AN INSIDE - OUTSIDE COLLABORATION

Midwest Books to Prisoners Community Zine Vol 4



FT. THE ART AND WORDS OF THOSE WHO REFUSE TO BE SILENCED

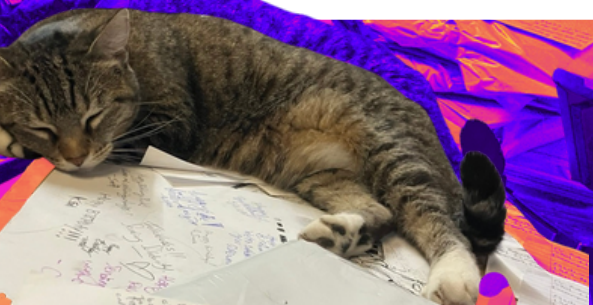


ART BY ESTEBAN PEREZ

WELCOME TO THE 2027 ISSUE OF OUR COMMUNITY ZINE!

This zine is a collection of work by incarcerated artists, writers, and poets - to be shared both within prison walls and outside them. Since 2004, Midwest Books to Prisoners has sent books and other reading materials to incarcerated people free of charge. This isn't charity or service - we do this because we've been there and know that our liberation is bound together.

Prisons attempt to destroy the spirit and mind of the people trapped within their walls, but these artists and writers refuse to be broken or hidden away. By building relationships between those inside and outside, we aim to dismantle the prison industrial complex and create a world that the powerful want us to believe is impossible.





CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEXT ZINE

We're accepting submissions of art, poetry, essays, fiction, nonfiction, comics, etc. for our next zine! Please include the following with your art:

- a statement that you consent to our publishing your work
- whether you'd prefer we credit the art using your first name, full name and address, social media handle, or an alias
- addresses of any family or friends to whom you'd like us to send the zine



ABOUT US

Midwest Books to Prisoners is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Chicago. Since 2004, we've been accepting requests for reading material from incarcerated people across the country and mailing them books, zines, legal resources, and custom newsletters free of charge.

CONTACT

Mailing address: Midwest Books to Prisoners
1321 N Milwaukee Ave PMB #460
Chicago, IL 60622

Website: midwestbookstoprisoners.org

Email: midwestb2p@gmail.com

Instagram: @midwestbooks2p

DONATE

Midwest Books to Prisoners operates on a shoestring budget funded mainly by individual small donations, benefit shows, and small grants. We're an entirely volunteer-run organization, meaning your donations aren't paying salaries; 100% is going directly to helping us get reading material to incarcerated readers:

- $5 buys someone a dictionary, our most-requested item
- $25 covers printing costs for 75 custom newsletters
- $50 ships a package of books to ten incarcerated readers
- $100 helps us replace broken printer parts

Recurring donations, even very small ones, are especially useful since it helps us budget and plan necessary spending ahead of time!

Thank you for your generosity!

donate here!

VOLUNTEER

The best way to help us quickly get books to more people in prison is to volunteer! At a volunteer session, you'll read letters from people in prison and pick out a personalized package of books for them. Stop by for as long as you want during our open hours:

Wednesdays 4pm-7pm

Saturdays 12pm-5pm

Theatre Y

3613 W Cermak Rd

Chicago, IL 60623

DONATE BOOKS

We're always looking for used book donations to add to our library! Stop by any time during our open hours to drop off books, or email us to coordinate pickup or shipping.

We unfortunately cannot accept books with water damage, stains, highlighting, or spiral binding, as prisons will reject them.

SPECIAL REQUESTS

We often run out of our most in-demand genres or receive requests for specific books we don't have on our shelves, meaning those requests can't be adequately filled. If you want to help us make sure we can fulfill every request we receive, purchase one of our most highly requested books from our online wish list!

A share of proceeds from each book purchased will go to Call & Response Books, a Black woman-owned bookstore in Hyde Park!

shop wish list here!

REQUESTING BOOKS (& MORE)

If you or a loved one would like to request reading material, contact us via any of the methods on page 5.

REQUEST BOOKS:

Let us know what genres and topics you're interested in (full list below), or your favorite authors. Also let us know what books you DON'T want (books you already have, authors you can't stand).

CLASSIC FICTION HISTORICAL FICTION ROMANCE WESTERNS URBAN FICTION COMICS MANGA GRAPHIC NOVELS HORROR FANTASY SCI-FI MYTHOLOGY COZY MYSTERY THRILLER RELIGION SPIRITUALITY OCCULT SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING MATH MEDICINE SPORTS HEALTH BUSINESS PERSONAL FINANCE TRAVEL PARENTING PSYCHOLOGY SELF-HELP ADDICTION HISTORY PHILOSOPHY SOCIOLOGY ANTHROPOLOGY ECONOMICS INCARCERATION EDUCATION DISABILITY LABOR POLITICS CURRENT EVENTS TRUE CRIME ORGANIZING CLIMATE GENDER FEMINISM RACE IMMIGRATION POETRY BLACK AUTHORS INDIGENOUS AUTHORS ASIAN AUTHORS LATINE AUTHORS QUEER AUTHORS LANGUAGE LEARNING ALMANACS FUN FACTS QUOTES HUMOR GRAMMAR WRITING GUIDES DICTIONARIES THESAURUSES BLANK NOTEBOOKS TEST PREP ANIMALS NATURE HOBBIES CARPENTRY CARS CRAFTS FILM ART ARCHITECTURE PHOTOGRAPHY BIOGRAPHY MEMOIR COOKBOOKS

REQUEST A CUSTOM NEWSLETTER:

We can print a newsletter on any topic you're interested in (politics, sports, technology, video games, cars, tattoos-- anything!) which we will send periodically throughout the year. Just say what you'd like to keep up to date on!

REQUEST BOOKS FOR YOUR CHILD:

We send books to children of incarcerated parents. Let us know how old your child is and what they like to read, and we'll pick out a pacakge for them! Please include the child's guardian's contact information so we can get their permission to send a package.

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Your books plant a story deep within my heart
Your kindness brings joy into my heart
Your caring takes root within my heart
Your trust strengthens the stem within my heart
When days are long and nights never end
I know I have a best friend
When there are many trials to bear
And no one seems to really care
When all my mountains seem to erupt
And I honestly feel like giving up
When all my plans have gone astray
And I feel like I can't face another day
I will open up a book and get lost in my imagination
and push play!!!

— Thomas Neely



K I T


Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.
VACANCY
TV
ALICE – When little girls dressed up they wore their own "Life Charm" hidden within the beaded turtles hung from the belt in back.

BRIXTON


SALTY!
"Don't like the way a conversation is going? Simply rewind and pick a different dialogue option"
"You don't necessarily need to get the answers all the time, but keep asking"
"ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD, WHICH IS REALLY IMPORTANT"
W€LC M€
MUNICIPALITY
500 Mt
HAL FAR
13 km
WELCOME
SECOND CLASS REFUGEES
XING
TARIFA ZERO



About Kit Brixton:

Kit Brixton is a prolific visual artist and author currently incarcerated in Kentucky. Working across a range of techniques such as collage, acrylic painting, mixed-media illustration, and literature, they have sent us several art pieces over the years as "ephemeral gifts of thanks and offerings of encouragement or mutuality."

Kit currently has 140 works featured online at abolitionarchive.org. From their artist statement:

"Creating and sharing allows the confluence of connection, communication, exploration, expression, and its relationship with the universe, concepts, and others. Interestingly, Appalachian roots and punk culture were fertilizer for the DIY ethos and caffeinated witticism incorporated in my art. People tend to engage within a spacious pause between the viewer and the viewed, creating their own meaning, application, narrative, questioning, or head scratching."

View their portfolio at:
abolitionarchive.org/artist.php?slug=kit-brixton

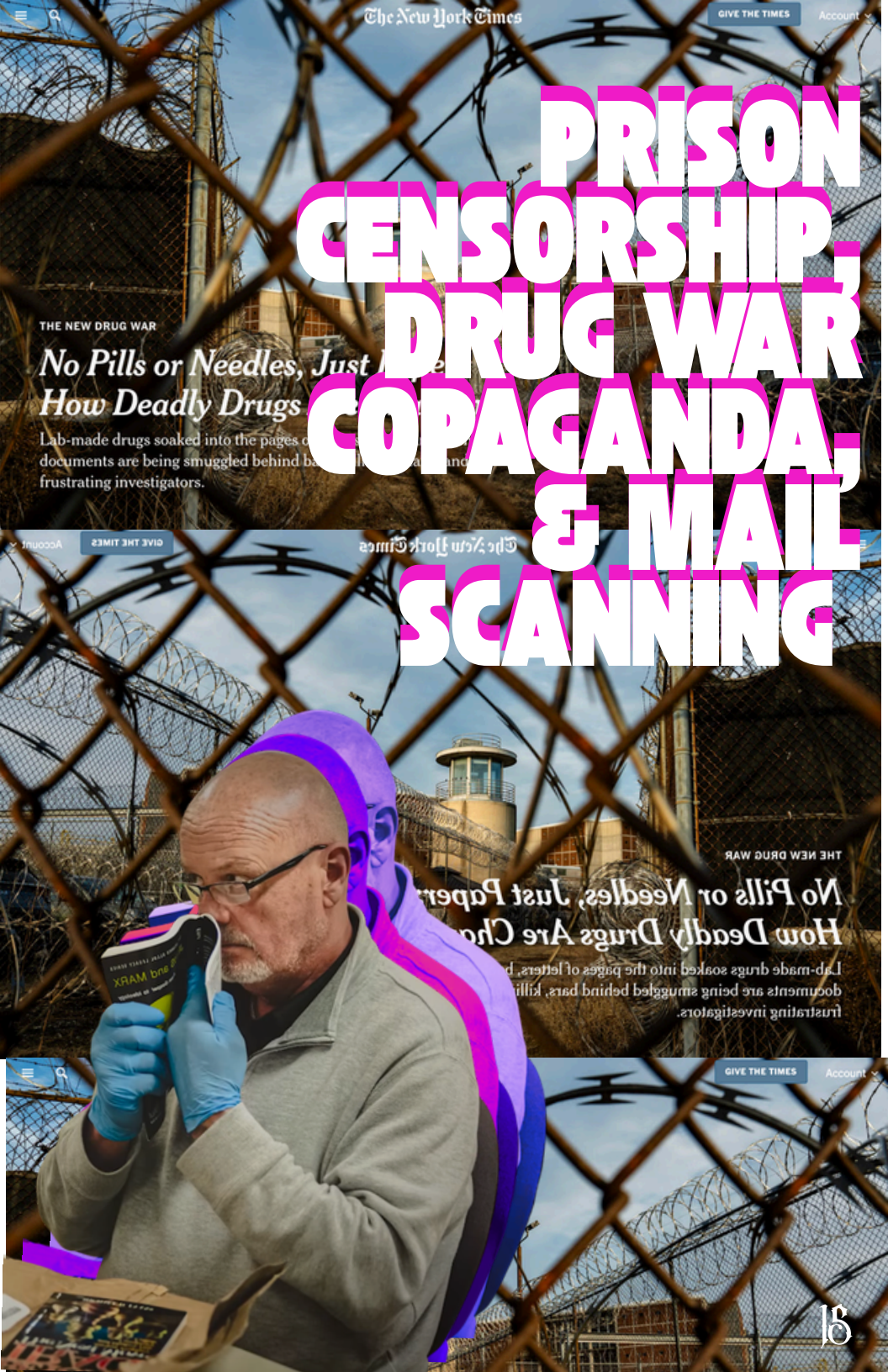
One Job Town

Young boys and old women
come to work at the village prison
dawn till dusk for wages given
to stay in homes and bills and wine
not much else in this small town
especially with all the AI around
warehouses for goods mailed just in time
warehouses for rows of artificial minds
warehouses for families, adults and children

– Champagne Song



ART BY ROBERT GREATHOUSE


The New York Times
GIVE THE TIMES
Account
PRISON CENSORSHIP, DRUG WAR COPAGANDA, & MAIL SCANNING
THE NEW DRUG WAR
No Pills or Needles, Just
How Deadly Drugs
Lab-made drugs soaked into the pages
documents are being smuggled behind ba
frustrating investigators.

Censorship in prisons is nothing new, but the last several years have seen rapidly increasing efforts to restrict prisoners' access to physical mail, books, and other means of connecting to the outside world.

In 2024, the Illinois Department of Corrections signed a contract with ICSolutions, a tech company that develops calling and messaging software for prisons. Soon after, IDOC adopted an emergency rule allowing all Illinois prisons to withhold prisoners' physical mail and instead provide only digital scans of mail though ICSolutions software.

This new policy, which cruelly eliminates one of incarcerated people's only direct connections to the outside world, has often been justified by prison officials with claims about paper sprayed with drugs entering prisons and causing overdoses.

Cook County Correctional Facility officials have played a central role in generating hysteria over this issue. In March, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart and Deputy Chief Justin Wilks went to the New York Times, which published an extended article ("No Pills or Needles, Just Paper: How Deadly Drugs Are Changing") with an accompanying video ("How A Drug Cocktail Made of Paper Is Killing Inmates") which did not consult any medical experts or drug policy/harm reduction experts, presenting only a one-sided story exaggerating the risks created by books and paper mail entering prisons and jails.

