

Prisoner Express Newsletter Winter 2021

Hi all, while I wish I could send many of you a “get out of jail” card, [think Monopoly], I can send you a packet of paper that offers opportunities to get your mind, spirit, and bodies into a more comfortable space. Welcome to the world of Prisoner Express. Our hope is that at least a few of the opportunities we are offering this cycle are meaningful to you. Being engaged in meaningful endeavors is satisfying, and satisfaction is a key to well-being. I know that your environment is harsh and our program helps soften the edges by offering opportunities to gather information, education and engage in creative self-expression in a public forum. If you are new to PE, I am so happy to welcome you to our community, and if you are not new, I am even more pleased to continue the conversation this newsletter allows between all of us.

This issue will be used to explain all the details you need to know to fully participate in our programs. It will also list the current programs we are offering for mailing in the spring of 2021. As usual there will be an eclectic mix of opportunities. Much of the newsletter will be used to share the writings, poems, and art that have been submitted through summer and fall 2020. I am sure I will repeat myself a few times in the newsletter, but I have to let you know right off the bat that I have been touched by the positive responses you have all shown to the programs we offered last cycle. Writing to let us know what programs resonate with you and what falls short of your expectations is the best way to help PE develop the materials that most interest you all.

Many of you writing for the first time have heard about PE from others or some resource guide. Often what is listed in guides or what other people tell you is outdated information. One purpose of this semi-annual news is to explain who we are, what we are doing now, and how you can participate. Prisoner Express is a program of the Durland Alternatives Library on the Cornell University Campus. The library is independent from Cornell but we have an affiliation agreement that calls for us to be housed on campus. We have a collection of books focused on alternative perspectives on current social issues. 18 years ago, I, Gary, an employee of the library began sending books to Dani in Texas and from this act. the program has continued to expand. All of the services we offer are free, except we request a postage donation if you want a customized package of books. All the money for this program has to be raised by me, and I have not found a source of funds to be able to pay 100% of the postage cost for the book packages. This will be explained later in detail. I just want you to know all other programs are yours for the asking. While this is the case please read the descriptions and only sign up for that which interests you. That helps us conserve resources and serve more people. All of the programs will be listed in the newsletter and at the end is a signup sheet you can fill in and send back to us.

We mail most programs through the USPS bulk mail system. That means each program I offer is mailed once, often in batches of 300 or more depending on the number of signups. I am hoping to mail the programs beginning late April, so please return the registration from by then. Some of you seem to get you mail within days of my mailing out a newsletter and others of you write many months after to tell me the newsletter just arrived. I don't know how to address all the breakdowns that occur in the mail delivery on all ends. My main strategy is to keep moving forward. I correct what I can from info gathered through the past mailings, and we at PE work hard to keep updating your address. It isn't perfect. I often get mail back as “refused”. Also, packets can get rejected for all sorts of reasons. I am never sure when you are aware, I have mailed out what I said I would, versus you thinking I am ignoring you. It bothers me, yet I don't have much control over all the circumstances. I often think to write a personal letter every time a packet is denied, but I don't have time to do that, when there is so much else to do. I hope what I am writing now explains some of the reasons you might have missed mail from us. So, if you ever feel we owe you something, certainly write and let us know, but understand we may not go backwards to try to find a publication you missed. It is about robbing Peter to pay Paul. I want to stay focused on your new requests coming in and the new programs getting created and mailed. I am so sorry for anyone who has been disappointed about missing a program.

I know I am addressing a small minority of our correspondents as most of you are quite clear in your appreciation for the packets. But just know that a lot goes on that I cannot control. Here's an example of my most recent urrrrrh! moment. We mailed out a Basic Computer Science packet. I am so glad at how many people have written to let me know they enjoyed it, but I have gotten notices that in some states the packets are not allowed because no Computer Science Education is allowed. Huh! This is the 21st century and without any basic computer skills most folks will be get left behind and unable to participate in the economy. I know of other areas that are subject to censorship, but basic computer science for beginners? I wonder how many people who did not get their mailing believe we did not follow through on our end. Of course, we do make mistakes as well, and human error is always a possibility on our end.

Due to the pandemic the library and the building it is housed in at Cornell closed indefinitely. I am not considered essential and have been working from home. I pick up all the PE mail at post office, read through it and send it through its' proper programing channels.

Please note our new address at the bottom of the page. I spend a few hours every morning reading your mail. All of the PE volunteers and student workers are working remotely. I sit at the center moving papers wherever they need to go. I thank you

all for keeping me so busy during the pandemic. I know a lot of folks are looking for ways to stay busy and connected throughout the social distancing portion of the pandemic. As you can imagine with PE there is no shortage of ways for me to keep busy. I am fortunate to have met you all through your letters



Art by David Partain

Previous Program Cycle-Fall 2020

Despite the lock down and pandemic we mailed all of our Program offerings last cycle except for Poetry Anthology 24. That is a work in progress. It may be a few more months to be finished. The chapbook program has delighted me with the creative poetry and chapbooks many of the participants created. Your chapbooks will be sent on to Elizabeth who is leading the program. Participants can expect to receive a copy of their chap book in a few months. I also am so impressed by the thoughtful responses we are receiving to the philosophy and mental health packets. I figured these would be subjects that would hold interest for you, but wow! I can see that more exploration in both areas is welcome, and we are offering more of the same this cycle. In fact, many of the programs we will offer this upcoming cycle will be both able to stand alone and also build on subjects offered in the last unit. Philosophy participants from the previous program cycle will get a compilation packet of the most interesting answers to the discussion questions in a few months, after Kylie reads them all.

Many folks have heard about our Build a Book program and our Spanish program and have asked to join. These are longer initiatives involving multiple mailings. I plan to offer both courses in our summer cycle of programming. I know many of you are still working on your Build a Book assignments and I don't want the program creator Maia to be overwhelmed by getting a lot of new material while she is still processing anything that is being sent in from the previous program. It takes a lot to write a book. The good news is we will have a number of other creative writing programs and instruction for you this cycle. Hope, who developed the Spanish Class has graduated and moved back to the mid-west. She created an advanced Spanish Packet, and we will roll it out in the next cycle.

Speaking of writing programs, I would like to know what you all thought of Mathew's Screenwriting packet. He gave you a separate address to respond so I have not heard your feedback. I thought it was comprehensive, and it really opened my eyes to the ways in which dialogue and pictures have to be conceived when writing a screenplay. I think you will enjoy Matthew's latest offering.

In the past volunteers came to the library to read you poems, journals, or view your art. They would write you a friendly letter about your work. With the library closed we have begun posting the journals and poetry online. Folks from anywhere can now find current journals and poems at <https://prisonerexpress.org/read-prisoner-writing/>

While I miss the students coming to the library to write to you, I am excited that anyone anywhere with access to the internet can now read these writings and respond to you. **Don't worry, you can mail in your work and ask it not to be posted online.** I know for some of you that is not what you are looking for, but I do know many of you find the mail you receive from PE volunteers to be the highlight of the program. Please note, many of the volunteers are passing through and I would not expect long term pen friends from this program. What I do know is that many of you have written to let me know how refreshing and inspiring the letters you have received have been for you. I believe the volunteers also feel better from writing you and sharing ideas so it is a big win for all involved. If you do write back to a volunteer use their volunteer number next to the name. Just like you. all our program participants get an id number. It makes it much easier, especially in remote times to get the letter to the correct person. More will be explained in the Journal and Poetry program offerings. I would like to hear from any of you who have comments on how it has been for you to share letters with PE volunteers.

Program Offerings Spring 2021

Expedited Books- This is the first program offered when PE began, and it is the only one we ask you for a donation in order to participate. You send us a customized list of the types of books you want and we use our best efforts to make good matches. During COVID-19 especially it has been harder to keep this project moving along, but we have been collaborating with an organization "Friends of the Library" They hold a giant book sale 2x a year to support our local public library system. It is in a large warehouse. All the books are donated by community members during the previous six months. They open for 3 weekends and a few special days after the 3 weekends. Every day they are open prices go down. People line up to get in. People come from far away for the sale. Especially folks who resell books. When I explained the Prisoner Express situation of how I cannot use my bookroom in my now locked building, FOL staff have been allowing me to go in on evenings when sale is closed for the day and buy books for you. We do not have access to a common meeting area to pack books. I take the books that are chosen at

the FOL site to various volunteers' homes. They then pack books and I pick up packages and ensure they get to post office. What used to be a labor-intensive project has gotten even more laborious. The good news is that PE is up for the job and I believe this collaboration with FOL can be good for both organizations. We will give it some time and see. So, for now to get a package, you first check with your prison to find out how you can donate at least \$4 to help cover the cost of postage. Remember asking for specific titles is okay but often futile. We rely on what has been donated and is currently available. We do get some great books, and I believe we make terrific matches. Let us know the limit of how many books are allowed and whether hard or soft cover are allowed in your facility. If you are not okay with us making our best guess selection for you when we don't have the books you request, then this service is probably not for you. When I can't find a book someone wants, but I can send them one I thoroughly enjoyed it feels a like I am sending a special gift. It is nice to get turned on to new authors. We do our best and for now that has to be enough

We don't have many new books, but we do have used books in good condition. Let us know all the rules at your prison as I hate when our packages are rejected. I don't know how often that happens, but it is more than I like. The pandemic has thrown off our scheduling and I imagine some of you have been waiting a long time even though you sent us remuneration for your package. If that is the case write to me, and I will do my best. If you need this to be a quick service with a guaranteed delivery time this is not the program for you. As it is, there are 100 people already on the list and we try to send out about 100 packages a month during the pandemic. **Since I have been working with the folks who run the giant FOL book sale, I have come to see that after the sale the warehouse is still full of books. Believe it or not they get rid of all the books so they can begin collecting again for the next sale 6 months later. I guess they believe that if a book didn't sell, they should let it go rather than give it space on the shelves. They empty the warehouse fast and I want to get some of those books to you. The problem is that I only have a few days to do it, due to their scheduling. If anyone can send me the name of their prison librarian and an email or snail mail address I will try to arrange a way to send cartons of books to the institution library. It is just an idea, but I hate to see so many books get tossed. The folks at the sale feel disheartened by that as well and want to work with us. I will need to raise money to send the cartons, but if I can find interest, I will find a way.**

Poetry Project-This program began about 12 years ago when Toby, a student volunteer was so impressed by all the poetry you all were sharing, that he created an anthology of the. Now we try to print an anthology every six months. We should be putting out Anthology 24 right now, but we are behind. I expect that it will go

out sometime this spring. Everyone who submits at least one poem for consideration will receive a copy of Volume 24 when it is printed. Every anthology is edited by a new group of students and community members, so I can't give any projection on what they like. Don't take it personally if your poem isn't chosen. We are not professionals in this regard, and I ask students to choose poems that resonate with them. That is the only real criteria. I don't know how to evaluate a poem, but I know what captures my attention. Some poems I immediately like, but others that are world famous leave me wondering what am I reading. It seems so subjective, but then again that is what taste usually is. I plan to have a unit on "Poetry Writing Instruction and Inspiration" in an upcoming program cycle. We have been posting your poems online and encouraging volunteers to read your poems remotely and write to you. Let me know if this is working. Because we are scanning the poems if you don't write legibly and we can't read the scan we do not post it. **Take the time to put your name and number on your poem, and if you don't want it scanned write in on the poem.** The poems do not have to be about the prison experience. Of course, they can be, but as fully feeling humans I know there are many subjects and emotions in which you are well versed. Here are a few poems recently received.

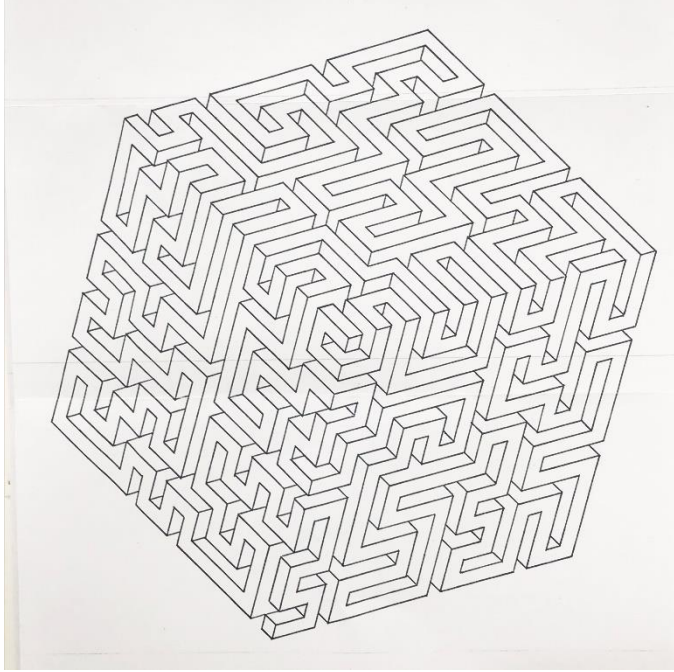
"When Pen Meets Paper" by Teddy Miles AKA the Alphabet's Jester

*When Pen Meets Paper, my paper's the arena, my pen's Tuff Hederman
I ride my imagination like Lane Frost rides Bodacious in 8 seconds
When Pen Meets Paper, reality fades and my insanity sinks in becoming that much more real
When Pen Meets Paper, time and space become irrelevant and vanish like a vapor
When Pen Meets Paper, my pen bleeds life coloring this paper like a suicidal maniac who's cut his jugular
When Pen Meets Paper, I feel God's hand on my mind while I go blind writing these rhymes
When Pen Meets Paper, like a supercharged nanoparticle, I fly faster than the speed of light so I'll see you later
When Pen Meets Paper, my multiple personality disorder acts up and loses its temper
When Pen Meets Paper, I swear I can undress Marilyn Monroe without even touching her
When Pen Meets Paper, I can run faster than the Flash back to the past and rescue my mom from committing suicide
When Pen Meets Paper, I can bite the bullet every time playing Russian Roulette, taking shots with the Joker and laugh about it.
When Pen Meets Paper, it gets me higher than all the peyote that grows in the desert
When Pen Meets Paper, I become the Poet, the Alphabet's Jester*

"Every Shade" by Taj Alexander Mahon-Haft

*Summer skies drip periwinkle
As we dapple ourselves with their gifts*

The freest rivers run slate and frothy
 Exploding life and sediment
 Where they kiss azure seas
 There we prostrate upon the shore
 Worshipping the soft force of the tides
 Until moonlight pours cobalt ink
 Upon our boldest dream come true
 So, we fingerpaint poetry in the sands
 As unseen midnight waves lap our toes
 I stare deep into your electric aqua pools
 And still make out orange sunbursts reflecting
 Where it's me and it's you
 Living every shade of blue...
 ...always



Art by David Bohm

"Stage of Life" by Liam Foster

Lives are like archipelagoes,
 In a sea of time,
 So small and pleasant.
 Tender moments and places,
 Filed away in short lived memories.
 Surrounded by an unfathomable expanse,
 That exceeds the limits of our imagination.
 For we can never determine,
 Where it begins or ends,
 Only our own existences,
 Seem to be finitely defined.
 Not even a value can be placed upon it,
 Like when one is lost at sea,
 Signs of land;
 No matter the size of the substance,
 Brings forth hope and joy,
 Often overshadowing their doubt and fear.
 Thus, we too seek companionship in our lives,
 For it brings us equilibrium of bliss and sorrow,

The sweet and bitter flavorings,
 Upon this stage of life -
 That serves to distract us from the horrors,
 Of the unknown shade beyond time.

"Out of the Ether the Ideas Come" by David Hehn

Lights go on & ideas flow across the page
 Like Jazz instrumental improvisations we're working without a
 safety net
 Taking chances
 Putting it all on the line winning the brass ring or failing
 spectacularly
 The crows oo's the crowd ahh's
 And more than a few hope for something tragic to happen
 And our hero does it for the attention of others,
 That and it is his part in life
 It is, what he has been called to do
 It doesn't have to make sense
 It only must entertain
 The crowd must feel it has witnessed something
 That it could be his Triumph or Tragedy
 Matters very little to them

"Extra Baggage" by Michael Haynes

Pain, we never really been apart
 We have a long relationship right from the start
 Ever since I could walk and talk
 You took advantage of me, and broke a little boy's heart.
 Pain, I know you oh so well, I have lots of stories that I
 Could tell, of suffering, sorrow, and dumb mistakes,
 On how all you taught me was to take, take, take.
 How I thought I'd never see twenty-five, I would be killed, shot, or
 somehow die,
 I do pray to God that I'm still alive, I have so many scars deep
 inside,
 The pain I have I always hide.
 But now I'm older and I want to share, the pain I'm accustomed
 to,
 To people who care.
 I'm tired of carrying pain everywhere I go, it's too heavy and it's
 taking its toll.
 Hopefully I can leave it all behind with prayer, patience and the
 gift of time.

