors are represented in the archive.⁴ It grows by up to seventy essays each month. The APWA evolved from the book project *Fourth City: Essays from the Prison in America* (2014).⁵ After the submission deadline passed, incarcerated authors continued to submit essays to the editor, Doran Larson, which convinced his team to create the digital archive to disseminate extant and future voices online that could not be printed in the book. An international pool of citizen archivists transcribe handwritten essays, subject tag essay contents, and submit short abstracts. Aligning with its pedagogical mission, the APWA invites teachers to assign editorial work to students and provides resources for these assignments.

Faculty assigning APWA editing create an online activist classroom within which students learn from incarcerated authors by studying

and editing their manuscripts. This essay offers two case studies that incorporate APWA editorial assignments as activist bibliographical coursework in English and literacy studies courses. It addresses what happens critically and pedagogically when undergraduate students serve as initial readers, transcribers, and subject taggers of first-person testimony from within a prison. Given the archive's rapid growth, students are often among the first to engage with submitted manuscripts.⁶ Their editorial contributions support incarcerated people writing to resist censorial regimes and emerge into the public sphere. This article argues that students who provide metadata for imprisoned writers empower incarcerated people to become public humanities teachers of the carceral state. Student Ashley Orellana concludes, after completing her project as a citizen archivist, that "no other group of individuals is more knowledgeable about the realities of incarceration and the toll it imposes."⁷ APWA authors' acts of witness through writing are models for students of the fortitude needed to confront violations of human rights, to process them emotionally and intellectually, and to fight for abolition.⁸

In Larson's courses on US prison writing at Hamilton College, undergraduates consistently find APWA testimony the most engaging of the term.⁹ This is because, unlike those with traditional publishers, writers in the APWA need only stamps and writing materials to circulate their unedited documentation of physical abuse, despair, and the loss of identities in spaces that demand hardening beyond self-recognition. In Larson's classroom, students discuss how their emotional responses to APWA authors are proof that, in them, these writers have found the readers they hoped for, who witness their pain and worth as human beings. For example, William M. Henderson writes from Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, California, imploring his readers to see themselves in those trapped in prison:

Thousands in the U.S. have been in similar predicaments for decades, due to a system of chronic injustice. I was a rocket scientist. It could happen to you, or anyone.

A man was released from death row in 2018 who had been there 41 years. He was proven to be not guilty. What he went through, and others go through in U.S. prisons every day, is considered to be torture according to international law. There is a modern Shindler's List to be worked. Will you be a Good Samaritan and help?¹⁰

Henderson's plea reached one student, who wrote in their journal, "I cannot even begin to contemplate what it would be like to be wrongly incarcerated for over two decades. It is a crushing thought experiment."¹¹ The student describes a common reaction to reading unedited personal accounts of childhood abuse, wrongful conviction, the criminalization of poverty, and the loss of bodily autonomy. Incarcerated writers are powerful teachers, but their lessons come with an emotional price for the reader that is part of the lesson itself. As another student put it, "I have such a hard time handling that this has been going on all my life, and it's happening now, and we've been lied to."¹²

Political scientist Marie Gottschalk has compared prison witness to narratives of slavery that "graphically rendered the physical pain that slaves suffered and . . . helped to propel the abolitionist cause."¹³ In fact, many APWA writers, like Reneigh Blake, write about themselves as victims of "modern day slavery," validating the equivalencies Gottschalk draws between prison and slavery witness literature. There are thousands of published testimonials to prison life that tell the stories of millions of people behind bars who suffer invisibility and denial of their humanity. Like slavery narratives, prison witness brings voices to the fore in a sharable text. It is incumbent upon instructors to teach students that their emotional reactions to APWA essays are akin to those of early white readers who first encountered on the page the oppressions of enslavement.

The dehumanization that justified slavery is reproduced in public perceptions of incarcerated people. From the 1970s to today, news and popular media have created a white fantasy of a faceless, menacing Black urban mass. The ensuing moral panic criminalized people of color and increased prison populations far beyond national and global norms.¹⁴ By serving as APWA editors, a deeply experiential educational opportunity, students encounter individuals held in prison as more than anonymous, criminalized laborers and state property. They become ordinary people and writers who have been legally caged, unveiling a national lie about humane justice. The editorial contributions of students to the APWA, and the emotional responses they evoke, help transform prison testimony from the page, through editorial allyship, and into action. As abolitionists did for and through enslaved narrators, student citizen archivists aid incarcerated people in becoming published public knowledge-makers, allying with other writers who spread awareness of criminal legal system injustices and the need for prison abolition.