They also spoke with right-wing YouTuber Tommy G, who was allowed into the jail to film a drug raid for a video that, at time of publication, has been viewed 3.3 million times ("Inside Chicago's Cook County Jail Drug Epidemic"). In the video, Tommy G and CCJ staff dig through people's cells, violating people's privacy and taking unrelated personal possessions. People inside have reported that their personal mail and books were confiscated without any confiscation slips, and their grievance forms have been ignored.

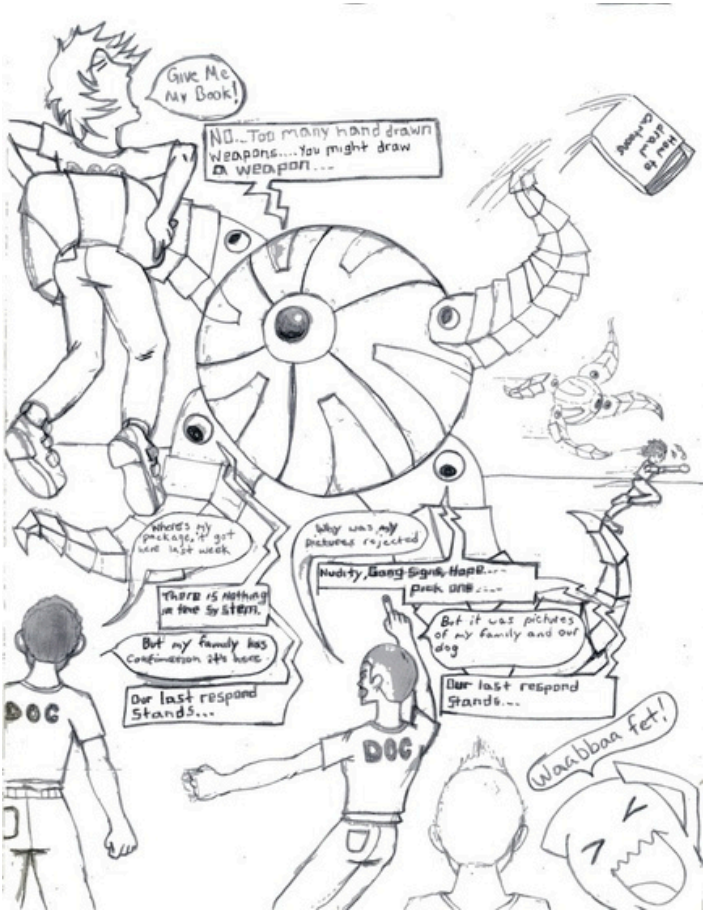
Officials claim restrictions on paper in prisons are motivated by a desire to prevent overdose deaths, but little has been done to address other proven and more frequent causes of death behind bars. Cook County Jail in particular has faced increasing scrutiny over numerous deaths resulting from prisoner neglect. In September, advocates, faith leaders, and elected officials pushed to have an independent investigation of deaths at Cook County Jail, but the resolution was deferred to November by the Cook County Board of Commissioners' Health and Hospitals Committee citing concerns the resolution could open the county up to liability. Per the New York Times' own reporting, there have not been any confirmed overdose deaths from paper containing drugs in the last two years, and not all earlier overdose deaths were confirmed to be from paper, let alone paper mailed into prisons.

Prison officials are not restricting paper to protect prisoners' lives, but rather to generate profit for prison tech corporations, distract from failures in prisoner care, and further isolate the most vulnerable people in our communities from their most important lifelines.

If you've been directly impacted by increased prison censorship, please write to us and share your experiences. Solidarity always!

Request one of our zines about prison censorship !

- **"End Book Bans and Mail Censorship at Cook County Jail!"**
- **"Midwest Prison Censorship Update 2025: Exposing the IDOC Mail Scanning Scam"**
- **"Circumventing Prison Tech Censorship"**
- **"Don't Step Back, Fight Back!" by Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin**
- **"Coalition Against Prison Censorship"**



Art by Danny Neira

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

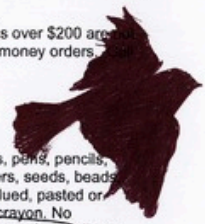
Notice of Unauthorized Item(s) Not Permitted

Illinois River Correctional Center

DATE: 8/23/23 HOUSING UNIT: ID72

INDIVIDUAL IN CUSTODY'S NAME: Juan Garnica NUMBER: M45737

MAIL FROM: Books to Prisoners



☐ Cash and personal checks are not accepted at this facility. Money orders and cashier checks over $200 are not accepted at this facility. You must use JPay to send money orders. Visit JPay.com to send money orders, or call 800-574-5729 to speak with a live agent 24/7.

Serial #_____.

☐ Stickers, cologne, perfume, lipstick, napkins, plastic card or holograms.

☒ No cardboard, unused stationary, greeting cards, envelopes, or postage stamps; art supplies, pens, pencils, sketch pads, photo albums, leather, cloth, felt fabric, ribbon, yarn, string, hair, feathers, flowers, seeds, beads, napkins, or food; no plastic cards, holograms, musical cards, homemade cards (glued, pasted or painted). No [illegible] contains highlighter, marker, glitter, stickers/Emojis or crayon. No eyeglasses, jewelry, cologne, perfume, or lipstick. Any foreign substance which cannot be determined oily or unusual items.

Any items which can be purchased in the commissary are not permitted. See individual in custody handbook

☐ No rock [illegible] (refer to individual in custody handbook); metal spirals; compact discs – home CD or computer; recording devices; condoms; medications.

☐ No solicitation of money; unapproved business [illegible], lottery tickets or forms, etc; phone cards or gift cards.

☐ No mail or photos to or from another individual in custody or from a third party or mail from another individual in custody to a jail or correctional [illegible] example that has not been approved. See your counselor for approval procedures.

☐ No photos of weapons, alcohol, money, nudity, [illegible] inappropriate photo/s, no smoking in photos, STG/gang-related [illegible] and gestures, altered photos, bondage, facility, drugs, violence, simulated sexual acts, [illegible] materials or same. _____ Quantity of Photos.

☐ No Internet/web site printouts pertaining to crimes of inmates or material which may compromise the order and security of the facility and no Facebook posts.

☐ No Social Security Card; Driver's License or I.D. card; School or employment I.D., etc of any one else.

☐ Banned Publication per Springfield Pub. Review Committee: _____

_____

☐ No duplicates of any kind, no game dials.

☒ Other: "We the People-Legal Primer" Booklet

☐ Money voucher is required ☒ Manila envelope is needed ☐ Write-out needed

IF YOU DO NOT RESPOND TO THIS NOTICE WITHIN 30 DAYS, THE ITEMS WILL BE DESTROYED.

Indicate one of the following:

☐ I have provided a stamped, addressed envelope to return the item **(ATTACH FORM TO OUTSIDE OF RESPONSE) ITEM MUST BE RETURNED TO SENDER UNLESS TOLD OTHERWISE.**

☐ I wish to have the above listed items destroyed.

☐ Other: _____

Be advised, if you do not return this form, the above item will be disposed of in accordance with DR 501.230.

_____ Date _____

Individual's Signature and Number

I.R.C.C. Mailroom Staff _____

Dis: White – Individual in Custody
Yellow – Mailroom
Pink – With Item

IRI 0065 (Revised 05/2023)

Printed on Recycled Paper

"Unauthorized"
Art by Juan Garnica

Unauthorized
by Juan Garnica

The overwhelming disappointment this paper gives is poignantly familiar to many of us. Our dismay is magnified by the patient expectation we've had for the arrival of our package culminating in this dreaded refusal notice. Eagerly anticipating your treasure as the officer calls your name for mail all you receive is a sense of helplessness. You feel a seemingly overpowering outrage and imagine a villainous devil sitting in the mail room whose sole intent is your misery. You know there's an invisible check box on the list of unauthorized items with no joy next to it which this illusory devil checks every time. Feelings of injustice and indignation fill you as you begin formulating the grievance in your head. This is one of the few ways in which we know how to counter-influence our helplessness, yet even the grievance process has lost that characteristic and become another factor in our vulnerability.

Our anger and hate assist the objective of the administration to maintain power over us and to relinquish our own power by failing to recognize that this paper cannot take anything away from us which we don't give.These restrictions and the illusion of our helplessness only become a reality if we perceive it as such.

We want to be treated humanely and not seen as the enemy of society, but as part of the overall public community. Our part is to reflect that desire on the administration and asee it reciprocated. When we look at them as the enemy, our minds and hearts are in war mode and ready to fight, even inclined towards it. Picture the person in the mail room imagining us in the same way we see them. This perception creates rivals in a dysfunctional community of which we are all a part of.

The only adversary in opposition to us is ourselves. Our external world is onla reflection of who we are. It is the creation of our mind as we perceive ity, so realize that the world looks different to the next person and it is according to the mirror which they are looking at. Community is a meeting of these minds with the goal of uniting these worlds. If anyone imagines a world in which you are helpless, don't languish in their fallacy. Harness your power and free yourself from the illusory cage of the mind's creation, and soar. Dismantle the bars of your captivity by letting go of anger and helplessness. These qualities and their equivalents should be at the top of the unauthorized items in your character.

DISPATCHES FROM INSIDE: CENSORSHIP

"YOU MAY REMEMBER A FEW WEEKS BACK THAT THE WISCONSIN DOC STARTED BANNING BOOKS FROM WISCONSIN BOOKS TO PRISONERS, CLAIMING THAT 'DRUGS WERE COMING IN VIA THEIR USED BOOKS', WHICH IS A MASSIVE LIE."

"[I] WONDER IF I HAVE ACTUALLY ALREADY BEEN RECEIVING SOME OF THE FREE MAILED IN NEWSLETTERS AND PUBLICATIONS LIKE THE FIFTH ESTATE, BUT THEY HAVE INSTEAD BEEN TRASHING IT AT PROPERTY WITHOUT TELLING ME.."

"EFFECTIVE THIS WEEK THEY HAVE EXTENDED [BOOK BANS] TO INTERLIBRARY LOANS (ILL). WE USED TO BE ABLE TO GET UP TO 2 BOOKS AT A TIME VIA CONNECTED LOCAL LIBRARIES. THEY ARE CLAIMING THEY FOUND FENTANYL ON A BOOK SO ALL BOOKS ARE NOW DENIED."

"THEN OF COURSE YOU ALL KNOW ABOUT HOW THEY ARE EFFECTIVELY BANNING YOU ALL FROM SENDING US NEWSLETTERS. SLASHING THE LIMIT FROM 1000 TO ONLY 10 FOR A MASS MAILER IS JUST AS EFFECTIVELY A BAN. I'M BETTING THEY'RE GOING TO FIND SOME REASON TO DENY US THE 2 FREE STAMPED ENVELOPES AS WELL, JUST TO FURTHER LIMIT OUR ABILITY TO RECEIVE INFORMATION FROM THE WORLD."

"OUR MAILROOM IS UNDERSTAFFED SO IT COULD BE 2-4 WEEKS TIL THEY PROCESS OUR BOOKS, OR OUR FAVORITE "I DON'T KNOW, WRITE AN EMAIL" (OF COURSE NEVER GETS ANSWERED)."

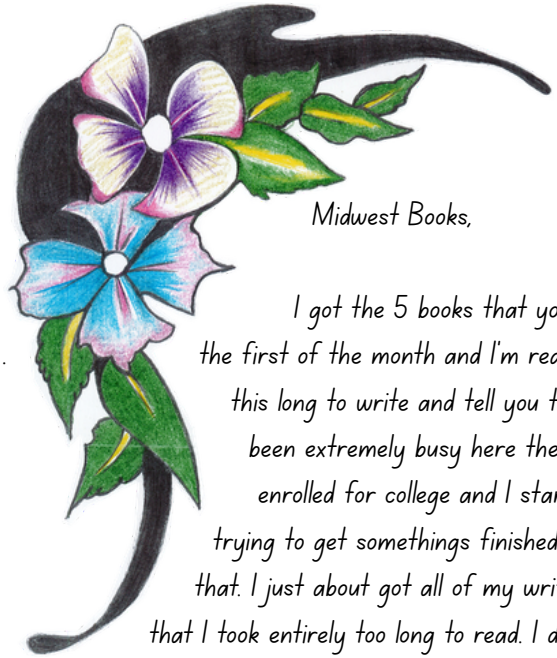
"THE LAST SHIPMENT OF BOOKS YOU SENT ME IN JULY MADE IT HERE, BUT I WASN'T ABLE TO RECEIVE THEM. YOU MAY ALREADY BE AWARE OF THE ISSUE WITH BOOKS BEING SENT INTO THE KDOC, BUT IF NOT I WANTED TO MAKE SURE I WROTE TO FILL YOU IN. THIS STATE HAS STOPPED US FROM GETTING BOOKS."

"THEY [ARE] GETTING STRICTER AND STRICTER ON JSTOR REQUESTS. DEPENDING ON WHO IS DOING THE APPROVAL DETERMINES GREATLY WHETHER OR NOT THEY WILL ARBITRARILY DENY AN ARTICLE BASED SOLELY ON THE TITLE... EVERYTHING FROM ARTICLES ON LEGAL PROCEEDINGS, TO STUDY OF THE KABBALAH TO DISCUSSIONS OF EQUITY HAVE BEEN DENIED. ACCORDING TO INMATES THAT WORK IN THE SCHOOL AND AT ADMIN, THERE HAS BEEN TALK ABOUT KILLING THE PROGRAM FOR THE LAST FEW MONTHS, BECAUSE THEY DON'T LIKE THE INFORMATION WE CAN SEE."