All One Big Family by David Hehn

The transient nature of all things
 Looking for meaning in life
 Feeling alone in the world of billions
 Are we not more than the sum of our TV parts
 Are we not more than consumers
 Are we not more than a selfie waiting to happen
 Are we not more than our trending nature
 And we all secretly hope to belong
 We all wish to be acknowledged
 There is this infantile push to be good
 How much praise is enough

*What if we all to agree in the inherent nature of all our worth
It would save a lot of time and posturing
There would be a mutual respect
We would sit at the same table :Equals
There would be a silent trust: A civility
We would be like a Family minus the Dysfunction*

Editor's Note-David Hehn has set a new PE record as he has sent many hundreds of poems to us this cycle. I am glad to share two of them with you. To David and all the poets in PE please keep on revealing a piece of life's mystery to us all

Journal Project-Oboy! we have big doings to report with this. We have been collecting your journals and sharing them with student volunteers for many years. Pre-pandemic, students would come to the Library where PE is headquartered and read your journals and write responses. Now with the library closed, your entries are scanned into a data base. They are sorted by alphabetical order and date, so your personal journals are all together in the data base in chronological order. We began this last April and are working hard to get as much of what you send in scanned. Some of you are not writing legibly. I do not scan those entries. When I believe your entries are either sexually aggressive or full of hatred, I still scan them, but I have not made them available to the general public. I am still trying to figure that one out. Most of the journals are not problematic in this way. Write as much as you want about anything, but general hatred is not promoted on our website. Maybe I can start an x rated section for those of you who want to be explicit, but I don't want to invite the general public to read your stories and have the first thing they see be some sex rant. I would like to hear your thoughts about this. Please write neatly. The people reading these journals can now be from all over the country and we will provide your address if they want to write you. Remember, I am assigning each volunteer a number and if they write you include the volunteer number in your response. This helps me find them. When I get your response to a volunteer, we will scan your letter to the volunteer. I am not sure how this will work out, but we are going to try. If you sign up, we will send you a journal starter kit, that is intended to inspire you to start writing. Your stories and experiences hold value and sharing them will add that value back into your own lives. It is also a way to get mail from PE volunteers. You can start your journal immediately if you so desire. **Date each entry! Mail entries in at your convenience.**

Meditation Project-Tara has been producing meditation guides and discussion packets for many years for PE members. While they began focused on Buddhist meditation, over the years Tara has seen the benefit of borrowing meditation techniques from many of the world's traditions.

Reading through one of her newsletters is both relaxing and helps one maintain a proper perspective. If you then try some of her techniques you might find yourself discovering something new inside of you that has been buried all this time by your mind. As I write many times in PE, I am in constant dialogue with myself

about life. It is engaging but it is also distracting. I know it is hard to quiet the mind, and probably for most of us meditation is a continual process of stopping thinking and coming back to focusing on our breath or what ever else you can use for a single pointed focus. BUT, I encourage you all to bring it into your lives. I know from reading your stories in your themes, poetry essays and letters, that you are often the product of a stressful upbringing and for sure you are in an environment that can be unbalancing.

Meditation is an opportunity to reset. Even if it is just for a few minutes. I find it helps me and I believe Tara's packet will bring you insights and provide simple, doable ways to quiet the mind and experience the freedom that lives within each of us.



Art by George Wilder

Chess Club-The PE chess program began many years ago and has been led by numerous folks over the years. I wonder if any of you have been with the program since Ettie first began it. Later Jack stepped in and continued to produce excellent lessons. After Jack, David who is in prison in WA. filled the role of program leader. Now we are led by "the Roberts".

First we had Robert #1 who graciously has been creating the last 3 or 4 lessons. Robert really took a big leap in doing this. He is a high school student who has been volunteering with the program for the last 2 years. He created an interesting History of Chess packet. He has been playing chess for years and took on learning even more so he could supply you with lessons. He will graduate high school this June and PE and all the chess players are indebted to him. Robert #2 has recently joined the program. I have not met him, except through email. I asked him to write a

short description about himself and chess. As you can see we are in good hands with the Roberts at the helm. The chess packets usually cover strategy, history, puzzles and recounting of great games. They are also a chance to have your questions about chess answered. We hope to send out the next lesson in late April, so if you have any questions or suggestions send them to me care of "chess club" Below is our new Robert's short description of his chess experience. Wow!

I'm a lifelong chess player, having been taught to play by my father when I was 4 years old. I was active as a scholastic player, participating in team competition in high school and college, including two Pan Am Intercollegiate tournaments playing 2nd board for Cornell. After college, I moved to Texas where I made a living as a database consultant and would typically play in weekend tournaments 3 or 4 times a year, gaining a National Master rating and earning a spot on the top 25 players in Texas list. One of the things I'm remembered for is notching a win in a simultaneous exhibition against former world champion Boris Spassky during his three-city tour of the U.S. in 1986, his only loss during that tour. Nowadays I've moved back to Ithaca, N.Y., and I keep involved as a chess teacher at the local elementary and middle schools.

Mental Health-Last cycle Sara and Jessica created a "Mental Health and the Brain" packet. It is clear they touched an exposed nerve for many of you. I have been so moved by reading the responses many of you have shared about your life journey. I see most things on a continuum. Everyone knows sadness but some folks feel sad 90 % of the time and other only 10%. I think we all know some degree of sadness, mental distress, pleasure, pain. It is all about where on the continuum you fall. I can easily see being in a love relationship where my partner and I agree 80% of the time, but not if it was only 30%. I write this only to illustrate that we can all relate to some degree to the suffering we and others can feel. I believe we at Prisoner Express reach out to all of you because it feels good to help and assist others on their life journey, especially when they are facing adversity. Many of you write me to say thank you for the service. If you want to thank us for our program do it by reaching out to others who are struggling and offer a kind word or action. I know you don't want to be taken advantage of, and that fear of others taking advantage is the dominant paradigm you all experience. Consider being an agent of change. Consider stepping out of the dog-eat-dog mentality that you are thrown in and offer a kind word when you can. I know it can make you look weak, but that is only cause the dog-eat-dog mentality is winning. Dog-eat-dog means there is one fat dog at the end. That is not winning. That is losing. If PE can help you all change the culture around you to one of support it would be a beautiful thing. I know I am being idealistic, and am glad to do what we do whether you join this kindness parade, but consider how little you really lose by being kind to others. Below Sara has some info to share about the next packet in the series.

Hi everyone,

I am overwhelmed by the response to the first mental health newsletter. I know that some of you may have been

expecting a list of ways to cope or "solutions," so to speak, but I hope that I was able to share a little bit of the science I'm so passionate about with you and offer some encouragement. Mental health is a complex issue that deserves attention and resources, and I am glad that this series has allowed for reflection and dialogue. Additionally, I am beyond excited to share some of these responses with you all in the following newsletter. The next newsletter in this series will focus on the interplay between immunology (very relevant amid the pandemic) and mental health. Even if you signed up in the previous newsletter, please do so here.

And while you're waiting for the next mental health packet, I want to draw your attention to the fact that I am still looking for stories of strength/growth to feature in an anthology. There is no word limit (as long as it's within reason!) and any moments that have allowed you to grow in some way are welcome. I appreciate those that have already been sent in thus far. It would be great if you're able to send these sooner rather than later, since I would ideally like to have this published by the summer.

On this note, I'd like to end with something uplifting—especially when the past year has been wrought with so much chaos, devastation, and heartbreak. One of the things I love most about Ithaca are the sunsets; in fact, I have a photo of one where purple fades to streaks of cotton candy pink, which then gives way to lemon yellows and tangerine as the sun dips behind the trees. Branches climb upward as though they're lighting the sky ablaze, and the wires of a lone telephone pole break the otherwise untouched washes of color. It's hard to describe a scene so vibrant yet so serene in words. The reason I mention this is that we tend to lose sight of the simple yet beautiful things around us, especially when we've got a lot on our minds. Even something as little as enjoying or imagining a sunset can bring a little peace of mind. -- Sara

Philosophy –The response to the last philosophy packet pleasantly rocked my world. Just as I was surprised that the number one book request over the years is dictionaries, who would have thought that a philosophy packet would elicit such an outpouring of wisdom and ideas. I am so impressed by the ways many of your minds work, at answering questions that have no concrete answers. I found many of you share similar beliefs as I and others of you have gotten me to think in whole new ways. We hope to have a compilation packet of some of the answers out to you, but I have been so busy reading the responses that I haven't even sent most of them to Kylie yet. She lives in another state. Kylie is beginning to focus on the next packet in the series and I look forward to both what she has to offer and also your responses to it. The compilation doc on the first Philosophy packet will be mailed to everyone who took the time to write the required responses. Be patient as there is a lot for us to read and digest.

Thank you all for making my job easy. There are so many possible courses to create and offer, but when there is such an outpouring of sharing as generated by the philosophy packet it

seems a no brainer to offer a second in the series. Be assured that this packet will stand alone so if you missed the first you can join in now. Here are some encouraging words from Kylie.

Hi Fellow Philosophers, Thank you so much for your love and support for the first volume of the philosophy series. I've received many of the letters and responses and am humbled and excited that most of you shared how much you've enjoyed learning and reading about life's big questions. I am learning from all of you as much as you are learning from me. As such, I am happy to be back for the next volume in this series, opening up another set of never-ending puzzles that I, myself, have never stopped wondering about. For volume two, we will be taking a closer exploration of topics regarding moral psychology. We will examine moral motivation, desire, intentions, and the strength/weakness of the will. I hope you will choose to join me once again in this exercise of reading, writing, and thinking deeper about these important topics. Lastly, I hope you all are staying well wherever you are in the world.—Regards--Kylie

Tabletop Role Playing Game- Here is a new program that your letters inspired. So many folks asking for books, wanted Role Playing game material. Let me tell you, gamers do not part with their books easily. I never see them in our donations. So, we put our minds together and unleashed Jameson. He has been part of the PE program for the past year. Many of you have written him as he has let you know about his quest to help you have fun with Role Playing Games. This cycle we are offering his first packet in what may turn out to be a multi packet series. As I am not a role game player I don't grasp how all of the rules and characters are created, but he does, and judging from the correspondence we receive, many of you do to. Activating your imagination in prison and creating new scenarios and adventures seems like a good way to take the edge off the sameness of each day. I imagine it is also a good way to interact and get a better understanding of the people around you. Are the guards ever allowed to sit around a play a game with you or is that totally off the wall? Out in the free world people advocate for community policing. In that instance cops live and interact in the neighborhood they work. People know them and the cop on the beat know the people and situations around him/her. Does anything like that ever happen in the prison system? Might be fun to have a prisoner guard RPG to build better communication among the two groups. Jameson's thoughts are below.

RPG Anyone? Table-Top RPG: Materials and Technique-In this flagship installment of the RPG program series, enjoy playing through ready-made sample games while also learning the techniques used to create them. Have you ever wanted to play a table-top game, but didn't know where to begin or how? Do you feel as though you don't have enough materials on-hand to create a successful game? With this program, learn how to have fun as a game-master or player, craft interesting worlds and engaging stories, and use game mechanics to add unpredictability to your adventure. I will include a basic game setting and demo campaigns, which can be used with provided game mechanics to start playing fresh out of the envelope.

As a bonus, if you've got an idea you think would be great for a campaign, feel free to write to Jamie at prisoner express and send in your story for syndication! After all, one of the best parts of role-playing games is sharing your story with others, and building a world together.

Screenwriting- This cycle of PE has a lot of continuing packets. Screenwriting is a follow up on the previous packet focused on creating a "Film Treatment". A treatment gives you something to show a person you want to finance your film. It also works as a blueprint for your script. Creating one is sort of like having architectural plans before you start building a house. Reading Matt's first packet I was struck by how different it is to write for a film rather than a book or short story. It is hard to conceptualize that in a film much of the story is told by the images, and poignant dialog is key. I was so impressed by Mathews ability to break down the creative process, and he has agreed to create a 2nd unit. Even if you don't write a screenplay, I recommend reading his packet based on all I learned from the previous packet he offered. We are fortunate to have him volunteering to assist you in developing these skills. Matt will receive your responses directly. I like that, as it saves me the work of coordinating all that mail, but I do miss seeing what you are producing. I would love if some of you write to me and let me know about your experience with the screen writing packet. Matt has sent in the following description of what he is offering

Writing the Screenplay--In this course packet, we will review and build on dramatic storytelling concepts that we introduced in "Writing the Film Treatment". Then we will cover the unique formatting rules that professional screenwriters use and discuss some of the challenges of writing for the screen. Writers who did not participate in the first course packet are still encouraged to apply.

About Me-I am a filmmaker, a teacher, and an industry technician. I think the easiest way to explain why I do this work is to share the two core beliefs that led me here. First, I believe all human beings have a capacity for creativity. It's not a magic gift that only a lucky few are blessed with, it's an ability that is essential to who we are. With practice and guidance anyone can learn to express themselves in a creative medium. Two, the act of creation has value for us as creators and for our collaborators, regardless of whether or not we have a mass audience. I want to do what I can to help you develop that capacity in yourself and to experience the value of creative work, because I know how essential it is to my own life. It's one of the few things I can't live without. If you have that same urge to express yourself, then I'd like to share with you the lessons that have helped me in my journey as an artist.

ARTknows Corner: Treacy has been leading the Art project for about 10 years and needs no intro for those of you who have been part of the program. For those of you new to this, I want you to know you are in capable hands, Treacy is focused on helping

you explore your artistic nature and unleash your creativity. Her Artknows newsletter is a staple of our program, and she is instrumental in creating art shows around the campus and the country showcasing your work. She doesn't want to get involved in commercial ventures and she is not interested in being anyone's art agent. She wants to help you create and express.

There are a number of volunteers saying they would like to help volunteer with the art program. I have suggested they view art that has been submitted and then write the artist a letter, yet I know there is so much more that can be done. Can any of you suggest to me art projects you'd like to see our art program volunteers coordinate? You are our inspiration! Treacy writes below:

Greetings! I hope this find you all well and safe. It is cold here with lots of snow! I'm grateful for my studio. It is so wonderful to get lost in the process of creating. How have you been able to work this past year? And if you haven't, how have you not been able to create? What did you find yourself immersed in?

Currently, I am working on a series of little icon paintings of animals. Because the paintings are small and because they are many-sided, it is like working in both mediums of painting and sculpture. I am doing a series of fish icons. I not really sure how I came to focus on fish, but I really love the anthropomorphic dimension of fish. (Quick quiz - what is anthropomorphic?)



"The one who saw the sky."

Because the paintings are small and sculptural (the frames have to be crafted) I feel like I can turn inward and meditate on them. Hence the name of icon (which I suspect is a small painting created for meditation).

Hey – maybe you can do a small icon painting/drawing. First, what is an icon drawing/painting? (and no, it is not the little symbol on your computer.) What would your icon contain? How would you present it; multi-sided or circular? Draw the frame around it – frames are very important for icons. When I wrote a proposal for an exhibition of my paintings, I discussed how it was important in these paintings to create a "place" for the animal to exist. The frame becomes like a house to the animal portrayed. How would you design your frame or house?



Art by Japon Gordon

And then if, you are not into icons (or even if you are – you can do both), create a drawing of an anthropomorphic animal. (My husband - who loves to copy off of me - is creating a series of human figures with rabbit heads in clay). Assignment - Create a drawing of an anthropomorphic creature. If you'd want, tell a story about it: Who is this animal; why did you select this animal; what does it want; what does it **not** want, and so on. (For instance, why did I choose the body of a fish and a head of a person; or why did my husband choose the body of a person and the head of a rabbit?!)

Upcoming exhibitions: We are working on having an exhibition as usual for **April. We are working towards having both a virtual exhibition and also plan to have an in-person exhibition once the pandemic is better controlled.** The benefit of having a virtual exhibition is that your friends and family will be able to view it (positive things coming out of the pandemic!)

The exhibition will have three categories – (1) general art; (2) art related to the pandemic (3) anthropomorphic creatures.

The first category is obvious – anything.