Activist Subject Cataloging Women's Writing in the APWA

In the case of Kirstyn Leuner's undergraduate course "Women's Prison Writing" at Santa Clara University (SCU), students join the APWA's editorial team as citizen archivists while they provide metadata by subject cataloging women's writing in the archive and also writing abstracts for submissions. Subject cataloging has a complex history intertwined with colonial, white supremacist influences on knowledge distribution through libraries.¹⁵ However, subject cataloging can also be activist in nature, as critical cataloging draws renewed attention to marginalized authors or works, highlights subjects that call out oppression and dehumanization, and flags harmful archival language in need of revision.¹⁶ For example, the subject tag "staff misconduct/abuse/harassment" exposes documented examples of prison staff falsely charging people in prison with violations they did not commit, as in Jessica Chambers's essay "The Peacekeeper," in which she recounts being punished for fighting with another inmate when she had actually tried to peacefully settle a dispute.¹⁷

Leuner's assignment explicitly positions the authors in the APWA as students' instructors in the gendered discriminations of prison life and its specific impacts on individuals who identify as women, who, since 1980, have been incarcerated at twice the rate of men but without equal access to resources within or outside of prison.¹⁸ The course and assignment are grounded in Paulo Freire's theory of dialogue and "naming the world." Freire argues that to overcome the silence and distance that oppressors create between people, one must communicate and socially identify or "name" the parts of one's world in dialogue with others, both oppressed and oppressors.¹⁹ As a consequence, "to speak a true word is to transform the world," and those who were nameless, silent, and hidden become recognizable individuals with voices, embodied visibility, and instructive messages.²⁰ The APWA amplifies women writers who name their worlds from the inside and propose solutions in their manuscripts, and student citizen archivists are part of the world that their stories transform.

By midterm, students in this ten-week course have watched the documentaries *It's Criminal* and *13th* and studied witness writing, including selections from *Women, Writing, and Prison: Activists, Scholars, and Writers Speak Out; Inside This Place, Not of It: Narratives from Women's Prisons*; and Susan Burton's memoir *Becoming Ms. Burton*. Theory and contextual reading help students understand the systems of oppression within which prison witness writers speak out, including selections from Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want to Talk about Race*. At midterm, students are ready to edit

for the APWA. They read Larson’s essay “Witness in the Era of Mass Incarceration” and two assigned APWA essays, Shannon G. Richardson’s “Unlike Some Inmates Who Expect” and Eve Mazzarella’s “You’re Not as Unique as You Think You Are.” During class meetings, the instructor introduces the list of subject tags (table 1) and their meanings, as well as the process and purpose of tagging, and students have a low-risk

Table 1. 44 APWA subject tags grouped by topic

Tags (22) Describing Prison Conditions, Logistics, and Culture; Abuse, Misconduct, and Rights Violations inside Prison (IP)	Tags (22) Describing Reflections on Oneself, Systems of Oppression More Broadly, Politics, and Social Justice Activism
Description of prison conditions (sanitation, buildings, temperature, water supply, etc.) Education (self, formal, joys of, need for) Programs, or their absence (drug treatment, parenting classes, anger management) Food (rations, quality, condition, deprivation) Hygiene Labor and employment (official and unofficial work, wages, training) Medical health care (and its absence, negligence) Mental health care (and its absence, negligence) Prison logistics (formal/informal procedures and processes, how one does x) Visitation (visits by family and others) Family relations (outside and/or from inside prison) Parenting (from inside prison; challenges/ joys of) Resistance/push back (filing grievances, legal actions) Solitary confinement (i.e., administrative segregation, special housing units, the hole) Parole (abuse, misuse, excessive, violation) Prison culture (among all who live or work inside) Abuse by incarcerated people Staff misconduct, abuse, harassment (by officers, counselors, and others) Administrative misconduct Rights violations Legal obstacles from inside (e.g., to accessing courts, law library) Capital punishment (death penalty)	Autobiographical (stories of life before prison) Family abuse (of author in home) Psychological/emotional/spiritual effects of prison Dealing with stress, coping Dehumanization Religious devotion/conversation/thanks Remorse, repentance; accountability Self-knowledge (gaining, achieved); self-transformation (of behavior, attitudes) Seeking peace inside Prison critique (of system as a whole) Policy critique (public, legal, criminal justice) Judicial injustice Police misconduct Social critique (wider than criminal justice policies or practices) Recommendations for change (e.g., in prison practices, criminal justice policy) Politicized prisoners (indicative of critical views of the racial, economic, and/or social politics of incarceration) Prison activism (inside and out: organizing, protests/strikes, writing to policy makers, resources/aid) Solidarity, help given by or to other incarcerated people: practical, political Historical precedents of mass incarceration (slavery, Jim Crow, Indian schools) Prison (as) business, profiteering Shout out (encouraging or warning other incarcerated people, youth) Wrongful public perceptions (of incarcerated people, prison, prison mission, judiciary, staff)

