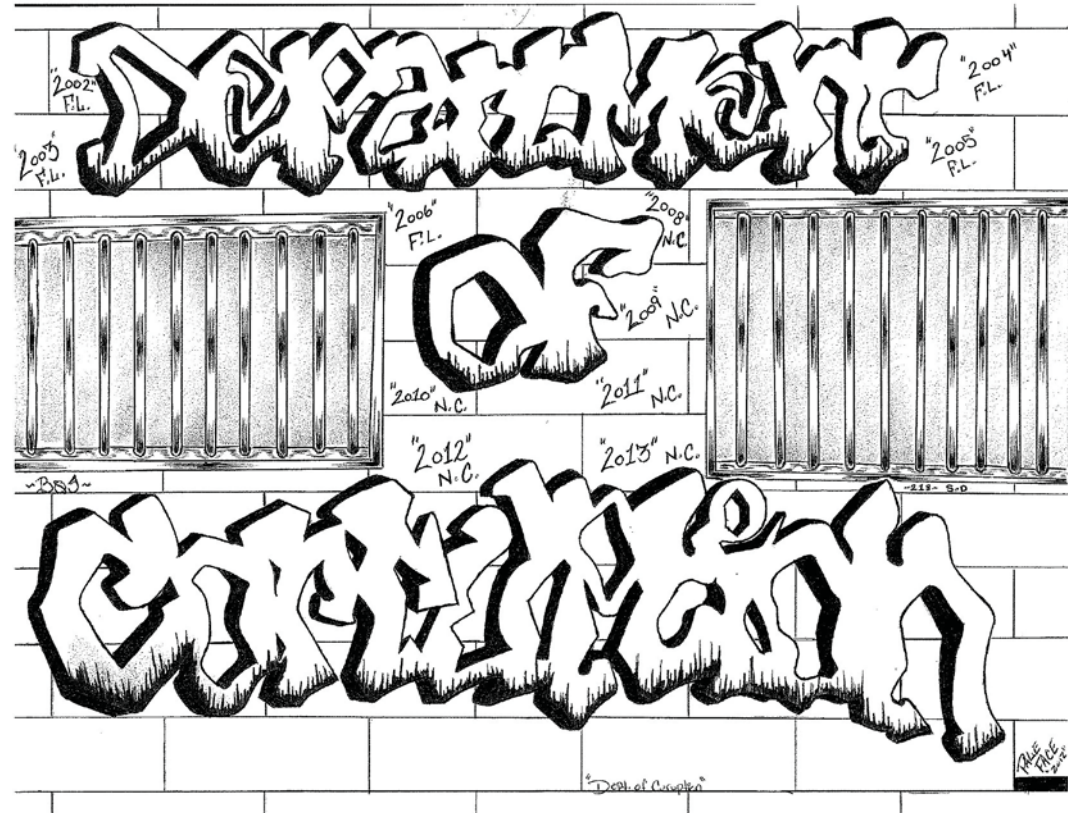


Words of Fire

writings by and for prisoners
published by the Chapel Hill Prison Books Collective
issue 8, summer 2014



Words of Fire is a collection of prisoner writing and artwork. It is published by the Chapel Hill (Internationalist) Prison Books Collective.

We welcome submissions of short essays and opinion pieces (500 words max), poetry, and art work from prisoners.

Note: submissions may be edited for clarity and length.

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

Mail submissions to:
Words of Fire
Chapel Hill Prison Books Collective
101 Lloyd St.
Carrboro, NC 27510

Please include your name and location on all submissions so we can credit you. Let us know if you **do not** want your name used. We can just use your initials.

Online: We also post a copy on our website. Let us know if you want your full name in the online version (otherwise we use initials)

About us: We are a Chapel Hill, NC-based anti-prison group that sends hundreds of books to prisoners in the South each month, maintains an extensive radical 'zine catalog, widely distributes a monthly poster promoting political prisoner support, and publishes prisoners' art and writing.
<http://prisonbooks.info>

Stand Your Ground!

