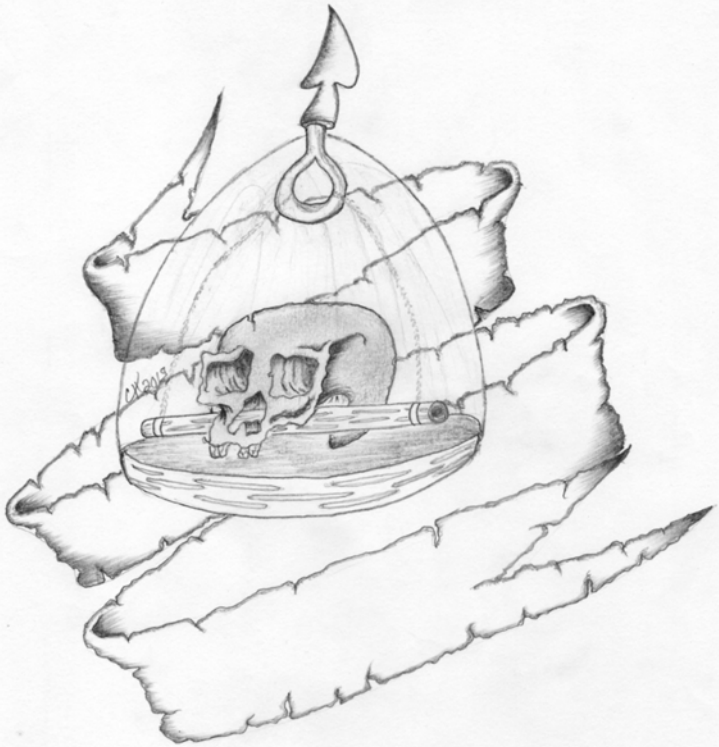
Words of Fire



Issue X, Summer 2019

Writing & Art by and for Prisoners

Produced by Prison Books Collective

Words of Fire is a collection of writing and artwork by people in prison or on parole at time of publication. It is published by Prison Books Collective Publishing and Distribution.

We welcome submissions of short essays, opinion pieces, poetry (all text pieces under 500 words), and art from people in prison. Submissions may be edited for clarity and length, and spelling and grammar for comprehension. We will not publish works that are racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise target specific groups of people, and discourage promoting violence. We will also likely not publish more than two pieces by one artist.

Include your name and location on all submissions, preferably each page. The printed zine will show full name and location, while the online version uses initials only. **Tell us if you have other preferences.**

Mail submissions to:
Words of Fire
Prison Books Collective
PO Box 625
Carrboro, NC 27510

Words of Fire only exists with your support! We'd like to thank everyone who submitted work featured in this issue.

We are a group based in Chapel Hill and Durham, North Carolina, that sends books to people in N.C. and A.L. prisons and zines (noncommercial booklets about various topics) nationwide every week. We also publish this zine of art and writing by people in prison. See more at http://PrisonBooks.info

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An Introduction

Hello friends and comrades,

This is the tenth issue of Words of Fire, our semi-regular zine of prisoners' writing, drawing, and news. We thank both our applicants and our audience for patience as we put together the newest edition. We tried to include works by as many creators as possible.

Since the last *Words of Fire*, the limitations prison systems put on reading material have received national attention; notably, bans on *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander were challenged and lifted in North Carolina and other states in 2018. In fact, the scrutiny over that ban helped free more books from the banned list.

Across the nation, in New York, Arizona, Washington, and more, groups who send books to inmates directly are coordinating to preserve inmates' rights to read. Meanwhile, activists and organizations struggle against for-profit prisons, the racist and classist justice system, solitary confinement, mistreatment of vulnerable inmates (e.g., our transgender siblings), and inhumane detention of undocumented immigrants. We encourage our readers to engage in these fights, and to keep in mind how they are connected.

Whether it is a dictionary, a guide to business, a mystery, or a coloring book, book requests are being answered every week at our workspace. We thank our volunteers for that, as well as managing the organization. We are also grateful to donors, whether they are a library, bookstore, school, or a concerned human being.

Finally, thank you to those who submitted their work. We honor your choice to share your heart with us and the world.

In solidarity,
Prison Books Collective
Summer 2019

Liberation through Literature

By N.L.
Portage, W.I.

Sentenced to a cage
For a fatal, youthful mistake
Knowing that, as I age,
My painful regrets won't change
What I would if I could

Despite my life sentence,
I seek to understand
The world that I live in
And who I really am,
So I can be a better human
—Though the massive, dull, dark wave
Of the heartless state
Does its best to drown me.
My soul struggles just to breathe
And—feeling so lonely—
Sometimes wishes I'd cease

Maybe masochistically,
Or stupidly
I've chosen to be.
Kept away from those that're kind
It's been within books that my mind
Has felt the rays of 'light'
That my fate's denied
Giving me a taste, at least
Of a sweeter life.

Books fuel my dreams.
I shouldn't complain, I suppose…
Some lack even those.

But books don't always ease the pain
Of wondering how my life might've been
"If only I'd known…"
Sometimes they must close.

And this pain, this ache,
It isn't all bad,
It pushes my pen
Inspiring poems
And prose
Which someday,
I hope,
Will make a book of my own.

Knowledge v. Education

By R.M.
Waynesburg, P.A.

Amidst the intelligentsia and skilled craftsmen of the proletariat, there lurks an invisible hand. This hand sorts men, and in doing so, lifts some up whilst holding others down, not according to their knowledge, nor their abilities, but to the singular prerequisite of an imperialist education. As a result, those possessing pieces of paper, signifying that all of which they know has been learnt under the auspices of one of these "hallowed" institutions, occupy a class of men who take precedent over those who have garnered their knowledge through experience, through blood and sweat, through natural talent and innate intelligence, or through a prodigious passion for their craft.

