

LETTERS TO A YOUNG INMATE LONGER WORKSHOP | YAHYA'S LETTER

- In prison, time works in different ways than on the outside. Think about the notion of time as an organizing principle in how to live life. We talk about “spending” time.
- Why do we use the word “spend”?
- What does “Doing time” mean?
- How are doing time and spending time different from one another? How are they the same?

Look at Yahya's letter as an example:

THERE IS GREATNESS IN YOU

Dear friend,

Please take the opportunity you have at this time to reflect and ask yourself: “What has my indiscretion cost me?” Your freedom, time without your loved ones, your hopes and dreams? Learn first how to take care of yourself. You've had elementary, middle and high school to answer a simple question. What do you want to be and what do you want to do with your life? Make a plan, not excuses. There is greatness in you. Develop it and nurture it. But most of all, protect it. Be accountable, make amends and learn to love yourself. You're worth it. Write and keep writing. Don't worry about what comes out. It will take form and shape. My name is Yahya and I'm 61 years young. It took me a long time and 16 years in prison to figure this out. You don't have to go to prison to learn this for yourself.

Take care.

Yahya

QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS:

- The writer has spent 16 years in prison - that is most, or all, of your life.
- It has taken the writer all that time to answer the question: “What do you want to be and what do you want to do with your life?”
- Have you thought about that for yourself?
- What's important to you?
- What would feel like a good way to “spend” the time of your life?
- Write about the things you would like to do and the ways you'd like to spend your time, now in Juvenile Detention, and outside of Juvenile Detention when you are released.