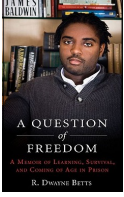


# Prison stories

Life in prison  
and after it.

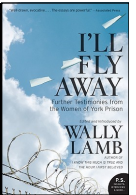


## A Question of Freedom (365 BETTS)

At the age of sixteen, R. Dwayne Betts- a good student from a lower-middle-class family-carjacked a man with a friend. He had never held a gun before, but within a matter of minutes he had committed six felonies. In Virginia, carjacking is a "certifiable" offense, meaning that Dwayne would be treated as an adult under state law. A bright young kid, weighing only 126 pounds- not enough to fill out a medium T-shirt -he served his eight-year sentence as part of the adult population in some of the worst prisons in the state. *A Question of Freedom* is a coming-of-age story, with the unique twist that it takes place in prison. Utterly alone-and with the growing realization that he really is not going home any time soon, Dwayne confronts profound questions about violence, freedom, crime, race, and the justice system. Above all, *A Question of Freedom* is about a quest for identity-one that guarantees Dwayne's survival in a hostile environment and that incorporates an understanding of how his own past led to the moment of his crime.

## I'll Fly Away: Further Testimonies From the Women of York Prison by Wally Lamb (810.8 ILL)

Novelist Lamb's (*I Know This Much Is True*) second collection of writing by the students in his writing workshop at the maximum-security York Correctional Institution in Connecticut, after *Couldn't Keep It to Myself*(2003), also focuses on the inspiring and raw emotions of women sharing the good and bad memories that shaped them. The 20 women whose work is featured here-18 inmates and two of Lamb's cofacilitators-show that writing is not just a way of capturing their most private thoughts and gripping emotions (e.g., hope, despair, courage), but also a powerful tool to foster hope and healing. They write from the heart in works ranging from poems to essays to short stories; each vignette is more compelling than the one before it.



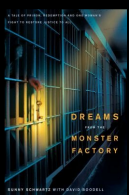
## Waiting to Die: Life on Death Row by Richard Michael Rossi (364.66 ROSSI)

In 1983, Richard Rossi shot and killed a man after a failed attempt to sell him a typewriter to obtain money for drugs. A year later, he was on death row in the Arizona State Prison. While waiting to die, Rossi recorded what he faced behind bars, from the strict regime imposed on eating and bathing to the stress he endured on a daily basis. In a simple yet eloquent style, he discussed fellow inmates who had been executed, the current administration of the death penalty, and his feeling of isolation and insecurity. Rossi ably documents the horror of capital punishment and the inhumanity of what an inmate must endure before the sentence is carried out.



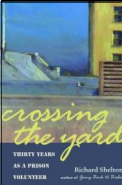
## Dreams from the Monster Factory by Sunny Schwartz (365 SCHWA)

The thorny topic of rehabilitating offenders in the American penal system remains front and center in this book by Schwartz, an expert in criminal justice reform, with an able assist from TV writer and producer Boodell. Schwartz asks a central question: "What do we do with the people who get out of jail and come back to communities?" Using real stories of former convicts and their victims, Schwartz concludes that the horrible conditions in prisons, the "monster factories" of the title, create people incapable of empathy or compassion who return to society and commit more crimes. A series of family concerns thrust Schwartz into helping spearhead the Resolve to Stop the Violence Project (RSVP) in San Francisco to create a prison that doesn't reinforce violence and that joins offenders and victims in a union of empowerment and accountability. Lucid, gritty and penetrating, this book is perhaps one of the most effective testaments available in the campaign to rehabilitate those we lock up and sometimes abandon.



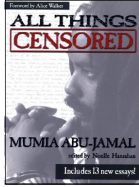
## Crossing the Yard: Thirty Years as a Prison Volunteer by Richard Shelton (365.92 SHELTON)

Ever since he was asked to critique the poetry of a convicted murderer, he has lived in two worlds. Richard Shelton was a young English professor in 1970 when a convict named Charles Schmid—a serial killer dubbed the "Pied Piper of Tucson" shared his brooding verse. But for Shelton, the novelty of meeting a death-row monster became a thirty-year commitment to helping prisoners express themselves. Shelton began organizing creative writing workshops behind bars, and in this gritty memoir he offers up a chronicle of reaching out to forgotten men and women—and of creativity blossoming in a repressive environment. His memoir bristles with hard-edged experiences, ranging from inside knowledge of prison breaks to a workshop conducted while a riot raged outside a barricaded door. Reflecting on his decision to tutor Schmid, Shelton sees that the choice "has led me through bloody tragedies and terrible disappointments to a better understanding of what it means to be human."