Ask yourself: Which holds more practical value, knowledge or education? For all intents and purposes, it's knowledge. So why is it that society favors the educated over the knowledgeable? Because an education can be controlled; it can be molded and shaped to keep information in its preferable context. An education is simply information input management, minimizing independent thinking to maintain a status quo. It's knowledge, however, that breeds change and births progress, because when there is no filter on the input of thought, then there is none on the output either. That is the fundamental difference between the two: That one comes already assembled, and one you have to put together yourself.

Daylight Savings

By R.M.
Waynesburg, P.A.

A gentle rain falls
Beneath dense ribbons of cloud
As a sympathetic sun
Melts away the walls and wire—
For but a moment, I know
Why the soul suffers
When it need not—
Alas! Wisdom wanes as
Echoes of unbearable misery,
Ricochetting off steel and concrete,
Make their way toward me—
Reminding me
To mind my hurt
Lest I lose it.

Because of You

By W.H.

Death row, Raleigh, NC

A Glimmer of hope-filled life
Pierced my dark overcast clouds of morose depression
Because of You
Taking the time to let me find a quiet, gentle refuge within
Your soothing words of experience-laden meditation and verification
A ray of Gracious and forgiving guidance was shone upon
Me with Radiance filled possibilities
If I but struggle to live and give
Life a chance I would pull through
Because there stands others Just Like
You!
Who said, “There’s nothing you can’t do?”: Live, breathe, strive/survive
Believe, you can and will achieve! I’m here but have no fear
The legions of the cosmos will aide you if you but
Stay conscious and true
All this was shared by, through and to me
From a Goddess of Pure spirit and all that’s
True
Because of you
So to the untold multitudes of You!
I surrender an eternal
Thank You!
For coming to my rescue!

Whispers from a Prisoner

By Vernon Nelson

Pershing County, NV

Emerging from my Nest like an eagle
I soar through the sky, observing the world
from a three hundred sixty degree angle
in my mind.
this is how I feel when I walk
amongst those who are spiritually
unconscious in the prison yard.
many People both in prison
and in the free world spend so much
time everyday
worrying about things that are meaningless….
We want to maneuver on an elevated level
But what we’re doing is
fooling ourselves, playing ourselves,
Destroying ourselves; and running from ourselves.
if we focused more on investing
our time and energy in brining one another closer
together, instead of being severed from each other,
we could bend light, communicate our thoughts and visions
and actually accomplish what we were
Put on this planet to do.
the most important thing in this world is time
and yet (everyday) we are running out of it…
How would you like to be remembered
100 years from Now?
What would you like said about you
when you are reduced
to Nothing but dust in the wind?
Did you help others? Did you love others?
Did you Pardon those that perhaps didn’t
deserve to be pardoned?
Well, just remember, that is the Very thing
We will all be seeking when we stand
before the lord in judgement: A Pardon.
it’s easy to give to those who are friends
and that give back to us,
But, the true test of god’s love
is to show mercy and kindness to
our enemies.

Vernon Wilson has multiple books available on Lulu.com, such as Emotion Stirred *(novel),* My Life and My Charms *(memoir), and* The Lost Writings of Vernon Wilson *(self-help).*

Tear Filled Angry Eyes

By D.B
Spruce Pine, NC

I watch in sadness as I see my world crumble
Before my eyes; in grief and pain I pray as little
Children across the land die, people oppressed because they're
A shade too dark, or they're not a part of the brotherhood of man.
With tear filled angry eyes I ask why so much bloodshed and hate in a
World so vast; so many wasted by an emotion that eats
Away the soul like cancer inside the body. How have so many
been tricked into mass suicide?
I look to the leaders in disgust at the wars they wage
In Democracy's name; The lies they spread to instill pride
And fear, creating killing machines who kill without even
Knowing why or their victims' names.
Wars! Nothing more than the rich man's scheme,
One in which profits are guaranteed. Politicians' stand
back and play this game of chess, manipulating each piece,
From the safe cozy shelter, another soldier dies, another human life sacrificed
Guaranteed capital gain,
Soldiers and civilians alike, all are but pawns and
knights upon the boards of these Political hounds. The
Illuminati in their secret crusade, in their thirst
For supreme command they crush beneath their feet
All who oppose.

They poison minds with dreams of freedom and peace,
A land where each person owns their piece, be it
Land or home, car or boat, Yet they tax and lean
And if you should refuse to pay then your dream is
Quickly taken away!
Democracy and freedom What are they anyhow?
How can there be democracy when they shove it
Down your throat without the courtesy of a
Drink of water. Compulsion is not a choice!
How can it be freedom when you have no
Real choice in the matter, when in reality
You're not allowed to stand with your own individualization
Which to be free surely demands.
Now you know the reason for the tears
In these tired and angry eyes!

Tears of an Oppressed Thug

By M.W.
Los Angeles County, C.A.

21 years and counting. No signs of light at the end of the tunnel… The boots on my neck; I scream (Black Power), Slavery is over with. The flash light across my head, blurs my vision; yet I remain dignified, pondering the atrocity, slaughter my ancestor's endured…empowered by a rich culture memory. I evolve like a African Lion. Their eyes ignite, fear consumes their disposition they run opposite from a oppressed soul no man in sight, I lick my wounds; thank my ancestors & walk head high chest out light at the end of the tunnel.

Bleed

By J.M.
Perry, F.L.

I know the world is crumbling, as I can feel it give beneath my feet.

What have we done, and what will we become should we extinguish a place so unique.

If our soul is not a part of our lives because it has a different thrive.

Where is the energy source. Its like a conscious vibe, where wrong may have conscience derive.

Hear the horns plenty forge.

You'll not save yourself unless you're willing to perish inside of another dimension.

Suffocating for a cheap high has been enlightening that the spirit travels unaware by premonition.