opportunity to practice tagging and summarizing Richardson's and Mazzarella's essays in small groups. Students learn, importantly, that formerly incarcerated individuals created the list of forty-four subject tags, where half of the tags describe conditions within prison and half describe reflections on oneself and systems outside prison. For each essay, citizen archivists can select up to three major and five minor subjects from the list that codify the author's testimony, and names their world, into a common vocabulary of metadata. The following week, students select and sign out the APWA essay they will edit from a list of available essays and submit a draft of their tags and summaries to peer-review partners and to the instructor for a complete/incomplete grade and feedback. During the third week of the project, students submit their final subject tags and summaries to the APWA through an online form. APWA staff communicates with the instructor and provides access to view students' final submissions. To synthesize the parts of this experience as learning objectives, students write a four-to-five-page reflection essay about what they learned from their editorial work and how it relates to prior coursework.

Chanell R. Burnette's sixteen essays in the APWA exemplify the testimony that student editors find in the archive and choose to tag. They name the world of women's prison life for a public audience, which Burnette calls "insight from the inside."²¹ For instance, in 2018 she submitted a typed essay to the APWA and to the *Prison Legal News* about the poor quality of care at the Fluvanna Correctional Center, a facility where she had been housed since 2006, reporting that despite a class-action lawsuit filed against the facility she has seen no improvements. "I submit this on behalf of all the women suffering here in this institution. I am only one, but strongly feel that our voices need to be heard."²² Burnette also handwrote a two-part essay in 2020 called "The Red, Unfortunate, and Blue," which drew the interest of several student editors.²³ In part 2, she describes the results of a survey she conducted about the prison's medical staff, who are divided into Red and Blue Teams and have patients assigned to them by last name. The survey results show that patients on the Red Team, like her, are more aggrieved about their quality of care, and all respondents report receiving inadequate health care and feel that the providers "no longer see us as people."²⁴ For this essay, an SCU student selected the major subjects of medical health care; prison logistics; and rights violations; and the minor subjects of prison culture; staff misconduct, abuse, harassment; dehumanization; seeking peace inside; and prison activism.

In time, the subject index and abstracts contributed by all citizen archivists will provide new pathways to access APWA essays and collect

quantitative data on the amount of documentary writing on each topic. Subject tags also place different witnesses in dialogue with each other that would otherwise be isolated monologues. The dialogue between records can be comparative as well as corroborating. For example, editors Shawna Ferris and Danielle Allard describe subject tagging in the Sex Work Database (SWD) as “activist” because it ensures that stigmatizing media reports in the database are always retrieved alongside testimony or other activist materials that humanize and decriminalize sex workers.²⁵ Within the context of the APWA, tags name and corroborate the shared worlds of incarcerated authors and also confirm that this testimony has been received and synthesized by an outside audience. When complete, manuscripts with the same major or minor subject tag will connect to one another and add diverse, validating evidence that precludes dismissing testimony, especially that of women and other minorities, as an exception or not credible.²⁶ This is especially important in the APWA given that women’s submissions make up only 4.75 percent of published testimonies despite broad advertising to attract submissions by women.²⁷ For instance, Burnette’s two-part essay “The Red, Unfortunate, and Blue” will be categorized alongside Steven Arthur’s essay “Medical Un-Care?” because they share the subject tag of “medical health care (and its absence, negligence).” Burnette’s writing highlights specific problems with women’s mental and physical health care, a smaller part of the archive, but also provides evidence of widespread health care neglect of all prison populations.

