

Poetry Anthology: Volume 23

Steel Hearts by Tavo

Arrays of steel rule
kids trained to duel
as depression pools,
flames of hate are fueled

By kingdom come,
Despite hatreds put out
The devil will tout
Matches laid among

A pit full of fools
In heaven's seven
Basements, hegemony
Sunk in the slain.

Lovebirds' memories
Fading, inundating
Minds' eyes lately.
Tragedies—turned tools

High hanging fruit
Takes a bit of shaking
Happiness—made moot.
Jailbirds stop singing

I am no menace
to society,
I know our bonds
are stronger than the
steel hearts keeping you
from conquering.

Blue Birds and Barbed Wire by Nate High

The world called her ugly, but all I saw
was her beauty.
When I was angry and on the edge, she was
the only thing that could soothe me,
She would send me pictures, and I would
just stare,
I knew that it was dangerous to fall in love,
but I didn't care.

I called her Aphrodite, she was a goddess
on her own,
her letters were my weakness, but still she
Prisoner Express

kept me strong.

Like every woman I've ever loved, her
time came and went,
So I boxed up her letters and all the pictures
she had ever sent.

I remembered her being beautiful, but no
one else does,

Shes the one who taught me how to see thru
goggles of love.

Our relationship taught me the importance
of perception,
and that was beneficial when my happiness
was in a recession.

When the darkness creeps in, I see thru
goggles of pain,

I only see the dirt, the trash, the blood stains.
I only hear the silence, I lose the sound of
laughter,
I'm surrounded by violence and nothing else
matters.

We all wear our goggles, some only see
the flames in the fire,
I used to only see the fences, but now I see
the blue birds dancing on the barbed wire.

Stolen Identity by Michael Marotta

Who am I supposed to be,
Please answer this I'm not sure...
Behind many masks I'll stay free,
And through all things can endure...
Blurred lines get crossed by choice,
Mostly for stepping over the rest...
Using one's often overpowering voice,
Keeps them blood thirsty also obsessed...
Look inside before it's too late,
Seeing whom really have you become...
You're not in any stable state,
When into insanity you've already
succomb...

You'd better figure out something quick,
Which person is pulling your strings....
Once tender skin feels that prick,
There's no secret what pain brings...
If nobody knows then don't tell,
First let inner feelings silently plea...

Afterwards lock sanity into a cell,
Because without expression no one's me!

Stagnation by AJ Castro

I've made mistakes
But only because
I am a human being
I had similar dreams
Though not similar
To the ones of
The reverend Dr. King
I wanted to be rich
So I hit the streets
And got money
By any means
I've destroyed lives
And hurt people
Did some horrible things
I yearn for peace
But I am haunted
By the faces and screams
From a previous life
That I can't shake
So it seems
My past is my present
Gift wrapped with a ribbon
Sitting under a tree
My future is uncertain
Who knows, what
Tomorrow will bring
Life is cold
So I prepared myself
So as, not to freeze
Life is hard
Especially, the part
About not being free
My heart is empty
Yet heavy
I feel so incomplete
I juz wanna change
But I'm being held back
By the old me!



Life Behind Bars by Phillip L Roth

The Etymology of “Inmate” by Johnny E. Mahaffey

Inmate

noun & adjective (plural in•mates)

[pronounced ín máyt]

ORIGIN Prob. orig. From INN noun (later assoc. with IN adverb) + MATE noun

1. An occupier or inhabitant of an institution such as an asylum, or sometimes a prison under the current Southern usage; used to dehumanize *non*-mental health prisoners; derogatory.

Ex. *The nurse at the asylum was aware of the inmates outside of their rooms.*

2. A person that is a stranger; not native to the location in which he (or she) is found to be living.

Antiquated

3. Not to be confused with prisoner. An inmate is a person that presents a danger to themselves (or others), and in most cases are not aware of their own situation. The inmate is the dangerous version of patient that receives care for mental illness in a controlled environment; whereas, a prisoner is someone undergoing a form of societal reconditioning known as

rehabilitation, before being reintegrated as a productive and conformed denizen.

Ex. *The inmates of the asylum consider themselves to be prisoners in cells; but, the prisoners in the jail take offense at being called inmates due to the word’s mental health connotations - nor do they approve of their cells being called rooms - or the building dorms.*

Attrib. Or as adjective. *That prisoner is not technically an inmate.*

Syn. CAPTIVE, detainee, internee; informal jailbird, convict, con, yardbird, lifer, prisoner

Good Thieves: Don’t Take Property, They Steal Time by David Hehn

The Rhymes of Reason
The Discontented SEASON
The Maletesense [*sic*] of it ALL
The Picture Perfect
The Discontented Dream
The Beguiled & Thee Obscene
The Photo Credit & The Dream
The Economy of “Distance”
The Unrequited Love of Misappropriation
“I’m sorry SIR. We’re going to have to take
your
Writer’s license”
Largesse
The Largeness of Personal Distress
“I’m Almost Impressed”. Almost
ALL or None
And we’re back to where we’ve Begun
And A DREAM starts with one
Mine is They Ultimate Construct
Convicts bleed Tears
And Years Are Our Poison
We Drink Deep
Our Silence Speaks Legions
Wrapped in a sheet
Alone in the DARK
Lying face up in my own Self-Pity
Fingering my paper

Writing my Guts Out

This Page Will Never See The Light of Day
And Who CARES Anyway?

Tears Float and are Trapped in Time
And I own Nothing so The WORLD is Mine
“Sing for your Supper, Boy”
“Give us Our Evening Entertainment”
Bleed for us if you must, But we Trust:
You Will Not Disappoint us!”
And HE Suffers for His ART
And He is a Living Caricature
And Even “A Little” means Alot
“Forget me not” He cries
And Tries, tries, tries... Again

Ira Furor Brevis Est by Franklin Lee

It burns,
That mind numbness.
I itch, I cry, but to no avail.
It eats me, craving, wanting.
I hear it! Don’t you?
The red veil hangs over my eyes,
Silencing what I want to confide.
I feel the knives digging deeper into my
skin.
A beast clawing its way in.
I am teeth that gnashes,
Eyes stitched together,
Poison fangs that pierce the soul.
The dissonance of voices,
Screaming with no sound,
Pulsatingly mumble, consciously aware,
Fill my cerebrum with a distraught,
flourishing rampage
A flare searing the third eye,
Grating sandpaper on eyelids.
The acidic bloom in bloviate speech,
I wretch in vomitous fortitude.
Anger is a brief madness.

“Untitled” by Lorraine Bennet-Kenitzki

What is love
But a thorn
on a stem
of a rose
a petal floating
on the wind
The syrupy aroma
of a flower

Crushed underfoot
The now beauty
inside of you
that only comes
out after I
stomp on you



Untitled by Unknown

Safety Valve by David Hehn

Too lazy to write a poem
I don't want to think
I just want to project
To rid myself of the clutter in my mind now
I don't know what is there now I am writing blind
Without purpose, without intent, diligent in going nowhere
Hearing one's voice hoping that if you let yourself go you won't scream
Letting off steam and whatever else is up in there
No this will not be remembered as some of my finest work but
it did me a mountain of good to just write

Slowly Healing by Julie Spencer

Something inside had died,
And I was just left,
Feeling hollow with regret
With the strength of high tide

And feeling I could not forget

Prisoner Express

And yet, now I have learned,
THAT feeling will also pass,
That nothing forever lasts.