When the sun goes down it's much easier to see the moon walking quietly on the water.

Every era has destroyed itself in particles until it totally vanishes; we're in scope for target.

Leaving is hard, but being left hurts. This isn't spoken rhetoric, but is dying oxidative.

Archaeology has produced portions of placements for museums, its poignance pep probative.

Movies have brought a lot of theories to life, look in case you haven't the imagination to read.

The universe is hungry for a supernova, and Earth is choking-thirsty, waiting for us to bleed…

Untitled #810

By Jack E. Dyson
Bonifay, F.L.

Physical pain, Emotional desolation, Behavioural abnormalities, Violent provocations, Systematically institutionalized, By dogmatic government, Psychologicaly unstable, Destroying all credibility, Ignominious inmate, That they can not and will not subjugate.



"Choose Wisely"
By S.G.,
Bellefonte, P.A.

The Gladiator's Eyes

By W.B.
Tabor City, N.C.

The gladiator's eyes
Fix me
With a vacant stare…

The stare
of a soul
That has traveled
The Via Dolorosa
A thousand times…

A soul
That well knows
The existential horror
When Atropos snips
The slender thread of Life
Yet again…

Yet realizes further
That the horror
Doesn't even mean anything…

That this animated flesh
To which a soul so tightly clings
As to a life-raft
In a shark-filled sea…

Is nothing more
Than meaningless dirt
Into which
The gods
Have breathed life,
Merely for amusement.

Through One Eye Only

By T.G.
Spruce Pine, N.C.

The torch burns to its zenith
As the drums echo,
Across the tree tops,
In distant lands…

They run from shore to shore,
Neglecting the truth,
Unity of the human race,
Heaven of the soul…

They nod their heads
They seldom smile,
Like a ship passing in the night,
The sea gulls fall…

The earth trembles a course,
Heart against heart,
Claim something, anything!
Let not the violence rise…

Then they walk, and walk,
To the powers there be,
Raising their sorted banners,
Yet they don't see…

What If Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now* Had Covered the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March?

By Donald "C-Note" Hooker
California State Prison, Los Angeles County

On January 21, 2017, in Washington, D.C., the Women's March was held. Two-hundred and ten-days later, on August 19, 2017, in Washington, D.C., the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March was held. Two-hundred and fourteen-days after that, on March 24, 2018, in Washington, D.C., the March for Our Lives was held. I became aware of Amy Goodman's Democracy Now and the work they do four-years-ago. Their on the ground reporting at the Women's March was excellent.

Sometime thereafter, I became aware of the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March. Seeing the crowd turnout for the Women's March, this was an opportunity to have similar crowds showcasing public support in the cause of the prisoner. I told anybody I could about the Prisoner March. I created a graphic design about the event that included the contact information to the event organizer. I then had the design printed on paper as stationary and distributed it to the prison population. When asked by various prisoners, "Why are you doing this? I told them, "It is our responsibility to assist those in society who are helping us behind the wall." While this was my message, many didn't seem to get it. One day we had visitors to give us entrepreneurial advice. I shared this stationary and it went over extremely well. One group was a Silicon Beach start-up that specializes in Social Justice Promotion. Two-weeks later, I reached out to this group to help promote the Prisoner March, and was temporarily suspended from my entrepreneurial group for doing so.

For the past two-years, every Saturday, I have been working with the Nation of Islam and their Fruit of Islam (FOI), regarding Minister Farrakhan's "10,000 Fearless," the call for men and women to be involved in neighborhood conflict resolution. ON Saturday, the day of the Prisoner March, I skipped this weekly meeting to watch Amy Goodman's Democracy Now cover the Prisoner March. This didn't happen. It happened nowhere on Broadcast T.V.; even tho this was a nationwide March.

On Saturday, August 12, 2017, in Charlottesville, Virginia, Heather Heyer was fatally killed in a hit and run during a protest rally of White Nationalist. A week later on the 19th, rallies were held across the country protesting Heyer's death. These rallies were covered in the national press and Democracy Now.

While our Prisoner rallies were nationwide, and multitude of people did participate, we did not reach critical mass to capture the public imagination. And "Why was that?" I list poor planning by the national event organizers, poor funding, and a lethargic laissez faire attitude by the prisoner population in getting family members involved.

Long time Penal Reformers and Abolitionist have seen the failures of individuals with big ideas but poor managerial skills, or lack of staffing to support those ideas but poor managerial skills, or lack of staffing to support those ideas. Oprah Winfrey and George Clooney gave March for Our Lives $500,000 each. It is not as tho Penal Reform movements don't have their arts and entertainment supporters and other philanthropist. 2.3-million times the number of family members affected by their imprisonment and America can mobilize a formidable March for Prisoners.

We are living in an age where social movements are becoming aware that support must be intersectional, meaning across social movements. To those who rally and use the "Prisoner's Voice," to raise awareness and fundraise off of, must understand that they must help to create stars-behind-bars. To the uninitiated, American prison-culture, influences American street-culture. American street-culture, influences Global culture. Cultural capital can be made into real capital. The currency capital of a reality TV star is their fame. that means making stars-behind-bars out of our writers and artist becomes a form of leverage of cultural currency in the planning and promoting of events. IT also means giving back to those artisans financially. This acts as an incentive for the prisoner-artist to go deeper into the mastery of their art. It also spurs broader prisoner participation in learning about the creative process, and how to become involved in the movement. And studies show, that participation in the arts is a known quantum in producing a more actualized returning citizen. Social media advance posting, scheduling tools, such as Hootsuite and Facebook Page Manager allows for the reposting of a prisoner's work, or links to their work, several times in any given month, week, or day. The same programing technique Record labels use with radio or streaming to capture the public's imagination with their artist. While much progress has been made, the mere fact that one March came 210-days before our March with mass media coverage, shows we have a long way in capturing the public's imagination here in the United States.