After subject tagging one of Burnette’s essays for an assignment, Allison Hoff (SCU) reflects on how her editorial work implicitly creates a community of “real people.” She writes about how within the APWA, stories like Chanell Burnette’s made “prisoners become humanized.” She elaborates that

[t]heir identities are not solely prisoner, inmate, drug addict, or failure. These are human beings, who endure the effects of physical and emotional trauma, addiction, and abuse just as any other human being would. . . . When we view prisoners like Chanell Burnette as real people with real stories, the corruption of the prison system and torture of imprisonment becomes glaringly obvious, and we can begin to change the stereotypes and systems which oppress these people.²⁸

Hoff emphasizes that the authors as a group “become humanized,” “are human beings,” and are “real people with real stories.” Hoff’s move from

considering one person's manuscript as an editor to perceiving an incarcerated person's humanity and their communities as a fellow connected person is precisely what Freire believes naming the world can accomplish. He writes about dialogue and naming the world as an "encounter" between the oppressed and oppressors that collaboratively transforms and humanizes.²⁹ The APWA makes this encounter possible by inviting student citizen archivists to meet authors within their manuscripts, their testimony to their world behind bars.

Transcribing a Counterarchive of Mass Incarceration

Along with subject tagging, transcription offers students another opportunity to intervene in the documentary record of mass incarceration by situating the testimony of incarcerated people at the epistemic center of knowledge-making about the carceral state. In Catherine Koehler's first-year seminar, "Prison Literacy," at the University of California, Merced, students take up the problem of gaps in the historical record of incarceration to frame their own critical examinations of university archival collections and literate artifacts significant to local and underexamined carceral histories. More than a cognitive skill or even a written text, Pamela Takayoshi argues that "literacy's essence lies in the transaction of written texts among people."³⁰ That is, literacy is a social practice, one often foreclosed to incarcerated writers through isolation, institutional surveillance, and censorship that denies them this sociality. Subsequently, traces of literacy endure as silences in the archival record of incarceration. Through their contributions as citizen archivists for the APWA, students not only identify and critique such archival silences but also assume an activist role to develop a counterarchive, one that centers the voices of incarcerated people and their perspectives and experiences of incarceration as the exigence for literate activity. The slow and careful attention of transcription also leads students to observe witness writing in the APWA as artifacts of the material and social conditions of literacy in confinement and enriches critical examinations of our university's archival collections that follow.

While roughly half of all manuscripts arrive typed and are processed through optical character recognition software, the remaining submissions are handwritten and must be transcribed to make them accessible and searchable. Notably, the APWA digitizes and displays the original manuscript alongside its transcription, at once preserving the material and social conditions of prison literacy, displaying the intersubjective

encounter between incarcerated writer and citizen archivists, and creating the conditions by which testimony can effectively reach audiences beyond prison walls (fig. 1).³¹ Through transcription, students contribute to the legibility and discoverability of testimony in the archive by enabling keyword searches and uptake of testimony in other texts and discourse, further broadening this audience through the production of a layered, accessible digital material record.

Before students begin transcribing, Koehler introduces them to the prison's complicated history as a literacy sponsor, selectively enabling and constraining literacy as an act of legitimation, but also an instrument of discipline and punishment.³² Students learn about how incarcerated people navigate and resist these conditions, reading prison literacy narratives by Malcolm X, Jimmy Santiago Baca, and Reginald Dwayne Betts, alongside others they identify in the archive, to understand the lengths to which incarcerated people must go to access literate transaction in confinement and the significance of this struggle. During week 4, students select an available essay to transcribe from a list provided by APWA staff and receive a unique editorial account to access their essay, which prevents transcription duplication.

Integrating transcription is a highly choreographed activity that warrants some explanation for instructors considering similar pedagogical opportunities for students. Dedicating class time to drafting transcriptions signals how the activity is valued and underscores that transcription is not a rote activity but rather editorial, which involves making decisions.



Figure 1. APWA reading interface with a manuscript and its transcription side by side

It also ensures that students can ask questions and get timely feedback to improve transcription quality. Students consult one another about difficult handwriting, for instance, and confirm their understanding of the APWA transcription guidelines as they encounter different editorial situations.³³ While the guidelines address general formatting and common situations that students might encounter while transcribing, students will still occasionally encounter manuscript-specific scenarios that require additional consultation with APWA staff. In Koehler's course, she frequently reminds students that their editorial role is to be a documentarian rather than to "correct" the essay and thus align with the archive's ethos and preserve the author's meaning.