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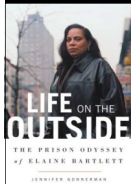
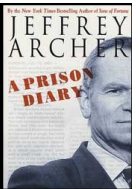
## All Things Censored by Mumia Abul-Jamal (B ABU-JAMAL)

Abu-Jamal, a gifted and controversial Philadelphia journalist, was sentenced to death in 1982 for the murder of a police officer, a crime, as Alice Walker writes in her foreword, "millions of people around the world" believe he did not commit. Abu-Jamal has not suffered the injustice of his nearly 20-year incarceration on death row in silence. He has written two previous books, both widely read and discussed, and by virtue of the power of his lucid voice and humanistic point of view, he was invited to contribute commentary to National Public Radio's *All*

*Things Considered* in 1994. His work was never aired, however, because the network gave in to pressure from then-Senator Bob Dole and the National Fraternal Order of Police. Abu-Jamal has also suffered governmental retribution for his insistence on being heard, but he continues to write eloquent and indelible essays about the failings of the courts, so-called correctional facilities, and the media. This collection brings together 75 of those pieces, accompanied by a CD of his banned radio recordings.

## A Prison Diary by Jeffrey Archer (B ARCHER)

In July 19, 2001, after a perjury conviction, Jeffrey Archer -international bestselling author, now known as Prisoner FF 8282-was sentenced to four years in prison and spent the first twenty-two days in HMP Belmarsh, a high-security prison in South London that houses some of Britain's most violent criminals. During those three weeks, Archer contemplates suicide; his mother dies, and a hundred photographers follow him when he's allowed out to attend her funeral; he's moved to death row because it's the only place with enough security to protect him, a high-profile prisoner; his cellmate sells a story to the tabloids, prompting Archer's move to solitary; and prisoners and guards routinely line up outside his cell to ask him to sign books or to ask for advice about their own writing. *A Prison Diary* is his unforgettable account of these events.

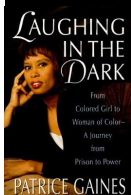
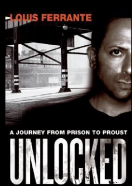


## Life On the Outside: The Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett by Jennifer Gonnerman (B BARTLETT)

For two and a half years, journalist Gonnerman shadowed recently released prisoner Elaine Bartlett, providing an intimate glimpse into the multiple difficulties associated with attempting to reassimilate into a society that is ill-prepared and often unwilling to assist ex-convicts. Convicted under the unforgiving Rockefeller drug laws, first-time offender Bartlett served 16 years in prison for selling cocaine. Attempting to reconnect with her four children, find a job, and acquire decent housing were all herculean tasks for the undereducated yet fiercely determined Bartlett. Refreshingly and bluntly honest, Bartlett eventually achieves a personal triumph when she becomes an eloquent activist campaigning against the brutally harsh drug laws that dictated her lengthy sentence.

## Unlocked: A Journey From Prison to Proust by Louis Ferrante (B FERRANTE)

A former New York Mafia soldier, Ferrante was known for being a solid guy, a thug with a specialty in safe-cracking, truck heists and loan-sharking collections. With this book of his personal transformation, he writes accurately and sometimes comically of his rapid rise from petty crook to reliable criminal with a bungling and colorful crew: Tony the Twitch, Botz, Fuzzy, Rizzo, Slim, Vinnie Bo Peep, Augie, Tony Pork Chop and Artie the Hair Do. Sometimes his mob account reads like a Puzo novel on steroids, but the author takes his licks when he is busted on a federal credit card rap and sentenced to a maximum security prison even though famed attorney William Kunstler represents him. In the federal pen with all its mayhem, Ferrante confronts his personal demons, elevates himself through reading books and embraces a new faith as an Orthodox Jew. Ferrante produces a raw, brutal memoir with glimmers of hope and redemption, and in so doing, this true crime account does not resemble any of the cardboard wise guys of the tube or the silver screen. It definitely grabs the reader's attention.



## Laughing in the Dark by PATRICIA GAINES (B GAINES)

Gaines's autobiography reveals a life filled with despair, peril, and finally hope. Her father was a career Marine and her mother ran the house. Despite this fairly stable beginning, Gaines spiraled downward. She was raped twice, became a shoplifter, drug addict and an unwed mother, married and divorced, and went to prison. After a long and painful look into herself, Gaines is now a successful writer and a celebrated journalist for *The Washington Post*. This is an insightful story full of pain, anger, and emotional and mental growth.

The author pulls no punches in her straightforward and frank writing style, detailing her sex life and drug addiction. Yet her stated purpose in telling her story is to give hope to other women who feel the utter despondency she once did. She succeeds admirably.