

# Portland Books to Prisoners

“I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me. I knew right there, in prison, that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.”

*-Malcom X*

# Chapters all over the country

- We are one of more than 40 chapters across the country that do similar work
  - Provide volunteer librarians in facilities as part of their mission (ex: Between the Lines)
  - Lead book clubs in facilities (ex: Book Clubs for Inmates)
  - Send boxes of books directly to facility librarians. They then will stock their libraries (if they have them).

Ultimately through these programs and systemic change in the criminal justice system... our goal is what?

To break the cycle of recidivism  
through the power of the  
education and written word.

\*\*Recidivism is the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend.

# Who we are (specifically)



- Portland Books to Prisoners is an all-volunteer group working to distribute books free of charge to adults in custody.
- We are dedicated to offering people behind bars the opportunities for self-empowerment, education, and entertainment that reading provides.

Over the last 20 years, we have moved around enough for one lifetime.

From basements, to garages, to living rooms, back to basements, to independent bookshops... the list goes on.

Fortunately, we found our forever home at Alder Commons a year and a half ago!



There I am!

We depend on volunteers, many of whom have been volunteering with our organization for years!

Our group meets once a week to find books in our collection that fulfill prisoner requests, wrap packages of books to be mailed, and sort donations of books.



Adults in custody send us their requests for books via letter or postcard.

We find the best fits for the request from our library of donated books, which rotates regularly.

\*Sometimes a letter may be identified as a special request. With our raised funds we will fulfill these requests!

Hello Portland Books  
for PRISONER,

12-6-2021

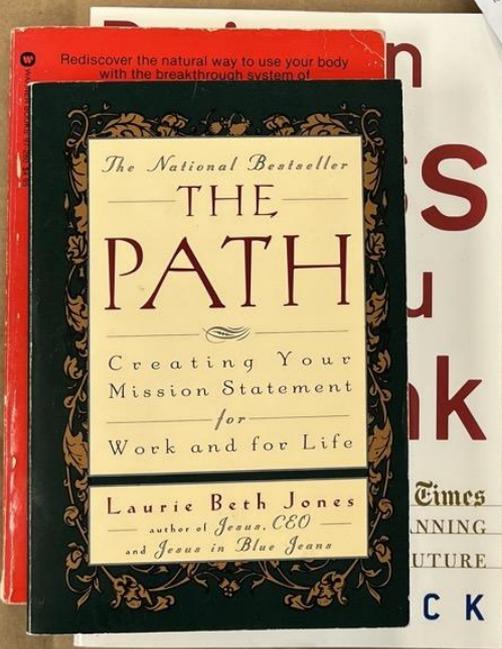
I Got your Address from a Really old and vague Resource guide. I hope The address is correct and that you help TEXAS. IF NOT my Appologies & Please send me a current Resource guide.

I mostly Read Science Fiction. I like to go on a trip to another place and time. FANTASY Rules too.

As that I have a 25 year sentence I am going to College for a Bachelors Degree in Business management. If you had any thing that could help me prepare for that that would be AWESOME

IF nothing like that is available NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICS or Graphic Novels ARE Cool.

# Expectation



Books To Prisoners  
92 Pike St. Box A  
Seattle, WA 98101

NON-PROFIT NATIONWIDE BOOK DISTRIBUTOR  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH LEFT BANK BOOKSTORE & PUBLISHING

Date: 4/16/2022  
Prisoner Name: Adam M  
Prisoner ID: 10210

Quantity	Description	Price
		\$0

Total Due: **PAID IN FULL**

Order Notes:  
Responsibilities may have a brief, professional note (no correspondence)

• Due to high demand please request only once every 3 months  
• We have matched your request as closely as possible  
• Help us help others, send us a stamp or fee

Initials (Printed):



Reality

We average 40-50 packages on a weekly basis. With the help about 7 volunteers weekly.

This is an average haul of packages that are ready to send out each week.



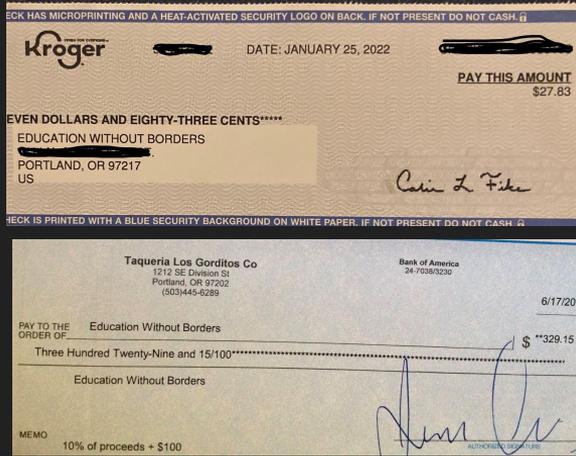
# How is it possible?