The APWA transcription interface allows students to save and return to transcriptions in progress, and once students have a complete draft, they copy the text from the interface into a Google Doc for peer review. As homework, each student then compares the original essay and transcription of two peers, using "suggest" mode to indicate conflicts. Students use this feedback to confirm and correct any issues with their transcription directly within the APWA interface before finally submitting to the archive. Finally, students compose a discussion board post in which they describe what they learned during their editorial work and pose new questions. Students are assessed based on their engagement with the transcription process (transcription draft, review of two peer drafts, incorporation of feedback and revision, final submission, and reflection).

Essays in need of transcription are typically the most recently received and ingested, and students encounter the most pressing institutional exigences through the transcription process. In fall 2020, Koehler's course coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Incarcerated writers submitting to the archive were overwhelmingly concerned with relating the unchecked spread of COVID-19 through their facilities, as prisons receded even further from public view.³⁴ Students understood that their work as citizen archivists would contribute to an enduring counterarchive of the prison's worst pandemic excesses, as the social rupture of the pandemic further restricted literate access and transaction in prisons across the country.³⁵

As students transcribed from their beds and kitchen tables during California's COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, incarcerated writers prompted students to identify with their experiences through resonances of pandemic "lockdowns" and social distancing with the carceral condition. Simultaneously, incarcerated writers were quick to emphasize the devastating impacts of the pandemic on incarcerated people, perpetuating a pattern of neglect. As Charles A. Brownell writes, "We're not all in

this together as [Arkansas Department of Corrections] doesn't care about the people in their care and have shown for years a complete disregard for human life. Incarcerated people are people and their lives matter. #AllofUs pandemic, send our people home and stop torturing, exploiting, and killing them for money!"³⁶

Within this shared social context of the pandemic and its disparate effects, students describe their experiences transcribing these essays as both humanizing and galvanizing, with some students catalyzing activist bibliography into critical action beyond the archive. For instance, during the pandemic, student Nyjah Robertson organized her remote classmates to establish an abolitionist collective on campus that has since coordinated a campus walkout to protest no-knock warrants and related police murders of Black people and allied work to support formerly incarcerated students on campus. Reflecting on her introduction to the APWA, Robertson describes how her contributions as a citizen archivist refigured her political orientations and commitments. "My dedication to prison abolition originated with the American Prison Writing Archive," she explains. "There are thousands of narratives describing the dehumanization and heinousness of this institution. With each story, a fire rapidly engrossed my soul, commanding me to find an extinguisher."³⁷ Moreover, she emphasizes, she came to understand that this would require more than shifting her own perceptions but collective action toward structural change, inspiring her to found the collective with the mission of "using archives . . . for the purpose of acquiring a possible solution and bringing forth awareness . . . to the university and surrounding communities." Through the collective, students themselves have created a teaching platform with a mission similar to the APWA's: to look to incarcerated witnesses and their writing for evidence of and answers to carceral injustice.

It would be ideal if courses were always full of students like Robertson, who embrace their roles as citizen archivists and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the APWA mission. Pedagogical victories nurture hope and encourage refining methods for continuing this work, but there are always complications that come with assigning social justice activism for undergraduate course credit. There are myriad ways that these assignments can pedagogically fail. As with all teaching, students can be transactional and motivated by grades, constrained by external obligations and circumstances beyond their control, or simply disengaged.

For these reasons, it is important for teachers to know our students and their educational environments as well as we can and to be prepared to adjust editing assignments and our expectations to account for the known challenges as well as the intangibles. For example, the University

of California, Merced, is at the rural epicenter of the state's carceral economy, with campus located just a short drive away from the largest women's prison in the world, and some students' lived experiences intersect with this economy. By centering underexamined local histories of incarceration in the course, and relating the archival gaps and silences students encounter to the counterarchive they build as citizen archivists, Koehler helps students process their own histories within broader social and political contexts that can be opaque to them. Some students report that this motivates them to solicit further testimony from within their own worlds. For instance, one student revealed that she questioned her mother and uncle, both correctional officers at area prisons, about COVID-19 conditions at their institutions, while another student shared that she asked her uncle about his experiences while incarcerated, a previously taboo subject in the family.

This is less often the case for undergraduates at SCU, a private Jesuit institution in Silicon Valley that is more sheltered from jails and prisons. To activate students' awareness of life outside the SCU "bubble," Leuner invites speakers from the Northern California Innocence Project (NCIP), which is part of SCU's School of Law, to present to the class, and students write letters of hope to NCIP clients awaiting their release from prison. However, even in the cases where life partially or fully disrupts student engagement in APWA editing, the assignment is still beneficial because it can be scaled down, such that small groups of students tackle transcription or tagging together instead of on their own, and the APWA gains an expanded audience by being mentioned in syllabi and in teaching conversations.