Though sometimes we wish
The feeling were fading fast,
I think it's best not to fight it,
And to be what we feel,

Or to let your feelings show,
But then I think
Its best to let them go,
Thats what I know,

When my emotions have fallen behind,
This is how I've defined,
My lack of emotional growth,
Which is what I've needed the most,

To process strong emotions
Without too much delay,
slowly healing people, inside and out
Strangers wanna know what your life is about,

I say "I'm healing now,
Though I struggled for years,
God showed me how
To give him my fears."

Self- Hatred by Carnell Wingfield Jr.

I may get in trouble for this one,
I accept any problem I may succumb,
I am only stating facts,
I live in a world today where
I hate being black.

May we start in a Courtroom,
An African-American woman said I tried to kill her in a dream,
What could be worse?
Her brother pointed me out for the color of my skin,
he said he did not see a thing.
fabricated gang evidence,
farfetched facts,
four consecutive life sentences,
I hate being black.

I live in prison with five different Nations,
Within my Nation resides eight different

tribes of "Nig***"
all are oblivious to where we are at,
Victims waiting to be made,
I hate being black.

I have a higher education than those who are in charge,
they give orders that make no sense,
mindlessly I have to obey,
I return to my space humiliated that I have Just done "that,"
I hate being Black.

Mind over matter,
You do not matter to mine,
Only a glimmer of hope,
I work hard to protect its Shine.

Even a small amount of faith is contraband,
they own everything I once thought was mine.

Yet I wear a mask when I leave my cell,
ashamed when I make it back
for, ever allowing them to make me hate being black.

My Thoughts by Mark Stebbins

My heart is stuck on calamity
I focus too much on vanities
My complexion is too dark to be one of those who plead insanity
While life dismantles me
My dreams be
Thoughts of how this system mishandled me
My light shines dim
Like that flame on candles be
As my eyes blurry from tears
I scream calls for help that only my pillow can hear
Incarceration
I'd be a fool to say it wasn't a part of me
Praying to the "Good Lord" hoping he hasn't forgotten me
But the only thing I know the definition of freedoms wealth
Oppressed by my own people but that's the hand that freedom dealt
So I'm suicidal & I continue to rhyme until I lose my breath
But then I stop to think cuz it takes a real

murderer to actually kill hisself

But these are just my thoughts...

A Love Affair by Andre Stuckey

A Love Affair
Brings together two hearts
All in the name of
Joy and happiness
Love is a special word
That has a lot of meanings
For those of us
Strong enough to pursue it
Love can be expressed in different ways
Love can sometimes
Be a puzzle
And a process
That we must have
Patience with
Love sometimes connects people
From different social
And economic backgrounds
A Love Affair
Connects two hearts
Into one
A Love Affair
Is unlike anything
The heart has ever experienced
A Love Affair
Connects two spirits
And bodies
Into one
Love is a special word
That is spoken and written
With one goal in mind
To bring our loved ones
Unconditional
Joy and happiness
A love affair
Frees two hearts
Brought together
In the name of joy and happiness

Off the Hook by Mark Stebbins

Off the hook
Poetry
From behind the wall
My heart is broken
But my soul still moves on
Prisoner Express

Walking blindfolded
“Ye with lil faith”
I hope the sea parts
So I can make my great escape
Destruction of mankind
Secluded in this hell
Given another chance
I pray I don’t fail
Determine right from wrong
What’s up is down
Greatness through failure
Is how true success will be found
Struggling with confusion
Of my mind on it’s own
Hearing my momma scream
Baby, please just come back home
Holding hands with death
Facing the ultimate test
What’s next
Becoming a statistic like the rest
My brothas & sistas can we fight for peace
Can we fight to keep our kids protected on
these streets
Can we teach unity
To ours & all of mankind
Can we stop the killing & wars
Based on egos & lies
See we have our own problems
Throughout the states
Incarceration
Poverty
Gangs
& Hate
Racism
Discrimination
& Stereotypes too
Please don’t prejudge me
& I won’t do it to you
Suffering from insanity in this concrete
jungle
Experimenting with medication just to ease
my struggle
Off the hook
Poetry
From behind the wall
Its the convicted poet
Screaming come one, come all
From behind the wall it’s off the hook
The convicted poet
I’ll be back in a moment
Take a breath & exhale
As I then challenge you to a proper diagnosis
Of my psychosis

Cuz’ it’s off the hook...

Unveiled Truth by Charles Higgins

For me, it’s got to be now or never
Educate myself to grow and succeed
Or I’ll be in prison forever
Thinking on how things could possibly be

I’m so exhausted of what might have been
Stuck in constant delusions of grandeur
Enemies still pretending to be friends
And so many questions without answers

Left behind and tend to fend for myself
where are these friends that I spoke well
about
No hand to lend, I can’t get any help
I’ve got no choice but to figure it out

Rise above it all and stand like a king
And serve the people who don’t see a thing

Minds Eye by Adrian E.

From the window of my mind’s eye,
I see various shapes and forms,
Some waiting to die,
Others waiting to be born.

I see the universe unfolding,
With remarkable design,
Stars and planets imploding,
Collapsing within time.

I see civilizations rise,
To great heights and peaks,
Then fall because of pride,
And often will repeat.

I see the weak suffer,
And the strong live lavish,
Ignorance of blunder,
Ordinary men become savage.

I see widows face of greed,
Well hidden breath a smile,
In almost every human being,
So many are in denial.

I see a world torn with war,

www.prisonerexpress.org.

Overwhelmed with corruption,
Evil lurking at the door,
Bio-nuclear destruction.

I see pestilence and famine,
Nations stricken with grief,
Children abandoned,
As mothers and widows weep.

I have no wavering doubt,
That the future will be bleak,
Unless we take another route,
And establish some kind of peace...

Am I Radical Enough? (In Response to Killa K.) by Carnell Wingfield Jr.

When you asked that
I believe that you are not radical at all.
fuck rehabilitation, I sit quiet
resilient within my silence
listening to people say that there is no impact
through violence.
When Hip-Hop was at its prime
there was a large promotion of crime,
it felt like African-Americans were getting
shot all the time.
Majority of us know that fear of sitting in
class
and either after school, before school, or
during class
Somebody hops the fence and you hear a
gun blast.
They were gangmembers that do not count.
Have you ever seen death in the face and
watch as the eyes turn to void?
It hurts when death come
You no longer see your boy.
Big Corporation raised gas prices to fight
ISIS,
I smiled at you,
Because if you are radical
I wish I can taste what that life is.
Sentenced to die in the system
I do not do drugs to escape the pain
Nor do I lie to myself until I seem insane.
They let us out now,
Those who say they no longer bang because
they are subjected to change,
Will still get slaughtered in the streets,
This life is not a game.
Am I Radical Enough?