C-Note has written for Prison Action News*,* California Prison Focus*, and* Mprisond Thotz*. He's been written about in* People*,* Darealprisonart *and* KCET-Los Angeles's Departures*.*

The Train of Life

By T.N.
Lillington, N.C.

At birth, we boarded the train of life and met our parents, and we believed that they would always travel by our side. However, at some station, our parents would step down from the train, leaving us on life's journey alone.

As time goes by, some significant people will board the train: siblings, other children, friends, and even the love of our life…

Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum. Others will go so unnoticed that we won't realize that they vacated their seats! This train ride has been a mixture of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hello's, goodbye's, and farewells…

A successful journey consists of having a good relationship with all passengers, requiring with all passengers, requiring that we give the best of ourselves…

The mystery that prevails is that we do not know at which station we ourselves will step down. So, we must try to travel along the track of life in the best possible way—loving, forgiving, giving, and sharing…

When the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty, we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who continue to travel on the train of life...

I wish you a joyful journey on the train of life. Keep success and give lots of love. More importantly be thankful of your journey. Lastly, I thank you for being one of the passengers on my train!!!

Books

By E.A.
Asheboro, N.C.

Books take you to distant lands
Right at the tip of your hands
They teach you about different places,
discover new cultures other races
Take a journey open the cover
There is much to discover
Let your mind wander through
the portals of time
One never knows what you may find
Venture to islands, rivers, lakes and oceans
Or let the prose tangle your emotions
Reading can be one of life's pleasures
And may lead to unexpected treasures

Here Inside the Lie

By Clifton Bloomfield, #69115
Penitentiary of New Mexico, Santa Fe, 87504

Have you not heard the winds sing,
Breezing through the concerting wire;
Blowing here, where all the fences ring,
Buffeting this place where I shall expire.

Inside the prison where I now fare,
It's silent as a tomb, yet always it is loud;
And no man can walk here without care,
Not the humble, meek, strong nor proud.

Within this world of steel and stone,
It's a house of bloody covered knives;
And each day it's just another bone,
Without a care of lost convict lives.

Here, just beyond you fence and gate,
Where each act is written within blood;
A sordid place where time does not abate,
You can feel convicts' emotions flood.

Living within this man-made fortress,
A place of animals, a humongous cage;
You need qualities far beyond dauntless,
For survival, you need both hate and rage.

Here are angry men born of sin,
Sheltered in time, shadows ever stark;
With ease, I walk amongst these men,
Another wraith with a darkened heart.

As we entered here, we lost all claims,
To a life beyond these bare concrete walls;
Numbers were given, we lost our names,
Such is how we now roam these halls.

Alone stalks a predator, moving forward,
At a life-consuming, steady rhythmed gait;
While there in the corner hides a coward,
Who shall live or die at the whim of fate.

I am a sage, a mere skald serving life,
Given centuries more than I would ever live;
My repayment, I spread chaos and strife,
For what else in return should I then give?

But we all are here, no just a dream,
Come count us should you have a care;
And in doing so, you might just glean,
Penetrating truths, why our souls despair.

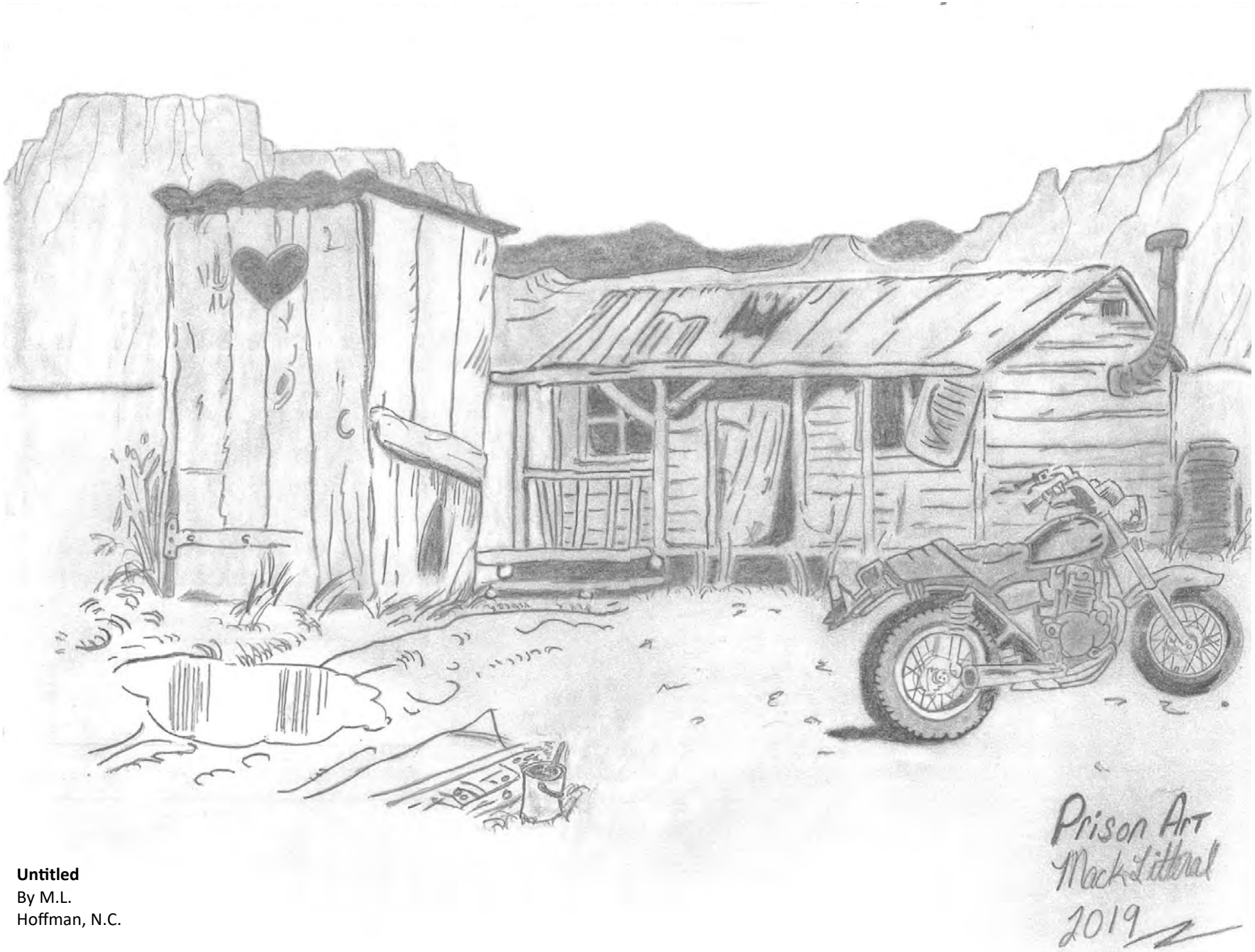
This is not the state in its obligation,
It is the corporate machine of gain;
Where the only rule is subjugation,
The mass infliction of wanton pain.