"AT THE END OF THE DAY THE FIGHT TO STOP THE EGREGIOUS CENSORSHIP WILL BE LOST, AS MANY SUSPECT ACTORS WILL MAKE $ FROM ALLOWING MAIL TO BE PUT ON TABLETS."

"IF IT'S NOT A BOOK, MAGAZINE, NEWSPAPER, OR CATALOG, IT GETS COPIED. IF IT'S MORE THAN 5 PAGES, YOU STILL ONLY GET 5 PAGES... NEWSLETTERS ARE HIT AND MISS, CATALOGS ARE THROWN AWAY 9 TIMES OUT OF 10"

"WE HEAR BACK FROM OUR FAMILIES THAT THEY ARE GETTING MAIL BACK UNOPENED AND BOOKS SENT BACK TO AMAZON WITHOUT ANYONE BEING TOLD WHY. THEN OF COURSE THERE ARE THE BOOKS THAT JUST VANISH. PEOPLE WILL GO DOWN TO THE MAILROOM WITH THE TRACKING #S AND MAILROOM STAFF WILL TELL THEM; THE TRACKING # DOESN'T EXIST (IT DOES)."



5-28-23

Midwest Books,

I got the 5 books that you sent me. I received them around the first of the month and I'm really sorry that it has taken me this long to write and tell you thank you. The truth is I have been extremely busy here these last couple of weeks. I got enrolled for college and I start classes June 6th so I've been trying to get somethings finished up before I dive head first into that. I just about got all of my writing done and I finished a book that I took entirely too long to read. I don't know if you've ever read Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, but if you have you'll understand where I'm coming from when I say it was rather tedious!!

It's crazy what you'll do to impress women sometimes!

Now that I'm done with that I'm going to read A Walk in the Woods that you sent me. I'm very appreciative for the books that you have shared with me, but I know there are a lot of others who enjoy them more because I donate them all to our library. This facility is where you have to start out for diagnostics before they send you to general population and those guys don't get anything so they are very reliant on the library. I'll say thank you for them as well since I'm here.

I hope you enjoy the stationary feel free to post it if you would like, I'm not shy. I wish I could draw because I would share more, but I'm at the mercy of others to get little things. Thank you again for all you do for people who are doing time, some people get to feeling like they are forgotten so people like you truly make someone's day. :) Take care.

Sincerely,
Brad Gillespie

Editor's Note: We later got this letter, also from Bradley Gillespie. It's tragic when someone who regularly writes back to us, and whom we have formed a relationship with, gets cut off from the outside world and from us. Yet unfortunately not uncommon. This is just one of the many daily violences inflicted upon those behind bars.

9-10-25



Hello again everyone!! :) I hope you all are doing great. The last shipment of books you sent me in July made it here, but I wasn't able to receive them. You may already be aware of the issue with books being sent into the KDOC, but if not I wanted to make sure I wrote to fill you in. This state has stopped us from getting books altogether from outside vendors. They only have one approved place, Books a Million, for us to order books from and the process involved is ridiculous. They seem to be slowly choking us off from all outside contact. It seems to get worse and worse every year. They want us to follow the rules, yet they break theirs everyday. I'm working on a big lawsuit and looking for an attorney, so hopefully we can try to correct their behaviors. That's a whole other conversation for another time though.

The person that filled my order looks to be a Rilleet maybe?? Their cursive is hard to read at times, but they said they were a masters student if that narrows it down. They got my proposal I wrote pertaining to a mental health case study, so whoever gets this please relay that I just got their note and am thankful for all their help. I haven't found a college yet to take me up on it, but the University of Cincinnati did get back with me, so I'll wait to see if they do anything with it in the future. I have more colleges I'm going to reach out to because I'm not ready to give up on it just yet.

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This will most likely be the last letter from me unless the KDOC is forced to change their policy towards books. I want you all to know that I've really really loved receiving your books and personal notes I'm going to miss having people draw me these stationary pages for y'all. I hope you like this one for the last one. You guys have been very much appreciated. You've been a light in this grim place and it feels like Christmas died knowing I won't be getting any more random packages from you. Maybe by the end of this lawsuit I can change something around here and bring that back. Until then though, we'll be alright here in Kansas, for we're pretty adaptive and used to things being taken from us.

I've been talking to a congress member to work on changing the drug laws or getting the Second Look Act enacted; as well as, I'm offering to do the remainder of my time on parole through clemency. If any of these things to decide to work in my favor, I'll probably be passing through and would love to stop in to do some volunteering with you all. I hope that would be something I could do. It would be nice to return the favor after how you've been here and done more than the majority of my so called "Friends". I'm sorry that I won't be sending any more thank you notes for books anymore, buy maybe I'll just drop a letter in ever once in a while to see how you guys are doing up there. Take care of yourselves. Again, thank you for everything and hopefully one day I can stop in and spend a day helping out.

Sincerely,
Bradley Gillespie #2000086107
EDCF
PO BOX 311
El Dorado, KS 67042

JUSTICE RESTORED

With no eligibility of parole
is convicting me of life
with no eligibility of Rehabilitation
Naw..
Hell nawww, There has to be some type of law
Is this penalty, proportionate?
There has to be some type of clause
As they claw, to handcuff my inner beat this inner heat
Handcuff this clip, try to handcuff my lips
But you gon' need some God-proof shackles to cuff this Drum
These words reach certain investors they gon' wanna cuff up
my tongue, Not in spite
Rather in Freedom, I keep moving wit da movement
Keep activating
They can keep me captive
But they cant keep me from being captivating
Just when, a mother's smile is restored
"It takes a village to raise a child" is restored
Judged by a jury of my peers, a community trial
is restored
I92I Tulsa, Oklahoma is restored
A time before King Hannibal is restored
Ancient Kemet is restored
5,000 years of my ancestors' blood is restored
My grandmother's hug is restored
Not! when "Blackness" is restored
Not! when "Whiteness" is restored
We win, when: that little grey space where you replace
that so called criminal with the face
of your own baby is restored
Not wrong restored, not right restored
Just love restored, just this restored
Justice Restored

Kenneth Olugbode
Basheer the Evolutionist

INTERVIEW WITH AN ABOLITIONIST



Kevin "God 7' Gordon is an abolitionist, author, and co-founder of The Bridge Collective Chicago, a nonprofit that provides support for young men and adult men who are victims of trauma that stems directly from systematic racism. Every Thursday, they meet in a brotherhood and men's sharing circle, empowered by the struggle to build bridges that will ultimately unite the masses oppressed by unrighteous governments.



Kevin described the following interview as his "words of inspiration to all freedom fighters and fellow comrades in the on-going battle to abolish the prison industrial complex".

When I first messaged Kevin to arrange the interview, he told me to meet him at the after-school program he works at, where he also hosts Bridge Collective meetings once the students go home. When I arrived I walked into large room filled mostly with kids, with a few staff watching over them. One staff member pointed me to Kevin, who was surrounded by children at a table filled with food, making sure they all had their share. He gave me a friendly introduction and brought me to a quieter room off to the side to have the interview in. The room had a window at the door, and throughout the interview for the next 12 minutes, kids faces were almost constantly peering in through. A few times a student or two would come in to say something to Kevin or ask what was going on. It was clear the students really liked Kevin, and that they were fascinated by the idea of him being interviewed while on the job. Throughout the interview, the sounds of playing kids punctuated Kevin's remarks.

[Roan] Nice to meet you in person. I'm Roan...and you're Kevin! We're excited to interview you for the community zine. First I just wanted to ask you just if you could tell us a little bit more about yourself.

[Kevin] Nice meeting you Roan, my name is Kevin. My friends know me as God 7, Nu-Pon Da God. I'm 45 years old, Black man living in America. I've been in and out of the jail system since I was 11 years old, my last stint was six years in MCC, fighting a federal case, and in that six years, I found my purpose in life, which is educating the Black children of the world, the Black man, woman, and child. And educating humanity. First and foremost, I'm unapologetically Black, but I'm for all of humanity. You know? And this abolition work is levels to it. The prison industrial complex is something that we need more education about, even though, in America, they try to shun it and push it to the back, but we need to be forefront with it.

It's definitely a problem people would like to be out of sight, out of mind.

Right because it generates wealth. It generates wealth for the powers that be. We all know who they are. You know what I mean? So, and that's not just people, it's institutions.

Who are they?

Colonialists. Imperialists. You know? White supremacists. So it's these things that we need to be educated about.

Yeah.

But, yeah, my abolition work never stops, and I just love educating us about us.

So one organization that you helped create and are running is the Bridge Collective. And I see you're here educating the children, but it seems like that mission for you extends to adults too.

The Bridge Collective is a nonprofit organization that I formed with my brother and two of our childhood friends. This is like a brotherhood. We hold meetings every other Thursday and we want to help people with mental health. Drug addiction, you know, housing. People transitioning back into society from being incarcerated, and just basically creating a space where we can just come and unwind and release some of that built in anger, trauma...and discuss it amongst each other. And it don't matter what you is, it's not faith based, but we welcome all.

And what's the point of that? Like what does having a space to talk about these things do for people?

Well we're not the first and we won't be the last. We're trying to make a difference in society. Dealing with under-resourced communities and underserved communities. We're just trying to give back, and do the right thing.

You spent a lot of time incarcerated, and you're doing this work that, in some ways, keeps you close to that experience. You're making an effort to help out people who are being harmed by that system or have recently been harmed. In some ways, this experience isn't something you're choosing to forget about, right? Why are you continuing to do this work instead of just trying to push all that aside?

I'm continuing to do this work because it's my purpose. It's my purpose in life to contribute to humanity in the right way. I contributed with a lot of destructive ways and destructive ways of thinking. So I got to contribute with trying to build it. If it takes that, making the men's organization, or helping children, or doing this interview with Midwest Books, then yeah, I'm gonna do what I have to do.

Ok, so what are you trying to build?

Unity within all communities. Unity within all communities, you know? And to let them know, we don't have to conform to being misled by governments. Not just the United States government, but governments.

[One of the students walks in, and wants to know what's going on. Kevin talks to her for a while, eventually she leaves after Kevin promises to do something later in the week with her. It's obvious the student has a lot of affection for Kevin.]

This [the afterschool program Kevin's part of] is cool. Like, I know this is just your job, but this is actually really cool.

It's like...me giving back. They [the students] come and ask me, Mr. Kevin, what are you reading, man? It's not Jesus. This is what I'm reading. [Kevin holds up book titled, "Black Anarchism and the Black Radical Tradition", by Atticus Bagby-Williams and Nsambu Za Suekama]. So I give it to them real, and they love it.

People think anarchist, and they think it just means like no rules. And it's actually like...no haha that's not the point. I mean, you're reading some dense theory and you're trying to contribute to a world that actually works for people, because this one doesn't. I mean it's failing a lot of us.

And has failed by design. It's all about design.

How does your time incarcerated affect how you show up to this work or what you feel called to do?

My time incarcerated I spent most of my time reading and writing, and that prepared me to transition back into society the right way, because my head was on straight, and I had resources, which were the right people. My daughter and my brother, to help me transition. So I did everything I had to do to get where I'm at.

You're an abolitionist. To you, what do you think the true purpose of prison really is?

It's modern day slavery. It's modern day slavery on a mental level. And its monetary gain for the power structure of colonialism and imperialism. So we need to destroy it. By any means necessary. We need to destroy it. The best way to destroy it is to learn the history of why it exists, and why it continues to exist. Even though we may get people who oppose our theories and ideologies of why the prison system needs to be abolished. We still need to get this information out to the people. We got to do the best we can. I'm not gonna stop doing what I do just because of a paycheck. They can't pay me to not speak about being who I am. I'm a righteous abolitionist. And I'll remain that.

There's a lot of people who don't want this work to happen and it's hard to keep doing it because you have to pay your bills. You have to work. It's hard to find time to do it...

It's hard to live in a society where people that you know, they're brain dead... Scared.

For sure. To you, what kind of world do you imagine is possible? Or what is the world that you want to imagine is possible? And what do you see as your role creating that world?

Anything's possible. There's no such thing as impossible, because if you spell impossible and take the 'I' 'M' off, it's 'I'm Possible'. I see a world where I have abolitionists, like me and yourself, being educators, and the world's leaders, for people tomorrow, next generations. I see a world where even though we say peace, peace, peace, [people know] that sometimes you have to go to war to obtain that peace. We at war with ourselves, and we at war only because we're a part of society that they basically neutralized the way that we're supposed to be educated. They force religion on us. So we have to be educated. If we can unite within our communities, maybe someday we can go get our own place. On this planet Earth. Or create a place! Create space where we can have our own place. By any means necessary, like the great words of Malcolm X, we gotta do what we gotta do. We can't be afraid no more. So, I just envision a world where there is no fear. You know? There is no false hope. There is no mystery God we're praying to.

Do you think there's a role for people who are currently incarcerated, that they can do on the inside to help create that world?

That's where the role starts. That's where the role starts, because the incarcerated ones have voices that are unheard. So we can amplify their voices, and amplify it to the world, I think we can make a difference. Especially because my voice was limited. And now that I'm free, I can give back to those ones that's locked up like I was, that still don't have a voice.