Prisoner Express

We are screaming we need more gun control
Because white kids are now falling victim to
their system.

We need more guns.
Lets ban bump stocks,
More people got killed at a country concert
Than the number of those who attended a rap
event and got shot.
Why not up the production of bump stocks?
You want to be in the fight,
But the fight is not worth fighting for,
You rather be seen holding a fist under
rainbow colors
Giving each other kisses.
What Kind of Radical Shit?
You want equal rights?
To be equal a man?
I know unique
She is not a bi***, a ***, or a freak.
She's a God, we worship her.
None call her lover,
We call her mother,
She is as radical as me
I wish you were able to see.
I will be looking out of a window of a
corporate high rise
Looking down at the encampment which you
call "Radicalized."
I will order you all breakfast, lunch, and
dinner
For all the days that are spent.
Like, Look at this radical shit.
It will be those who are like you who will
say that
I compromised, I negotiated.
I will look your dead in your eyes and reply
"I am so radical that I infiltrated".

Nhat Hanh's Exile Dream by Stephen Stoeltje

I go to a hill in the north,
I play there and leave things
On that hill. I plant trees
and build a wooden pagoda.
I play in the water of streams,
And from there I gain strength
to go forth
to meet friends and grow dreams.
The hill grows – leaves, poems, flowers.
The hill grows me. When I am gone
I become sad—lost and lonely for my hill.

127 Anabel Taylor Hall Ithaca, NY 14853

Yet the hill never remains the same.

Moments by Eathon English

Moments alone from you are far greater
Then I could of ever thought here it is
I thought my ways were justified by
The balance in your love but
Reality show up with pictures of
Truth and everything I did effected me
And you.
Now I sit holding hands with the fate times
Alone with you are resting my
Memory bank
Up against those who proclaim something
Or the other passion floats like
Morning mist, like your love I had to
uncover.
Now I'm subjected to whatever sinks its
teeth into my exposed mental flesh.
As I long with a deep desire for you
To lay your head upon my chest cried
Times of both night and day at the end of
This journey are questions, where will
Her love be very close, or oh so far away.
Whatever the result is it's meant for us
Both tree today down the road I will
Never let you go,
moments.

At First by Guadalupe Jurado

Here I am all along at night,
Missing and wishing you were here insight
I think bout you night and day.
In my heart is where you'll stay.
The day we met,
I dont forget.
Your the only lady I ever loved
I'd give you anything and all the above
It feels good to be in love
Like some cute little doves.
I love when I call you and you are there
We can talk all day and have no care
Its better to take it slow then fast
It's me and you- lets forget about the past.
The type to make you my bride
I hated the world
Till you showed me a different side.

www.prisonerexpress.org.

Yellow Truth Star by Jeff Links

My needle keeps me bleeding
With orange tiger sharks, I swim
institutional halls Razor-wire forgets me
Tattoos hide tears that aren't coming
Inked needles testify the length of my body
Braid me to joys I'd forgotten
Eyes meet a woman I've never met,
But grew up with.
Our tribal conversation soundless
Written on an exposed shoulder
Sunlight yellow spaghetti
Strap limp useless, draped
Against soft brown skin
The convict blots my blood
He smears my yellow fantasy
His rag drips the lies I've cried
A connection to my inner skin
Because I'm only honest with
People I don't like.



Untitled by Edward Rodriguez

Razor Wire by Louis Wilson

Life Surrounded by razor wire,
Sun gleaming setting it afire.
Tormenting the soul, fence of hell,
Content because this is where I dwell.

Living within the terror zone,
Twilight creeps in ta chill the bone.
Frosting the gate cold to the touch,

These restraints with my mind I crunch

Moving forward I see it now
These borders will not keep me down!
So from sunrise to when it sets,
I embrace life with no regrets!

Let's Roll by Shon Pernice

I don't know who you are, Or what clothes
you wear, But I want you to know, That I
truly do care.
I came home from the war, And made a huge
mistake, My life out of control,
A life I did take.
After years of denial,
And living in an institution, It finally
dawned on me,
I owe moral restitution.
Working through guilt and shame, And a
promise to my wife,

That what I must do, Is give a new life.
I avoid drugs and prison tattoos, No disease I
can catch, Because I will not fail, Whomever
is my match.
Push ups, sit ups, run on the track, Refuse
drinks that are sugary,
As I prepare this vessel,
From whom gets my kidney.
What I Wear by Stephen Lawrence Stoeltje

Blues man "Blind Man Lemon" sang
Wondering if his clothes
Would fit into a match box.
I don't own the clothes I wear-
My shorts are even community shared,
Including as well my socks
And they don't always match.

Thomas Merton wrote in his journal on
contemplation:
"What I wear is pants.
What I do is live
How I pray is breathe."

I liked that so I wrote in mine:
"What I wear is white,
Where I live is confinement
How I breathe-
Is prayer!"

I am not where I live
or what I wear,
Nor with a lot of words.
What I am is in my prayer.

Johnny Cash wore black for the
disenfranchised
For the poor and the prisoner.
He said, "until times are brighter."
Now he wears white and sings a New Song
He understands it all by and by;
No longer now such a fighter.

When St. Francis naked abandoned his
world
Upon the first pauper peasant he saw
He asked for his humble poor robe.
This simple robe became the monastic habit.
He wanted to wear only the lowliest clothes.

My simple prison white I wear
Are my humble holy habits;
Poor lowly and disreputable.
So now I live without a care
-to what I wear
Now simply what I am
Is only in my life of prayer.

Unsure by Never B. Famous

Are we all not different
But shades of the same being? Birthed from
the same channel,
Eyes open for seeing.
Deep you should ponder,
Far you should reach,
Are you desperate to learn,
Or eager to teach?
We can speak a different language, And be
saying the same thing. Knowledge means
little,
If you understand others and yourself. It
doesn't bring...
Connections past the flesh,
Deeper than the mind,
If you're happy living a lie,
The truth you'll never find.

Unbroken by Micheal Holiness

I've faced different kinds of trials
 Conquered many incre obstacles,
 Turned the nay-sayers into believers
 And made the impossible possible
 Broke the chains of bondage
 Shook the snakes from my feet
 With a spirit that wouldn't break
 And a heart that won't skip a beat
 As courageous as a lion, I won't see
 defeat even when circumstances and
 Situations beat me down, i'll still find
 my feet, no matter, what life throws
 my way i'll never fold, crumble, nor break
 weak, put the weight of the world on my
 shoulders. I'll just smile and plant my feet
 For I am Mr. Unbreakable with the stillness
 that you should seek..

Take a Chance by David Hehn

He thinks so little of himself that he doesn't
 feel the need to always try The worst
 tombstone is an empty one devoid of merit,
 devoid of trying Limitless intentions
 Spare us the mental protections, give us the
 mental projections
 Risk making a fool of oneself
 The results may astound you
 And everyone else.