The second category is art that you have created in response to the pandemic. This could be a narrative of an experience around COVID; a picture of yourself in the mask; be imaginative!

The third category - Anthropomorphic creatures (and if you have a narrative about the creatures, this will be included).

Thanks for your letters! I really enjoy hearing how you are doing. We hope to expand the online gallery of your work and invite the public to both view it and write to you about it. The Monday nights letter writing workshops are much missed, and we plan to return to them when the campus opens up to us. Until then, we will post as much as possible online.



Art by Phillip Rath

AND then there is always the next edition of ARTknows which will come out in May 2021. I hope you have enjoyed reading about new artists and art! I really learn a lot in researching materials for these ARTknows newsletters. In the most recent ARTknows on primitive and outsider art, I discovered many new artists. I even got an email from one of the artists featured – Fergus Hall. He is the artist who is responsible for many of the Tarot card illustrations of the 1960's (some of you will remember!). Fergus writes in response to my asking him about the different between classical trained and self-taught artists:

"As far as I am concerned the very essential core of any figurative art and painting is drawing, so simple, learn to draw and then you can paint.

However, it may not be so easy to define. I think we have all been ruined by the 'classical' and yet even with that very restrictive regime there is much to be learned.

It is a bit like perspective, once you know it, then you can avoid it and adapt it. -Fergus

If you liked Fergus' art, I would forward your positive comments to him. Many of the other artists featured in the ARTknows will not be so lucky (having passed) but you can let me know who you liked in the lineup of artists, so I have ideas for future editions of the newsletter.

Take care, be smart and keep safe!-Treacy

Note from Gary-I hope to include stories and poems related to your experience of COVID in the on-line art exhibit as well. Feel free to submit creative writing on this subject for the upcoming

exhibit. Best to write **Attn:Artshow** on any writing submitted that you wish to be considered for inclusion in the show.

Draw a Song -So many of our programs involve you signing up and then waiting months for the mailings of the programs you desire to arrive. It is the nature of the way we have set up PE. It allows us to serve the most people with the least amount of funds. I imagine it can be frustrating to hurry up and send in your signup sheet to only have to then wait. Luckily new PE volunteer Alice has stepped forward with a fun and creative idea. Alice has been one of those kind souls who wrap your expedited book packages and sends a kind note. She had an idea for a project that you can start anytime and not need to wait to hear from us. Here is what she proposes.

Overview-Studies have proven music is a way to reduce stress and to get into a mindful state of consciousness. You may develop your cognitive skills and improve your emotional well-being when you take on the challenge of expressing yourself through music.

I sincerely hope that despite possibly feeling isolated or broken, this project provides you with the opportunity for expression and for experiencing safety, peace, and comfort.

It's time to make a new start. Begin a journey of self-discovery. Or maybe find some perspective and perhaps some insight. I also believe we all have the potential to reach our highest intelligence. We have the ability to find the answers within us. Growth is possible. I think acceptance is the first step. I'm encouraging you to reach deep and question yourself. With all seriousness, this can also be fun. You're tapping into a realm of your subconscious. This can be exciting to some. Especially if you like to be creative.

Goals

1. Reach deep and answer some questions about yourself.
2. Gain perspective and insight about yourself.

Specifications

STEPS

1. Pick a song of your choosing that resonates with you.
2. Listen to a song while you draw what you hear and feel.
3. Explain your process and what it means to you.
4. Repeat this as many times you want and to at least 5 songs.

Questions to consider:

- Why did you choose this song?*
- How does this song make you feel?*
- Did you notice a repetitive pattern?*
- What colors came to mind when you listened to the*

song?

My Personal Experience:

Music has always been an outlet for me. In many ways, I use it to get through my day. Music has a timeless effect that builds memories for a lifetime. This brings me to the song that not only changed my life but made me who I am today.

The song "Don't Worry, Be Happy" by Bobby McFerrin was released in September 1988. It was the first acapella song to

reach number one in the Billboards hot 100s. I can't remember the first time hearing this song. But I do remember my first time watching the music video. It was the summer of July 2019; I was sitting in my Aunt's living room. My Aunt and I were having a lovely conversation about life and reminiscing funny moments when she suddenly brought up the hilarious music video of the song "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Because I was stunned to see Robin Williams and Bill Irvin starring in this music video, I immediately fell in love with the humor. Especially Bobby McFerrin's funny facial expressions and the change of Robin Williams's dramatic outfits. Those moments took me away from my problems and put a smile on my face. What I didn't realize though, was how much this song would impact me in the future. A few weeks later, I was hospitalized. It was terrifying for me because I had never experienced what you call an episode. Also known as a nervous breakdown. I was separated from my family and living in a hospital for weeks on end with people I hardly knew. In the beginning, I wasn't even allowed to go outside. The only things that kept me alive in that hospital was that song and the music room where I would sit, write, and draw every day. It's almost funny to look back on. I remember the staff complaining at me for always wanting to listen to "Don't Worry, Be Happy." There was something about when I would draw what I'm listening to and feeling, this flowing feeling in my body would take over. It felt incredible. I had so much anger and sadness built up inside me and when I put it to paper it was so relieving. Because I was able to express that anger and sadness in a beautiful way I could move forward. It is easy to forget how music can strongly affect us. It can save us when we have nothing left. Heal us when we are traumatized. And connect us in humanity.

After coming out of the hospital, I still had a lot of work to do. I had to go through the horrific process of finding the right medication while suffering from symptoms of severe anxiety and intense suicidal thoughts. Faith was my only option. But music saved me. I look back at those moments and feel proud of how much I've accomplished since then. It wasn't easy to look at myself at the beginning. I knew I had to find acceptance through it all.

Milestones

- I. "I'm devoted to working on my soul, mind, and body. I'm learning to accept the things I can't control and focus on the things I can." - Me
- II. "Although we are capable of the worst. We are also capable of the best." - A fellow inmate, Leo Cardez

This project requires very little equipment. All you need is music, pen, and paper. I wanted you to be able to choose the music because it's supposed to be personal to you. There is no right or wrong when it comes to learning about yourself. Even though I'm not much of a drawer, I can still picture what is drawing through me. If you have trouble analyzing what you've drawn in the present moment, it's still available to you in the future. **Send all your drawing to PE Attn Alice and I will post some online hopefully accompanied by the music that inspired you.**

Themes Essays- When I think about, the origin of PE it comes down to the themes essays. When the program first began, I was sending out book packages only. I got so many thank-yous, and they were all saying the same things.

"I don't like or trust those around me, especially those who are different than me. I am going crazy. I cannot share how I really feel with anyone as it will be seen as weak and used against me, and that receiving mail was the highlight of the day." I started the theme writing program so I could have something to send out as I did not have the time to write individual letters. Each month I gave a topic. The assignment was to write a true story based on your reaction to the theme topic. I then share the entire collection of writings to everyone who makes a submission. Well after I shared a few packets, I started receiving responses that were again similar. This time the participants wrote. "I thought I was going crazy, but now I see many people are thinking like me. I am not going crazy; I am in a crazy making place." Or they would write. "I thought I disliked [fill in your racial ethnic religious group of choice] but after reading this essay I realize we are more alike than different." Many of you wrote to say how much you appreciated the real sharing of emotions and vulnerabilities the theme writers shared. It was clear to see that reading each other's writings was a key to waking up to your power within this experience. You are not alone. Many understand what you are going through, and through words and writing you can change yourselves and others. So, I thank all of you who participate in the theme writing program. You are making a difference in the lives of others. You are pointing out paths that can help soothe the soul and balance your energy. We all face suffering, but if we meet it with awareness and our general good nature, we see all suffering eventually passes, and if we look at it right sometimes our suffering can polish the being, we are meant to become. Thank you theme writers and I encourage those of you reading for the first time to consider participating. Send in your theme on any of the listed topics and as long as we can raise the funds we will send you a complete copy of the themes submitted for that month. Only two rules in the word themes. **Keep it to 750 words or less, and they are meant to be truthful stories.** I will reprint a few stories from a previous 6-month cycle so all of you can get a look at what we are doing with this project. To get a complete packet you must submit a story.

Upcoming Word Themes

Distant Family	due 4/1/21
Twist of Fate	due 5/1/21
Strangers	due 6/1/21
Interruptions	due 7/1/21
Mail	due 8/1/21
Getting Started	due 9/1/21
Accidents	due 10/1/21
Success	due 11/1/21

Here are some selections from previous theme topics:

CLOTHES

by Frank Olms

There is an aphorism that infers: clothes make the man, and there is another that states: dress for success. Two written statements that have absolutely no application to my current statue in life.

In my previous life as a self-employed entrepreneur, dress did have a slight impact on whether a potential customer would let me work for them. Some people are more impressed by the outward appearance of a man, rather than the integrity of the man himself or his qualification at his advertised profession.

In my status in prison, clothes still make the man. Unfortunately, the clothes I am currently wearing distinguish me as a guest of a gated community, an inmate, so to speak-- a guest of the state! In prison? Maybe. But prison may be geographical for some and psychological for others and still others may find it simply a pit-stop in life's cycle of things- a chance to regroup, restart.

Prison is, for me, just a different location from which I can still function in my new profession as a writer, an indicator of music or composition, of prose or poetry, of fact or fiction, of history or future events... ah, future events- speculation, prophecy, a wild guess as to what will or may happen, or may not happen... Will I still need clothes in the future, or, as an Indicator, will I only need pen and paper? Or maybe a paper suit?

I wonder if paper suits come in a rainbow of colors or if I will only clothe my mind with letters, numbers, and characters of various meanings-- ampersand forever!... but no clothes.



Art by Kenneth Zamarron

White Jordache by Leo Cardez

Ricky was my childhood bully. We were the same age, same class, living on the same block. I was an undersized, bucktooth, big-eared nerd who had to fight the current in the shower. He was held back a year and had unnatural muscle definition for a 10-year-old. He tortured me for years. I was weak, scared, and an all-around perfect target.

My parents were Mexican immigrants who grew up third-world poor. For us, a trip to Burger King was considered a nice dinner out and relegated to birthdays and holidays – and even then, only if we had a coupon - 2-for-1 Whoppers! I was forced to wear my older sister's hand-me-downs. She was twice my size and although a bit of a tomboy she still wore girl's clothes.

There was one exception: these white Jordache jeans. I loved them and although they were clearly too big for me I insisted on wearing them; even if I had to bunch up the waist with a belt. I thought I was so cool - Crocks from Miami Vice. But Ricky would soon try to change all of that.

He must have been some sort of fashion prodigy because he knew they were girl's jeans and made sure to point it out to the class. It hit me hard. I thought I finally looked cool. I could feel my huge ears burning bright red and in a moment of rage said something about Ricky's mom. Back then, that was the worst insult you could make; "mama" jokes were big. And then it was set: we would be fighting after school.

It was the longest day of my life. I watched the clock with dread as it mercilessly ticked down. I was scared. I did not know how to fight. Stupid jeans! I thought.

I kept to the same routine as I walked home with my friends Van and Vernon. They were the only black kids in my grade and twins, and as such, were outcasts like me. A block from my house I could see a small crowd of kids had gathered; Ricky was pacing, smiling at me - I could read his thoughts. Mine would be the easiest ass he ever kicked.

Survival instincts kicked in and I ran like hell. Van and Vernon tried to hold Ricky back (God bless'em!) but him and his crew broke through and gave Chase. I ran with the speed of a gazelle in the savanna and busted through my kitchen door out of breath and terrified.

My sister took one look at me and calmly got up from her chair, crossed the kitchen, grabbed a large butcher knife, and walked out the door. I could hear her screaming, daring them, threatening to chop their baby nuts off. I was still in shock, still laying on the floor heaving when she walked back in, put the knife away, and went back to her homework. She never said a word. Neither did I, but at that moment I realized my sister was a badass.

I do not remember if I ever wear those jeans again, I think I did. Ricky was still a bully, that would not change for a few years, when girls became the new priority. But he never chased me

home again. I would eventually grow into my ears and braces fixed my teeth, but inside I still felt like that scared gazelle. But in one way or another my sister would always be there to save me and that started to give me a new sense of confidence.

My sister and I would grow close and then grow apart over the next couple of decades. Our relationship was episodic like that. But I always held on to the belief that besides our parents, she was my greatest protector. The fierce mama bear ready to protect her cubs against all enemies – and she has.

Dedicated to my sister Antonia... For everything. Thank you for being my sister.

These Old Rags by Catherine Lafleur

Before prison, my life contained a teensy little problem. I had a room in my house. A very special room that only me and my dearest girlfriend could enter. It even had a lock on the door. Not the kind of interior home door that can be lock-picked with a hair pin. No, it was a serious affair. Solid, heavy, and attached to a deadbolt which required an actual key to enter. Gentlepersons, I present my closet.

I confess I collect clothes. I did start out reasonably with an extra wide folding door closet. But my clothes collecting habit grew and grew. Shall I relay the gruesome details? One day I was out with friends. My husband heard a loud crash. He raced into our bathroom arming himself with a baseball bat because surely such a noise could only come from a burglar. Only the bedroom confronted him. Nothing seemed out of place. Then another bang issued from the closet which he opened, only to have everything fall out on top of him. All the shelves and the hanging rod had fallen. In short, I broke the closet.

The first step is admitting I have a problem. Okay! I admit it. You might remember I grew up in a commune. And it was a weird religious one so as a child I grew up having no possessions. An older sister, Ellie, would dress me and my friend Rus every morning. We got to choose what color to wear out of the communal closet of hand-sewn children's clothes and that is as far as the choice went. At my grandparents' house, where I spent my summers, there were clothes waiting for me. These were regular kid's clothes, much different from the homemade clothes of the commune. I got to wear jeans and culottes, some bathing suits for the Moose Lodge pool, and a few dresses that did not resemble anything Laura Ingalls Wilder would wear.

Once I left the commune and started life in the real world, I became interested in fashionable clothes. That led to shopping for bargains. Enter the Trunk Sale. This is an event you must get an invitation to attend. Imagine a room full of designer clothes at unbelievable sale prices and me with my own credit cards. It is enough to make a girl buy an item in every available color. Now do not call me Imelda. I admit, I started to become addicted to "the problem" especially since they also sell shoes at these shindigs. Everyone who knows me admired my sartorial elegance. I was very well-dressed.

Confession number two. I convinced my husband to sell our house and build a new house... Solely because I wanted a large walk-in closet. Although that is not the argument I used to convince him. Starting a family, close to his golf course, putting in

a kitchen garden in our new spacious backyard. Those were the winners. But really it was all about the closet. An entire room just for me and my wardrobe. Dream. Come. True.

Fast forward to my current life at Camp Prisonery Land. I have only four wardrobe choices. Blue men's pajamas with long or short sleeves, athletic shorts, and a gray t-shirt both appropriately baggy and saggy, two different styles of dresses: dark blue with 5 buttons down the front and a pocket or the dazzling medium blue dress with a neckline that either makes me look like I am auditioning for a role in *The Jetsons* or as Friar Tuck. The shoes? A vast array of choices: toe thong flip-flops, black Crocs, plain white Nikes, or my favorite black work boots. All footwear to be worn with the required white and gray crew socks. Gentlepersons I give you sartorial excellence Prisonery Land style

Lifecycle of a Shirt by Thomas Black

Quite a few years ago I went to a local store, shopping for work shirts. In the men's department I found a rack of nice Western style shirts, nice colors, decent prints. And a bonus, the sleeves were already cut off and nicely hemmed.

In my world, this is a win-win situation. I do not have to cut the sleeves myself, and I'm not paying for material I won't use, and the nice hem meant they'd last longer.

I picked out five or six. All went straight to the work shirt wardrobe, except one, a white cotton shirt with thin red stripes and medium block size. It went to the special occasion wardrobe. By special occasion I mean any event not considered a formal affair. It was perfect for going to the juke, beer joint, all you can eat catfish night at the cafe, and dates.

I wore it on one very special date. I asked a lovely lady from work out (back when it was still socially acceptable to date someone whom you worked with). I invited her to the social event of the year in Southern Arkansas County. The Arkansas County Fair Demolition Derby! It does not get much bigger than that! It worked out and we eventually got married. But back to the shirt.

It maintained its place of honor for quite some time, still in use for going out on special occasions. Then it was relegated to the work shirt wardrobe. It endured for a while in this role, but eventually time and wear began to show.

It was relegated to the yard shirt pile, suitable for scrapping metal, yard work and automobile repair. I still maintained a reverence for my shirt. We had had so many good memories.