Rehabilitation is the cause they say,
But let us be real and not pretend;
This sham upheld is not the way,
If continued, then where shall it end?

Prisons built by men in suits and ties,
Contrived behind their boardroom guiles;
To indenture men by boldly spoken lies,
Contracts written with heartless smiles.

This is how America becomes chained,
Fettered slowly, it will be one and all;
While the wealthy will have gained,
And the rest of us shall take the fall.

If you believe these words cannot be true,
These things to which I give hue and cry;
While living under the red, white and blue,
Then one day, I may see you here inside the lie.



Untitled
By M.L.
Hoffman, N.C.

The First Fifteen of Life

By Johnny Hill
New London, N.C.

I was born a twin
Of my own innermost.
One good. One evil.
Both sharing the same host.
My destiny unsure
And placed in your hands.
Were pain and suffering
Among the demands?

They entered our lives.
I was taught fear and hate.
You had to know!
Was that meant to be my fate?
Then one was found:
Ignoring portents awares,
Said were dires dark,
Choosing devil over heir.

The bruises did fade
And wounds were soon to heal
Scars to the soul
Betrayal ever to feel.
Hindsight so curious
Always seemed surreal.
Was that not what it meant
To become a Hill?

Those I thought saviours
Seemed of little alarm.
Send me back they would
Regardless of the harm.

There were times of smiles.
So few I dare to say.
If you recall those times
He was locked away.

Rare times they were
And it was then that I shined.
But, with his release
That child was left behind.
I told them of demons,
Not all of the night.
Daylight and dark filled
With cries of pain and fright.

A childhood voided
Of tender boyish glee.
Many wakened moments
Plans were made to flee.
Yet escape was found
In play among the trees.
Oh the damnation
Of those discoveries

As a youth,
Abominations I became.
Then soon discovered
That evil had a name.
I surrendered young
To desires dark and deep.
Then the angels sighed
And turned their heads to weep.

Never compare us!
For burdens I do bear.
No bottle. No crutch.
This weight is not to share.
Though fear and hate
Guided many early day,
Aloud I swore
Never to become that way.

Now looking out
From inside of this glass shell.
No stones cast
When I recall those I befell.
I AM hear me;
Doubting, angry, and alone.
Not yet broken.
Am I able to atone?

I do regret this,
Though it's all that remains.
Now this is my life.
My passion and my chains.
A life like a ship
Eternal on the sea,
No port, no refuge,
Ever vast and empty.

My Dilemma

By B.M.
Delano, C.A.

As the stars slowly reappeared in the silent endlessness of the nights sky I cut the last mourning rope of grief and surrendered myself to the all sustaining tide of destiny.

Like a monk that journeys a blind path in good faith,

I close my eyes and let her engross my every dream.

When I looked at her I could see that her eyes held a tiny storm, her lips embossed with secret thoughts that were swollen to the truth she was trying to tell me.

So lost within my dream her voice was inaudible, when I kissed her, the storm from her blue green eyes came into our mouths. The tears that slid across her skin were sweeter than honey from the sacred bees from the devil's garden.

So what am I to do…if I can not awake from this ambition now drunk from the mead that is her soul I'm currently content. She has found a way to monopolize the space within myself reserved for only a chosen few.

So what am I to do?

Regrets

By C.F.
Butner, N.C.

I regret
hurting so many people with
my bad decisions.

I regret
spending so many years behind razorwire
missing
birthdays
holidays
anniversaries
funerals
special occasions.

I regret
that I won't be there for so many
of my nephew's milestones:
first day of school
first lost tooth
first love
proms and graduations
achievements and accomplishments.
Nor will I be there to take him to his
first sporting event or concert.
I won't be the one to buy him his first beer.

I regret
that I'll be
labeled and judged
long after
leaving prison.
That's assuming
I ever do get out.

I most regret
that I'll never
get married and have my own family
and that I'll probably
die a lonely old queer.

Untitled

By M.L.
Hoffman, N.C.

This is true, us offenders we've always had to literally lay back and take it. Lord help those who go in front of a parole board every three years, just to be turned down by pencil pushers/white collars! It's true there are violent offenders and some the public is safe by keeping child molesters off the streets and others who commit fraud, taking money from old folks. But, by me saying this, what I see in here, if you really look close these people who commit these crimes, well, it only lasts a few mins maybe the crime they committed lasted a couple of hrs. But being in the prison here every day min by min, hour by hour these guards not all but most make sure you truly suffer. Like Medical here they approved me to work with a broke thumb, while maybe not a big deal to most, I need that thumb I'm writing with it right now with news and information that really could change our prison system.