Seeking Renovation by Jesse Osmun

Connected by David Hehn

A neighborless conflict, no such thing
 Everybody is somebody's neighbor, if only
 their own I LOVE Myself, I dare you to do
 the same
 LOVE Me, LOVE yourself
 We are one in the same
 We will be in LOVE together
 No one will be to blame

I Dare You by Richard Dixon

I dare you to live and let live
 I dare you to harm none but do as you
 ye will,
 I dare you to take on the challenge
 and fulfill,
 your dreams and achieve,
 I dare you to succeed,

I dare you to reach for the
 sky, grab her hand, and give
 lit the sweetest kiss,
 Collect all the stars in the
 galaxy and throw them into
 the well of abyss,
 for every star make a wish,

I dare you to fly high above all others
 look down to the ground and know there's
 another world waiting to be discovered,

I dare you to look doubt in the face and
 laugh,
 to put away
 self-pity, and to know *your* self-esteem
 will be as high as the tallest
 building in New York City,
 I dare you
 I dare you to look in the
 mirror and say "I am a survivor
 there is none like me,"
 I dare you to be the unstoppable
 force that meets a brick wall,
 The rumble in the Jungle,
 the calm before the storm that
 the animals run from, but no one
 can see,
 I dare you, I dare you.

Untitled by Scott Madoulet

Spirit divided
 The duality of man
 Who am I really?

Slowly I'm sinking
 Weighted by many mistakes
 Drowning in my shame

guilt, remorse, and shame
 have made me heavy hearted
 forgiveness I need

I once was a child
 time and can't be undone
 I am what I am

My Prison Job by Scott Madoulet

Recreation porter
 Used equipment sorter
 Prison restroom cleaner
 ID thru the screen'r
 Yard trash picker-upper
 "Hey Brother, Whats up?"-er
 Contraband hand-offer
 Your shit, had enough-er!!

#ENDCANCER by Hawkins M.

Show some love, fight to end cancer,
 Because we can't allow it to win...
 It affects us all,
 Children, women, and men...

Inside of our bodies,
 Is where cancer tries to cower and hide...
 You can take my hair, my health, my life,
 But you will never take my pride...

Here at the Old Folsom Relay for Life has
 given us all a Voice to inspire and share the
 raw emotions we feel... The idea is we all
 can make a difference,
 Thank Old Folsom Today for making this
 real...

Enough Said by Bob Lee Handy

10 years!

If I die now it'll be a life sentence.

Sequence of events.

Designed by a wicked inventor.

I have no respect for the creator
that created this contraption
that holds me captive in my own homeland

Home is a prison, a cave, a dungeon.
—Enough said.

Reflection by Reynald Corey

Looking out the window
Reflecting upon my chaotic life
It's been one helluva journey
Either how big the bullen nor how sharp the knife

People have left & bridges have burnt
Now I'm all but alone,
Wasting away in Concrete Hell
Until I'm just a pile of bones.

Not all that long ago
I really thought I had it made,
Now I try to remember
But it's all beginning to fade.

That truth really scares me
Being held for what I can't even remember,
One more journey around the sun
marked by each passing December.

One day I'll leave this place
Into a new world to explore,
I'd be ill advised indeed
To expect it to be as before.

For now I'll get back to my life
meagerly existing in this little box,
Surrounded by walls & fences
Waiting for intercoms & clicking locks.

The Window by Nate High

Sometimes I stand and stare thru the dirty glass, self-inflicted pain is all I gain by watching the world pass.
I entered prison young, a child with a forfeited future,
Life without parole creates gapping holes that cant be closed by any suture.
I've become the man without a past. A boy without a story to tell, after 18 years in prison, all I know are days wasted away in a cell. I was 14 and in the 8th grade when I did what they say I did, but when it comes to murder, no one cares if you're only a kid. Sentenced to Forever, I no longer believe that I matter, I am just a broken soul whose every dream is eventually shattered. Self- gratification is the key to trying to survive, Just breathing is more important than finding meaning, when you're fighting to simply stay alive,
This window is hell, it reminds me of a life that's not meant for me, But when you live in a cell, the darkness cant be all you see, So I embrace the pain and watch as the world passes me by, And I grow stronger with every tear that I Silently cry.

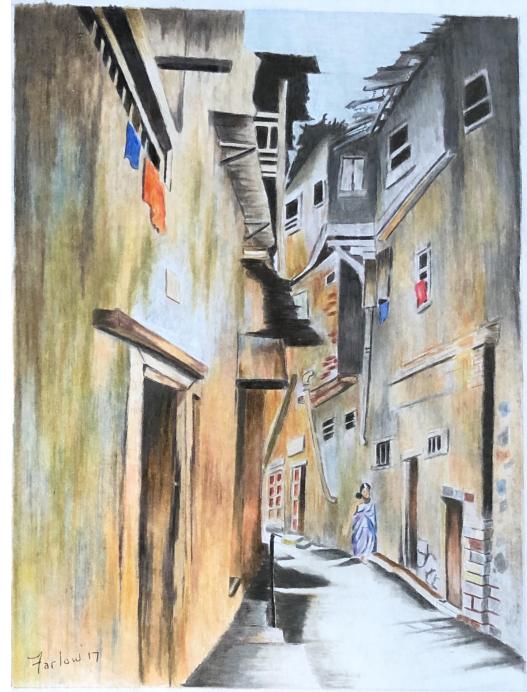
Luz Limitado by Charles Higgins

A sol dejando
De Domingo a Sábado
Año despues año
Oscurecerse vacío

Blue 2 by Anonymous Poet

It's a sunny day. All is warm and bright except for me. No smile on my face, No warmth in my heart. Why must life be this way? The sun shines while my eyes Brim over with tears. The sky is clear, but my mind Is clouded.

If only I could be what I See instead of what I am, Wouldn't that be something?



Untitled by Gary Farlow

Fatherly Advice by Charles Higgins

Son, I'm certainly not going to be the dude, Who tells you that you need to go to school.

Just to be successful and see the truth, That it benefits you regardless of what you do

Go ahead and accept this lesson neer expected,
Take a second and just ponder the exception

Education is often regarded to perception, By textbooks that are guarded by deception

The god of my affection, Yahweh got me elevated, worked harder, but I'm smarter than college educated.

I'm no longer delegated to these moronic imitators, simple players posing versus the noble stated haters.

Take your time with your attempting and trying, Patience with your practice and reading and applying.

Learn from your mistakes rather than let them haunt you, And shine... regardless when nobody wants you to.