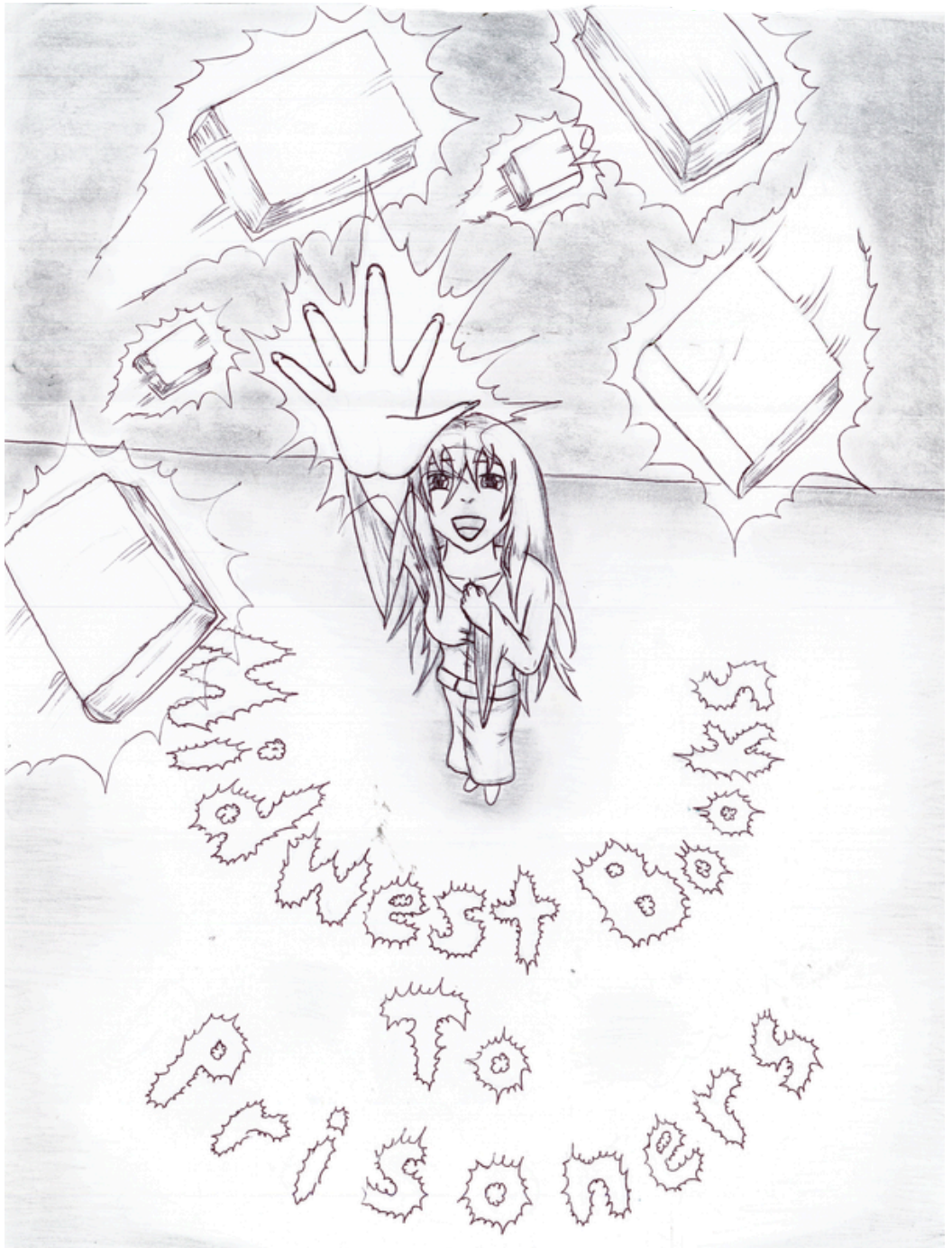
People who are incarcerated really do want to have a voice, and there's so much institutional force within prisons that tries to silence them and tries to keep them from communicating with the outside world.

Yes they put them in a shoe and they just lock up their voice. And us out here, we gotta be there for them. So that's why I was like, No, I gotta do this interview. I gotta do it. Even if I'm on the clock.

Well, I just got one more question for you, which is that this zine is gonna go mostly to folks who are incarcerated. Do you have a message that you want to give to the folks that read this?

All right: to the guys, the sisters, the brothers that are doing this abolitionist work, that are doing righteous endeavorment, for righteous government, righteous social development. I won't give up. I'm y'all amplifier. I am y'all voice. If you can't be heard, I'm out here. I'm doing what I gotta do for us. So don't worry, I won't give up on us. You don't give up on us, and I won't give up on us. I got us.





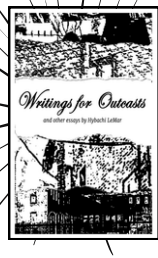
ART BY DANNY NEIRA

Volunteer Zine Recommendations



"Kuwasi Balagoon: Letters from Prison 1983-85"
Balagoon's letters meditate on carcerality, colonialism, imperialism, and liberation. His Anti-imperialist Anarchism remains an important critical lens today.

- Sea



“Hybachi LeMar: Writings for Outcasts”
LeMar, formerly incarcerated revolutionary and servant of the people, writes with seering clarity on alienation, subjugation, and autonomy with an unmatched poetic gift.

-Jones



"When Reform Becomes Revenge!"
This zine collects the art, poetry, essays, and more created by women in Logan ~~Correctional~~. The works discuss gender, race, trauma, carcerality, and beyond, it is an invaluable work.

- Sea

Read anything you would like to share your thoughts on? We are accepting book/zine reviews to be included in our future publications! Send a letter with your review/recommendation to our mailing address at 1321 N Milwaukee Ave, PMB 460, Chicago, IL 60622.

Free Legal Resources

We will send free legal materials upon request. This catalog is a small selection of what we have available. We are not able to provide legal advice or representation or perform personal tasks. However, we can - within reason - help with basic legal research and print publicly available documents such as laws or court rulings.

Midwest Books to Prisoners (Legal)
1321 N Milwaukee Ave PMB 460
Chicago, IL 60622

Last Update August 4, 2025.

• **Insider's Guide to Jailhouse Law** (11/2024): Formerly "We The People", this guide published by Prison Book Program is a general overview, basic legal dictionary, and national directory of legal and advocacy organizations. También en Español
• **Jailhouse Lawyer's Handbook** (2021, 6th Edition): Published by The Center for Constitutional Rights and the National Lawyers Guild, instructions on filing a federal lawsuit addressing poor conditions in prison or abuse by prison staff.
• **A Tilted Guide to Being a Defendant** (2017): facing charges based on personal, political and legal goals. (Also see the shorter zine version "Criminal Legal System for Radicals")

Monthly "Legal Updates" Newsletter

Write us to subscribe to the free monthly newsletter with current articles from Solitary Watch, Prison Policy Initiative, Law Professor Blogs, Truthout, Injustice Watch, Jailhouse Lawyers Speak, and more. You can also request a custom newsletter choosing your own topics and sources.

South Chicago ABC:

•"Handbook for the Wrongfully Convicted - pt 1, 2 and Table of Authorities" (Eric D Smith)
•"Criminal Law Concepts (Michael Salerno
•"Criminal Law Forms" (Michael Salerno)
•"Federal Habeas Corpus for State Prisoners (Michael Salerno)
• "How to Use the Law Library Write Your Own Law Work" (Michael Salerno)
•"Anarchist Litigation for Dummies" (Gary William Hallford)
•"Dont Shank The Guards Handbook: Legal Recourseto Guards' Harassment, Brutality and Rape (Kevin Rashid Johnson)
•"Handbook on Surviving Solitary Confinement: A Survival Guide for the Targeted Prisoner"- Khalfani Malik Khaldun
•"Martin Sostre in Court"

Other Publications

Prisoner Resource Directory" (Nov 2024)
• "Handbook of Legal Terminology" (4th Ed 2020 Mississippi Judicial College)
• "Jailhouse Laywers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners vs. the U.S.A." (2009 Mumia Abu-Jamal)
• "If An Agent Knocks (2020, Center for Constitutional Rights)
• "Repress This! Ways to Be Your Own Anti-Repression Committee" (2014)
• "Bad Behavior: How prison disciplinary policies manufacture misconduct (Prison Policy Initiative, 2024)
• "A Matter of Life: The Scope and Impact of Life and Long Term Imprisonment" (2025, Sentencing Project)
• "Captive Labor: Exploitation of Incarcerated Workers" (2022, ACLU)
• "Standards for Library Services for the Incarcerated or Detained (2024 Edition)" (American Library Association)
• "Business & Legal Toolkit for Returning Citizen Entrepreneurs" (2020, GW Law School)
• "No Justice, No Pleas: Subverting Mass Incarceration Through Defendant Collective Action
• Civil Commitment for Sex Offenses packet (IL and National reports, 2022)
• "A Practical Security Handbook" (2025, No Trace Project)
• "Threat Library": counter-surveillance, forensics and mitigations (2025 No Trace Project)
• "Peer-to-Peer, Encryption, and Tor: New Communication Infrastructure"
• "Your Life On The List: A Survival Guide for those Forced to Register Upon Release" (4th ed. 2024)
• "Children Are Different: Implicit Bias, Rehabilitation, And The New Juvenile Jurisprudence (2013 Robin W Sterling)
• "White Paper on the Science of Late Adolescence: A Guide for Judges, Attorneys, and Policy Makers"
• "Trial Manual for Defense Attorneys in Juvenile Delinquency Cases (2012 NYU School of Law)
• "Effective Communication For Commutations: A Teacher's Guide" (2018 Prison Renaissance)

LGBTQ

• "Built Binary: Rethinking the Incarceration of Transgender Individuals Within a Dual-Gendered Prison System"
• "Policies to Increase Safety and Respect for Transgender Prisoners" (Natl Center for Transgender Equality)
• "Still We Rise: Trans Resources" (TGI Justice Project 2017)
• "LGBTQ Books to Prisoners Packet" (Resource List, Trans, Terms, Coming Out, Safer Sex Inside)

Columbia Jailhouse Lawyers Manual

13th Edition. Updated Summer 2024.
Request by individual chapters

Section I: Introduction to the JLM
Ch1: How to Use the JLM and How To Use It
Section II: Learning Your Rights
Ch 2: Introduction to Legal Research
Ch 3: Your Right to Learn the Law and Go to Court
Section III: How to File a Lawsuit and Learn About Your Case
Ch 4: How to Find a Lawyer
Ch 5: Choosing a Court and a Lawsuit
Ch 6: An Introduction to Legal Documents
Ch 7: Freedom of Information
Ch 8: Obtaining Information to Prepare Your Case: The Process of Discovery
Section IV: How to Attack Your Conviction or Sentence
Ch 9: Appealing Your Conviction or Sentence
Ch 10: Applying for Federal Sentence Reductions Based on Changes to the Law
Ch 11: Using Post-Conviction DNA Testing to Attack Your Conviction or Sentence
Ch 12: Appealing Your Conviction Based on Ineffective Assistance of Counsel
Ch 13: Federal Habeas Corpus
Section V: How to Attack the Conditions of Your Imprisonment
Ch 14: ThePrisonLitigation ReformAct
Ch 15: Incarcerated Grievance Procedures
Ch 16: Using 42 U.S.C. § 1983 to Obtain Relief from Violations of Federal Law
Ch 17: The State's Duty to Protect You and Your Property: Tort Actions
Ch 18: Your Rights At Prison Disciplinary Proceedings
Ch 19: Your Right to Communicate with the Outside World
Section VI: How to Attack Your Conviction, Sentence, or Prison Conditions at the State Level
Ch 20:Using Article 440 of the New York Criminal Procedure Law to Attack Your Unfair Conviction or...
...Illegal Sentence
Ch 21: State Habeas Corpus: Florida, New York, and Michigan
Ch 22: How to Challenge Administrative Decisions Using Article 78 of the New York Civil Practice Law and Rules
Section VII: General Health and Safety Rights in Prison
Ch 23: Your Right to Adequate Medical Care
Ch 24: Your Right to be Free from Assault by Prison Guards and Other Incarcerated People
Ch 25: Your Right to be Free from Illegal Body Searches
Ch 26: Infectious Diseases in Prisons: AIDS, Hepatitis, Tuberculosis, MRSA, and COVID-19
Section VIII: Issue-Specific Rights
Ch 27: Religious Freedom in Prison
Ch 28: Rights of Incarcerated People with Disabilities Ch 29: Special Issues for Incarcerated People with Mental Illness
Ch 30: Special Information for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and/or Queer Incarcerated People
Ch 31: Security Classification and Gang Validation
Ch 32: Parole
Ch 33: Rights of Incarcerated Parents
Ch 34: The Rights of Pretrial Detainees
Ch 35: Getting Out Early: Conditional and Early Release
Ch 36: Special Considerations for Sex Offenders
Ch 37: Rights Upon Release
Ch 38: Rights of Youth in Prison
Ch 39: Temporary Release Programs in New York
Ch 40: Plea Bargaining
Ch 41: Special Issues of Incarcerated Women
Section IX: Appendices
Appendix I: Addresses of Federal Courts & New York State Prisons and Their Respective Federal Judicial Districts
Appendix II: New York State: Filing Instructions & Addresses of New York State Courts
Appendix III: Addresses of New York District Attorneys
Appendix IV: Directory of Legal and Social Services for Incarcerated People
Appendix V: Definitions of Words Used in the JLM
Appendix VI: Definitions of Latin Words Used in JLM

Constitutional Rights of Prisoners (9thed.,2010)