By R.E.
 Maury, NC

I went to the store to get skittles and ice tea
 Going home, I sensed someone following me
 I called my friend on my cell phone to tell her whats going on
 I'd walk, stop, duck
 But still being followed by this truck
 He won't seem to go away
 Now I'm beginning to feel like prey
 He's getting out probably to attack
 I got no choice but to fight back
 I knock him to the ground
 He pulls a gun and shoot me down
 The State of Florida told him
 "Stand Your Ground!"

Treyvon R.I.P.



By J.B.
Raiford, FL

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Front cover image: "Department of Corruption"
by C. T.,
Butner, NC

Back cover image: Unknown author

Introduction

Hello Friends and Comrades,

Greetings! This is the 8th issue of Words of Fire, our semi-regular 'zine of prisoners' writings, drawings, poetry, and news.

It has been a busy year since the last issue, impossible to summarize in one short introduction. Suffice to say, we've done our best to stay busy here on the outside. Last summer, the country erupted in protests after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for his killing of young Black teen Trayvon Martin. Trayvon demos happened all over the country; in LA and Oakland marches took over highways and smashed stores and police property, setting a precedent to follow. In Durham members of our collective participated in organizing multiple marches and rallies, taking the streets without a permit and gathering around the downtown jail.

In the winter, Durham itself erupted over the police killing of young teenager Jesus "Chuy" Huerta. For several months there were marches and vigils, two of which resulted in police property being destroyed, and another that ended with a rock-throwing street battle amidst clouds of tear gas, again in the vicinity of the downtown jail. The police stonewalled the family's efforts at learning more about the death of their son, ultimately exonerating the officer responsible. All of this has increased tension and anger with the Durham Police Department, and galvanized new networks of radicals, anarchists, and other social antagonists.

Collective members also helped out with several jail and prison noise demos in the spring and summer 2014: two at the women's prison in Raleigh, and a third at the jail in Durham, to call attention to June 11th, an international day of solidarity with long term anarchist prisoners.

And now again, in August of 2014, the country is exploding in anger over the police shooting of an unarmed Black teen, Michael Brown, this time in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, MO. For at least four nights that small town exploded in rioting and looting, as residents fought back against the police and poverty. Solidarity vigils and rallies have happened around the country; even here in Chapel Hill the police headquarters was vandalized in solidarity with the Ferguson rioters.

Untitled

By Comrade A.E.
Butner, NC

Mr. Piggy you are what you eat swine
Your oppression is your shit, mud and urine you roll around in
when you think of way to try to take mine
Your rage is the rage of a wild hog
I sit and plot on you sipping this eggnog
I wake from the dream and your still here
As I look into your eyes I see you filled with fear
Your oppression is soon to be over your time is near
Don't worry your cowardly self while I live day to day in this cell
Build myself in a way you could never tell
I hide in the shadows waiting for war
Always remember when it rains it pour
When your time come I will not shed a tear
Cause all my loyal eyes see is Uncle Toms and Klan members
My mind, body and soul will never surrender
Leave a mark for the future comrades to remember
Your corrupt mind is on a never ending oppression till we all dead
and gone
So I guess day by day it's on
Comrades we will see a better day at the end of this oppressed time
zone

Tired (*Continued from page 25*)

Most of the work the oppressor does is psychologically performed! In the vast amount of years of my incarceration, I've seen MUCH of the oppression inflicted against the masses in a psychological fashion. The system "experiments" with ideas to see the reaction of the population; if the population demonstrates no significant resistance, then oppressive laws and regulations are implemented. The few "lone wolves" will be ostracized/segregated, so that NO uprising will be promoted. Under the illusion of "rehabilitation," C.D.C. continues its psychological warfare!