We typically spend around \$400 on postage each month all of which we have to fundraise for.

We raise money for our operations and overhead costs in a few different ways.

- Direct \$ donations (PayPal, Venmo, Cash)
- Book buyback programs (Powell's, Wallace Books, Backstory Books)
- Fundraisers with our partners (Fred Meyer, Rose City Book Pub)

# A little more about our Partners



If you shop at Fred Meyer, consider adding Education Without Borders as your community rewards partner. We will receive 90% of the donations that come through that partnership.

Rose City Book Pub in NE Portland is one of our donation location drop off sites. They have also hosted fundraiser events for us, like a letter reading event we did a few years ago.

Local businesses, like Los Gorditos, have offered to donate a portion of their proceeds from a day of operation to us. We often bring a group of people to the business to help support the cause as well.

# How we spread the word

We've been featured in the Portland Mercury, interviewed by university students and other community groups.

We table at community events, street fairs, and host our own outreach events as well.

And honestly... word of mouth goes a long way.



You guessed it!  
Me again!

Most recently we tabled at the Freedom Festival which was a huge success!

# But here is the ugly truth

The Prison Industrial Complex is a repressive system

- The U.S. has nearly 2 million people incarcerated in state and federal prisons as well as county jails (a 500% increase over the last 40 years)
- The majority of whom are people of color.
- The majority are imprisoned for nonviolent crimes.



# Restrictions and Limitations

Prison libraries (if they exist) tend to be very limited, and access to them is often highly restricted, so outside sources of books are necessary.

At most prisons there are very few books available.

There are often regulations governing books sent to people who are behind bars, making it hard for relatives and friends with limited means to send books to loved ones, or for those who are incarcerated to receive relevant reading material.

## How we fit in this system

One thing we can all do is reach out to incarcerated humans in this system is to provide a few books to help them pass the time and educate themselves.

This is where we come in. We fill a very obvious gap for people we barely hear about and don't even see. More often than not they are a forgotten community.

7-31-18

Thank you very much for the Books you people  
sent me, they will help me in my academic  
journey to become a productive individual in  
society. I would like to make this world a better place and  
recovery is the first step; education is a ~~avenue~~ avenue I must  
take. Thanks very much for the assistance.

God Bless

All of you.

Why we do this

Dear Volunteer (?),

I have spent weeks on Lockdown since COVID hit, and reading has been the only thing I can do to pass the time. Now more than ever your efforts have helped carry me through one of the most difficult times of my life.

Reading is my only respite from imprisonment. Great books get me out of my troubled thoughts. In a better state of mind, I can start to have hope for the future,

I will always be grateful,  
Love, Luck & Light,

## Books to PRISONERS,

I just wanted to send a thank you note for the books I RECEIVED!! I WAS SENT AN LSAT TESTING book and composition NOTE book. Thank you for honoring my REQUEST for legal RESOURCES! By the GRACE OF God I WAS RELEASED from prison FREE of all my charges! Hiland Mountain forwarded the package to me at home in South Dakota, where I just actually enrolled with Blackstone.EDU to complete my Paralegal degree. Receiving that book was the NEXT step in completing my goals to SUCCEED!! Thank you for all you do. If I may ask to Pass this blessing on?? There is another prisoner in Hiland Mountain, she's actually the law librarian there, I would like to REQUEST any legal book BE SENT to her??



One page at a time!

cool.

Well Guys Thank you for all you do.

The Books you provide make our life

so much better. ONE PAGE AT A TIME!

# Questions? Get in touch!

To volunteer:

- Sign up for a shift on the [Hands On Portland](#) site

To donate books:

- Send us a message on [IG](#), [Facebook](#), or via email - [pdxbookstoprisoners@riseup.net](mailto:pdxbookstoprisoners@riseup.net)

To donate money:

- We have PayPal and Venmo (@Portland-BooksToPrisoners), accept cash, and checks can be made out to Education Without Borders (our fiscal sponsor)