Ch. 1 - An Overview of the Judicial System
Ch. 2 - Administrative Law
Ch. 3 - Use of Force; Use of Corporal Punishment to Enforce Prison Discipline
Ch. 4 - Prisoners' Rights to Visitation/Association; Searches Ch. 5 - Prisoners' Rights to Use of the Mail, Internet and Telephone
Ch. 6 - Isolated Confinement—"The Hole" and Administrative Segregation
Ch. 7 - Religion in Prison
Ch. 8 - Legal Services
Ch. 9 - Prisoner Disciplinary Proceedings
Ch. 10 - Right to Rehabilitation Programs, Right to Medical Aid, and Right to Life
Ch. 11 - Additional Litigation
Ch. 12 - Parole & Probation
Ch. 13 - Litigation against Government and Individuals
Ch. 14 - The Prison Litigation Reform Act
Ch. 15 - Selected Federal Statutes Affecting Prisoners

Illinois

• “Pretrial Fairness Act” end cash bail booklet: the full law, court rulings, & implementation flow charts
• “The New Stop and Frisk”? Chicago Gun Stops (2024 Injustice Watch)
• “Mapping Your Future” (2025 Illinois Re-entry Guide by Education Justice Project - También en Español)
• “Local Rules of the United States District Court Northern District of Illinois” (Federal, June 2025)
• Illinois DOC Medical Lawsuit / Consent Decree (Lippert v Jeffreys)
• Starting a case to appeal a criminal conviction in Illinois (assorted articles and forms)
• “Ending Torture by Solitary Confinement (2025 Illinois report by Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights)
• “The Chicago Police Torture Scandal: A Legal And Political History" (2015 People’s Law Office)
• “IL Civil Practice Guide” (Jenner & Block, 2024)
• “Higher Education in Prison Programs in Illinois” (Education Justice Project 2024)
• “Finding Illinois law: A Librarian’s Guide for Non- Lawyers” (2012)
• “CPD Enforcement On False Reports (OIG 2023)
• Cook County Jail Prison Conditions Amicus Brief(2016)
• “Guide for Attorneys Recruited to Represent Plaintiffs in Section 1983 Cases” (7th Circuit 2017)

Uptown People’s Law Center guides:

• Grievance Procedure handout (April 2025)
• Filing a Federal Civil Rights Complaint (April 2025) • Tips on Filing a Medical Care Lawsuit (March 2025)
• Overview of the Law: Excessive Force (May 2025)
• Know Your Rights: Out of Cell Time (May 2025)

Illinois Prison Project guides:

• Commutation Toolkit: (3/2023, 9pg)
• New Youth Parole Toolkit (2023)
• Commutation Petitions: A Guide for Incarcerated People and Their Loved Ones (Illinois Prison Project)
• Joe Coleman Medical Release Act (Illinois Prison Project)
• Sentencing Credit Handbook (Dec 2023)
• Pardon Handbook for Pro Se Filers (May 2024)
• Grievance Toolkit
• Youth Parole Toolkit
• Transfer Procedures
• Registry Reentry Guidelines

Illinois State Appellate Defender

• **Handbook on Briefs and Oral Arguments** (2020)
• **Monthly Criminal Law Digests**- notable rulings updated monthly.
• **Criminal Law Handbook**: summaries of significant decisions, organized in chapters by topic.

CH 01 Accountability
CH 02 Appeal
CH 03 Armed Violence
CH 04 Arson
CH 05 Attempt
CH 06 Bail
CH 07 Battery, Assault, Stalking Offenses
CH 08 Burglary and Residential Burglary
CH 09 Collateral Remedies
CH 10 Confessions
CH 11 Conspiracy and Solicitation
CH 12 Contempt of Court
CH 13 Controlled Substances
Ch 14 Counsel Part A: (Right to Counsel, Waiver of Counsel, Attorney Fees and Costs, Effective Assistance of Counsel)
Ch 14 Counsel Part B: (Reasonable...
...Assistance and Other Standards, Conflict of Interest, Where Lawyer’s Competency is Challenged)
CH 15 Discovery
CH 16 Disorderly, Escape, Resisting & Obstructing Offenses
CH 17 Double Jeopardy
CH 18 Entrapment
Ch 19 EVIDENCE.
CH 20 Extradition
CH 21 Fitness To Stand Trial
CH 22 Forcible Felonies
CH 23 Forgery
CH 24 Guilty Pleas
CH 25 Home Invasion
CH 26 Homicide
CH 27 Identification
CH 28 Immunity
CH 29 Indictments, Information, Complaints
CH 30 Insanity - Mentally Ill - Intoxication
CH 31 Judge
Ch 32 JURY
CH 33 Juvenile Proceedings
CH 34 Kidnapping, Unlawful Restraint & Related Offenses
CH 35 Obscenity
CH 36 Parole, Pardons and Prisoners’ Rights
CH 37 Perjury
CH 38 Preliminary Hearing
CH 39 Probation, Periodic Imprisonment, Conditional Discharge and Supervision
CH 40 Prosecutor
CH 41 Reasonable Doubt
CH 42 Robbery
Ch 43 SEARCH AND SEIZURE
Ch 44 SENTENCING
CH 45 Sex Offenses
CH 46 Speedy Trial
CH 47 Statutes
CH 48 Theft And Other Property Offenses
CH 49 Traffic Offenses
CH 50 Trial Joinder And Severance CH 51 Trial Procedures
CH 52 Venue and Jurisdiction
CH 53 Verdicts
CH 54 Waiver - Plain Error - Harmless Error
CH 55 Weapons
CH 56 Witness

Publicaciónes en Español

• Guiâ para reclusos sobre la ley penitenciaria (2024)
• Construyendo Tu Futuro: Una guía para la reintegración exitosa" (2025, Illinois o Nacional)
• Un nuevo camino Una guía de los retos y oportunidades después de la deportación
• Lista Nacional De Recursos Para Prisioneros (3/23)
• Peticiones de Conmutación: Una guía para personas encarceladas en Illinois (Marzo de 2023)
• Cómo Preparar para la Audiencia de Clemencia de tu Ser Querido (IPP)
• Guía para Presentar una Solicitud de Asilo...
...Defensivo para Personas LGBTQ y Personas Viviendo con VIH
• Conozca Sus Derechos "Pro Se": la detención, deportación, y defensas (NIJC June 2024)
• Los Derechos De Los Acusados En La Constitución
• Manual De Liberación Médica Joe Coleman (Illinois): Una Guía Para Personas Encarceladas, Sus Seres Queridos Y Abogados (IPP 1/24)
• Solicitudes de Perdón:Guía para Solicitantes Pro Se (Illinois IPP 11/24)
• Comprender los créditos por sentencia: Una guía (Illinois IPP)

Immigration

• Columbia Jailhouse Lawyer's Manual Immigration Supplement (11th Ed): Consequences of Criminal Activity and Right to Consular Access
• "A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges & Opportunities After Deportation " (available in english/español) (2025 Education Justice Project)
• Obtaining Release from Immigration Detention (2021 Catholic Legal Immigration Network)
Trump Changes in Immigration Law (2025 NYBAR)
• Previous Tactics from the Fight Against ICE...
...(2025 Lake Effect Collective)
• Asylum Defense for LGBTQ / People with HIV (Immigration Equality 9/23)
• All In One Guide to Defeating ICE Holds (NLG 2012)
• A Brief Guide to Representing Noncitizen Criminal Defendants in Illinois (NIJC June 2024)
• Know Your Rights: Pro Se guide Detention, Deportation and Defenses (NIJC Dec 2024)
•Procedural Manual For Asylum Representation and Removal Proceedings (NIJC 11/24)

Censorship

• "Lenient in Theory Dumb in Fact Prison Speech and Scrutiny (2016 David M. Shapiro)
• "Turner's Insurmountable Burden: A Three-Circuit Survey Of Prisoner Free Speech Claims" (2022, Kristen Schnell)
• "Midwest Prison Censorship Update 2025"
• "Circumventing Prison Tech Censorship" (2024)
• "End Book Bans and Mail Censorship at Cook County Jail!" (Midwest BTP 2023)
• Campaign Against Prison Censorship and Book Banning (2022 True Leap Press)
• "Don't Step Back, Fight Back! Proposal for a Coalition against Prison Censorship and Book Banning" by Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin
• "The Perils of Prison Tech Censorship" (2021 Final Straw Radio podcast)
• "Return to Sender: Prison As Censorship" (2023 Mariame Kaba)
• "RTS Zine" (2023 Project NIA)
• Jailhouse Lawyers Manual Ch 19: Your Right to Communicate with the Outside World

California

* CDCR Administrative Grievances and Appeals (2025 Prison Law Office)
* CA Lifer Parole Packet (2019 Legal Services for Prisoners with Children)
* CA State Court Petitions for Writ of Habeas Corpus (2019 Prison Law Office)
• Newsletter: "Keep The Fires Burning" (Oakland Abolition and Solidarity)
• Newsletter: "The Abolitionist" (Critical Resistance)

Request chapters from the 2024 "California Prison and Parole Law Handbook" by Prison Law Office:

Ch 1 Administrative Grievances And Appeals
Ch 2 Rights Of People In Prison
Ch 3 Cruel And Unusual Conditions Use Of Excessive Force And Protection From Physical Sexual Abuse
Ch 4 Classification, Housing, And Programs
Ch 5 Prison Rule Violations
Ch 6 Placement In Segregation
Ch 7 Medical Mental Health, And Dental Care Ch 8 Determinate Sentences, Restitution Time Credits And Release Dates
Ch 9 Lifer Suitability Parole Pardon
Ch 10 Detainers And Extradition
Ch 11 Parole And Post-Release Community Supervision
Ch 12 Civil Commitment Sex Offense Mental Health
Ch 13 Immigration Issues For People In Prison
Ch 14 Direct Appeals Of Criminal Convictions
Ch 15 State Petitions For Writ Of Habeas Corpus And Writ Of Mandate
Ch 16 Federal Petitions For Writ Of Habeas Corpus
Ch 17 Federal Civil Rights 1983 Lawsuits
Ch 18 State Tort Lawsuits
Ch 18 State Tort Lawsuits
Ch 19 Legal Research Writing Strategies

TRULINCS 11137512 - SONG, BENJAMIN HANIL - Unit: FTW-J-A

FROM: 11137512
TO:
SUBJECT:
DATE: 04/04/2026 07:11:49 PM

Dear Midwest Books to Prisoners,

I got the publication! It is so amazing, thank you. I loved the articles and the graphics. It was amazing to see everyone supported from everyone in our case to many people I knew about and got to learn about. I wish I knew about ya'lls project before. I am happy to know about it now. Thank you for all the work. I'm sending some of my poetry, I hope ya'll enjoy it! Thank you! Take care!

Politicized Healing, also like 5 books

Thank You!



CHAMPAGNE SONG (ANY/ALL) IS A WRITER AND RADICAL ACTIVIST, SENTENCED TO 100 YEARS IN PRISON FOR, IN THE WORDS OF THE GOVERNMENT, "[BEING] THE EMBODIMENT OF ANTIFA."

FIND THEIR WORK AT PRISONRADIO.ORG, PRAIRIELANDDEFENDANTS.COM, AND IN SEVERAL ZINES.

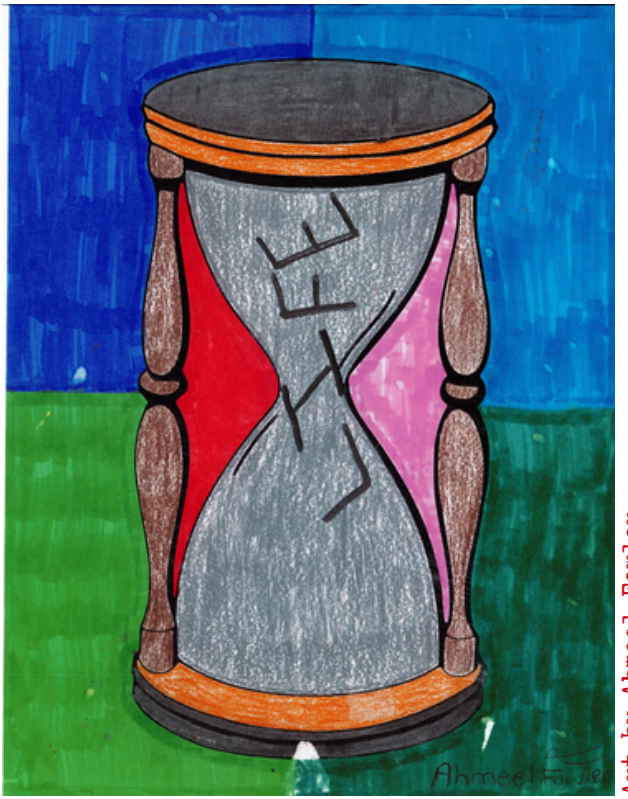
Write to Chamagne using this mailing address:

Johnson County Jail, TX
Benjamin Hanil Song, 202502108
P.O. Box 247
Phoenix, MD 21131

"Prison Art"

There's a Charizard in Segregation Cell 210
It's so big across the ceiling and wall
10 feet off the ground
I don't even know
How it got up there
Flaming breath and iconic tail
Claws, wings, and fangs
It's the best Charizard I've ever seen
It fills me with wonder
I'm lucky to be here
Like my first Artists Alley
or step onto Akibas streets
Surrounded by filth and prisoners screams
It's a peaceful, Holy scene