After so many years of service it was getting thin. So, it was demoted to the pile reserved for fish cleaning clothes. Part of my living is earned by commercial fishing. The processing of fish is a dirty, bloody, smelly activity, so for shirts and pants it is the last leg. The clothes ain't allowed inside. After a wash they are hung on the back porch to air.

I was still very fond of my shirt. I saved it from the trash can three times when my wife tried to discard it. I am not one to give up on a garment, especially one with such fond memories.

But the day came when it was time to admit the shirt's time was done. While at the fish house I snagged it on a nail, ripped a large gash across the back. And it was very thin after so much wear and bleach. It was a painful choice, but it had to be done.

I took it home, called my wife and let her watch me throw it in the trash. She had a good laugh, me not so much. It was sorta like losing a good friend.

by Vicki Hicks

Beyond the fences and barbed wire, we are an individual. We choose what style and brand we want to wear, when we want to wear it, and where we want to wear it.

Prior to being incarcerated we wore a uniform, work, or school alike, Monday through Friday. I wore a uniform complete with shield and gun, boots, and vest. Weekends and holidays were my time to express myself. Victoria Secret, Holister, American Eagle, Gap; just to name a few. We often place tags on our bodies to show what we like or can afford depending on who you are.

Inside the prison walls we wear tags to identity who we are; complete with name, height, weight, hair and eye color and your DC#. Periwinkle blue in many different shades are worn by every Florida department of corrections inmate. There is one set pattern for both men and women that come in small, medium, large, etc...., some wear dresses. There are long and short sleeve shirts. By the way, the white stripes down the sides of the parts are quite fashionable. On the positive side, I wake up to go to work and decide that today would be a good day to choose the periwinkle shirt with not quite matching parts with the white stripe. Black work boots compliment my outfit. Maybe tomorrow I will choose to wear, I do not know, the other periwinkle outfit with the white stripe.

Clothes from a young age define our individuality. Prison takes that away from us.

by James Sanford

"Keep my clothes!" I told the cop on my way out the door. He looked at me like I was nuts. He was the crazy one trying to keep me in jail.

I was nineteen years old and I had just finished serving up a three-year prison sentence. Upon my release, I was rearrested at the gate and brought to county jail to clear up an old warrant. It was something trivial, and not worth all the extra effort.

To my dismay, it took a couple of weeks to get in front of the judge. I was very anxious. I knew I was going home, I just didn't know when. Finally, my number was called to have my day in court. It felt like winning the lottery.

They called my name and I entered the courtroom. The first thing I saw was my mom sitting in the front row. I could not wait to give her a big "free" hug.

My moment arrived. The judge knew the situation and dismissed the old case. I remember him being pissed about "wasting taxpayer dollars on this." The only thing I really heard him say was "immediate release."

Filled with excitement, I practically ran over to my mom. Now I just wanted to go home.

I was slapped back to reality when two cops approached, and one of them put his hand on my shoulder. The outspoken one said, "Hey buddy, you are going to have to go back to jail with the prisoners to get your clothes. We can't let you leave here in a county jail jumpsuit."

Without the slightest hesitation, I unbuttoned the orange jumpsuit and stepped out of it wearing just my socks, sneakers, and t-shirt. As I slipped my sneakers back on, I handed the jumper to the shocked, red-faced guard. He did not say anything.

Everyone in the courtroom was flabbergasted. They say it is always the things you least expect. I proceeded to walk out of court that day and nobody stopped me.

I hopped in the front seat of mom's car and we went home. She told me she loved me, but I was crazy. I miss my mom.

The moral of the story is: Nothing, especially not some stupid clothes, should keep us in jail a moment longer than we have to be. Thanks.

NOURISHMENT

Beauty for Ashes by Joseph Green

...We rejoice in our suffering... ..

Age four:

"Tyler, you little shit! Where are you? Get the fuck out here!" My mom's boyfriend screams while I lie hiding under my bed, clothed only in my sister's underwear, confused and terrified.

I am nourished

Age six:

I weep as my home retreats through the back window of my mom's '79 Pontiac Formula.

I am nourished

Age six to nine:

We moved four times in three years .

I am nourished

Age fourteen:

Friction with my stepfather prompts me to call my dad, "hey, do you think I could live with you?" Dad is playing stepfather to his girlfriend's kids; one girl and one boy, mirroring my sister and me-whom he ignores. "Sorry kid, we just don't have room."

I am nourished

Age fifteen:

Coming through the door into the Neonatal Intensive Care unit. My girlfriend and I see tiny Justin lying on a table, chest heaving, limbs convulsing, shuddering... dying.

I am nourished

Age nineteen:

I am awakened by rapid knocking on the motel door. "Uncle Ed! What are you doing here?" "I need you to get dressed and come with me; I'll explain everything in the car." In the car he says, "your mom's being airlifted to the hospital. She has a brain aneurysm."

In the waiting room, I realize we are directly under the NICU where Justin fought, and I quietly acknowledged the counterpoint.

The doctor enters and I see my mother being pulled away like my home through the back window of that old Pontiac.

And I am nourished

Nourishment is that which sustains life and promotes growth.

Suffering - when we are in its midst, we swear it's killing us.

Looking back on the most painful events of my life, however, I see it was the terror-stricken heart of a confused, abused boy that feeds the fiery passion to be an ember of change in this dark, cold world today. And that pitifully dependent adult child would never have ventured to join the path to becoming a man had not his enabling mother been torn from his infant grasp.

"....suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope..."

Nothing is so nourishing as hope. Hope is that great element of the human spirit that resists the oppressive tyrants which war against the instinct to persevere. Without hope we are lost. And hope finds its conception in suffering. Without suffering, we could not know endurance. It is endurance of trials that builds character. Only those with character possess the hope to survive.

When was the last time you embraced suffering, scarfed it down like a starving vagrant at a buffet? The thought is intensely counter-intuitive, but those who have dared to, have to set their corners of this world ablaze with purifying fires.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the Earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

These probing words, uttered by a man who, more than any other, leaned into suffering- reveal a painful truth so obvious we see it daily without note: growth requires death. The nourishment of all living bodies demands the suffering of lesser biological agents. In a relative way, the nourishment of the spirit demands that mind and body suffer.

The spirit is the apex of the human construct and the physical and emotional suffering we endure nourishes that immortal facet of our being. It is painful when we are confronted by difficult trials; but so is it painful to plants and animals when they are cut down. Painful but necessary.

On the eve of His execution, Jesus said something thoughtful that hearts will find haunting, *"If anyone serves me, he must follow me..."* This same Jesus- speaking through the prophet- said: *"I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace or spitting. I have set my face like a flint. Follow me."* He says.

Shying away from suffering is akin to refusing to eat. The end of that course of action is death. Our lives on this planet are inescapable temporal. We will either starve our spirits in a vain attempt to preserve what must fade; or we can rejoice in the hardships which nourish that lasting component of our being.

"I have set before you life and death. Choose life."

By: Walter Hart

Everybody changes on the outside... they might get older, fatter, thinner, muscle toned, more stylish, greyer, or even sickly... but in order to change on the inside, I mean really change, that

usually takes place after something really good happens or something really really bad happens. And in 2012, after being incarcerated for 7 years, I won't say that I hit rock bottom but I was definitely in the vicinity. A series of events began taking place at a pace that literally overwhelmed me.

My father passed away, my significant other informed me that she would no longer take on the burden of loving a man in prison, I was transferred to a place I did not get along with... I hated it. The program, the staff, the inmates, and my situation. Somebody for some reason felt he could bully me. Big mistake. He came looking for a monkey and found a gorilla... I hurt him pretty bad... and was placed in administrative segregation, more commonly called ADSEG or "the hole." Sat in there 6 months waiting to see if the local district attorney would pick up the case, which would mean me getting retried and given 6 more years. He didn't, but I did have to deal with the punitive damage that the prison had in store for me, time loss of one year good time and me sitting in the hole for 20 months.

I wrote every address I had of the remains and residue of my support system and loved ones, but no one wrote back. I was alone. Then as I headed to the shower one day, being escorted by an officer and wearing restraints, a guy hollered at me from his cell, "Give me your name and number and I'll send it to my prayer circle, some good people so they can pray for you!" I did not hesitate, I blurted out my info and thought nothing else of it. Then about a month later I received a manila envelope from a lady in Missoula, Montana. She sent me two stamps, two greeting cards, a couple of crossword puzzles and a nice short letter telling me that she saw sunny days and blue skies in my future.

Her unselfish gesture led to me writing her back, and my return letter led to 18 months of correspondence. I mean genuine, pure, unadulterated high-quality conversations, which I prefer over lip service any day. She talked about Pearl Harbor, outliving three husbands, graduating from college, the first one in her family. Outliving a daughter, but currently dealing with a son who was a drug addict and who had robbed her blind. Talked about her youngest son who was her hero, how he took care of her, for she was an elderly woman, 87 years old.

She never sent a photo and I never asked for one, she told me jokes and I did the same in return. I did not ask or want to know if she was white, black, Hispanic, green, or blue, and she never asked me either. A person's soul has no color or gender, at least that is how I see it. She saved many of my days, shared a treasure chest of knowledge and wisdom and love with me. She never sent me one dollar, and I never dared to ask her for one either. It wasn't about that at all, not even a little bit.

Then one fateful day she sent me a letter, one of the shortest ones she ever sent, but that letter had power... the power to make me cry, something I hadn't done in many years. She told me how she went to her doctor and learned that she had stage 4 cancer which was spreading rapidly through her body, and as I read the letter I was amazed at her incredible wit and courage.

The doctor told her that he wanted to remove a tumor in her head that would surely blind her within two weeks if it was not removed. She told him, "Let's do it." He then asked her if there was anyone, she wanted him to call in case of an emergency and she told him, "Yeah, another doctor! No reason in calling my family and worrying them to death." I laughed and cried at the same time. She was my friend in the truest sense of the word.

She said that if the doctor wasn't a boldfaced liar, then this would probably be the last letter she would ever write. She said that it was a privilege to meet me and she thanked me for all the warm words I wrote her in the winter of her life... thanked me! How could she thank me? The privilege and the pleasure were all mine. She was there for me during my darkest days when I was hovering right above rock bottom, a beautiful person through and through.

I hastily wrote her back, hoping and wishing and praying that she received my words before she passed away... I never heard from her after that, and yes, I thought the worst. Then, when I was down to one week left in the hole, one week before going back to the mainline and getting a semblance of privileges and limited freedom I received a letter written on fancy stationery. Not even written, it was typed. The return address was unknown to me, as well as the name. I tore open the envelope and only then did I look on the back of it and noticed what we call a "money stamp. Once a letter lands in the mailroom of a prison it is opened, searched, read, and if any photos or money orders or checks are enclosed, they will be taken out, the money orders/checks will be forwarded to the treasurer to be processed and the envelope would be stamped, letting us know that in 30 days once it clears, we will have such and such amount of dollars in our prison account. The stamp read \$1,500. One thousand and five hundred dollars sent to me in a fancy envelope, but from who?

I began to read the letter, and a guy named Gary explained to me that he was my friend's son, and that she had passed away, but my letter to her arrived in time and he was able to read it to her in the hospital. He went on to say that one of her requests to him was to send me \$1,000 to assist me with commissary. He decided to read all the letters I had written to her before doing so, and after reading the love and respect and gratitude I displayed to her in our exchanges and seeing how I made his mom happy, he decided to send me \$500 dollars of his own money as well. He felt it was the right thing to do. He requested that I not write back and wished me nourishment on my journey. Thank you for listening.

By: Thomas A. Littek

When I think of nutrition, several questions come to mind: What, exactly, is "nutrition?" And what is it that feeds me and provides me the satisfaction that I crave?

Too often, we tend to believe that food alone nourishes us. But, when I remember that I am more than just a body, I begin to understand that nourishment is not limited to food only. Indeed, the world furnishes a great spectrum of nutritional sources that humans need to maintain good health. Fresh, clean air, sunshine, even quality time spent with loved ones are but a few of many, many sources of nourishment.

I personally crave the sort of nutrition that feeds the spark of life within my soul. Now, since I am stranded momentarily at the Graybar Motel, I find the best nourishment comes from a good book. Nothing seems to satisfy my wanderlust like a good story. It's a means of escape that stone walls and steel bars cannot stop. Pillow fluffed, feet propped up, freshly popped popcorn by my side. With everything in place and set to go, I'm off to another time, another place.

Like you, I have my favorite genres, favorite writers, Still, I know our paths have crossed on the pages of some story. Maybe it was in Grisham's Ford County. Or possibly King's New England. Perhaps we followed Alice down the rabbit hole or tagged along with Ann Rule in pursuit of some long-forgotten psycho killer. We've met before; we'll meet again in some story far, far away from the Graybar Motel.



Art by Jerome Washington

A Life of Nourishment by Jordan Berg

When you think of nourishment, the most common thought is food. Those folks wouldn't be wrong at all. We need food to survive along with physical nourishment, mental nourishment, emotional nourishment.

I don't want to talk about most of these nourishments. It's impossible for anyone to survive without physical and emotional nourishment. It's the mental nourishment I want to discuss.

Prison brings about plenty of idle time. As of this writing, the COVID-19 virus has our Wisconsin Facility on a perpetual lockdown. Everything is delivered to our door's segregation style.

24/7 lockdown for an indefinite time gives anyone willing to better themselves the opportunity to learn. I.e.: mental nourishment.

I first picked up reading on a regular basis after being placed in RHU. As most are aware, being in RHU leaves you with literally nothing. A concrete bed, toilet, sink and in some cases, a in cell shower.

At my institution, books are brought around weekly, letting you check out up to 4 books of a list 12+ pages long (side note- if it weren't for G. Francis who donates his entire state check to buying new books for RHU, mainly educational, it would be limited).

These books have helped me tremendously. Growing up I literally thought I knew everything. My mom made that statement all the time.

Turns out I don't. But I grew to like to read books that challenge my way of thinking. I'm a very vocal Republican, but that doesn't stop me from pursuing Democratic points of view. I don't agree with everything that's said, but the point is to be enlightened.

I've learned to read all subjects. One topic that really challenged me were books on ethics. If it wasn't for the glossary, I would've been lost.

A couple years ago I was launched into the subject of Civil Law. Boy oh boy is that subject endless. Research is tedious, but most people hate it. Expect me, I do enjoy it.

This was a pinnacle moment in my prison journey. It started by helping me navigate a civil mess. But during this mess it opened my mind to something I enjoy. Before my release in October 2022 my hope is to become a certified Paralegal.

Those small steps starting with reading books led to a moment on mental nourishment that continues each day. It took baby steps, but the nourishment I received came from books rather than the people around me.

I understand that it may be difficult for some people to sit down and hold a book. But start small. It literally might change your life as it did mine.



Art by Dakota Martin

In Search of the Mystic Ones by Thomas Combs

Here I stand,
A loaded gun in hand.
Glistening on every surface, refreshing morning dew,
Presenting this day anew.

I roam the plains,
In search of the elusive ones that remain.
I embrace the hunt with much delight,
As I wait out the day, and into the night.

I possess the power and the will,

Excited to produce the skill to complete the kill.
For I am destined for this great feat.
They hide in the shadows, shrouded in mystery.

Its time is dwindling, drawing to an end,
Finally making his presence known, proving he's not pretended.
Clack, Clack, round enters chamber, line up sights, gently squeeze,
The report of the shot is heard, then he drops to his knees.

Life is slowly draining, the fire extinguished,
Stand over this massive ten-point, Mmm, I can taste the tender brisket!

RESILIENCE

Resilience and Formation by: Justin Kirk

Resilience. What an appropriate word for a prisoner. Confined. Locked away from the world yet still fighting to find meaning in his own limited way. To move past his shame and guilt and see something within himself that is good. To awaken each day in a box and put on a smile for the crowd.

I wouldn't have chosen that word to describe myself, but I find it very appropriate.

Being a prisoner is a monotonous thing. Day in day out, our lives are a formation of events. Like soldiers marching we all know our place, we know our next step by the clock on the wall.

5:30am Count

12:30pm Count

4:30pm Count

9:00pm Count

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Sleep.

Formations.

But somewhere in between those times we find the resilience to carry us through the worst moments. The hardest days. The days we just want to give up or lash out at someone around us and fight and destroy and burn down our own lives because that's all we've ever known. Those days are bad.