I feel people really do care, but they just don't know what's really going on behind these walls. Department of public safety is getting stronger and putting more offenders to work for pennies across this country, which also costs jobs for the public. They make eyeglasses, chemicals for prisons, they do laundry for medical, mental and other prisons, they work at meat plants, and the most they'll make is fifteen dollars a week. Which the prison gets back! If you get work release you'll pay around two hundred bucks a week for board.

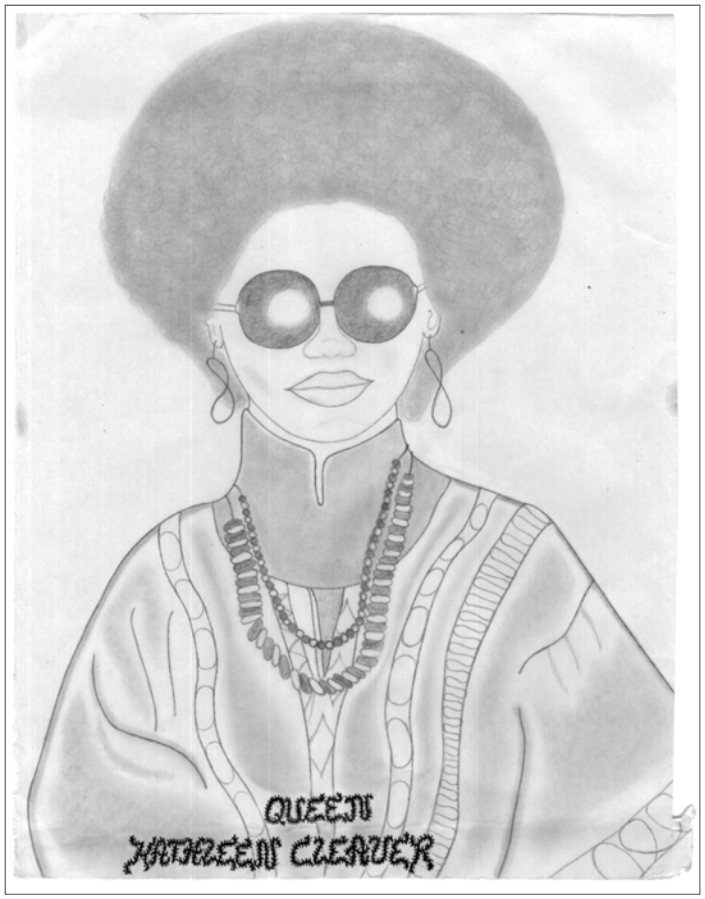
There's a guy who just spent two years in the county jail and still has 15 months left on that sentence, nad then another sixteen months for another D.U.I. that's roughly 4 ½ years for a crime, wasn't any accident, no hit and run and only blowed a eight on the breathalizer (overkill). Right.

The prices they state to keep an offender housed is such a big lie. And there always saying there short of help. I look out my cell quite often and count 5 guards sitting and bullshitting every day here at Foot-Hills Youth Prison which has the hole for ALL three prisons here. They get funding for fake programs here like Restart Program—many of them ain't worth a shit. And why so many guards! I go probably 90 hours without a shower! My water only trickles, I drink only 8 ounces of Kool-Aid at mealtimes. We don't

even get out to stretch our legs. Knowing we're suppose to get 90 mins a week exercise. But who's going to know? Why do they need more guards when so many jails and prisons now keep detainees or offenders locked down from 17 hours to 23 hrs. And the whole time varies, like me, I probably go for 80 hours straight. But I decline a shower because of the nastiness of the showers—floors—I've done met guys with staph infections. I went to medical the other day with a guy the doctor just told he he caught scabies!

This is my 6th camp since Dec 1st 2017 because I start trouble like this for them, by exposing what should have happened years before I got involved in this mess. Now maybe your brother, cousin, dad, husband, or even your child's in this hellhole! We all need your help, please help us by opening more web-sites—newspapers—zines—even interstate signs. I'm in here because I'm homeless and got into a streetfight inside a restaurant while trying to stay warm. When a guy who stole everything I had, then dared me to do something about it. I was a decorated War Vet and fought for this country, but couldn't fight for my-self. This is American justice and I'm not happy with it.

I worked for IOA—Inside-Outside Alliance, which is a jail paper, for over 2 years and still stay in-touch with a story now and then or art or poems. I only had 550 to 720 inmates I fought for at Durham County Jail. I'm sure that DPS is by far much more. Help me expose what going on behind these walls, let me bring prison news to you not edited by any wardens!



Queen Kathleen Cleaver
By R.M.
Oglethorpe, G.A.

Blackness

By K.C.
Laurinburg, N.C.
Member of New Afrikan Black Panther Party

Before God said, "Let there be light," the universe was black as night.
Dark like the skies void of stars, nothing "bright" in sight.
Black like the oil that flows through the veins of the Earth.
Or darkness that envelops a baby in its mother's womb before birth.
Black like the land that conceived all mankind called Mother Afrika.
Blackness is beauty like the queens of Mother Afrika.
Black like the tone of my skin, big nose and thick-lipped grin.
A "malanite" soldier, warrior descended from my Afrikan kin.
If blackness means death then "light" brought it destruction.
Colonization, chattel slavery, lies of emancipation, and corruption.
Exploitation, no self-determination, incarceration, and stagnation.
We are impatient, tired of being "2nd class" citizens in this racist nation.
Black is the raised fist, berets, and leather jackets.
Panthers in self defense pouncing on the enemy springing into action.
Why do my presence, our existence cause you to fear?
Are you afraid of the people you've oppressed for years?
Blackness is why you shot us down in these streets for no reason.
Civil suits, and oversight committees is a way for you to reason.
Dreadlocks, black, and baggy pants make you believe that in a heathen.
Justification for you to shoot us down in every season.
Winter, spring, summer, fall, face down on the ground beside spent rounds.
Lifeless in a puddle of blood with my hands bound.
Down with the oppressor because I'm black and I'm proud.
Head high, fist in the sky optimistic to hear the freedom sound.