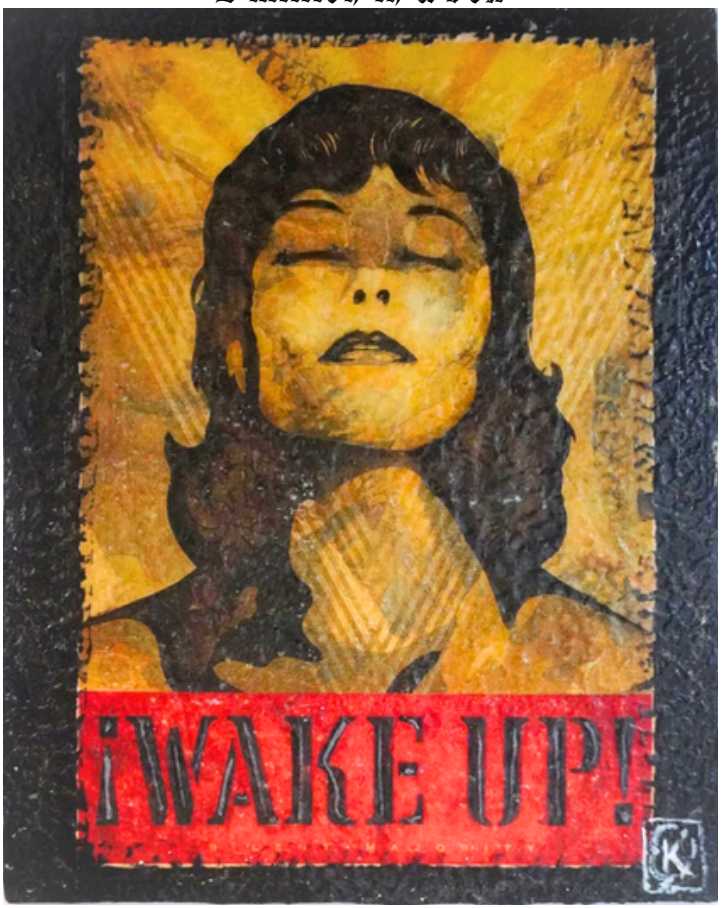
-Champagne Song



Art by Ahmeel Fowler

"Yesterday, it wasn't me"

Yesterday, it wasn't me
But other poor lost souls
whose lives are consigned away
to go on behind closed doors
in tower cells, camps, fences, walls
Whole minds, ideas, and memories
love, trauma, and loss
softness and sadness, bravery and strength
2 million in a box



Art by Kit Brixton

Poetry by Champagne Song

"Merry Christmas"

On my way to court
I saw a homeless sweep
Merry Christmas

Poetry by Champagne Song
Art by Ahmeel Fowler

"My Love"

My lover
And my best friend
I long to see
the fire in your eyes again



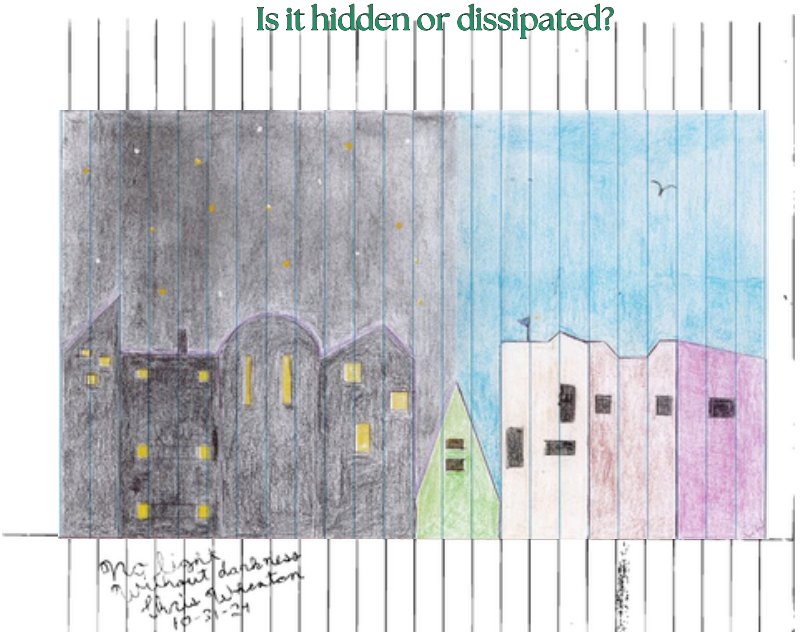
"All At Once"

Time is a circle
Not a straight line
Our warmest embrace
Happening Yesterday
Still happening today
And going on tomorrow

"First Sunrise"

by Champagne Song

The barest hint of scarlet-pink tints the first sky
Long thin clouds streak hot pink ruled lines
the sun's rising brings a deep purple hue
till the windows on the opposite prison wall
reflect peach colored sky above the dark slopes
like gentle volcanoes, a sunrise above Maui
the morning finally brings blue and violet
into the world
it brings the tan of Texas buildings
and Texas dirt
silvery rolls of shining barbed wire
the brake lights of a security car slowly roll by
wide bands stretch out transparent across the sky
move like fingers grasping the world
windows change from the tropics to sterile whites
revealing old rusty iron bars
all the colors now meet
a layered quilt
pink, red, black, purple, peach, blue, white
Finally, I see trees in the distance
Dark shapelessness resolves into green
the grasping hand of the clouds has gone
Is it hidden or dissipated?



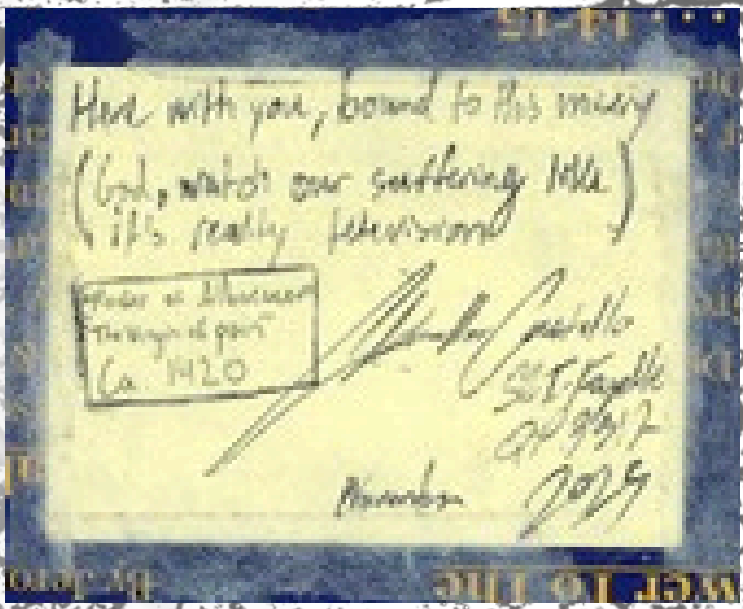
Art "No Light Without Darkness"
by Chris Wheaton



"THE REAPER VS THE DEVIL" BY PARIS ARNOLD



art and words by Chancellor Castillo



In My Dream

by Buddy Smith

In my dream!!
Chocolate chips and lemon cake
Four-course meals and t-bone steak
Then I awake!
To hunger pains and heartaches
Breakfast call
Hard grits and frostbitten pancakes

In my dream!!
The world smells fresh and clean
The sky is blue and the grass is green
Then I awake!!
To grey walls,
And row after row of prison stalls

In my dream!!
I'm innocent and the injection doesn't sting
An angel comes and places me under her wing
Then I awake
To an electric chair as I start to scream
Lord tell me this is all in my dream?



Art by Frank Navarro III

"Community Garden"
by Juan Garnica

Unattractive thorns adorn my image
I blend into the weeds surrounding me
living amongst the despised

The contemplating eyes cannot fathom
a blossom growing in the midst
of so much hostility

Predisposed
Incredulously searching
for imperfections in my beauty

Doubting my authenticity
Refusing to acknowledge
Perseverance

Unwilling
to see I overcame
the barren ground of my captivity

Distinguish my character
fertilizing the soil

Discern the beauty of my thorns
necessary for survival

I flourish in this thriving garden
A perennial
restoring beauty
to the community
I once polluted.



Art by Robert J. Baker

Ponder

Thoughts formed in a Storm, often Conforms from pain -
gained by sustaining rain, in sleets of strain.
To compound the change is to be bound in chains,
Let free from the links, of time and aims.

Unshackle your brain, by pontificating new laws.
Fear, constrained by options unclaimed.
Let loose your frame to engender your gain
by pondering new ways to achieve your claims.

-H Cox



Art by Mike Isenhower



Art by Cole Eben

THE WORLD IS PASSING ALL AROUND ME
IN THIS BOX, THIS ORIGAMI
I'M LEFT TO BEAR THIS PENANCE AND MY ANGST

THE NIGHTMARES REAL BEFORE MY EYES
THESE SHEPHARDS BRING US LAMBS DEMISE
AN INFERNO LOOMING FROM A CAN OF SPRAY

I'VE BEEN HERE FOR TOO MANY DAYS
CHASTISED FOR MY NEGLIGENT WAYS
LONGING FOR A CHANCE TO CALL MY SON

I CANNOT WAIT FOR MY RETURN
TO ROUTINE FRIENDS AND BOREDOM TO BURN
SIMPLICITIES THAT I CONSIDER FUN

MY ENDLESS WOES COULD SHAME THE SINNER
THIS EPIC NEVER HAS A WINNER
THE HERO IS TOO SMALL TO MAKE A WAY
ONE DAY I'LL RECALL THIS STAY
OF THREE MONTHS SPENT IN HOT DISMAY
AND I WILL PRACTICE CAUTION IN IT'S WAKE

BY DYLAN BLACKSTONE

Smile

by Juan Garnica

I wear a smile
to sweeten my bitter image
perpetuating the illusion
you wish you see

I smile
to see the grin
reflecting on your face
        but
you don't care enough
to question its authenticity
        and
perceive my agony

You imagine an oak standing tall
seeking refuge
I can't provide
        with
these withering branches
        blind
to the dying tree

All you can say is
        smile
not daring to
        betray
the masks we're wearing
or awaken from
the fantasy we've created
        to avoid
        suffering
what we feel

My Bondage

Poem by Andrew Arciniega
Art by Cole Eben

To my bondage I could see no end,
To bloodshed countless of lives would be the fate of friends.
Submit to our fate accept the rules I could not apply,
By 18 a 6 to 30 was as normal as apple pie.
Society knows not the way of our lives only it's crime,
Slavery was changed to prisons in the course of time.
My bondage were broken communities, a fact of law;



At 14 I seen my first murder something brutal and raw!
To the system we've become property among the living
How do I cry out to a God the world says is forgiving?
My choices, my scars, but it was the hand I was dealt,
Poverty was cruel so the same the deaths we felt,
Compromising with rivals for hoods that weren't ours,
Division among barrios is what brought death this hour.
To this bondage I could see no end,
I've chose the change now time is my only friend!



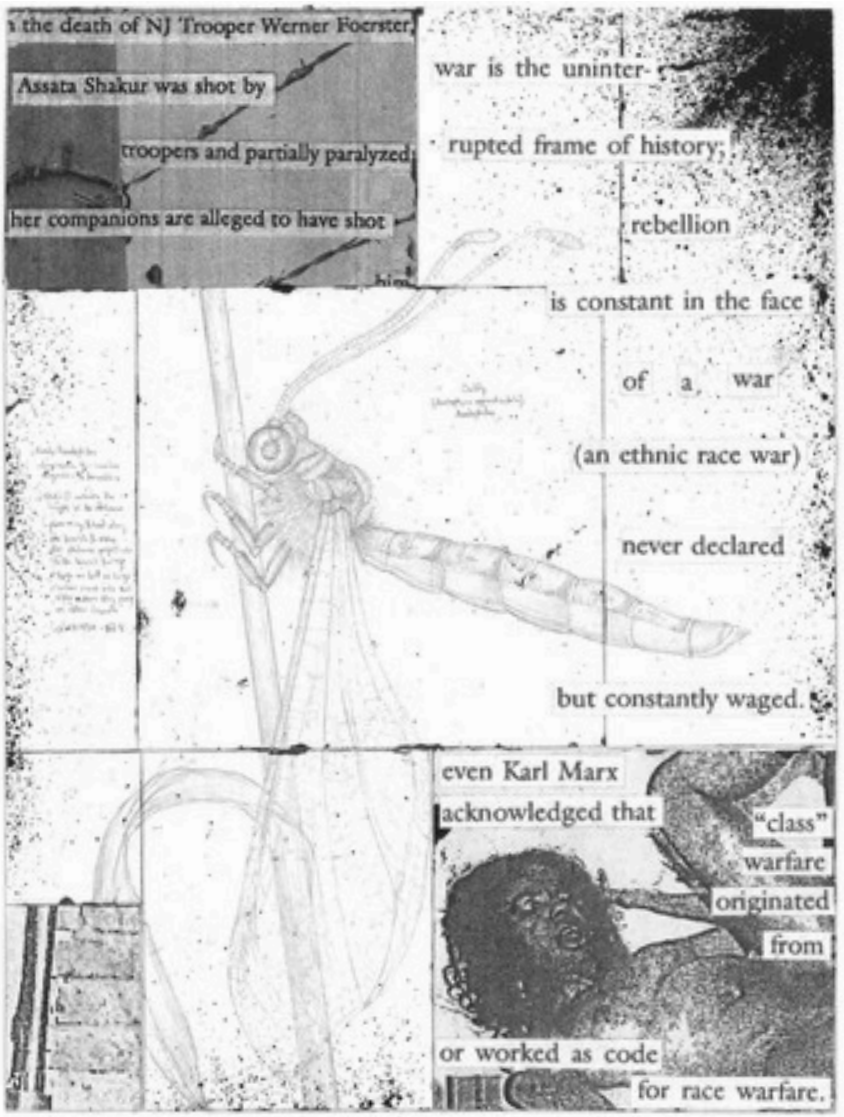
by Dwight Quigley

FOREVER UNDYING

BY DWAYNE "BIM" STAATS (@BIM_2I_)