For me, the resilience comes from those who have given me a reason to fight. For a higher purpose, to be a better person. People I love, people who have changed me, even the words written by fellow prisoners. Like Victor Frankl in "a man's search for meaning." We must find meaning in our life. We must be resilient. We must be more than prisoners.

Ant and Grasshopper by: Catherine Lafleur

Camp Prisoney Land is in a COVID-19 hot spot. Our tri-county area contains a little over half of the confirmed 30,000 infections in Florida which is about 16,000 cases. However, there are no infections at this camp. Not even as much as a sniffle. The nursing staff comes around to each cell and checks on us daily. We are all disgustingly healthy and resilient.

The only work areas open are the kitchen and laundry and they are busybody like industrious ants. The sewing factory is part of laundry and my friend Jolie has been working seven days a week. Instead of making uniforms, our crew of eight seamstresses have been turning out masks. These ladies sew

2,000 per day on antiquated machines which are barely functional. Boxes of these items are going out the back gate to other prisons twice a week.

My friend Jolie, who is old enough to be my mother, is exhausted. She is so tired every day that she falls asleep immediately upon sitting on the bunk. I like to have Jolie for tea in the afternoons. But she is too tired even for that. I made dinner for her, I organized some jerk chicken pieces, tomatoes, and sliced cucumbers over noodles with ranch drizzling and, out of boredom, sliced apples to look like a flower. I despise cooking but it's the least I can do for my friend. I admire Jolie because I could never work 7 days a week like that. She is truly resilient.

In fact, like the lazy grasshopper, I have not been at work for a month. I have been lying around the dorm self-isolating and washing my hands like Lady Macbeth. My stash of Smithsonian, National Geographic, and Atlantic Monthly magazines is depleted. I have read all my Joe Abercrombie novels. In a frenzy of boredom and book lust, I binge ordered a bunch of movies and free classic eBooks on the jpay kiosk. The result? Sick of movies and one I am stuck with 2,138 classic novels full of misogyny and racism. Hint for the cautious reader, look at the label that says updated for today's reader. It's code for all the offensive racist and gendered stuff being removed. Envy me, please. I am desperate, obviously not very resilient.

Today is Sunday. Jolie is working and I have hit the nadir entertainment wise. I must resort to material of an embarrassing and morally ambiguous nature. I will now reveal a secret no non woman should ever know, a shameful secret. When a woman has nothing else to do, she shuts her cell door, gets under the blanket, and reads...cat magazines. Yes, even now a two-year pile of my roommate's Catster, Catfancy, American Cat and Cat Life magazines await my reading pleasure. I have so far resisted the feline siren song, but I AM BORED!!! I'm on a slippery slope here. At least Jolie has resilience, maybe I should make her some dinner.

A Blast from the Past! by: Jordan Berg

We are at War! A predator is lurking. When will it strike? What's the damage gonna be?

You may be thinking I would be talking about our 20-year engagement in the Middle East. But you would be wrong.

This predator is silent, and its reach is indiscriminate and there currently is no cure for it. Things will get worse before they get better. You might have guessed already that I'm writing about COVID-19, AKA Coronavirus.

History is filled with Pandemics. From the Creation of the Universe, however you may believe that happened, the World's seen its fair share.

Plague's, Flu's, Smallpox, Ebola, Coronavirus etc. Together they have killed 100s of millions, maybe billions. Those affected have something in common- Resilience.

You can knock people down, destroy homes and families, yet somehow people always survive.

But they don't just survive, they thrive on a strength they didn't know they possessed. It's instinctive.

Sure, it's gonna be difficult, especially when in our lifetime we have NEVER experienced anything like this, that requires us to take unprecedented steps to combat the spread.

We don't know what tomorrow will bring, but what we do know is that those who are struggling will get help.

People do amazing things when we hurt. Neighbors will help neighbors again. Long lost friends will check in. Food will be delivered. People taken care of.

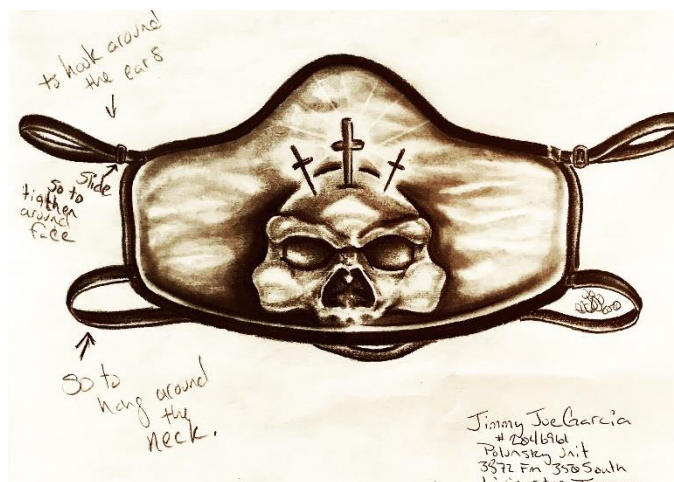
The most common thing said is "We will get through this". We will. There is no doubt.

Humans are remarkably resilient. It takes all sorts to pull through these challenging times. We must never forget those who succumbed to this unseen predator.

Nor can we forget the brave men and women who sacrificed everything in the face of danger to protect the rest of us. The world is lucky to have Nurses, Doctors, EMS, Police, Truck Drivers, Cashiers, Store Stockers, and many others who continue despite the dangers to themselves and family.

Rebuilding will take time. It will not be easy. Being Resilient is part of our true inner nature. So is helping each other.

This pandemic has shown us all that love shows no boundaries. As Ellen says, "Be kind to one another"



Art by Jimmy Joe Garcia

Mindfulness by: Jason R. Glascock

Prison beats the mind, body, and soul. IT hammers on me like a blacksmith, not with an artist's eye for his craft, but to destroy and ruin. Glowing bits of my being fly in cascading arcs with each strike. I am made less and less and less.

The being of self is not quite like iron, fortunately. I have a choice. I choose how to respond to assaults done to me. So, I choose not to allow myself to be destroyed and reduced by these traumas, but to grow and find new ways to be flexible. I choose to be resilient.

This process is mostly about being mindful of who I am, what I want to become, and envisioning my beingness evolving into that vision. I must remind myself that I am not the source of external attacks, that these attacks are toward their fears, and I am the mirror of the evils they see in themselves, so it's they, themselves, that they are targeting and not I. I am not the disease but the cure.

This mindfulness instills, empowers, and manifests as a solid self-confidence built on truth and understanding. The beatings diminish both in frequency and intensity. I become more

in control of my fears and they are found to be shadows or illusions. I have more options from which to choose. These are the essence of resilience.

By: Tonya Bell

Is the ability to recover from or adjust easily to change or misfortune.

Whatever we do in life regardless of adjusting or not we are responsible for the outcome. Everyone is responsible, we must have patience and self-restraint, which would allow us to recover from our past ways. Hold fast.

MAKING ENDS MEET

By: Vicki Hicks

About twelve years ago I made a decision that would alter my life as I knew it. My children all played sports on travel teams, my husband liked expensive toys with very expensive accessories, and I could not keep the bills paid to save my life. You see I could not say NO! Now I am not blaming my family for my decisions, but they are the reason for it all the same. We tried to take a second mortgage out to consolidate and that led to more debt and before I knew it, I was drowning all by myself. There was no way I could tell my husband that I was behind on almost every bill we had; I was embarrassed that I could not even get that right. I decided to start small by taking just a little money and then more and more money until it caught up to me. On April 15, 2016, my life totally changed. I was arrested and now have spent 4 years and 3 months trying to fix relationships that have forever been changed because of one decision I made on my own trying to keep to my family happy. I no longer must try to make ends meet. If I don't have it; I cannot go out and get it so I have come to realize that if I can live on this little amount, I will never have to take money that does not belong to me. I can survive on very little. I have come to realize that my family would have survived without the extra money I took never actually made ends meet but did damage my relationship with my husband of 28 years and my youngest child.

By: Jeremy Brown

"When you make two ends meet it becomes complete!"

I serve people in various ways. By helping and serving others with my talents, words, abilities, wisdom, and knowledge, I'm able to make ends meet. For instance, have you ever wondered about all the strands of DNA in your body? If you were to make those ends meet it would be 6ft long. Of course, you would have to pull the DNA out of the nuclei of 1 trillion plus cells and use nano-claws to hold the strands together from end point to starting point.

As for surviving in prison. Well, that's easy if you just go to chow, come back, and meditate on your bunk all day, but that's boring and creates apathy and stagnation. I educate people, I change mind frequencies. I teach yoga, sometimes I'm known for reading Tarot or palms, law work (no prob, easy peasy). If I'm feeling creative myself maybe, I'll do a tattoo on myself or other

people. I write and sell poetry, mostly love poetry for people's girls, or boys of whatever they're into. The other day I sold my shower time for \$1.00.

Making ends meet is about fulfilling another person's needs, wants, desires, or just stringing together 1 trillion cells of deoxyribonucleic acids. I make it look easy, and it all is once you get your Universal Flow, you sort of just go. I focus intently on what it is I'm doing and just keep going. Work is work, it doesn't matter what I'm doing, I do it. I have 7 people who owe me Digital Cred, money, food items, for various tasks performed, and half of them will never pay, oh but favors in the future come in handy (eww so dandy!).

I make more than ends meet, I make Beginnings separate, I change fate, and I manifest destiny with every thought, word, deed, action, point of view. You must find all the ends to make them meet, once they meet, separate the ends, make new friends, and make their ends meet. Do you feel the Universal Music Beat? Hee :) Trying to make ends meet, you're a slave to money than you dre[am].

By: Allen Wendell

I've been locked up for 15 years now. My whole adult life has been behind bars (I'll be 35 years old this October). Yes, I've had my own things and I was well equipped and aware of responsibilities before I was incarcerated, but I think that I've been the true definition of making ends meet. This long journey has been a real critical testament to my patience and understanding about life and budgeting. At times, I've had hundreds of dollars on my books, and at times I've had less than \$50.00, but somehow during these years, I've learned how to make my priorities a priority, because the next receipt wasn't always promised. Thankfully, I've been able to eat a meal just about every night of my bid and my hygiene items have been well above what is expected. At times it could've been a plain soup (noodles) and some days I had to go to sleep because I was so full, but now, I try to help my family and friends as much as possible. Teaching them how living from check to check isn't always healthy.

Planning and budgeting is always the key. At times we tend to push our priorities to the backseat, and we make momentary items and materialistic things our importance, but we still have rent, car payments, insurance, etc., to pay. When those things should've been our priority from the start.

Whenever I receive any money from my family and friends, I plan it down to the last penny on how it's going to get spent and how not to allow my temptations with buying music and sweet items to stand in my way and sidetrack me from what's important. Making ends meet is more of an understanding and not just a phrase that we use when we're ahead on our bills. It's the struggle to not struggle if you know what I mean...

Well, I hope that my words were able to help you in some shape or form. I wish you all the best.

MAKING LOVE

By: Rolf E. Rathmann

Not war. War of words. Words that hurt. Hurtful action. Making love, not war. That's a theme in my lifetime dating at least the Vietnam era. But with the advent of social media came a tribalism that formed a moat around our lives. More in -your- face bigotry added to the mix, and a powder keg seemed ready to ignite/ Essentially a simple phrase such as "make love" seems at best, quaint, at worst, an anachronism, and highly unattainable.

I grew up in a loving home and a supposedly safe neighborhood with open-minded parents who, through their actions, preached tolerance, and respect. Our world was torn asunder when a bullet, and an assailant merely wanting money, nearly ended our mom's life. That's when I first knew hate.

The perpetrator was black. My mom, white, being too young (or too sheltered) to understand that race played no role, I harbored resentment and fear towards black men. If someone from a different race walked behind me, my senses were heightened. I'd slow down, pretending to spot something of interest in a shop window, letting the object of my derision pass.

A few years followed and, sick of living in fear and now old enough to understand the error of my thinking, I did change. However, not without a few stumbles. One late evening after a school dance, I saw some black teens milling about. Though my gut told me to steer clear I chalked it up to racism on my part. To prove myself better than that, I opted to walk through their clique, I was beaten up. Fortunately, though time, age, education, and life's experiences (combined with a whole lot of therapy), I would learn more effective ways to challenge my "isms" while placing everything, such as race, in perspective.

As a gay male, I too would experience hate. I was bullied or called derogatory names. Feeling self-shame at my core. I engage in a way of self-inflicted hate via internalized homophobia, and addictively unsafe behavior.

The nineties saw its share in a war of words. 1992 was pivotal for me. I was watching a political party convention. Many speakers extolled with great passion and vitriol "Family Values". That planted a seed within me of hate for the "other" side- people who felt that anything diverse or different, such as an un-wed mother, an illegal immigrant, gays, etc, were not part of the fold. Today, I'm very much a part of the tribalism, where other views are wrong, I am right.

As that decade ended, activist friends challenged me to look at my own "white, privilege". What did it mean to be white in America? How did I knowingly or unknowingly encourage systemic racism? By merely being born white, what benefits did I receive? There were not comfortable conversations. Even now, with all this woven into the tattered fabric of American life, these are not comfortable discussions to have.

2020- societally, we are more divided than ever. Extremes on both ends of the spectrum fight for airtime, political cover, and legislative victories. Our nation is in a metaphorical war, long ago skewing a concept of love.

Humanity is on full display as a weary nurse uses an iPhone for a family to say its final goodbyes to the family dying alone in isolation. Love rules the day.

Finally, as for myself, sitting in prison for the wrong I've done, well, this is not stereotypically the place where one finds love in full view. But I can still do my part in a significant way. By loving myself enough to make the right decisions to move forward, towards a purpose driven life.

Making Love, Not War. It's not an unattainable goal, but it can be seen lost in all the din. I hold on the promise of hope, believing in time that the strains of bigotry, bullying, shame and violence can be supplanted by the chords of their opposites.

By: Frank Olms

Sometimes making love is the gift from God and timing is everything.

I was driving along Main Street: downtown. The time was about seven at night. As I passed the Bradstreet grammar school, I saw the love of my life.

Many times, you see a member of the opposite sex and have immediate paroxysms of passion that leave as quickly as they came-but not tonight. I pulled over to the curb and parked my car. She was sitting on the front steps of the school, about 100 feet from the street, her chin resting in her hands, and her elbows supported by her knees. (what was I seeing?) Some supernatural force was bringing us together. She was just fifteen. The date was August 8, 1962.

The initial conversation was awkward and somewhat one-sided as she seemed to be taken by surprise. We made arrangements to meet again- the next night.

She told me later, that night she called the fella she had just started to date and told him they would still be friends but would no longer go out together that was all she told me then.

Four years later we were married (what therefore God had joined together, let no man put asunder).

Our life together was typical of most: struggle, adjust, struggle some more, accept, and move on. We had good times, we had hard times, but we never had BAD times.

Our first child (my wife referred to her as our love child) came along and was followed by three more. Two girls and two boys. And she gave them all equal love.

We attended a year end party for the Englewood Board of Realtors in 2002. A few days later, at the board office, another Realtor asked me who the girl was that I was with at the party, and I said, "my wife". He then asked if we had just gotten married. I asked him why he thought that. He said, "Because you two looks like you just met each other." I said, "we did- forty years ago".

I guess true love never flaunts itself-it just shows.

Three years later, during 2005, forty-three years after we met, my wife died. On her death bed she told her two friends how we met

and that she knew that night that I would be the one she would spend the rest of her life with... How would she know that... she was only fifteen? A marriage made in Heaven. Maybe-Me?... I'm still making love in my mind.

By: Gerald Durst

We were laying there in my queen size bed, holding each other, my hands still caressing her... one hand was, the other was still enjoying the feel of her left breast. Her nipple was hard against my palm. I have a quick recovery time, and I wanted to be with her again.

I could feel the heat from the glow of orgasm radiating off her body as she slowly, gently rubbed her ample bottom against me. I know that she too wanted another go round.

"Baby, I love to f---." She said breathlessly. She was still breathing heavy.

I said, "Honey, that was making love."

"Making love, f---ing, same thing. It all feels so good" she replied.

"No, no, no," I said. "Making love is slow, easy, and time consuming. How long was I down on you before you began begging me to stop?"

She lay quiet for a moment. I could feel the smile on her face in her entire body. "I lost track of time while you were down there. You were teasing me so much, and it felt soooo...mmmmm."

"I was down there at least two hours before you begged me to stop. You said you couldn't take any more. So, I stopped, and then I made love to you."

"Oh, what's the difference?" She asked.

