

# The Art of Soulmaking

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

Dear Art of Soulmaking participants,

We have been interviewing our volunteers about their experiences corresponding with you. We wanted to share with you some of the things they are telling us, so you can see what a positive impact you are having in all of our lives.

First, you have to know that we are human and awkward. We struggle with writing the letters. We just want to say the right thing.

Here is what it's like:

“ I was definitely nervous about this from the get-go. I like that we do the work that we do. I like that I'm the background person who can help out with logistics. I don't actually have to interact with [people], and I can still support it. Then I got a letter. Somehow once the letter came it was like, 'Oh it's just a person.' ” -- COURTENAY

“ I kept trying to write and I was like, 'That's not it. That's not it.' Then, I set it aside and just kept thinking about it. I tried to write it maybe four times. I would start over and see if I could write something new. Then I would stop halfway through the sentence. I looked up how to write a letter to a prisoner online. I was asking the questions, 'How could I meet soul to soul with someone with no separation? Human being to human being, heart to heart, how to be together without bias or prejudice about different life circumstances. Then finally, I wrote it, and I could feel myself open. It felt like an offering that was true. ” -- NANCY

“ When you have no idea who someone is, and you have no idea how they're feeling, it's so much harder to know what you say. You're not sure what to share. I don't want to share too much, I don't want to share in a way that she won't feel like she can come to me. But at the same time, I have to let her know me, so I can be a place she would want to come. ” -- AMANDA

We feel blown away. We had no idea how much strength and heart we would find in your letters, and how much you would affect us for the better.

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The perspective that I had before that feels different—I expected a general hardness that they would have to hold. Many of the letters I've read have been incredibly soft. ” -- MAYA

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I mostly thought that people who were incarcerated would be more upset about it and more angry. I expected more rage and dissatisfaction. While she has struggled, there's a genuine gratitude that she always carries with her. I find that inspiring because I struggle with that, and I'm not incarcerated. ”

-- SIMONE

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I'm struck by how much they care about all sorts of things. She was in quarantine, and so excited to go back to work being a dental assistant, and she was so passionate about it. They have shared so much appreciation with their lives. ” -- RACHAEL

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The voice I hear coming through the pages feels genuine and thoughtful, even more so than most people I know. I was surprised at how warm it felt. I don't ever get letters like that. ” -- JASON



We are learning so much and growing so much from what you are teaching us.

We are not the same people we were when we started this process.

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These women are so strong. Reminds you what it means to be human. There is something that pulls out my own strength about what it means to have a life. Life is special. I feel like my world is getting cracked open. They are quoting artists. ”

-- RACHAEL

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It's kind of sobering. It's like a reference point for being myself. I'll be in a meeting, and I'll think, 'How would I actually talk right now if I were writing a prison letter?' And I'll realize just how much I need to slow down to be more genuine. ” -- JASON

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I didn't expect to care so much. It was so intimate and personal. I don't know, I just imagined this person who had probably minimal contact with the outside world. I got the letter, and something felt so tremendously intimate about it. ” -- MARCUS

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When I was first writing these letters, it was kind of a dark time in my personal life. I was going through some things, and it was just such a soft light in that space. I always could come back to these letters to feel my heart again. It was just my favorite thing to do. Something has been opening for me around—life being short. I can't just sit around being upset that I don't have the things that I want. I better figure out if I want it, and if I want it, then go see. Life feels more possible or more worth trying. ”

-- SIMONE



More than anything, what we're learning is how much we are the same. We walk away from the letters feeling so connected to you.

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I found myself just having a moment of we're the same... we have the same kinds of emotions and feelings. ” -- MATT

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We all need a time out from life. We all have moments when we get far from ourselves. ”

-- RACHAEL

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It feels like an honor somehow. There's not much artifice. Someone who is doing something just for themselves, and I get to be involved in it. The purity of that experience feels striking or impactful. ”

-- AUSTIN



What we really want to say is thank you. Thank you for letting us into your world and your hearts. It means the world to us to be connected with you in this process. We love you.

*Love,*  
**The  
Soulmakers**