VISIONS OF HAVING EDGAR J HOOVERS PHONE TAPPED
WHEN I HEAR HIM SAY KILL FRED I COME OUT IN ALL BLACK
ON THE OTHER LINE THE FBI DIRECTOR HEARS A NECK GO
"SNAP"
THEIR STAGED RAID AT PREDAWN HAPPENING I2 YEARS BEFORE
I WAS BORN
STILL I MOURN; LIKE I'VE SWORN TO HOLD COURT, WITH A
POINT TO SETTLE THE SCORE
EXCAVATING GRAVES, SCATTERING REMAINS
OF THOSE WHO ECLIPSED OUR REVOLUTIONARY SUN THAT DEC
4TH
WONDERING IF JUDAS SEEN THE BLACK MESSIAH, BEFORE HE
HIT HELLS FLOOR
PICTURING FREDS WIFE SCREAMING AT THE SOUNDS OF SHOTS
INSTEAD OF KNOCKS
WHILE AN ALLEGIANCE OF DEMONS STREAM IN THE DOOR
WAKE UP FRED! WAKE UP FRED! BUT HE COULDN'T BUDGE
BECAUSE HE WAS DRUGGED BY A SCUM, WHO INFILTRATED HIS
TRUST
THEY WAS PETRIFIED, OF A VOICE SO PROMINENT
THAT THEY HAD TO KILL A GIANT WHILE HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS
FOREVER UNDYING - THE CHAIRMAN JR WAS IN THE WOMB
CANT IMAGINE HOW MUCH TRAUMA INTERNALIZED BY DEAR
MOMMA HE CONSUMED
JUST THOUGHT ABOUT HOW THEY BOMBED THE AFRICANS FROM
THE MOVEMENT MOVE
I GO FROM ONE EXTREME TO THE NEXT, PLEASE EXCUSE MY
MOOD
LIFE AND TIMES OF A SOLITARY CONFINED MIND
WITH A COMMUNAL HEART - THAT GOES OUT TO CHAIRMAN FRED
HAMPTON AND MARK CLARK
AND THOSE THAT DAY, WHO SURVIVED GUNSHOTS THROUGH THE
DARK
FOREVER UNDYING

THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT & COMMITMENT TO THE STRUGGLE!
POWER IS THE PEOPLE - BIM



by Chancellor Castillo

The Face of Emmett Till

FACE THE FACE OF EMMETT TILL 'TIL JUSTICE FINDS HIM WHOLE.
FACE THE WOUNDS THAT HAUNT US STILL, STILL RESTLESS IN HIS SOUL.
THE BALLOONED ORBS WHERE CHEEKS SHOULD BE,
THE BLUDGEONED SMILE THAT WE CAN'T SEE.
LOOK UPON THE GRUESOME MARKS OF JIM CROW'S HEAVY TOLL.

PEER INTO THE CASKET, GASP AT EVIL'S WICKED HAND.
PEER INTO THE PAST AT UNMASKED INHUMANITY OF MAN.
THE MANGLED FORM THAT WAS A BOY,
THE EQUAL RIGHTS THEY CAN'T DESTROY,
LOOK UPON THE FACE THAT CAUSED THE WORLD TO TAKE A STAND.

HIS MOTHER BADE US LOOK, JUST LOOK AND LET THE WHOLE WORLD SEE.
SHE SHOWED US WHAT THEY TOOK, THEY SHOWED THEIR INSECURITY.
THE STOLEN YOUTH BASED ON A LIE.
THE FACE OF TRUTH THAT CANNOT DIE.
LOOK UPON THE FACE OF ONE WHO'S FINALLY BEEN SET FREE.

EMBRACE HIM IN HIS LONELINESS WHO DIED A MARTYR'S DEATH.
EMBRACE HIS ENDLESS LIVELINESS FOR WE ARE NOW HIS BREATH.
THE STRUGGLE THAT HAS YET BEEN WON,
THE VICTORY WE MUST GIVE HER SON.
LOOK UPON THE FACE OF ALL THE WORK THAT WE HAVE LEFT.

STATE OWNED, BUT NOT MY SOUL
STATE OWNED, BUT NOT MY SOUL,
MY MIND AS WELL IS FREE.
ENTWINED THEY FIGHT TO REACH THEIR GOAL -
MAINTAIN MY DIGNITY.

THERE'S FREEDOM IN MY THOUGHT
AND POWER IN MY PRAYER
A VOICE TOO STRONG TO BE DISTRAUGHT
IT SCREAMS FOR JUSTICE THERE.

BEHIND MY BARS, WITHIN MY BRAIN
I TAKE MY FLIGHT AWAY FROM PAIN
I FIND MY JOY AND STILL REMAIN
STATE OWNED, BUT NOT MY SOUL.

-SHAWN BLOCK



Art by Dwight Quigley

"FORCED"

BY HARDY BROWNER

FORCED TO FACE
A FOREIGN DECISION,
FORCED TO EMBRACE
A FOREIGN RELIGION,
BLACK AND WHITE
BEGETS A FOREIGN COLLISION
THAT'S UNPRECEDENTED
DESTROYING OUR VISION

FORCED TO PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE
WHILE PRAISING THE DEAD
IGNORING THE LIVING
AND ONLY FREE IN THE HEAD
INDEPENDENT THINKING
IS THE THING THAT THEY DREAD
DEATH OR FREEDOM
IS THE REASON THEY FLED.

NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
CREATED THE DISTANCE
ACCOMPANIED BY AN IDEOLOGY
THAT MADE US DEFENSELESS
PROVING THEM WRONG
AND MAKING THE DIFFERENCE
ANCESTRAL PAIN CREATED RESISTANCE.

FOR REMOVAL OF CHAINS
CHARGE THEM A FEE,
SHACKLE THEIR MINDS
CONVINCE THEM THEY'RE FREE
FELONY CONVICTION
IS SLAVERY FOR LEASE
AS THE MURDER OF KING
WAS THE REMOVAL OF PEACE.

NEW RAP SONGS
SPIRITUAL POLLUTION
INTERNAL REVOLUTION
IS THE ONLY RESOLUTION
READ THE CONSTITUTION
AND IT'S VOID OF A SOLUTION
NO BLACK INCLUSION
SO FREEDOM'S A DELUSION
NO BLACK INCLUSION
SO FREE(DUMBS) A DELUSION



Art by Dwight Quigley

Stars

Take off with no hesitation
Towards an unknown place without destination
If we turn around we'll see the ground vacant
What was once now isn't

Let's push past our imagination's limits
Be creatures of creation
Even when the atmosphere induces deprivations
We'll make our own oxygen
In our own places
And plenty more

In the darkness we can breed light
We'll be the arsonists
The burning stars in the vastness of night
We can reach heights beyond the sky
Even beyond our time
We will burn for past our existence
Light years in the distance

Let's escape by awaking from this land
As a desert's sand we'll flow unconstricted
From beginning to end
Free like a brush stroke
We can paint a thousand pictures
Without one spoken word

Take flight let's go opposite of gravity
Above our gatherings of comfort
A rare felt altitude paid for what it's worth

Let's go there
We can go anywhere and nowhere
Like paint splatter
Unpredictable
Let's shatter our glasses of present perceptions
Indirectly directed misdirections
And pass through forecasts of the skeptics
We won't allow to cloud our visional senses

Our limitations are not present
They may never be in our existence
So let's fly as high as we can
Burning stars in the distance

by Alex Manov

Before I am dead and gone
And I finally rest in peace
I hope to leave behind
An unforgettable legacy,
Ever since I was a child,
I wasn't confident or convinced
I would ever reach my full potential
Life never made too much since
One day I picked up a pen
And my hand I began to write
I couldn't believe what I wrote
Suddenly so much came to light,
I wanted to be successful
But my mind would have to expand
It was obvious I had a gift
That gift is in my hand,
I had to keep on writing
So my talent would be exposed
And as I kept on writing
Something beautiful began to unfold
I started putting words together

•••

Words with meaning and that also rhymed
It became like poetry in motion
Derived from the depths of my mind,
I wrote about pain and love
Passion, betrayal, and trust
Tales of life and death
Commitment, denial and lust
And any other subject matter
That happen to cross my mind
Ideas would begin to arise
And intermingled at inappropriate times,
I would write them down on paper, napkins
Or any material I could find
I would iterate it over and over
Until it was embedded in my mind,
If this wicked prison life
Don't become the death of me
Then it's possible I'll succeed
But my writings will forever be...
My Legacy!!

Rattle

by Eric McCormick



Art by (anon)

The dry bones of dead dreams
Rattle, relentless and sure
Both beneath and atop
The cacophony of the World.
I shake them, from time to time,
Although they resonate
Just as well left alone.
I can't stand to bury them,
It's too much effort.
To dig dig dig dig
Them up again.
That work is too
Dark and lonely,
They decorate my brain
Life a witch-doctor's hut
On some desolate, rocky island,
Full of magick and fear,
Memory and amen,
Dreams, dead and dry,
But I still rattle their
Bones bones bones bones bones
And shake them at
The ghosts they've made
Relentless and sure.

Hide and Seek

by Eric McCormick

In the tall
Grass, in the
Shadows of corners
Of churches and dreams
And gyms and
Addictions and diet
Plans and in the
Mantras of
Gurus
We all cavort and capes
Giggling and fidgety,
Never quite
Silent or still
Enough, until
It calls us,
"All is free!"

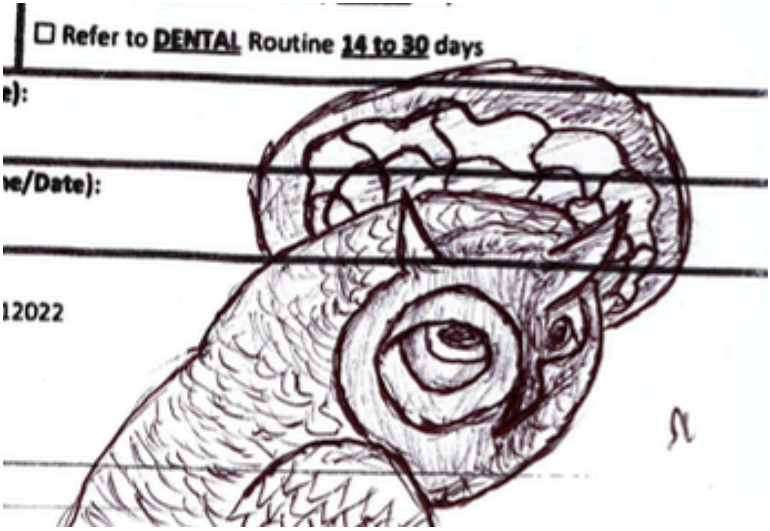


"Cali" by John P

Dandelion Dreams

by Anarchist Prisoner Sean Swain

A dandelion came to me in a dream
Gold and blazing
Wrapped in fire
A new friend feeling familiar
Singing of juneberries
Candy and piñatas
I awoke with dandelion song
in my ears
Closed my eyes
Faced the fence line
And blew softly into the air
A whisper of breeze
A song of wind
To reach an open field beyond the fence
and left white fuzzy dander
of a distant dandelion
to scatter and take root and thrive
as a thousand seeds of hope.



Art by Frank Navarro III

SELF [AKA, EGO PAINTS WITH FALSE COLORS]

BROKEN IS THE TIE BETWEEN IDENTITY AND SELF
THE DEEPEST REACHES OF MIND SCOURED
IN HOPE OF ASCERTAINING REMNANTS OF INDIVIDUALITY
PERSONALITY SKIMS THE FARTHEST SHORES OF FAMILIARITY
ENCROACHING CONFUSION IS SOON MET WITH CHORDS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL REPOSE
THOUGHTS ARE LEFT ABANDONED IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE UNBEKNOWN
THE PRIMAL PATH LEFT UNMASKED, DESOLATION REMAINS UNACCOMPANIED
A STRANGER AS GUIDE, DIRECTION IS LOST
GENESIS RESTS AS COUNSEL AS FAINT REMEMBRANCE HOLDS FAST
EMOTIONAL BONDS EXCITE THE SENSES, SERVING AS A LAST LINK OF ORIGIN
TEMPORARY RE-ACQUAINTANCE LINGERS
SELFHOOD MUST NOT BREATHE ITS LAST

-MR. JERRY BARNES, III

SOLOW REDLINE

Check out SoLow Redline on the net
Spotify, Soundcloud, Youtube & Facebook

Support SoLow by donating to his cashapp
$LiyahMeshell19

Write SoLow Redline at Cook County Jail:

Joseph Lane #20230728042

2700 S California

Chicago, IL 60608



Write MWB2P to request BARS BEHIND BARS, the zine of SoLow's collected work.