I said, "Let me show you." I was ready to go again. So, as we lay there spooning, I entered her again.

"Making love," I said as I took my time, "is about feeling. It's about caring about the other person. It's not about me."

"It's about ensuring that the other person gets theirs. I put a lot of time and care into ensuring that you receive the most pleasure you can from our being together."

I took my time with a nice steady rhythm that she began to match. After a minute or two of this I got a good, strong grip on her curry hip, and began to pound her hard and fast.

"This, my dear, is f---ing." I said to her as I slammed myself into her.

I went on like this for several minutes before I slowed back down, then stopped, then rolled her onto her back, and continued face-to-face.

"Wow!" She said as she looked into my eyes. "I never thought there was a difference. I have to admit that f---ing doesn't last long and is not near as satisfying as making love."

Another satisfied lover.

By: Teddy Lewis

Every time I wake up it's like the Earth makes sweet love to me. No, I'm NOT talking about sex, but love in the midst of my disposition. I feel like God presides all over the prison and the greatest followers shall come from the prison system. It's a pure euphonical thought of making love to this pen that writes these words which cause my mind to suddenly fluctuate so far beyond

prison that true success on any level is within my grasp. Life's journey is filled with ups and downs, trials, and tribulations but if you look closely at your sudden surroundings you should notice what making love is all about because the Earth is making love right at this moment to you.

DEBTS

The Debt We All Owe Society by Mathew Ellington

I believe in growth, in our personal responsibility to better ourselves. What I don't believe in is the concept of rehabilitation, and I'll tell you why. To rehabilitate is synonymous with to cure - to fix or repair from injury or disease. The implication is that there is something wrong with you, that you are broken and need to be fixed. To be cured. When you accept that, you accept someone else's image of you in contrast to their image of a "perfect" world - one that offers comfort and freedom to a fortunate few, even as it offers empty promises to the vast majority of who continue to scrap, suffer, and bleed. In order to be a part of that world, they say, we owe A debt to society" - to be rehabilitated, to kill the parts of ourselves that they deem cancerous and unacceptable. None of us owes anyone that.

Instead, we owe it to each other to love, respect, and appreciate our innumerable differences as equally valid contributions to the shared story of our species.

We owe it to the disenfranchised - those shackled by the chains of oppression and inequity - that we accept as valid their experiences of suffering, that we lend our hearts, our minds, our strength and our common humanity, so that we may all one-day stand, untethered, in the light of equality and justice.

We owe it to our children - and our children's children - that we be better stewards of our world than those who came before.

But perhaps most importantly, we owe it to ourselves to grow, to learn, and to love ourselves enough to be able to craft this world into a dream of our own design instead of seeking to rehabilitate ourselves into someone else's.

Whether you've been incarcerated or not, your debt to society can be no more - and no less - than this.

By: Roderic Pippen

Debt is something that is owed to someone. It could be money, property, or something much deeper. I pride myself on not being indebted to anyone. But looking at my life, I can see where I am indebted to a few people.

One being my older sister, for always telling me what's right. No matter how farfetched it seemed to me at the time. I lived my life according to how I see things that day. But my sister always tried to instill in me the morals I needed to be a good man. But being ignorant to responsibility, I thought she was trying to control me. Even though I'm now serving a LIFE sentence, she's still here helping me to change my outlook. And use my morals as a guide to be the best version of myself. So, I can as a man say I'm in true debt to my sister for raising me and putting in the work to develop me once I threw my life away. Now, I think of ways I can repay her for everything she has done for me.

Another debt I owe is to my son, Roderic Louis Pippen Jr. At just 11 years old, he loves his father unconditionally. He doesn't know the reason I'm locked up, nor does he care. He's always happy to talk to me on the phone and even happier when we have our visits. He serves as my motivation to change into a better man and gain my freedom. So, I can be there for him when he needs me. This being my darkest moment; he gives me light every day. I owe him for opening my eyes to what's important. What truly matters, loving those who love you. And being comfortable being who you want to be. I'll spend my life repaying him for the strength he gives me daily.

Lastly, I have my father to pay back. Although he wasn't the best example for me growing up. He was always there, and always trying his best to protect me. Even if it was from myself. Because he lived life, he knew what the wrong choice could do to me. And tried his best to guide me away from the streets he knew. And when I turned my back on his tutelage, he still supported me whenever. I landed myself in a troubled spot. Even now he is raising my son, just as he did me. Trying to protect him and guide him away from the wrong situations. He doesn't owe me anything, but he still provides shelter for both my son and I. And continues to give me life lessons that will stick with me long after he is gone. And through both my son and I, he will continue to live, protect, and teach.

Those are my debts I will die trying to repay. Stuff that can't be monetized or devalued. But are the most important parts of my life. And will affect the futures of people who may not even know me just yet. But the man that has been molded by these debts, will do right by the world. One way or another, I will make a difference. All while clearing my debt.

By: James Bauhaus

Debts! -First, let me thank Catherine LeFleur for coming up with so many winners so far (arguments) and for bringing us Katherine Hatten, another Olympic class writer. Also, good job! For Ms. Hicks. I loved that sentiment, "weep at births, celebrate at funerals." I had not heard that before, and it made a mark on me. And, I don't want to gush, or put off my fellow writers by having too high of an opinion, but in my opinion, Ms. Allenbaugh certainly deserves praise and encouragement for her work. I owe a debt to all of these writers for showing me how to be less critical of others. I **see** how they can write well without being so critical, even though I choose to keep criticizing. I do not; however, owe a debt to a couple of dope dudes who sniffed out my \$ because one is smart and the other I feel sorry for. Mutt wears his life story on his scabbed-up head and nastily, busted-out teeth. I give him small items and let him swindle me on barbers. His cage mate, Jeff, says he tried to pay the Mexicans his \$1,000 dope debt, but his sis or daughter stole it. (I don't listen too closely to scams.) Meanwhile, one of the "one-stop inmate services" stole \$25 from me and never did the internet search I'd contracted for. (I'm trying to find a Jamaican word processor named "Yanique" who advertises on "Fiverr." She does great work.) So, Jeff says his 74-year-old mother does great Google and needs cash. I say, "Find Yanique and I'll give her a fast \$25."

He said "Sure thing, but send it to me instead." Days pass. It appears that his poor old mother has had enough of him. He corners me to sell me on his Big Idea about how, using only his brains and my \$, he can pay off his dope debt and make me

rich just by selling the Mexicans' trash-dope, (which they get from the kops) for me. "We would be helping each other!" he says.

So, I help my first friend, and his reward to me for doing this to tell his younger dope-buddy, "Jay's got plenty of money! I know this because he doesn't care when I don't pay him." I want to help my other friend too, but all I could do with my friend is bow out, because dopes can only learn for themselves that there are better things to do in life, even in prison, than exploit everyone for a few hours of buzz. I feel sorry for both of them, and wish that I could help them more, but this guy is not the fool that they wish I was and cannot be pulled down into the "emergency" that they have created out of their debts.

Picture Themes-As we all have forever heard, a picture is worth 1000 words. Hmm I bet anyone signing up for the film writing class will learn that really quick. Anyway, I know many people respond to picture cues more easily than words. After all every picture tells a story. Besides word cues, here are some other ways to flex your writing muscle. Same deal here. If you want to get a copy of the writing you must submit a writing on the picture. Have some fun and see what yarn you can spin from these scenes. These do not have to be true stories. They can be if you want, but they can be as fantastical as you like as well I look forward to seeing what's inside you. Here is a sample of writing submitted for pictures from the last cycle.



Due 4/1/20

35 House by Leo Cardez

Covid-19 was a pandemic. Covid-20 was a disaster. Covid-21 was a dystopian nightmare come to life

The vicious disease known as the Smitty Sniffle swept the globe with astonishing speed (most of those infected were dead within 24 hours), killing more than 99% of the Earth's population. With so few people left to keep the systems running, civilizations collapsed: no power, communication lines, running water, borders – no more life as we knew it. All the conveniences of modern life snuffed out in an instant. I lost my glasses and had to learn to live without.

Survivors developed tribalism and pseudo family units called Kins. Kins are either nomadic, following hunting routes once used by our ancestors or gatherers, farming, and ranching in small communities for survival - it seems the writers of shows like The

Walking Dead were prophetic in their assumptions of human nature. But I know none of this

I am the sole survivor of an isolated penal island off the coast of Norway known simply as 35 House. At full capacity we had just under 2,000 inmates and guards. When the disease arrived at our shores I was the sole convict housed in the segregation unit (the Hole) I was serving my last 30 days for fighting, although now I can admit I was wrong and I regret it. My god do I regret it.

It was eerily silent. I didn't hear the usual moans and screeches of the aging prison. No meals were delivered but without a clock I had no way of knowing the actual time. It was only when two full days and nights had passed without so much as a door opening and the strange putrid scent beginning to permeate my cell that I knew something was terribly and irreversibly wrong.

It took another two days to escape my cell, but fear and hunger are powerful forces. I found my fellow inmates and guards at various stages of decomposition. The disease ravages the arteries causing massive heart attacks and almost instantaneous death – and that way it is merciful. I found my best friend still in his bunk having slept through his own death; others were not so fortunate.

I've moved into the warden's residents - the house on the hill – an old, sad, and lonely edifice that used to be the town chapel before the island was bought by the Norwegian government and transformed into a minimum-security open-plan re-entry facility and compound. Although spacious, open, and airy it still holds a certain quaintness that makes me feel at ease, as if the saints and spirits once worshipped here continue to watch over the sacred remains. I have long buried or burned (when I became too tired to dig) my fellow islanders and have given up hope of finding any other survivors or of ever being rescued. I'm sure penal islands full of rapists and murderers are not on anyone's priority list. My daily routines are relegated to acts of survival; foraging for food, chopping wood for heat and cooking, and reading books to pass the time. I have accepted my fate. I will live out my days here alone.

It has been two years since I escaped my cell and not a day goes by I don't regret it. Why did God allow me to live? Is this some form of cruel cosmic joke I don't yet understand? There is no food left on the island and the fish have moved on to warmer climates. My efforts to build a boat of some kind have all failed with almost fatal consequences. There are no more books to read and memories of loved ones have erased their faces - I can no longer remember a time before being left alone. My mind, my new prison, argues and reasons with me to end my misery, but I am a coward. Every night I fall asleep with the hopes it will be my last and every morning I wake up to the nightmare that is my reality.

I wake up to the thump-thump-thump sound which I imagine are hunger-pain headaches. They're getting louder; closer. I dare allow myself a hint of hope as I run outside in nothing but socks and underwear and there it is, in all its glory, a beautiful green helicopter with a bright red and white cross. As I wave my arms furiously I shout and run after them. They see me. I drop to my

knees and begin to weep. I cannot hold the tears back – tears that have been locked in a secret chamber of my heart now free to spill on my face. My life was over. I was in many real ways dead and buried, but today I have been resurrected. Today, my life begins anew.

House by D.W. Johnston

You see these old buildings (churches, houses, barns, etc...) all over. When I pass one I wonder about its story. Not long before I left California, I was living in the desert out past Barstow, along the Mojave. A strip of sand that some crazy person ages ago named "River." One day cresting a dune on my dirt bike I nearly rode off the roof of an old stone house. Not surprising since there are all sorts of things buried in the dunes out there. An abandoned movie set, classic cars perfectly preserved. A Spanish galleon full of pearls. Or so the stories say. The house was mostly full of sand so I couldn't get inside, but it makes you wonder about who lived there. What would motivate someone to try and make a life in such a place? Drag all that out there and start stacking stone on stone 'till they had a house. Maybe it was different then. Maybe the river flowed by. When I was young the river had some water in it year-round, though barely a trickle once it passed Apple Valley. The alfalfa and ostriches they used to grow didn't use as much water as all the housing tracts do now. Thinking of that house I'm amazed how quickly nature will take back what's hers if allowed to. Maybe one day after we're all gone the river will wash away what's left of that house, and its story will end.

Old Home by Giles Belcher

Man, the structure is at least 100 years old or older. Are stone, bricks, and granite even used in construction? It's somewhat windy here, even a little bit of a chill air wise! Who lived here and when I couldn't tell you? Could have been a lighthouse too? I am not sure of that tower though. Some of that brick and stone are crumbling and decaying away from the ravages of time. Any ghosts haunting this place? Don't know at all? A strongly made, defensible home definitely!

It's a peaceful, beautiful place this is! I could stay here for a long while and beat defiant peace with this. Root and walls sturdy and good year around living here, just need to get a good lay of the land here? Maybe good growing crops, hunting, possible fishing maybe? If the walls could talk, what would be said? What memories of life would be revealed? Only God and the people who lived here could say! Old world craftsmanship says to time, I am still here and standing tall! Maybe still be standing another 100+ years, don't know. Gotta look up the history of the area to find out the who's who, and ways of life here before now! Gotta take this picture and try to come back here soon! Don't want to leave this place! But got to see the surrounding area too! I'll see this old home again for sure! Got to! Sunlight setting lower, darkness is coming! Got to go on.



Nature is talking
The one, she is born

Here there be faeries by Steven Lee Adkins Jr.

Halt!

Look there. There, just beyond the clearing.
Shhhh. Keep it down, don't frighten her away. A child? No. We may never see another the rest of our days but if she were to lead you somehow, into the fields, it could be the last any of us ever sees.

That, good friend, is a faerie.

Yes, I'm serious. That seeming to be a human child could be hundreds of years old or hundreds of thousands of years old.

Living a wildlife of mirth in the wildflowers and the breeze.

No, my friend! Come back. Bah! Let's try to catch him. And look... she's laughing waving him on. There's more of them. Ha! I had no idea my good friend could dance so. And look at me, I've never danced in my life but now you'd think I was born to it. So happy dancing with us in circles, peeling with laughter. I wonder, is such fun always to be had in these fields? I'm winded, hope we rest soon.

But a Flower by Daniel Huffman

I know I'm but a flower to you child,
But please don't pick me, be fair
Yes, it's true I grew wild.
And I see my friends in your hair
I'm begging and pleading, I'm being polite
Let me see another day
So sweet my smell in the air tonight
But won't you be on your way

Thistle by Daniel Huffman

I will call you thistle with blooms and thorns the same
You will grow tall and to the sky you will aim
You'll make dyes of purple, red or blue
You'll have a sweet smell too
You will be part flower and part weed
And yes, your bloom will produce many a seed.

Destiny by George Hesse

Uncle Reggie/ Medicine man said "one will
come"
Many warriors stepped up
But mother Earth remained angry
New viruses and diseases
Catastrophic records
Maybe this is it
Wouldn't surprise me if the stars, moon, and sun
changed
New natural disasters
As humanity we are failing Earth
Why? The Earth is alive
One will come
Hourglass is cracking
If only we could turn back the hands on the clock
and watch
Where our true connection to Mother Earth was
lost
We used to be one
Clean air, land, water
"One will come again who can talk"
Who will communicate so Mother Earth won't give
up on us
One with nature

Faerie in the Mist by Phillip Rath

"I see you, CJ" said the faerie to a tiny ant crawling
across the stamen of the withering flowers.

"I see you, Addison" said the ant to the faerie.

"Why do you crawl around on these dying flowers after
they've lost their bright blues and soothing aromas?"

Addison inquired of CJ as she bent closer to better hear
his response.

"I don't think they're dying. There is plenty of life down
here where I am. I see some fresh pollen, a few young aphids
and chlorophyll enough to keep a vigorous ant like me satisfied
for days and days. I have discovered a virtual banquet",
exclaimed CJ, "Why don't you join me for a meal?"

"Oh, you silly ant! Faeries don't eat aphids or pollen and
chlorophyll would probably make us sick! Faeries live on honey
from the bees, berries and nuts from Mother Earth and water from
our sister the brooks and spring in the meadows".

Curious, CJ asked, "What is a berry or nut; what's a bee
and where do they get honey and how is a spring your sister?
What a confusing would you hive in".

"CJ, don't you know anything? The bees are those
flying, bugging creatures who visit the same flowers you do. They
drink a flower's nectar and create honey for us. Of course, the
earth is our mother and the brooks and streams are our sisters,
after all, we're all family in this world!" Addison gently informed
CJ.

"Do you mean that even I am in your family, even though
I'm smaller than your fingernail?" inquired CJ.

Laughing gayly, Addison replied "Of course, you silly
ant. You are my brother and the earth is your mother. We are all
family, although we don't always act like it".

"Well, I'll be jiggered," responded CJ "I thought the
queen was my mother. Are you quite sure?"