Personally, I am very tired of it and therefore, I've come to the realization that I'm no longer "expendable" to the ideological agendas of those who's lost (or refuse to utilize) their will and power to PUSH BACK against our (convicts') true oppressor!

Of course the inside of prisons has continued to see its share of struggles as well: a decentralized group called the Free Alabama Movement organized a labor strike in multiple Alabama facilities in January, drawing attention to their struggles and causing a violent repressive backlash. In North Carolina, a small interracial group called the Brotherhood has formed to facilitate struggle. Intermittent hunger strikes and petition drives have also continued in various facilities.

In the midst of all these events we've tried to stay up to date with our primary project of sending books, 'zines, resources, and news into prisons in North Carolina and Alabama. We also continue to keep people on the outside updated about struggles against police and prisons with our blog at prisonbooks.info, and continue to support political prisoners nationwide with a monthly political prisoners' birthday poster. Being overwhelmed with book requests, we were recently forced to cut back on sending in to Mississippi, and have been searching for a group in that state that could take on the task. We are presently backlogged by several months; if you don't receive your books immediately, don't worry, they're on their way.

One final bit of news: for just the second time in its 25-year life, the Internationalist Bookstore and Community Center, with which we are affiliated, is moving in September 2014. Starting that month, you can send book requests to:

Internationalist Prison Books Collective
101 Lloyd St.
Carrboro, NC 27510

We'll continue to participate in and support all the fierce and uncontrollable struggles against police and prisons that we encounter, on both sides of the wall. Hopefully this small publication can be a welcome release and also an active part of that.

In solidarity,
Until Every Cage is Empty,

The Chapel Hill (Internationalist) Prison Books Collective
Summer 2014

Judgement Day

By K.T.
Spruce Pine, NC

When the gavel struck
My world stopped
Suspended
in mid air
My mind started racing
the Judge's Words became deafening clear

That very moment I was met by mortality
everything I once knew
everything that I loved
I watched go down the drain

That day my life was taken
in exchange for my name
I got a number
I became a statistic of the Judicial System
no one to blame
Just my uncanny ways

I live a life of uncertainty
life is but a vapor
My life and yours will someday fade
Death is ineluctable
one question remains
on Judgement day
Will I walk through those pearly gates
or descend to a firey fate

Tired
By M.D.H.
Soledad, CA

Often times, it crosses my mind; the question: when will the oppressed tire of their oppression by the oppressor? As I've been caged - with rage - in the California penal system for almost 16 years, there is so much degradation I've experienced and witnessed, it startles me how much the incarcerated endures. The injustices inflicted by the "powers that be" are astounding... to the degree that one can only wonder why hasn't a "convict revolt" occurred yet? I mean, yes ... there have been "incidents" where convicts have staged minor upheavals; however, how a "statewide major one" hasn't erupted is beyond my comprehension?!

The truth of the matter is that violence is not the only viable option – although it seems (at most times) that violence is what the "system" understands – but there isn't even a hint of resistance. There is a sage saying that "oppression will continue .. until it is met with resistance." The ability to debilitate C.D.C. [California Department of Corrections] needs to come on several levels, including financially and psychologically. A lot of the finances that C.D.C. operates on generates from the income that prisoners (and their families) contribute to them .. such as canteen, packages and every other C.D.C.-sponsored outlet. Prisoners could (and should) boycott these "capitalist" markets within California's penal institutions ... especially those who likely will be confined in these modern-day slave camps for most – if not ALL – their lives. These conditions are deplorable and degrading, which is no way individuals – with hardly anything (some NOTHING) to lose – should accept!

Continued on page 26



What's Love?