To conclude, the authors suggest that the APWA's curation of pedagogical opportunities for activist bibliography can also guide teachers in higher education. Witnesses speaking through the APWA show university educators that witnesses are the true subject-matter experts when it comes to educating about the prison industrial complex and its insidious machinery. When APWA testimony or any other carceral witness writing is part of the curriculum, those who survive and document their experiences become the teachers. University instructors, in turn, can enable this transformation by using their academic privileges to create a new kind of "classroom" that is more like a public humanities project team under their direction and in collaboration with project managers at the APWA. Students form the editorial corps of the project team, responsible for paying close attention to the nuances of witness style, literacies, and rhetorics and for representing them as faithfully as possible in their transcriptions, subject tagging, and summaries. Their work is a public-facing and activist

digital humanities practice: collaborative, interdisciplinary, and resistant to traditional conceptions of what “literary scholarship” in the academy should look like. What emerges is a decentered, project-oriented community invested in amplifying the voices of writers testifying from their prison cells. If instructors in higher education are open to changing the shape and power dynamics of the classroom, more students will have the opportunity to learn directly from incarcerated writers. To volunteer as a citizen archivist for the APWA, visit: <http://prisonwitness.org>. For information on and support for integrating editorial activity into a course, contact prisonwitness@jh.edu.

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NOTES

1. Valjean Royal, “Survivor Testimony,” American Prison Writing Archive (APWA), July 14, 2009.
2. Jamil Hayes, “Being Incarcerated during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” APWA, August 20, 2020.
3. The term “citizen archivist” is established in library and information science scholarship. For another participatory archive documenting state violence, see Stacie M. Williams and Jarrett M. Drake, “Power to the People: Documenting Police Violence in Cleveland,” in “Critical Archival Studies,” eds. Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T-Kay Sangwand, special issue, *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017): 1–27.
4. Doran Larson, ed., APWA, accessed May 1, 2022, <https://prisonwitness.org>.
5. Doran Larson, ed., *Fourth City: Essays from the Prison in America* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2013).
6. Known previous readers are those processing essays into the archive.
7. Ashley Orellana, “APWA Editing Reflection Essay” (Santa Clara University, February 20, 2022), 3.

8. The authors do not presume that students have not experienced incarceration. However, our experience suggests that many students may be learning about it in detail for the first time.
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12. Anonymized comment, *Literature 342, American Prison Writing*, Hamilton College, Fall 2021.
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19. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005), 88–90.
20. Freire, 87.
21. Chanell R. Burnette, "How Could I Forget?" APWA, 2021.
22. Chanell R. Burnette, "My Name Is Chanell Burnette," APWA, September 2018, 2.
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26. See Leigh Gilmore, *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 19–20.
27. Doran Larson, "Gender Identity," APWA.
28. Allison Hoff, "APWA Summary Reflection" (SCU, February 9, 2021), 4.

29. Freire, *Pedagogy*, 89.
30. Pamela Takayoshi, "Literacy's Power: Women's Memoirs of the Victorian Insane Asylum," *College English* 84, no. 2 (November 2021): 199–219, quotation on 205.
31. Brandon Martinez, "16 Years since Inception," APWA, August 25, 2010.
32. See Jodi Schorb, *Reading Prisoners: Literature, Literacy, and the Transformation of American Punishment, 1700–1845* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014).
33. "Transcribing Guidelines," APWA, accessed March 18, 2022.
34. Related projects include Covid Prison Project, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://Covidprisonproject.com/>; UCLA Law COVID Behind Bars Data Project, University of California, Los Angeles School of Law, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://uclaCovidbehindbars.org/>; and Prison Pandemic, University of California, Irvine, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://prisonpandemic.uci.edu/>.
35. See "APWA COVID-19 Essay Finding Aid," APWA, accessed March 18, 2022, https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vQkYVDQvwbYyLTz6zT6wk9yvcGoZHGGu4QL5qWdEjPYI8Ph1ZW_MN0FOf9Z33n81nMZ6Nqau4RSoz6px/pubhtml?gid=1352032667&single=true.
36. Charles A. Brownell, "#All of Us: Pandemic," APWA, December 2, 2020.
37. Nyjah Robertson, email message to the author, July 21, 2022.