Hummingbirds in April

By J.F.
Clinton, N.C.

One can't help being amazed
by their special grace

and straw-like enamel beaks
like ancient Roman dirks

They mostly fly solo,
as if sometime long ago

they were somehow left out
of the wing-flight kingdom.

The bright hues draw them,
their tiny 5-hour energy

bodies dart in and out
in dizzying little spurts,
furtively dashing around
the red-bottomed sugar bowls,

wings modulating in lightening speed
to help them stay afloat

when the soft winds buffet them,
their yellow-green bodies hovering

majestically above the pink irises.
They come and go in Spring,

Mostly when the blue Jays are gone
and the shiny red sugar troughs

are hanging so invitingly
from the pretty pink dogwoods.

A Child's Breath

By F.M.
Polkton, N.C.

A particular when fruit bears rare

Which procrastinating thoughts have sown

Instead, conditioned seeds fates reaped

But carelessly from indifferent hands

Beneath hopeless, yet fertile soil

Flowers have bloomed there

Still, most often wither

In company of enchanting weeds

And though the sun does shine

The light struggles to break

Through cloudy outlook

And overcast introspection

And the rain. Always the rain

Till they forget what wet is

Only the pomp of the parade

Where they march the streets

To any blind man's cadence

Down beaten, perilous paths

Leading where simple choices made

Now belong to a policy

Where 'was' and 'when' are loved

As much as 'is' is hated

And ceilings are studied

Like the ancients did the heavens

As the cracks go unseen

Just a screen for projected thoughts

Where the fortunate sees change

While the damned spies

Faults, blames, excuses and accusations

For a bad harvest and a harsh winter

Missing their own rightful claim

So many stay timidly rigid

Where policy rules alone

Like downed trees in a storm once stood

So few evolve like the reed

Or the ubiquitous dandelion

Whose seeds float on fortunes' winds

In search of forgiving soil

To begin anew, but still

Prepared for unfortunate gusts

Of a child's breath.

Grand Juries

By F.M.
Polkton, N.C.

The day the hood stood still
Tear spilled
Landing where blood soon puddled
The love all huddled
Turned violent
'Cause the innocent could no longer suffer
The silence in silence
Riots are the language of the un-heard
Riots are language of the unheard
When justice is just some word
Foreign to the American Born
Whose skin appear kissed by the sun
My neighbors, restless natives
Who spend their lives hating each other
Almost as much as themselves
Except for tonight
Facing F.P.D.
In government hand me downs
Their brothers (and sisters) in arms
Arms up, without arms
Tired of bonds they bond
While sympathizers pool together money
For bonds
So they wont have sit long
In holding cells knowing
Nothing was won
News cameras come (This time)
And soon the looting.
Overshadows the shooting
When kind of rage
Makes the poor set ablaze
The only store for miles
Accepting federal aid
In a place they don't expect
Federal aid
Civil servants tell the civil lies
Then feign surprise
When they react uncivilized
Too soon the news cameras flee (everytime)
And then I can't breath
Hands up tees
Fade slow from many rinse cycles
Long after time has washed it
From the minds
And though the burnt out store fronts
Are now lots investors fear
Change still will have not come
Like Barack forgot to bring it
With all that hope he brought
Finally, without the fat lady's finale
The hood begins to move again
Luckily, the present is never proof
Who victory chose
That's a truth only history shows.

Free Me

By C.P.
Winston-Salem, N.C.

Who said doing time is easy, nawh
I beg to differ, It's hard on my
mind, body, soul, all I know is pain
Will that FREE ME. When I rise I
want them all to see I shine with
a light that only God can see will
that FREE ME. I was told the strong
could hold on locked in a hell of
unknown caged as a animal mind
sharper than "Martin K. King." Will that
FREE ME nawh, but having a true
understanding of SELF unlocking the
chains that lock my mind I had
a clear picture that seen GOD's on
Earth and that Freed ME.

Untitled

By M.S.
Corcoran, C.A.

A criminal mind thinks of ways to justify his actions through dishonest means, and for the sole purpose of satisfying his selfish needs. A revolutionary transforms his mind into one that thinks about the needs of the people in the community and creates ways to change the conditions that are oppressing the people.

In prison, where the criminal will one day be for his unlawful activities, he will be faced with challenges beyond his control and must figure out a way to fix what he can not change or succumb to it. Us New Afrikans have become conscious to our surroundings, and have read and studied the works of our ancestors which causes us to practice collective ways to change our situation, and this is what caused a revolutionary transformation of one's way of thinking, acts, talks, relates to one another, dress, structuring of family and personal habits.

We have learned how to eradicate backwards, unprogressive or incompatible ideas and activities, while proving the correctness of the views we share with our ancestors who struggled before us against the same system. This is an ongoing and endless practice, until the principled contradictions of the oppressed and the oppressor are eliminated. Prison is a concrete tomb where the imperialists, through their fascist practices, have buried some of the most deep-thinking individuals alive. In order for this to end we must abolish the prison industrial slave complex entirely. I stand with all those being oppressed by this system in solidarity.

Who You Are, Who Am I

By M.X.

Collegeville, P.A.

Who you are? Who am I? Where do I want to go?

I do not know.

The reflection of temptation seen unbalance.

We need to defeat our arrogance.

So the world, earth can change underneath our feet.

Disrespect of women is the reason the earth is bleeding.

Perhaps you do not understand, you need to recognize

your perfection.

Only a fool believe in the same deception.

Feeling of hope, ready to face fear,

Earning my rank under the pope care

Drinking up all the good thought I've have share.

Who you are? Who am I? Where do I want to go?

Mars because my freedom belong to the stars

Who am I?