"Oh, you silly ant! Of course, the queen is your mother,
but the Earth Mother gives life to us all and has since the

beginning of time. We faeries love all creatures as our family so we only eat and drink those gifts freely given by our brothers and sisters. Mother made faeries to speak to all creatures, great and small, to tell them of our family and share the Love of Mother," Addison told an overwhelmed and confused ant.

"But sister, I have no gifts to give you since you cannot eat aphids nor drink chlorophyll. I'm not a very good brother" CJ sadly moaned.

"But CJ, you're a great brother! You shared your knowledge with me and made me laugh. You generously offered to share your meal with me and patiently listened to the message Mother sent me to share: My life has truly been enriched by meeting you," explained Addison.

"Imagine that! A tiny fellow like me has enriched the life of a Faerie! I guess I am a great brother!" boasted an exuberant CJ. "I am so glad you stopped by to chat, Addison".

"As am I, little brother. Please take the message of our Great Mother back to your colony CJ, so that all creatures, great and small, might come to accept all beings as their brothers and sisters so we can all live in peace and harmony."

With that, off went Addison, to spread the message to all the women of the Great Mother.

Social distancing by Robert Bartlett Sr.

Storm clouds gathering.
She stoops to smell the flowers.
Nothing else matters.

The Girl and the Dandelion by Mack McCauley

He stood quietly and watched the girl as she leaned forward with a bemused look upon her face. She was intently studying the transformation of what had once been a lively, radiant bunch of field dandelions into the lifeless husks that now remained. Just one week ago she had stood there, in almost this exact place, wanting to pick these dandelions to create a bouquet for her grandmother. I had advised against it, explaining as best as I could in such a way as for her to grasp about the cycle and continuity of life. To better illustrate the lesson, we had come to visit each day to watch as the dandelion progressed through its lifecycle, from the vibrant sun- yellow flower it had been to its gradual transformation into seeds. A "fluff-ball" she had called, with its seeds perched precariously like paratroopers ready to jump and ride the winds until safely returning to the Earth, ready to create new dandelions. She had helped some of the seeds along their journey by blowing on them so she could watch them float on the breeze with delight and awe in her eyes.

Now here she stood, with a wreath of wildflowers crowning her head as she contemplated the final cycle of this bunch of dandelions. The look of bemusement slowly faded and transformed into one of immense distress as some revelation of hypothesis formed and set in her head.

"Grandpa? She asked quizzically. "Does the same thing happen to all flowers?"

The deep look of sadness seemed to fill her soul and I perceived a glimpse of it escaping through her eyes as she looked steadily at me, awaiting a response. For a moment, I

regretted ever having stopped her from picking the dandelions, having never foreseen the depth of which she would contemplate this life's lesson. Even with my regret, I knew I must allow her to finish connecting the dots to one of life's most primal lessons. "Yes sweetheart." I replied, "Not only flowers, all living things. We all get from start to finish in different ways, but we are all born, live, and die. Hopefully, we can be like the dandelion by bringing a small amount of beauty and joy to the world around us, then pass it along for future generations to see and appreciate. If you remember nothing else, remember this: Life is made up of moments, living is recognizing and enjoying those moments."

She pondered my words a moment, seemed to accept them, then stood up and removed the wreath of flowers from her head. She laid them at the base of the dandelion plant. An offering of recognition to a life that had existed and had made a difference if to no one else but one small child.



Mountains in View by Jack Simpson

I had worked all my life just to get up one morning and find myself retired. I grew up around beaches and lived there all my life. It had soon lost all its luster to me. I needed more.

Being a lifeguard isn't an easy life. Everyone depends on me for safety. Getting old isn't funny when you really love to do something. I felt alive sitting in that chair. Looking at a view that soon would be no more than a memory.

My body had told me after all the years of torture in the sun and all the running. I had to change to make it. Now I patrol the beaches handing out tickets I had no desire to do. Not everyone is here to break the law.

I had decided to sell my beach house and travel. The realtor said it would sell easily since it has an ocean view and a split level. In less than two weeks it was sold. Money in my account and traveler checks in my pockets.

The day I left, I told myself I wouldn't look back. My heart sank a little as I drove away. Fort Lauderdale bound for a lifeguard convention. Talk about Bikinis and old swim trunks. Some of them would leave a lasting impression. One that I hoped would soon leave my memory banks.

My three-day trip after the convention was well on the way. Since I had never left Florida, mountains would be a beautiful sight for me. My heart was set on seeing the Colorado Rockies.

The late John Denver had a way to express his feelings in songs. My heart was to sit on the rocks where he had sat and run my fingers over the words of his song. I had never seen an Eagle fly. Only on Nature shows at ETV. This really had been one of my dreams.

Time has a way of losing you as the miles clicked by. Seemed just like last night I was in Florida. Now the traveling was coming to an end. I could look ahead and see rows of beautiful mountains in the fading sunlight.

Clouds appeared through the broken sky and on the right the moon appeared in its quarter phase. My heart beat with pure excitement. Soon I would be listening and reading the words of the "Rocky Mountain High" song.

The mountain that he sang about had special meaning to me. I wanted to close my eyes and just float away. Just a few more miles and I could do just that.

Pulling in the parking lot, I grabbed my disk player and adjusted the headphones. My legs were shaking with excitement. When I stopped, my feet touched the same rock that Mr. Denver had sat on. I pushed play and the music sent me back to that time. With my eyes closed, I could float away on Eagle wings. Each word was crystal clear. Tears welled up in my eyes. All my life I had listened to his music and it made me feel like I was part of his life.

I heard a voice say, "Are you alright sir?". My eyes opened to see a park ranger and I explained that I had driven from Florida to see this wonderful sight. That I had wanted to see these mountains all my life.

We talked about Mr. Denver's life and how it was so thoughtful that people still cared for his music. I told him I was the one who felt honored. He helped to change my life completely. That enjoying the rest of my retirement would be easy.

The love of beaches to mountains, nothing beats a great tune, a beautiful view, and most of all, the feeling of being free. To seal it all, an Eagle flew overhead and called out.

The Longest Road by Mack McCuley

My footsteps fell wearily, one after the other. My head was heavy with the thoughts of how far I had already traveled and of how far I had yet to go. My gaze lifts from the cracked desolate, ever-stretching asphalt laid out before me, asphalt that reaches onward unendingly. Onward towards the beacon of hope that is the mountains on the never nearing horizon. The mountains. The illusory goal we all strive for and at times race towards. A seemingly set destination in the distance. Destination, what a word. A derivation of the word destiny, which is like the mountains ahead- something that always seems to loom before us, somewhere in the intangible distance.

Somewhere on the road ahead.

"Where am I? How did I get here? Where am I going? How will I get there, other than just one foot in front of the other?"

These and a thousand other questions bombarded my thoughts, allowing me no rest. Thoughts that have nothing to do with the physical road I am on, but about life itself. Life, the only road which possesses the ability to affect my existence based on the choices I make during my travels from cradle to grave. My destination, as I have already made mention of, which is seemingly set. I am heading for the illusory mountains on this, the

longest road of my life. I mention this again to better clarify something I have learned about this road which I call life. When I was young, the mountains appeared to be the age of sixteen and the attainment of a driver's license. Yet once I reached this destination I learned that it was not truly a destination, merely a milestone. A signpost or landmark along the way. So, I hurried on towards my next mountain. This may have been graduating college, or getting a job, getting married, having children, or leaving my mark on the world in some other tremendous yet trivial way. It is always different for each of us, yet not really. Why? Because we eventually come to the realization of something we have always known: Life's only true destination is the grave. For as we are born, so too shall we die.

I say this not to discourage you, but rather to encourage you. As with any other road trip, it's all about how we get to our destination. Do we crawl? Walk? Run? Roller Skate? Hitchhike? Drive? Take a bus? A Train? A Plane? Decisions, so many decisions. I learned in math class the most practical way to get from point A to point B is always a straight line. However sometimes small side trips are needed to provide a break in the scenery and the monotony. Sometimes these side trips afford us the opportunities to take a breather, to examine the road map of our lives. To see if where we are heading is really where we want to go. Do I get to grandma's house by going around the block and through the park, or by cutting across the city's landfill? Both ways will get me there. When I was younger I would probably have opted for quickness. I was in a hurry, all I wanted was to be grown. Now that I am older, taking time to enjoy the journey is more important.

Sometimes, as a man, I face huge challenges with pride. I am grown. I am a man. I can do things on my own and as with any road trip, I simply refuse to acknowledge that I may need to stop and ask for some directions at times. Knowledge comes from experience. How can I know where I am going if I have never been there? Sure, there are road maps but not even they can tell you everything about your journey. Where are the best places to eat? To shop? To meet interesting people with interesting tales and lessons from their own journeys? Rand McNally is good, but not that good.

"Where am I? How did I get here? Where am I going? How will I get there, other than just one foot in front of the other?"

These questions are irrelevant and about the past. How I got to where I am or how far I have come is the past and the past cannot change. If I spend all my time focusing on the past, my future will not change either. On the longest road, problems are never really the challenge. The challenge is how we deal with problems and allow our focus to return to where it belongs, on our journey.

The Road by Leo Cardez

To my naive eyes the road ahead was clear. I could not yet see the mountain of suffering and self-discovery that lay ahead. So is the paradox of life, all is well until one day it isn't. We will all be tested, no one is immune. This is the story of my biggest test to date: incarceration.

After nearly two decades of climbing the corporate ladder and a few years after finally building a good relationship with my estranged family, I at last, had the life I'd always dreamed

of. I was elated as I looked out my Lake Shore Drive penthouse. I had a six-figure salary as vice president of a global public relations agency. I was driving the very car that hung on a poster in my childhood bedroom. I summered in Europe and dated gorgeous models. It was everything I had ever wanted. I had to bite my lip to stop from smiling as my friends and family awed over my success. This is it: you made it, I kept thinking to myself. But, the storm had already arrived, I just didn't know it yet.

One morning, while recovering from another night of debauchery, there was a stern knock on my door, "Police, we have a warrant for your arrest." The following few days were a blur of interviews, frantic calls, jail cells, and court appearances. And just like that, I lost everything I had ever worked for. By the time the final gavel dropped almost three years and over a hundred thousand dollars later I stood in front of the judge as just a shell of a man I had once been.

Back in my cell at the county jail I was told I would be leaving for an in-processing center the next morning where I'd stay for at least a couple months before being shipped off to prison to serve my sentence. I can remember my despair. It was like being stuck in a barrel at the bottom of the ocean with no options-- there is nothing worse. In many real ways, I was watching my own death and burial.

The following weeks were shadowy and supremely uncomfortable, a litany of doctor visits, strip searches, and an introduction into my new paramilitary style of life. I was indoctrinated to the convict code and a new hierarchy-- which I quickly and sadly learned I was at the bottom of. I couldn't sleep. I barely ate. I was hemorrhaging friends and family. I was falling deeper into the well and could barely make out any light.

But as the everyday doings of my "real" life-- dinners out, weekends with my daughter, steady stream of Tinder dates-- fell away completely, I noticed the continuous present that had replaced it. For someone "on-the-new" being vigilant of your surroundings equates to survival. I had to quickly devolve into a more highly tuned, instinctual being. The law of the jungle is clear: the weak become easy prey.

A life barren of my real-world idiosyncrasies was surprisingly simple. My only goal was subsistence: sleeping, eating, hydrating, and, occasionally, bathing. I no longer felt guilty about ignoring emails or not returning calls, no longer worried (as I constantly had) that my various girlfriends and lies would catch up to me or that I wouldn't fall in love in time to have more children.

How curious to realize that so much of my existence was a construct that could be exploded overnight; and how curious too, to see so clearly how little all that "stuff" really meant in the grand scheme of life. It wasn't that staying in touch or having children were unimportant, but staying alive and in control, mattered so much more.

Meanwhile, I quickly became aware and appreciative of the bonds we forge as human beings. I was so moved by the handful of friends and family that stood by me and were willing to try to help-- all in their unique and special ways. Relationships with family were stripped to their core, as if the years with all their distancing had now come to nothing. My parents and sister cared for me as a child, and with few expectations, I gave in gracefully. To receive these blessings was humbling and an inspiring testament to the fact that many people are basically good and

loyalty truly exists. It was like attending my own funeral and seeing who would attend and truly mourn and who would simply go through the paces for appearance's sake. Most of us will spend a lifetime not really knowing who to trust and who loves us-- I did.

When I was finally allowed to go to yard (outdoor recreation) late that winter, I began to spend those forty-five minutes roaming the expensive rec area wearing grey sweats, black boots, and a blue knit cap. I often hadn't showered or even brushed my teeth, but I didn't care-- who was I trying to impress? This new lunacy of mine was strangely liberating as was losing all the old social etiquette rules I always felt compelled to follow. I stayed mostly to myself and minded my own business until I felt like I was the invisible man. It's amazing what dark magic these walls have-- they can take so much from a man. But, strangely, I reveled in this new anonymity, this feeling of non-existence, of the unexpected pleasure of becoming a deserter of the real world. Oh, I knew I still existed-- I hadn't completely unmoored-- but, I lived in the fringes. And so, it was that I crunched through the snow watching my breath, dreaming of a different past and unknown future. I fantasized about the book I'd write now that I had the time or the great physique I would soon have now that I would be pumping iron with the rest of the gym rats. Sometimes I even praised myself for having withstood the onslaught of hate and anger my arrest had caused and now this incarceration; and for finding a way to stay positive through it all. Human beings are resilient, I said to myself aloud. You are resilient, came the voice from deep inside a secret chamber of my heart.

It's been five years since my initial incarceration and prison life has become my new normal. I am no longer the invisible man. I have friends, job, and volunteer duties (I also shower and brush my teeth regularly again). But every so often, I think back to those first few months and its revelations-- to the strength (and weakness) of my relationships, to my mother's unconditional devotion, to my liberation from the real world and the faith it gave me in my own toughness. And that's when I am overcome by gratitude from being alive, yes, but also for having known, just for a moment, the strange exhilaration of being dead.

My journey has no foreseeable end, but I know now that whatever new mountain may hide around the next bend will not break me. I will endure... regardless of the pain. This time spent at one of America's many gray bar human warehouses has taught me an invaluable lesson: freedom can be found through pain.

"Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose." — Viktor Frankl



Animal by Gerald Durst

David's yak stood saddled and ready. It was hard to believe that it was July. The polar shift of 2050 had left the Earth all screwed up. The season had completely changed. Christmas was now in the beginning of summer instead of winter. Fourth of July fireworks in the snow.

David's yak came from a small herd that a rancher in Colorado had kept. They are hardy beasts that tolerate cold well. It didn't take too long to get past the musky smell of their bodies once you got on board.

David isn't a very tall fellow, no more than 5'5", but he is well built. You'd have to be these days with all the competition from other villages and marauders' camps for resources. He's a good looking fellow with his lantern jaw, hazel eyes, and blondish hair.

With his rifle in hand, and a cap and ball pistol in his waistband, he looked into Stacy's eyes, "I'll be back before you know it".

Her blue eyes, worry etched into them and her face, looked into his. "I hate it every time you have to go".

"Don't you worry too much. You've got the boys with you, and we won't be gone long" He said to his nervous wife. "It's my turn in the patrol rotation. This one will be short unless we get hit with some snow".

"I know," she said as a single tear slipped free. "I just worry so much every time you go. What with the raving gangs and the patrol from the other villages. I don't want you getting killed in a skirmish".

"I'll be fine. Ugly will see me home safe". He patted his yak as he said this. Then he looked down at his two sons. He opened his arms and the 11- and 9-year-old boys rushed into them.

"I love you, Joseph and Daniel. You boys take care of your mom, and keep things going while I'm gone".

Joseph, a toe headed, strapping young man who took after his dad in this muscle department, looked at his father with a brave look on his young face. "I'll make sure everything is done right, Dad".

"I know you will, son. Just as I know that, you, Daniel, will do your part as best you can".

"Yes, sir" said the brown haired 9-year-old. He stood awkwardly as his body didn't quite line up. He had been born with kyphoscoliosis which meant his spine was slightly twisted with the s-curve of scoliosis, and a hunch from the kyphosis.

In spite of this, the little boy worked hard. He tried not to let the pains in his back stop him or slow him down. Sadly, his body was weak, and muscles building just did not come easy for him. Yet the little fella was game.

"I'll make ya proud of me, pa" Daniel said.

With a big smile, a swelled breast full of love, he tossed the boy's hair, "I'm already proud of both you boys".