Wildfire Haiku by Dwane West

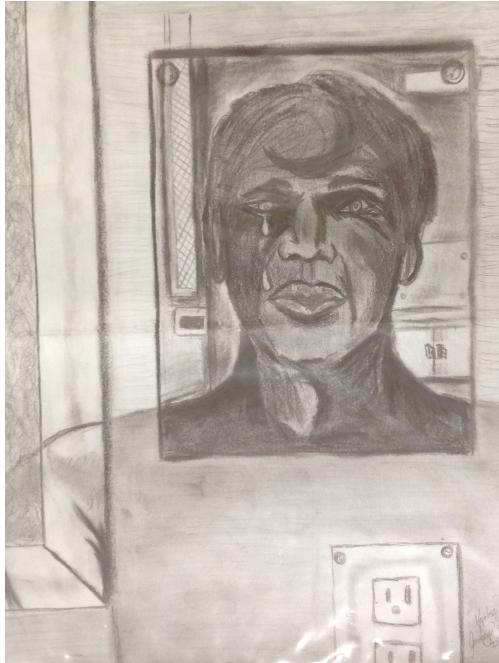
An empty pasture
Lightning strikes the brittle grass
Ghostly smoke rises

The horizon glows
Wind pushes the hungry flame
An inferno grows

Harsh thunder rumbles
Rain calms the roaring fire
Whisps of steam - scorched earth

Seasoned Actions by Scott Madoulet

not too young to die
not too old to lie
not too young to cry
not too old to try



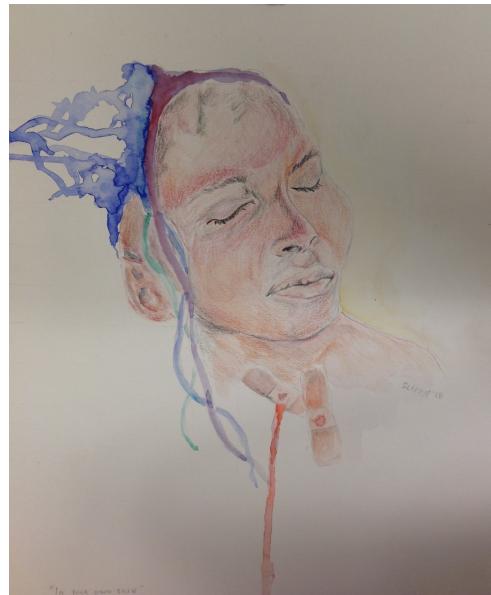
Hopeless by Jackey Sollars

Reality Outposts by David Hehn

Signs points us in different directions
Look toward the horizon you may see the Super Moon
In the very merry month of May
I was walking around the prison track one day
When what should I see but a loss of dignity in a man with his head held low
I asked him what was wrong? He replied that his mother had just died
That she died 5 days ago, but they didn't tell him till today
You see they said they had to verify and couldn't tell him sooner
He'll miss the funeral, he'll miss the day that they lay his Mom to rest
He seemed like he was in shock so I got angry for him at what they did
Just to think it was 73 degrees and sunny at that moment
And a minute before I couldn't think of any problems.

The Resurrected Man by Liam Foster

As a cycle comes and goes,
I oft wonder how time flies.
It seems the world shifts and changes,
Yet I alone am bereft of It;s touches.
Isolation yields a complex clarity,
For it reveals the folly of Destiny.
Fallacious ideologies that shaped one's identity,
Are liberated from ignorant obscurity.
What is left to reconstitute,
When the body mind and soul is rendered destitute.
Seeing the brutal truth you cant refute
This fresh reality forces you to be resolve.
Thus from this enforced solitude,
I've gained an enhanced attitude,
Rising from the crucible with a sense of rectitude,
Prepared to face whatever fate wishes to include.
I, the resurrected man reaches,
Striving to secure that distant liberty.
For with it life will be absolute,
Determination's my natural aptitude for I've the fortitude.



In your own skin by sleep

Oceans of Eternity by Liam Foster

Sailing away now,
Across the Oceans of eternity.
I let the tide pull me away,
As the waves lap and spray.
Distance is unfathomable ,
What is time,
If duration is unknown,
But perception.
Lost in an endless moment,
I yearn to escape;
Absent any shores upon the horizon,
I shudder in despair/
Yes, the solitude of the sea,
Is soothing as it gently rocks and sways;
And it's depths promise change,
But for fear I do not drive under
Left adrift plagued by a storm of thoughts,
I cannot flee this sea of memories.
The stars above are hidden from sights,
My world is filled with perpetual night.
Obsidian waters as far as the eyes can see;
I try to imagine what freedom would be,
For it exists only in dreams,
Yet I find not even sleep for comfort.
Time crisp breeze,
Does not ease,
These feelings inside of me.
This life is death,
As absence is not existence
So in this tribulation I seek oblivion,

Finding no succor to my plight,
I truly understand that I am alone.
Thus is the brutality of reality,
That the true prison is time,
The very substance of the waters we cross,
That fill oceans of eternity.



From the Inside Out

From the Inside Out by Dennis Sierra
(Kenika)

A Moment In Time by Liam Foster

Chance,
Smiles, Laughs,
Bruises, Stratagies, scars,
Thoughts, words, sounds, touches.
Unions, separations, reunions,
Kisses, hugs, caresses, looks,
Fear, love, pain,
You, me,
Us.
Simple words do tell a tale,
They create a story to feel.
Can you see, will you hear,
The messages to draw you near.
Sweet lips can play with words,
Like beautiful singing songbirds;
But can you bring healing,
With what you're feeling.
This I try for you and I.
To give and take a moment in time.

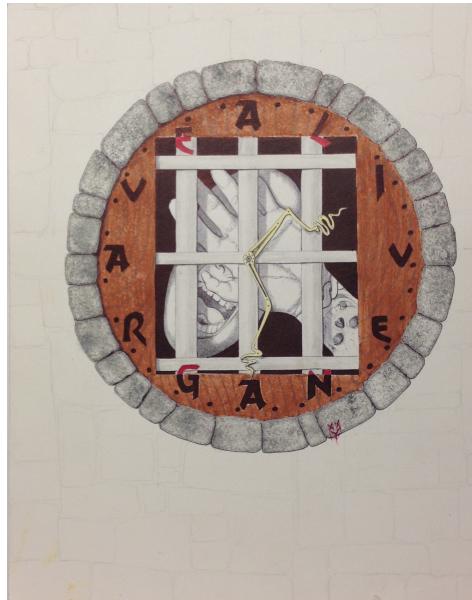
Watchin' The Clouds Go by Ed Rose

Clouds gather—rain begins to fall.
Lightning flashes—a warning for us all.
Can't say when life will be mine.

Don't know what's at the roads end I'll find/
Time for a new day—
Time for a newer way
Of lookin' at things.
Gonna sit back and listen to the birds sing
— watchin the clouds go by.

Gonna build a house on a mountain some day.
Grow my food -n- herb and grow old and gray.
Gonna find a pretty girl — take her for my wife.
Hafta make her happy so she never says goodbye.

Take her away with me—
Take her away with me
To the mountain where we will be
so satisfied...
Watchin the clouds go by.



Alive N A Grave by Cody da Criminal

Freedom by CL Nobles

Freedom is like a breath of fresh air
When your heart is lonely and your thoughts are
In despair.

Freedom is like ice cream on a hot summer day,

And humbling like a snowman melting away.

Freedom is like lightning, striking through the sky,
Softly like a tear forming out at thee eye.

Awaking like a kiss, gripping like a hug, it is even enchanting, like the humming of a bug.

Freedom is like a volcano, lava dripping down the sides and proud like a man beating his chest with pride.

Freedom is like an earthquake rumbling the ground and as sunset sweet as a puppy, adopted from the pound.