"I Know"
by SoLow Redline

WELCOME ONCE AGAIN TO THE MIND OF SOLOW
MY MOTHER NAMED ME JOSEPH, BUT SOME CALL ME JOE, THOUGH
YOU CAN CALL ME WHAT YOU LIKE, JUST ENJOY THE SHOW
WHILE I EXPLAIN TO YOU WHAT I ALREADY KNOW
MY SUN SIGN IS AQUARIUS, SO TO SOME I'M MR. KNOW-IT-ALL
BUT THE TRUTH IS, I DON'T SPEAK ON WHAT I DON'T KNOW AT ALL
LIKE ALL THE DIFFERENT SUBJECTS, I KNOW I CAN THROW AT Y'ALL
IT'S SOME SIDES OF ME THAT I WON'T SHOW AT ALL
I KNOW SOME PEOPLE DON'T CARE FOR ME AND I'M OKAY WIT THAT
BECAUSE WHEN I SHARE MY OPINIONS, I USUALLY DON'T TAKE IT BACK
YOU SEE, I KNOW L'VE BEEN THROUGH HELL, BUT I SAFELY MADE IT BACK
SO I KNOW A DEVIL WHEN I SEE ONE, NOW TAKE WHAT YOU TAKE FROM THAT
I KNOW PEOPLE LIKE TO JUDGE ME AND DON'T EVEN KNOW ME
I KNOW NOT TO GAMBLE, CAUSE I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE TO OWE ME
I KNOW A LOT OF HISTORY, I STUDIED THOSE BEFORE ME
SO IF YOU KNOW SOMETHING I DON'T, I INVITE YOU TO SHOW ME
I KNOW MY LIMITATIONS, SO I DON'T LIKE TO DRINK
I DON'T HANG WITH SHADY PEOPLE CAUSE I KNOW HOW THEY THINK
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A WRITER, I KNOW MY WAY AROUND THE INK
I KEEP MY EYES ON THE PRIZE, I KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I BLINK
I KNOW HOW TO SURVIVE, YOU GOTTA PAY YOUR DUES

•••

...

I KNOW WHY SOME PEOPLE CRY, CAUSE I BEEN IN YOUR SHOES
I KNOW HOW IT FEEL TO MISS YOUR BOAT, IF YOU SNOOZE YOU LOSE
I KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG, I AIN'T NEVER BEEN CONFUSED
I'M DIFFERENT FROM THE CROWD, I KNOW WE NOT THE SAME
I TAKE LIFE SERIOUS, I KNOW IT'S NOT A GAME
I KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A LIT MATCH MEETS UP PROPANE
I KNOW IF IT'S AN OIL FIRE, USE SALT TO EXTINGUISH THE FLAME
NOTHING IN LIFE IS PROMISED, I KNOW IF YOU DON'T WORK, YOU DON'T EAT
ALTHOUGH I'VE WON A LOT IN LIFE, I ALSO KNOW THE FEELING OF DEFEAT
I'M NOT A SORE LOSER, BUT I LOVE THE RUSH WHEN I COMPETE
I LIKE TO FINISH WHAT I STARTED, I KNOW WHEN MY JOB IS NOT COMPLETE
I KNOW TOMORROW IS DIFFERENT, SO I PLAN IN ADVANCE
OF ALL THE THINGS I DO KNOW, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DANCE
I KNOW A LOT ABOUT WOMEN, I'M EXPERIENCED IN ROMANCE
I KNOW TO TREAT HER LIKE A LADY, TAKE HER OUT & HOLD HANDS
I KNOW MY KIDS LOVE ME, EVEN THOUGH L'M NOT THE BEST FATHER
EVEN THOUGH I EDUCATED, I KNOW I COULD ALWAYS BE SMARTER
I'VE CAME A LONG WAY IN LIFE, BUT I KNOW I CAN GO FARTHER
I'VE DONE A LOT WITH MY CRAFT, BUT I KNOW I CAN GO HARDER
THAT'S ONLY SOME OF WHAT I KNOW, L'M NOT EVEN HALFWAY THROUGH
I KNOW ABOUT TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS, BECAUSE I HAD MY FEW
I KNOW SOME OF Y'ALL GONE, LIKE THIS PIECE THIS WHAT I DO THOUGH
SOME PROBABLY WON'T LIKE IT, BUT I ALREADY KNEW

"ABANDONED"

BY SOLOW REDLINE

I sometimes feel alone
left behind, by myself, on my own
Everybody I love is all gone
I've been pushed to the side, dismissed, disowned
Who would be at my funeral if I were to pass away?
I'm not askin because I feel bad today
I just have to say
It hurts to the core to be treated as a castaway
Am I a bad apple, spoiled and rotten?
Is that why l'm hurting, feeling downtrodden?
Will this pain be stoppin or am I just temporarily forgotten?
Imagine wakin up feeling froze because you slept out in the cold
I'm not just talk bout frostbitten toes
When I say "left out in the cold"
I'm talkin by yourself, being discarded Nobody cares, totally disregarded
I'm fighting this depression, trying my hardest
But still I lose every round, regardless
You can see it in my face, it can't be imitated
There is a shell up over my heart that can't be penetrated
I don't know how to love because it's never been demonstrated
I feel empty inside, like my soul has been eliminated
like I'm in a relationship and just got dumped
on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere and can't get a jump
I might cry soon in my throat, I feel that lump
Deflated like a car tire, no access to a pump
Imagine being pushed away, always rejected
People give you the cold shoulder and don't care how you affected
No sense of security, never being protected
You don't have to be an orphan for you to be neglected
When will I see heaven? I'm living in hell
Ain't nothing goin good, I'm not doing too well
I wanted to write something uplifting, once again I failed
You think this poem is sad? Imagine rotting in jail
in one of these cells

"STILL RAINING"

BY SOLOW REDLINE

All the military powers, the soldiers and bombs
Can't stop a storm overhead so desperate to come
You can't trust the politicians cause they work with the devil
Put your faith in one of them the whole earth with get leveled
Gangbangers with a badge to protect serve
Every time they get made it affects the world
I think we need another Noah to come build an ark
We ain't going nowhere like a car still in park
Everybody getting wet and it's cold and sickness
Little girls' heads swell when they notice they thickness
Manmade disease but it ain't no cure
What if the president caught it? Well, I ain't so sure
Money get you what you want like a cure for AIDS
Ain't it magic how it magically just goes away
I think we need some sunshine before we all get drenched
If this is a dream, then I think we all need to get pinched
It's still raining
We need the rain to stop, to change this plot
You ready for a change or not
It's still raining
We need sunlight in the air
It's still raining
We need the rain to stop to change this plot
You ready for a change or not
Dear Lord, if you hear me, we need a way out
We can't afford to sit back and watch it all play out
Everybody going wrong, can't find a safe route
Kids living on the streets where they forced to stay out
Tsunami took lives, Katrina took homes
I know this poem won't right all wrongs
But have mercy on us Lord, we are not that strong
We can't fix this on our own
It's still raining.

This Way Out
They call it outside but it's made of concrete
and into this live tomb on a dim Monday morning
the bullfrog slid like it was a mountain brook,
camouflaged as if planning on cement living.

You only see sky if you keep moving,
gunmetal whorls of wandering showers appearing
to slacken and loiter through honeycomb grate,
black amphibian eye reflecting void beyond.

Look, he's climbing the wall, and we've all done this,
that's why it's a he, his slimy toes cleaner than ours
finding purchase on the rough boundaries of life.
He'll go out how he came in, through a gap frog-sized,

Soul-sized, a hole just big enough to wriggle,
holding down the hops to pull one leg and it's jelly pal
to the inviting darkness of outer-space
or the path that gets you to it.

-Max Reynard



"YOU ALL MAY HELP HOPEFULLY SAY WHATEVER YOU BELIEVE 'THE 'EVER HOPEFUL' ENRAGED MUTANT NINJA SQUIRREL MIGHT SAY TO HELP YOUR DONORS UNDERSTAND HOW LIFE-CHANGING THEIR HELP IS.. MORE THAN ONE LIFE WILL BE LOST THIS HOLIDAY SEASON FOR LACK OF A BOOK TO ESCAPE INTO - SIMPLE TRUTH"

-CAT COVELLI

Love Poems

For anybody's martyr's song

by Santos Pruett

Art by
Jose Martinez-Segundo



What's love that's always strong? Beasts from the antipodes, spring down! And haydens leap like liams over beaches! Love is the friend whose faithfulness is wit, is best your mimic when you tongue-tied vow, aloof when you win and surly when you stammer, cries I do not understand you, and corrects your right answer.

2. Indulges with contempt your sweet tooth at the fair, gives you fearful rides on the roller coaster, greets you like a sovereign when you've come on hour, but puts the green toad in your bed just as soon thereafter. Your sober love turns tomcat in the bar.

3. Children hate school, soldier's discipline, love hates love but what's the good of that? O the sweet cry, the dark eye! Love stomps it's foot but cannot slip the snot.

4. Man can remove the leopard's spat, nor ever dye the wolf white, love loves what love is nor can it change that.

The Viewer
by Dylan Blackstone

Like the frog, I sat upon a lonely lilypad among
A forest dressed for a festive sort of way
The birds, they chirped, and bugs, they hummed, and from
The nectar all were drunk, rejoicing in the harvest of the day
For hours they made riotous cheer: hoorahed they like the chanticleer
Their laughter filled the woods like children's play
I stayed but to enjoy the show and while their songs fell through the oak
A change in wind had marked the time of day
I bid adieu, and with a flutter, these little wings of mine then uttered
A dance that took me back from where I came
To home, a cozy fixer-upper. I returned and fixed up supper
A blend of fig and apple marmalade
To my den, I then retired and curled myself beside a fire
Reflecting on the frolic and the games
An ecstasy had overcome me: in my bed there I laid slumb'ring
Rejoicing in the bounty we had made

Art by Jose Martinez-Segundo



#1

Long Words (cont: Path)

Start at the SQUARE
Vertical - Horizontal - Zigzag only!

T	I	C	E	D	C	O	P	P	C	K	U	N	U	R
S	I	L	X	I	C	P	C	N	O	H	S	V	O	I
S	I	I	P	L	I	I	R	I	F	I	C	A	B	I
C	L	G	I	A	O	H	U	O	I	D	U	T	I	L
I	I	A	R	F	U	S	E	E	C	I	N	I	T	A
P	C	H	I	I	L	A	C	L	S	U	F	S	U	T
O	C	S	P	M	O	N	R	L	O	G	O	D	B	I
C	V	I	P	O	P	S	E	O	L	H	C	I	S	P
S	O	S	O	T	N	T	P	R	O	D	I	F	E	O
O	L	O	P	O	E	R	U	S	M	S	I	L	U	D
R	C	I	N	O	U	O	Y	R	O	I	D	U	D	U
C	A	N	O	C	M	S	H	H	A	N	E	O	O	E
I	L	U	O	N	O	E	T	T	E	M	O	R	H	S
M	T	P	I	U	Q	S	A	R	A	P	O	P	Y	P
A	R	P	E	D	A	L	I	O	P	H	O	B	I	A

PNEUMONOULTRAMICROSCOPICSILICOVOLCANOCONIOSIS (45)

HIPPOPOTOMONSTROSESQUIPPEDALIOPHOBIA (36)

PSEUDOPSEUDOHYPOPARATHYROIDISM (30)

SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS (34)

EELLOGOFUSCIOUHIPOPPOKUNURIOUS (30)

HONORIFICABILITUDINITATIBUS (27)

DICHLORODIFLUOROMETHANE (23)

R Rose

Puzzle by Richard Rose

Greeting Card Instructions

- Cut along the dotted line.
- Fold and write a note inside!
- (This side is the cover page.)

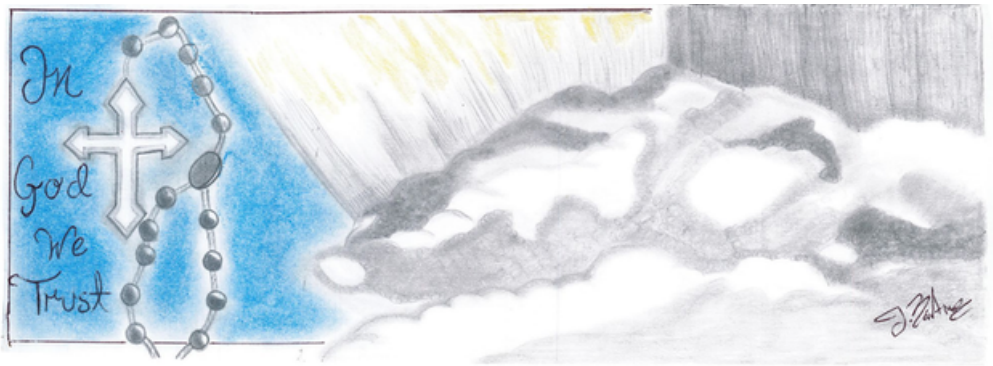


When we asked Jose Martinez-Segundo if we could use his art for greeting cards to send people inside, he responded with even more greeting card designs. Including this panda-themed card, which we hope you use to send a letter to someone!





Out
of a thousand
roses, I picked the
One that will have
eternal Life



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Thank you for reading our community zine!

If you want to support any of the showcased artists, please look up where they are incarcerated to see instructions for sending money and mail

Always in solidarity, Midwest Books to Prisoners

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Front cover art:

"PRISONER OF MY OWN MIND"

by Paris Arnold

Back cover art:

"Fly Guys"

by Bryan Harrold