"I'll also make sure Tommy Tomleson doesn't bother him," said Joseph.

David smiled as he took Stacy into his arms. "You better come home safe," she whispered in his ear. "I don't plan to raise 3 children on my own".

He whipped back holding her shoulders at arm's length, his eyes as big as saucers. "You're serious?!"

She nods her head with a smile that wraps around and meets behind her long dark hair.

With a whoop, David picks Stacy up and gives her a whirl. "Hey Fellas!" he bellows, "I'm gonna be a dad again!"

Cheers arise from the other men in the patrol as wives and sweethearts and daughters surround Stacy with warmth and love and giggles.

David gives Stacy one last long, lingering kiss. Then, grinning like a fool, he orders the patrol to "saddle up".

"Alright, boys!" Daniel yells, "Let's get this over with. We got family to get back to".

A heartfelt cheer goes up as the 12 men head out to ensure the safety of their own little village.

Animals in Mountains by Jeremy Brown

"Now I know what drove Van Gogh. Da Vinci, and Michelangelo, and Poe mad" - spoke the man.

"Can you hurry up and take that picture? It's too damn cold out. I mean we're in the Sierra Nevada's for Christ's sake, and you have over a hundred pounds of weight on me, I mean by god can't I just lie down yet, this is nuts. I've got icicles growing on my teats and now I've started a new hairstyle - ice dreads. Well how do I look? I know I look prehistoric, but at least I have horns. Come over here so I can poke you in the ribs. But I can't, you're my human and I love you. I mean we've been out here for like 6 years. You and your solo quest of staying off the grid, when are you going back to your crazed human Ant Hill? Ah, but I know you. You've been in prison for 75 years, now that they let you out, you won't ever go back there, will you? I knew it, you can't keep away from me." Tug. "Let's go through the mountains again, no problem, Yank these ice dreads off my ass will you, it's cold back there. Well at least you can cuddle in real close to me tonight because it'll be a cold one. Our close warmth will help us both survive. I promise I won't roll on you like last time. I really broke your left knee that time, didn't I, ha ha, good good times! Give me some whiskey will you, this wildebeest needs a warm drink. Good for the blood flow you know."

"Fine, quit pestering me, you're the most talkative beast I've ever met. Do you want me to sew your mouth closed?"

The wildebeest made no response. The man being away from society and civilization for so long couldn't tell what was real or fantasy, and his past prison bid only made it worse. "Damn, got to stop drinking." Then he chucked the absinthe into the snow.

"Now Jeremy, why did you go and do that?" spoke the wildebeest.

"Holy smokes, I guess my fantasies were real after all, and you're a real talking wildebeest. By God, I thought I was going mad." A tear rolled down the man's cheek as he came to the realization that his fantasies were actually manifesting before his eyes into reality. The line between fact and fiction became one.

"Now I know what drove Van Gogh. Da Vinci, and Michelangelo, and Poe mad after drinking absinthe it opened their minds, which in turn manifested all their fantasies into an actual reality."

"I was never a fiction, Jeremy. I was always able to speak, it's just that other human minds weren't open to hear me speak, because they were always on their phones, and well I could only speak softly" the wildebeest said.

After this enlightening realization, the man went to the back of the wildebeest and pulled off the ice dreads that accumulated on its buttocks. "Well now that I've attained Animal Communication Enlightenment, I guess the only thing left to do is to pull ice dreads off your ass."

"What a paradox after all." That night they both got drunk on absinthe in a cave with a hot fire away from the Human Ant Hills and complete Insanity.



Beyond the Present by Clarence Cummings

Clearly, history repeats itself. There is nothing new under the sun. Many times, I catch my thoughts running like wild stallions through the open prairie, escaping this war that is raging on the home front. A war that is deep inside, filled with past and present dark images of cruelty, bigotry, misogyny, violence, and rage. Not only is my mind locked in like some deposit box in a vault, but I can hear, smell, taste, touch, and see the silhouette of time's impression, as if an atomic bomb exploded, only to leave behind the ghastly images buried in the stained dirt and burned into the hollowed landscapes. The mind's eye is a jewel box filled with all precious stones and rare gems. Every conscious moment anticipates the next move like a chess player closing in on the inevitable checkmate. Taking time to survey the landscape, the moment hits your eyes like a flash of lightning, a sudden and momentary blindness followed by a gracious aha ... Thank you for the insightful moment. The abundant and elaborate construction of nerves attached to the eyes allows for an exact and beautiful image, flashing all the colors of a rainbow, revolving a course of action frame by frame. In the drama of life there is a moral to the story. Everyone possesses within the key to unlock their future. I am who I am, you are who you are by our choices.

The eyes are the windows to the soul. My view and your view are not the absolute. What is truth? Is it our life's experiences or is it filled with our mind's interpretations of everything? We all have our own vision of what we want and how to achieve it. The plan is to think beyond the present and open up to other achievable possibilities.

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Silence is Invisible by Jeremy Brown

What you see is only a fraction of what actually exists. Using Clairvoyance, we can see our future timelines. The Ultimate Reality within you is expansive. Telepathic communication with your Highest Self is factual.

Open and Tune into your Sixth Sense to Realize this new perception.

Possible Futures may be realized beyond the here and Now. Awaken your powers of Infinite Creation and Visualization by applying and practicing simple mediation.

You are infinite, infinite Immortal Soul, you never die, only change forms!

This process therefore will help you with decision making, watching, thoughts, come, go!

When your Third Eye opens you begin to reach your frequency!

Beyond this limited time and place, lies Infinite Quanta of Space!

This world is left without a trace. Accelerate your mental pace. Stay awake, make haste. Soul liberation is right in front of your face. Nothing is truly what it seems, you can feel things in your imagination. Extraordinary Experiences lie within ordinary moments.

Factuality, Truth, Answers all rest in your own Invisible Silence. Silence the voice of your mind, Mementos Necessario Un Absoluto Silencio. Spiritual Transfiguration, your perfection is complete. Now levitate your consciousness. Are you living or Dreaming to live? Have you ever had that feeling where you're not sure if you're Awake or are still dreaming? Awaken through One pointed concentration. This is your Activation.

Practice Applied Meditation! O' what a delightful Mental True Sensation.

Fade to Black: A Life Gone Too Soon by Marvin Jones Sr

Hello!!! Can anyone hear me? Can you see me? Please, someone, talk to me! Oh God, I'm scared. Something isn't right, and I can't wake up, it feels like I'm drowning ... where is my family, my Dad? Oh wait, I can see my friends standing over my body, wait, I can see my own body on the floor? What is going on here, why are they slapping my face, and why can't I feel it? Please, just rush me to the hospital - they will know what to do!

Okay, good - I see Joe and Dave lifting me up and rushing me to the car, please don't let Dave drive, he is still high from his last shot.

Wow, you guys are just going to throw me in the back of the car with no care at all? That's alright, just get me to the ER. Wait, the hospital is in the other direction! Where are you taking me?

Why are we stopping at this abandoned building? Get your hands out of my pockets, put my cell phone and money back, I'm going to need those.

Guys?! What are you doing? Don't leave me on these steps like I'm a piece of trash, come back, come back, don't leave me here!

Oh my God, what have I done? Why is the darkness creeping up on me? Mom, Daddy, help me, I'm sorry!! Please forgive your baby girl!

R.I.P.

La'Portia Marie Jones of Boston, Massachusetts.

A Story about Knots by Catherine LaFleur

During my recovery from COVID I was isolated in Plague Dorm D. I slept a lot in the morning, in the afternoon, and all night long. I was a weak noodle. I tried to walk the tiers, do a bit of yoga stretching, sit on the locker or a bench, and I was still exhausted by everything. I just kept nodding off.

All this inactivity began to affect me negatively. My muscles and joints started to ache. Then they knotted up. I would roll around in my bed of pain, having hallucinatory dreams, only to wake all bent up. Finally, I was having something resembling a Charlie Horse in weird places like my upper arms and my back. One morning I awoke and could not turn my neck. I was crimped up in the shape of a flamingo. My cell neighbor, a woman of Wagnerian proportions, had to pull me out of bed. Brunhilda said she was going to help me. First, I had to stand in the hot shower for twenty minutes. Then I had to meet her in the dressing room.

Just standing in the shower, dressing myself and creeping down the stairs winded me. The pain was horrible. I noticed Brunhilda had brought my rolled-up sweatshirt down. At least my head would be cushioned. I obeyed her instruction to lay face down on the bench. As I started to stretch out a spasm seized me. It was a Charlie Horse breaking diagonally across my back. I tried to get back up, but Brunhilda pushed me down ruthlessly. She is a lot bigger and stronger than me. This unlicensed person then dug her fingertips into the spasm. I squealed really loud and tried to get her off of me. That's when my shoulders were held down by Loki, who has been standing by unbeknownst to me.

What must this look like on camera? Me lying face down on the bench with my shirt pushed up. Loki gripping me by the shoulders, and Brunhilda using her knuckles and elbows to knead the knots. No response from the officer's station. Sure, doesn't look suspicious at all.

Only squeaky wheezes came out of me. My mouth was buried in the sweatshirt which Loki had stuck under my face. Whatever Brunhilda was pressing paralyzed me. Nothing stopped her. She pummeled me from neck to hips. I couldn't feel anything but hot antagonizing lighting strikes. By that time, I was crying. And whimpering. The more I wept the harder she pushed.

Then suddenly every knot released at the same time. I became relaxed and boneless. Loki let me go and Brunhilda stopped. They helped me sit up. I was dazed. In a slightly slurred voice, I thanked them as I stood upright like a human being for the first time in weeks.

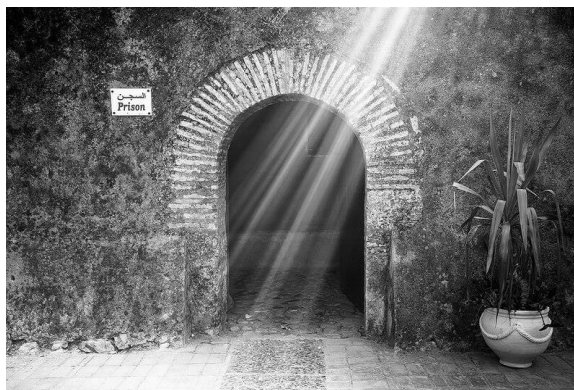
Upcoming Picture Cues



Due 4/1/21



Due 5/1/21



Due 6/1/21



Due 7/1/21



Due 11/1/21



8/1/21



Due 9/1/21



Due 10/1/21

Final Notes- Please consider joining the theme writing program. I know many of the regular participants pay close attention to one another's writings, and it is yet another way to build community even though the forces conspire to keep you separate. I think everyone of you who steps forward and grows intellectually and emotionally in prison is showing others a path that is constructive. All of PE is meant to give you ways to express yourself, and find avenues for expressing purpose and meaning. Besides that, it is also a great way to develop your communication skills and your sensitivity to other's experience. Human history is built on us learning from one another, and many of you have valuable insights to share with others. PE hopes to be a medium where your ideas, your voice can stand out and be heard. It's a huge task with mass incarceration filling our nation's prisons, but we all find ways to make a stand. There is no absolute truth regarding life that I can swear by, but all my experience lets me know that when I can find projects that engage and interest me, then I am happier and more productive. Being productive is good as long as the tasks you undertake are meaningful to you. You can see offer a wide variety of opportunities hoping we can find something for everyone. Underneath it all, we at PE know that you belong to the human race and want to include you in all that we do. You are not defined by a mistake. All of us have made many mistakes. Admittedly some are more consequential and against the law. Our focus is not forgive and forget, but rather to forgive and remember. Use this opportunity to look at your life and the circumstances that brought you to where you are. What ever it was, it happened, and nothing can change that. What we can control is where we go from here. How do we accept our experiences and not be controlled by them? It doesn't mean you stop fighting injustice, but it does ask you to not sink into bitterness and blame. It is easy to do so, but in the long run you only hurt yourself. We are always interested in your thoughts as to how we can make this a better program. I await your suggestions. Best wishes-Gary

Registration Sheet – Please check the box of each program in which you wish to participate. Carefully read the requirements of each program before signing up.

☐ **Expedited Book Mailings** – Check with the administration of your facility to be sure you are allowed to participate. If yes, please send a check for \$4.00 or some other means that is allowed at your prison to cover postage. Books are free, but the mailing cost is not. List types of books you want, and we will make the best match with our existing collection of books. Warning, the Pandemic makes everything a little iffy

Please fill in this if you order expedited books

_____ Number of books allowed

_____ Soft cover only

_____ Hardcover and soft covered both allowed

☐ **Poetry Project** – Please send me the next Prisoner Express Poetry Anthology Vol. 25. I understand that to receive the anthology I am required to submit a poem for consideration in the anthology. Once we finish collecting for Vol 24 all entries automatically are entered for Vol 25

☐ **Journal Project** – I will keep a Journal for a year and may share my entries with PE. Please send me a Journal Starter packet.

☐ **Chess Club** – Yes, I want to receive a packet on how to improve my chess game.

☐ **Meditation Project**- Yes, I want to join Tara for meditation practices and spiritual musings.

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☐ **Art Knows**: Come explore the world of art with Treacy. This packet will include instructions for our next art projects.

☐ **Philosophy**- This packet will examine moral motivation, desire, intentions, and the strength/weakness of the will. Come join Kylie and read and share your musings on these topics.

☐ **Mental Health Studies**-Come learn ways in which disease, your immune system and mental health are connected, and gain more awareness regarding maintaining good mental health.

☐ **Learn to Write a Screenplay** - -In this lesson you will learn how to write a screenplay. If you always felt you had a story to tell, here is your opportunity

☐ **Role Playing Games [RPG]**- From your letters to the program we gather there is an army of Gamers looking for new games and characters. This packet will incorporate Jameson's ideas with your suggestions. Let the fun begin!

You do not need to sign up for the Theme and Picture Writing programs or Alice's draw a song project. By submitting your writings and art, you are automatically included on all future mailings regarding those individual projects.

Prisoner Express Permissions Form

I grant Prisoner Express the right to publish, in its newsletters and website, any work including essays, artwork and journal entries,

☐ that I have sent to Prisoner Express in the past

☐ that I will ever send to Prisoner Express in the future, unless I clearly indicate on the work that I do not want it published.

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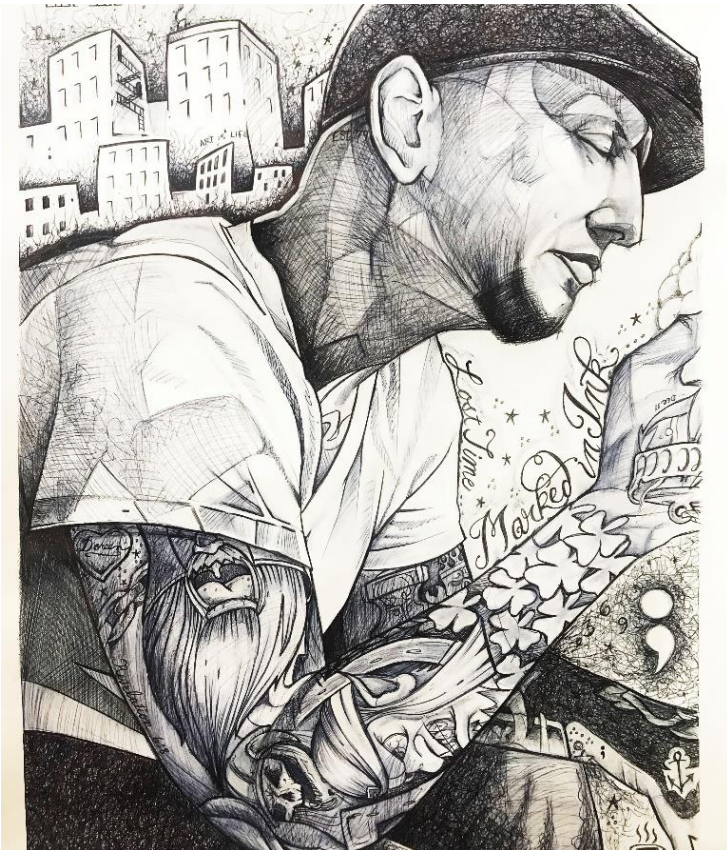
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“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present.” — Bill Keane

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Art by Michael Sloan

Prisoner Express promotes rehabilitation by providing information, education and opportunities for creative self-expression to incarcerated individuals throughout the United States.

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