Freedom is like a waterful splashing into the ocean
Or a letter in a bottle peacefully floating.

Freedom is from the clouds, like droplets of rain
In tiny little beads across the windowpane.

Freedom is like an adventure, a voyage out to sea,
Tropical birds singing songs in a jungle canopy.

Freedom is no restraint, restrictions, no obstacles
You can feel it, you can hear it, it is apparent,
No optical.

A Ticket to Die by Paul Baber

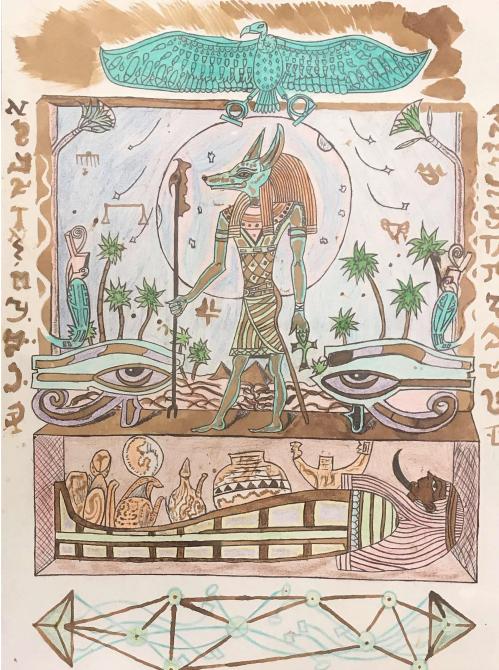
Awakening from the dark, I come into this life,
No way of knowing the coming times of strife.

The trauma of birth was a relentless call,
Of things to come and the things I saw.
Many bad things have happened and I've asked "why?"
Many might say I've been given a "ticket to die."
A ticket to die and no clear reason why,
Commonly wonder and look for an answer in the sky.

Desperately seeking somebody's hand,
In this troubles and forsaken land,
Through this pain and sorrow,
Will there be a better tomorrow?

Changing my mood from glad to sadness,
Will there be an end to this constant
madness?
Love me and take away this endless pain,
Don't let my love for you be in vain,

Don't tell me you're leaving; don't say
"goodbye",
Authentic until the stars fade from the sky.
What I'm going through you can't
understand,
Would it be too much to hold your hand?



Anubis by Jeremy Brown

The Dragon Slayer by Sandy Blazinski

Here comes another dragon
guess I better get my sword
I fight these battles day and night
and I fight them all alone
What I wouldn't give if just one time
Someone would come up and say
"It's okay, put down your sword,
You don't have to fight today.
I'll fight this battle for you,

I'll slay this dragon so you don't have to."
Yes, that would be nice, but until it
happens...
I guess I better get my sword
Here comes another dragon.

School Jewels by Michael S. Griffis

All across this gracious land
from East Coast to the West
our teachers with the toughest task
yet always ace the test
From A,B,C's and 1,2,3's
'til days of graduation
our mentors guide with loving care
it's more than just vocation
It's so much more than all the three R's
at times it's life and death
A child saved from reapers grasp
with teachers final breath
They show the best in worst of times
and too they pay the price
the gift of love is life itself
and that of sacrifice
These heroes songs are the most unsung
their feats not brought to light
a thousand times a day take place
with strength and grace and might
Today tough brings this song of praise
to those that make the grade
mentors, teachers, helping hands
this written accolade
Thank you for my faith renewed
our teachers get an A
our children too from coast to coast
have yet another day.

The A-Z Poem by Angela Rizzo

Always fair, so I try to be
Bargaining chips, they're not for me
Challenge my mind, change my heart
Dare to stay, never apart
Ending and ending not a good start
focus on the bullseye, throw the last dart
Gripping and fighting, what is the point?
Headache and headache, what is the point?
Inside here everyone see's
Justice and freedom, those things are a tease.
Keep to one-self, that's your best bet.
Learn to be humble, owe no one debt

Mercy and grace gifts from above
Nothing to gain, if you fall in love
Open my eyes, keep my mouth shut
People are haters, I go with my gut
Quicken and quicker the day the days fly by
Rushing to years end to say my last
goodbyes
Sorry can't stay, so sad to go
Under the radar over the wall
Victim no more made the last call
Walking papers feels so right
X-ray eye's, now I'm out of sight
you can be you, and I can be me
Zen till the end, that's how life should be.

Untitled Poem by Eric Pepke

Heart like a coal briquette
Black dust pressed hard
Burns hot maybe once
Grey ash blows away

Abandoned by Michael Mosley

I hate being in the dark
Cause that's when the thoughts
Torment my heart
growing up
Parents—halfway played their part
Abandoed, I remember...
Birthdays in the park
Watching ice cream and cake melt
Waited on mama too long
She dont know how it felt
Having parents that didn't care
Was just the hand I was dealt
Juvenile Detention
"Son, who can we call
To come pick you up?"
"I guess my Dad."
"We did, he basically said:
He don't give a f*ck"
"Damn, forreal? Thats how he feels?"
"Said he washed his hands
he's gonna let the state deal."
Add another name to the list
Of people who lost hope
I've always been replaced by
something else
With my mama, it was dope
With my Dad- Alcohol

I remember just being a kid
getting told I was a lost cause
Lock down, lights out, I pause... to reflect
even if it torments my heart

Its time to accept
Im lost in this life
but what's the cause for all the strife?
Maybe it was being abused in my youth

People - simply never care to hear
the truth
only a toddler, left in the dope house
sometimes for no reason

I'd get punched in my
mouth
violence was a regular occurrence
everyday

You can either run from it and be a coward
or embrace it an be okay

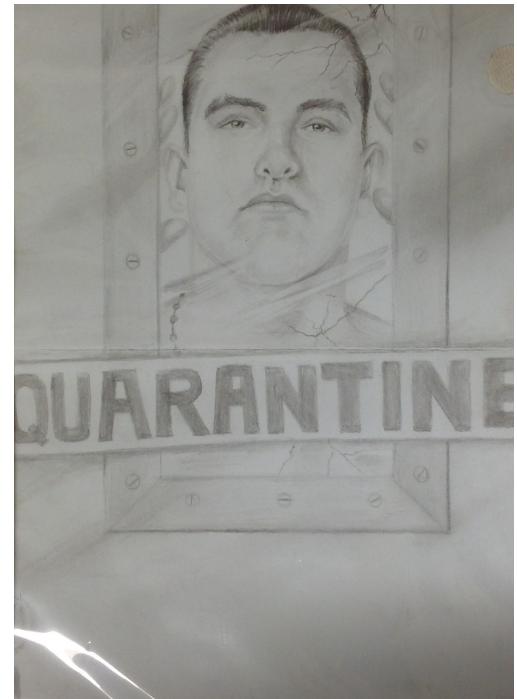
I had no other choice
In order to live, I had to play
can't you hear the cries
of a man who's been led astray?
at night, by myself

I clasp my hands and try to pray
"Dear Lord, I know up to this point
I've been a product of my
environment.
My life experiences have caused
To resort to violence.
Listen, as the tears take away the silence.
I've been abandoned, stranded
Forsaken and disowned
I just ask for your forgiveness
For all the one's I've done wrong."

