

Points of Entry: Writers on the Border

 pen.org/literary-activists-immigration

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PEN America writer members are sharing reflections on the crisis surrounding the treatment of immigrants, asylum seekers, and those living in the United States without documentation. As we learn more about the conditions in immigration detention centers and as the federal government threatens mass deportations, these writers give expression to the sadness, anger, and despair engendered by the experiences of those seeking sanctuary in our country.



Monique Truong, novelist (*The Sweetest Fruits* and others)

United States of America, I am losing faith in our shared vocabulary.

What is *freedom* and *independence*? What is *land of the free* and *home of the brave*? What is *tired, poor, and huddled masses*? What is *united*? Their agreed-upon meanings—hard-earned, hard-learned, and hard-scrabbled—are being gutted and, worse, replaced with *chain migration, anchor babies, rapists, gang members, illegals, and our country is full*.

United States of America, this Fourth of July I honor the unsung conjunction *and*, the true arrhythmic heart of our nation since its inception.

And, the stalwart, acknowledges our nation's ambitions and shames: Pilgrims *and* parvenus. Settlers *and* dispossessors. Revolutionaries *and* slave owners. All men are created equal by their Creator *and* all men are not treated as equals by their Government.

And's purpose is to join, no matter how complicated and contradictory the grouping of facts, ideas, and stories. *And* does not prioritize or take sides. *And* is neutral, which is not to say that it is amoral or incapable of judgment. *And* requires that we take a breath and take into account all that *and* has offered to us. *And* is meaningless alone, in isolation, and without context. *And* cannot perform its function without the words that precede and follow it. *And* requires others to be present. *And* by its very nature cannot exclude.



Photo by Haruka Sakaguchi

United States of America, we are living under the rising flag of *or*.

Or is the deliverer of conflicts, the conveyor contradistinctions. *Or* is the ascendancy of irreconcilable differences, an efficient two-letter battle cry, posing as a question. Yes *or* no? With *or* against me? My rights *or* yours? Citizen *or* criminal? *Or* is a false flag. *Or* is a conjunction whose purpose is to divide.

PEN America On

2020 Census Won't Have Citizenship Question as Trump Administration Drops Effort:
<https://t.co/sIWlhzF9jL> via [@nytimes](#)

Joaquin Castro stealthily captures photo and video at border detention center:
<https://t.co/pPKbpUyrKN> via [@washingtonpost](#).

Like many, I've been completely preoccupied & devastated about what's happening on our southern border—but proud of my colleagues [@PENAmerican](#) & in the literary community who are responding to the crisis through words, humanity, and action. [#CloseTheCamps](#)

<https://t.co/Amfi2iXXrF>