God who has been reborn.

Heaven & Hell

By T.A.
Hookerton, N.C.

When I was young I was told Heaven is in the 'SKY'—

people riding on clouds + Gold on the Ground,

Hell under Earth with Fire all around,

The Good walks through the gates of Heaven,

and the BAD Burn in Hell, Burn in Hell for Eternity.

Doing good & Bad is apart of Our History,

I know people that goes to Church, But do more Bad then you + me,

No! I'm not Save, does that makes me an Evil Being?

I can't sleep at Night, Because I see Demons inside my Dreams,

NO! these are Nightmares—Demons with Angel wings.

I hear the Gate close unfamiliar people Surrounded me,

I can't let myself out the Guard put away the Key,

I'm use to doing what I wanna do, I'm use to being FREE.

Now I know Prison is HELL

n HEAVEN is the Streets

The Streets Don't Love Nobody

By A.W.
Raleigh, N.C.

Why do a lot of black men say they love the streets?

These are the same streets that pass out AIDs like presents on Christmas

The same streets that get you a life sentence in prison,

The very same streets that leave more dead than living,

And often bring heartache, drama, pain, stress and beef.

The exact same streets that don't care about good, bad

Young, old, men, women or children.

The same streets where hungry addicts get their feed on,

From the drug of choice that they feel they need in life to proceed on,

The streets where those who are sworn to serve and protect,

Swerve and oppress, and murder innocents where they rest

And invent some false story of self defense,

Let's not live in a pretense or pretend.

The streets have no loved ones, no family, no associates, no comrades and no friends.

And its compassion ends at the same place it begins.

The streets that turn family members into foes,

School girls into prostitutes and hoes,

Influences people to murder each other over money, jewelry, cars and cloths,

Yet this is the lifestyle we chose, one that causes turmoil to human bodies,

Uncaring, unremorseful, with no regrets or pity 'cause the streets don't love nobody.

The Smoke Screen

By H.T.
Chesapeake, V.A.

We better know there is a fire whence we see much smoke rising than we could know it by one or two witnesses swearing to it. The witnesses may commit perjury, but the smoke cannot. – Abraham Lincoln

Honey bees are symbolic to the working class, the poor, the enslaved prisoners and the minority. The honey bees work to build their hives. The hives are the honey bees' homes, their schools, sanctuary and even their enterprise. The working class also works together in order to build their homes, schools, sanctuaries and enterprises. This is a means of survival to be able to build ones foundation.

The honey bees' labor produces honey. Honey is sweet to the taste and can also be useful for medical purposes. The working class labor produces money, economical growth and a false sense of power. That is sweet to the taste of lust and greed. The power structure aims to seize both of these resources from the honey bee and the working class. The power structure is the invaders; the colonizers who enter forcefully as an enemy to enforce imperialism.

When smoke is applied to the bee hive the bees swarm to the honey and also begins to move very slowly. The honey bees begin to think a fire is coming to destroy the honey. When the smoke begins to slow the honey bees down from their normal active lives.

The invaders then scoop in and steal the honey.

This is the smoke screen. Something intended to conceal or deceive. This is a tactic that is used by the power structure to gain economic power.

When the smoke is applied to the working class it effects their minds and causes them to not be able to see the truth. This smoke is materialistic lust, drugs, violence, false doctrines, any substance, act, or deed that is used to destroy the mind. The power structure applies the smoke and scoops inside the working class minds—their hives—and steals the working class honey and money.

The power structure wants the working class to depend on the assistance of the power structure constantly and forever. This is why the power structure applies the smoke to the masses. To maintain dependency. To keep the working class depending on a false economic system as a means to live.

When the smoke clears this is a sign of peace. The battle of the mind is the battle to separate oneself from the smoke. The battle of the mind is a war. There's not peace without a war. In this particular case I'm speaking upon a mental war. Where the pious must separate themselves from the smoke. So that they can breathe clearly, live prosperously with love, truth, peace, freedom and justice.

The invaders built homes in the habitat of the baboons in Capetown South Africa. The invaders placed a busy street with heavy traffic and fast cars in the middle of the baboons habitat. The baboons began migrating across the street where the fresh vegetation is located to eat. This is the baboons' means of survival. The invaders built homes where homes were already established. The streets and the invaders homes is the smoke that was applied to the baboons. As the baboons strove to migrate across the street they were harmed. The baboons (according to the power structure laws) became victims of circumstances. The baboons were victims who were blamed for trying to live.

When the smoke clears one will see who and what is the enemy to the cause of redemption, of salvation of a better tomorrow. The power structure applies the smoke. We must apply the smoke detectors. "To be alive is to be aware."

How to Get to Prison

By C.F.
Butner, N.C.

To go to jail,
commit a crime.

To get bail,
you have to be rich or lucky.

Where you go from there,
it's up to a partial jury.

More than likely,
you'll end up in here with me.

Resistance

By C.D.
Taylorsville, N.C.

I woke up with resistance in my blood
Even though I wanted to give up
Keys singing to the buzz of the lights
While oppression runs amok
Cold another tray served
I have to check for signs of disrespect
Maybe a glob of spit or shards of glass
Give blessings and thanks to eat is a chance I take
Bend at the waist and spread your cheeks
Just to take a shower
I'll wash in my cell cause I'm a man dammit
Before you inspect me like we're at a slave auction
Suicide plans are made by others
Who can't live with a boot on their neck
He may have taken his own life but I know what went on
The system committed murder
Beat on my door with your sticks when you pass
Just to disrupts my peace
'Cause I won't answer to boy or feed in to your games
My dignities still within reach
Blood in my eye and my soul is on ice
Pride is my power to revolutionary suicide
I woke up with resistance 'cause they want me to die
And I'll be damned if I make it that easy



Untitled, by C.H., Spruce Pines, N.C.

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