Choices Covid-19 by Brittian Osorio

Everyday thath you clock in
You make a major sacrifice,
To work on the frontlines, risking your own
lives.
Mentally and physically ready to lose your
mind,
And although you try to hide them we see
the tears in your eyes.
Ever segment on the news someone breaks
down cryin,
Because we see the choice you make to keep
us safe and alive.
Other people wouldn't be able to make the
same choice in time.

To save someone's life whether it's yours or
mine.
I saw a commercial that made even me
wanna cry
We see what you go through but I don't
know what its like
All the fear in your heart yet you put it to the
side
To helo him or help her no matter what you
feel inside.
You're the definition of humanity, an
example of love
So let me express my gratitude and support
to the ones,
Out there everyday and night, doing their
part to help us
Together we will stand endure and Rise Up



Quarantine by Juan Ochoa

Where's My Homies??? by Cory Lott

Should I have copp'd out 2 a sex crime??
Or should I have told da truth by dropp'n
dime??
2 say this doesn't bother me @ times...
Would B a mothaf*** lie!!
I would've neva thought dis would've come
Back & Bite me...
I thought da only... hting dat sticks on
records
Are felonies!!
Now look @ me... Im still doing time 4
someone
I swore was my homie!!!
Its crazy how ppl look 4 anything 2 B'lieve,
jus so
Dey assume it'll make U weak...
I see people laughing @ me, But I still can't
find whats so funny...
I'm Glad I C what ppl think of me...
I'm not one 2 hurt easy... so aGain...
Where's my homies...Who said "Plz look
out 4 me...
& Plead Gulty!!"??
OH I see... Its time 2 let Blame fall on
Cory!!!
When oui Both know...it's U who loved
young pu***!!
Whoa 12 me...

Da crazy thing about this... is it made me look in a whole New Perspective!!!
Betrayal from a street GanG... Dat I swore my

AlleGiance with!!!

I was left'd alone 2 wear Defoulmnt...
Of where da nxt man put his d***!!!

It wasn't about how much... I can stand...
It was da feeling... of dismantling "A family MAN"!!

DID U ALL 4Get... Who open'd up endless avenues??

I made sure our clique stay'd... fresh, fly & new!!

Wasn't I Da One Who Gave otha hood curfews... jus so da elderly could come as dey choose??

I Gave a name 2 our Block... By collecting from rival crews!!!

Oh U must've 4Got... How I Got shot... By dem fools in Blue!!!

Jus 2 retaliate screaming "soo- woop"... I'm dat dude!!!

Nobody can do... what I do...
everybody...felt

safe coming & Going to school... Once I gave da signal... Dat everything

Is cool!!! All of dis... 4 my love 5 piru!!!

Im glad I faced such a tragic shittyation... Because.. It taught me 2 "NevaJudge"...

regardless 2 what someone case is!!!

A simple Guilty plea... OPen'd my eyes
More Den I thought

I'll be able 2 c... Basically... My Homies used me... Jus as quick as dey expect'd me!!
I took it all in stride... Because I got morals & principals Beyond my pride!!!

Dey say all good things come 2 an end..

But I say... Be careful whom U take in... As friends!!!

No losers wanna c u win!!

You'll cross alotta fakes & phonies
& please don't end up like me... S.M.H. @ my

"So-called Homies!!"

Peace!!



Losers Weepers by Kenneth Zamarron

Your Memory Lives On by Michael Mosley

this poem is dedicated to my homie Randy

White

A-K-A Ray-Ray

I know its taken forever and a day
but how could I write this
or even find the words to say
when we lost you in the worst way

Im moving too fast

let me rewind and push play...

though we had many mutual acquaintances
we didn't meet until our incarceration

I still remember
yelling through the cracks on doors in
segregation

making sure the guards juxtaposed us in the
rec cages

you motivated me to write
where upon I produced pages
after midnight at the vent
you told me all about Texas
and the sister that you missed
you was there on Christmas

When I drenched the c/o with p***

I can still hear echoes of your laughter
released from the hole
just to return 2 weeks after
"inciting a riot"

tried talking our way out of it

but they didn't buy it
killing time, playing poker
always joking

didn't care if it made us broker
in different pods, swapping poems

I kept yours in my folder

You told me:"keep writing, you're getting
colder."

behind bars we formed a bond
but it went far beyond
made it to the streets

after years, it was a blessing to be free
first thing you said on the phone

"you gotta pull up on me"
"of course your my everyday
guy"

I remember telling you

"Bruh, you gotta stop getting high"

I remember telling you

Kicked out, homeless, without a dime

I drove an hour to pick you up
wasn't gonna leave you stuck
made a phone call to my mama

"Bruh, go get your stuff
she said you could stay
its all the way in White Bluff.
this is your chance to get clean
get off them drugs"

but my plans never worked out
I couldn't do much

Running from the law, sleeping couch to
couch

seen you right before I got arrested
your eyes were filled with doubt

"I feel like Imma die, if I don't get out of this
house"

thats what you told me word for word
your voice full of desperation but I never
heard

halfway through my stint of incarceration
I got the news

just a mile down the road
you were found in a car, overdosed
that night I cried

in the midst of your ghost

another life claimed by the opiate epidemic

Heroin ravaging our communities
your just another caught up in it

I guess its true

our fate really is suspended
and for some reason I'm still dangling
but only by a thread

wondering why the man upstairs
didn't take me instead...
i'm left with pain and fear
that any given moment
I'll find out someone else I love's not here
never thought a person
could run out of tears
but I've shed so many in just 23 years
for you, my brother
plus countless peers
lost to the system or the streets
just know your memory lives on
for as long as my heart beats.

In the Red by Johnny E. Mahaffey

FREEDOM-eyed among those aside
Set in societal asphyxiation
and social media strangulation
under unqualified state-pride!

A decades long legal mudslide
of constitutional suffocation
and mass incarceration facilitation
now coming to an end with society OPEN-eyed

This much needed prison reform makeover
not from heart, but a financial arithmetic
under a voter-getter guise as empathetic
this complete punitive classification
turnover!

Due to the erroneously over-convicted
spillover
resulting from so much greed it's pathetic
decades of unending incarcerations
unsympathetic
with their eye-for an-eye, Constitution plow
over!

Mentally ill were tossed away with no one to
confide
innocent with guilty with partially guilty in
desolation
together without divide; because, of the
corrupt takeover
of courts (with?) guilt (with?) blame (with?)
some money pathogenic?

Enough by Jeremiah Taylor

I've taken all I can take!
I've stood by all these years!
I watched you come and go!
You tore my heart open and then shoved it
shut!
we've fallen in and out of love.
I've gone from sane to crazy!
Enough!
I held my doubts!
I've cried myself to sleep!
I've rose from being the underdog to only get
knocked down again!
I've been brusied, beaten, broken!
Told you were born this way!
Enough!
I've ran with the crowds just to fit in!
I loved to only get it raken and never
returned!
I cried out to just let me die!
End this pain, let me be set free! Shattered!
I've given up! Reached the end! but it is'nt in
my blood!
Enough!
It's time to be a fighter:
It time for me to step up! Speak up! rise up!
It's time I mend the pieces, rise up from the
ashes
a defeat, find out who I am: Set me free!
Speak life into me:
Enough is Enough!

The Graveyard by Paul Burton

The graveyard weeps of saddened souls,
a darkened say has taken tolls,
For those who
could have changed the world,
for those who's time
We can't control,
We can't replace
and won't forget
the things youve done
or what they meant

The graveyard weeps of broken hearts,
for those that's been there
from the start,
Those crying eyes of crystal tears
torn away by sharpened spears
by blood knives

and foolish fears,
The graveyard weeps of Ravished Dreams
The great The wise, we held so dear
Just like the leaves, when autumn falls
their beauty lives the world
goes on,

we turn the page and start from
New but don't forget the things
you do.

The graveyard weeps it crys for you
the ones we lost and
gone too soon

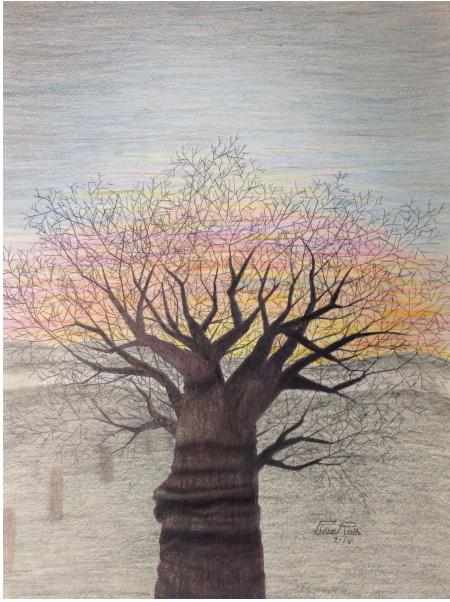
Prison within A Prison by Jason Minner

Within these walls of concrete and stone,
Deep in the mind so far from home.
I see many others with little to no hope, so
many zombies stoned on state dope.
We fight and we yell to our convict peers,
Can't even tell a secret due to too many ears.
We stand in a line waiting then and now,
While some kind in a badge loudly yells
"CHOW!"
Sitting upon a metal stool trying to cut some
crap with a spork,
What I would not give for a regular knife
and tined fork.
But you can not trust this psycho with an
everyday item,
All because I'm way too crazy or I'll just
hide them.
With ramen-noodle soup I buy, I trade and
sell,
Anything to make it easier in this not-so-
private hell.

Putty Cat by Matthew Shelton

Her whiskers whisper, scraping across my
leg.
Her purr almost a sillage,
But felt when she nudges me.
Saying "Hello"!
Black and white, and friendlier
Than a whole box of kittens,
She isn;t afraid of the 'Red Ticks' and
'Blood Hounds'
In the Kennel.
She might envy the horses,
But only cause they have a better vantage.

She sleeps all day, and hunts all night.
She's the only one not "locked up," free to prowl.
Her ears perk up when the count whistle blows,
And the dogs begin to howl.
She's the first to greet us inn the pre-dawn light.
And always my first welcome sight.



Grand Old Oak by Phillip L Roth

Love Deserves a Second Chance by Andre Stuckey

love deserves
a second chance
For a heartbroken
As you sit
And contemplate
Your purpose
In Life
Do you have
the strength
to wonder
How long
Has it been
Since you
Truly loved someone
Will you continue
To be a slave

To your broken heart
or will you fight
For what
Love has to offer
Life is not
Complete
Without
The joy and happiness
THAT love
has to offer
whether
Its the love for yourself
or a
significant other
Love deserves
A second chance
For a heart
that has been
Broken once
And often several times
As you call out
My name
How long
Has it been
since you had
The faith
AND truth
IN someone
to truly love again
As you call out
my name
As you rely
on me
more and more
For the
Daily Joy and Happiness
love has to offer
As you call out
my name
While you lay
In my arms

Poem by Jermetras Watson

Sorry For your pain,
and lonliness,
But I love you and you must love yourself,
Sorry For your pain,
Do not allow this world to put a stain on
your heart,

Sorry for your pain,
Please smile for me because my love will never part
and you will remain in my heart,
Sorry for your pain,
Remember everything in this world is materialistic and
you can't take any materialistic thing with you to heaven,
Love yourself because you are special no matter what she said or he said about you, they are only upset
because they see the light in you and not themselves and
only want to push you down,
Sorry For your pain,
keep love alive, which means you must live because of
the love inside your soul,
sorry for your pain,
please take my hand and by the way, my name is Kindness
and it is a pleasure to meet you and I believe our
Friendship will last, because Love and Kindness go well with one another,
Sorry for your pain,
Please take my hand and I will love you and teach you
to trust again until there's is no more tears from your eyes,
Sorry for your pain.

JUST BEECUZZ by James Newman

Golden honeycomb of happiness
Abuzz with springtime joy
Where festive feet tap the time
Very Anxious to deploy
Antennae know when a warm breeze
Blows, follow fragrant scent
Ambrosia flows, striped stomachs
Grow, flower petals bend
When stamens dry, flap wings and
Fly, It's time all buzz on home
An'pay sweet honey homage
To the Queen on golden throne

To all who submitted poetry for this anthology:

I hope you have enjoyed this poetry anthology. Tavo is a new worker at PE. When he found out I was looking for someone to read all your poetry and create this anthology he jumped at the opportunity. Typically I ask a few people to work together to create the anthology, but the pandemic closed down the university and slowed down our ability to do our programs. Luckily for all of us Tavo kept working on the project. He must have read many thousands of poems to find the ones he selected to go into this publication. It is a hard job to choose a few from the many. I know many of you are thrilled to see one or more of your poems included in the anthology, and I also know many of you feel hurt when you do not see your well crafted poems included. Poetry as we all know is subjective. Whether your poem was chosen or not, is not a reflection on you but rather on the values and beliefs of the editor. What is a reflection on you is that you took the time to craft a poem and submit it. Doing that while facing the daily grind of prison life indeed makes a positive statement about you, your character, and your desire to connect with others. This anthology is meant to celebrate your creativity and the power of the human spirit. Writing and submitting a poem shows your strength, your desire to be part of something bigger than yourself. These traits will serve you well in the future.

We received a number of poems after Tavo finished the selection process. All of these poems will be considered for the next poetry anthology #24.

You are Prisoner Express! As long as you continue to write I hope we can be here to promote your writings, both to other prisoners and to citizens in the free world. We will continue to use your writings to raise awareness of the humanity of all who are locked away, out of sight. Your writings remind us all of the bright spirits that reside in each of us, and I hope you will continue to participate in Prisoner Express writing projects.

I have encouraged Tavo to include a poem in the anthology. If you want to write to him at PE, I will forward your mail to him. With campus still closed down these are most unusual times. As are all of us, we at PE are adapting to the changing conditions. When you next write let me know what you think of the PE Poetry Project.

Best,

Gary Fine



Untitled by Unknown