By J.C.
Butner, NC

Love is forever, it's something you remember: And when times get hard it makes you not surrender: They say patience is a virtue, "yeah" maybe that true: But if I have to wait on love I rather it be with you:

Love is an opponent, one that you can't defeat: And when that love knocks you down, it's something so unique: Whatever my heart holds for me in the future, I really don't have a clue: But just in case it gets too crowded, I'll always save a spot for you: pain is love and love is pain: Now that I've got you, I can make it through the rain:

Love is relationship's and relationship's are complication's, without them we will never know if what we have is strong or not: so I'm ready to settle down with you and tie knot: Love is forever and for always just like me and you: That's what love is to me, Whats love to you?



By L.S.
Woodville, MS

Prison Life

By R.E.
Maury, NC

It all start when you commit a crime
pled or found guilty and set some time

Then you are sent to a Institution
with a sentence and maybe a restitution

In prison you see many different races
guys from many different places
Also many familiar faces

Some guys sentences are short, some are long
But we all are here cause in society we did something wrong

Prison is a place you suppose to re-ha-bil-i-tate
To me its a place to rebuild your hate

If you are in the prison population
you should get a trade and further your education

But they sit around and listen to the radio
Yell, beat on the table while they play domino

If you are a felony you are under the gun
This is so you won't try to run

And if you think the guard in the tower won't fire
Just try getting your ass over that constatine wire

Now that you are in getting out is your main priority
So get a job, obey the rules and those in authority

Good luck and I pray I never to see you back
But the odds are against you if you are Black

@. True Love is a Fact ...

By R.C.H.
Mt. Olive, WV

Beautiful don't give me no slack ...
This heart was given to you and I will never take it back ...
Your heart I will keep a whole without no crack ...
This love for you is true, it's not an act...
A lovingful heart you've given, that I'll refuse to give back ...
For share not even one percent this love will we have to subtract ...
Keep my love pinned to your heart with a life long track ...

@. Your Healing Love ...

By R.C.H.
Mt. Olive, WV

As your love I had to pick ...
It's a healing love that will never make me sick ...
Your beautiful face show's all your brightness for it brighten's in a
love flick ...
Beautiful you came into my life as a perfect fit ...
I'll always be here for you no matter if your slim or thick ...
I'm a loving man, as a female I will never hit ...
I'll be here until the end, even if I have to take hit's and kick's ...

The Voice

By D.J.
Mount Meigs, AL

An empirical Love
Is based on facts,
An apprehended perception
With no strings attached,
Potent poetry is considered art
And Love constructs
The mental heart,
We are subject to objective
Realms at times,
And the forces of the physical
Can alter the mind,
Love is aesthetics elevated
Intensified and up-graded,
To be persuaded by her
Is a philosoph mandated,
Rated by the masses
Judged by the classes,
Politically up-held
And can be reviewed by who ask
it,
Can also be amended
Cause Love is law,
An individual's conception
Love let's talk,
Love is beautiful
The foundation of art,
Allow me to explain
How she overwhelm the heart,
Too complicated to perceive
Through a poetic verse,

Plus I feel un-worthy
To explain her worth,
But yet my heart beat
And I'm still alive,
Up-right and erect
Searching for Love with my eyes
All of my answers
Lay with the dead,
That died from Love
In a mental bed,
With a mental spread
And a mental sheet,
With a mental flu
That they couldn't beat,
So no – I can't explain
Because I'm still alive,
Go ask someone
Who Loved and died,
Talk to me, talk to me
Love lets talk ...

Humanity

By M.D.H.
Soledad, CA

Although the overall concept of this manuscript may be “alien” to the intellect of the incarcerated mind and those trapped in the jungle called “the game,” it is vital – at least in my thoughts – in order to progress. However, mere knowledge of such is not productive because even the most knowledgeable “know” ... what elevates one above the other is the application of those principles to the daily life!

What strikes me as “strange” is the manner in which another human views people who may be different? Either based on race, gender, creed, status, etc; somehow – along these paths of life – we lose our humanity and transcend into nothing more than a savage animal! We (too often) pass judgment on the next person, based on differences (physically, mentally and/or spiritually); instead of realizing the MANY similarities we do have in common, we focus in on the few differences.

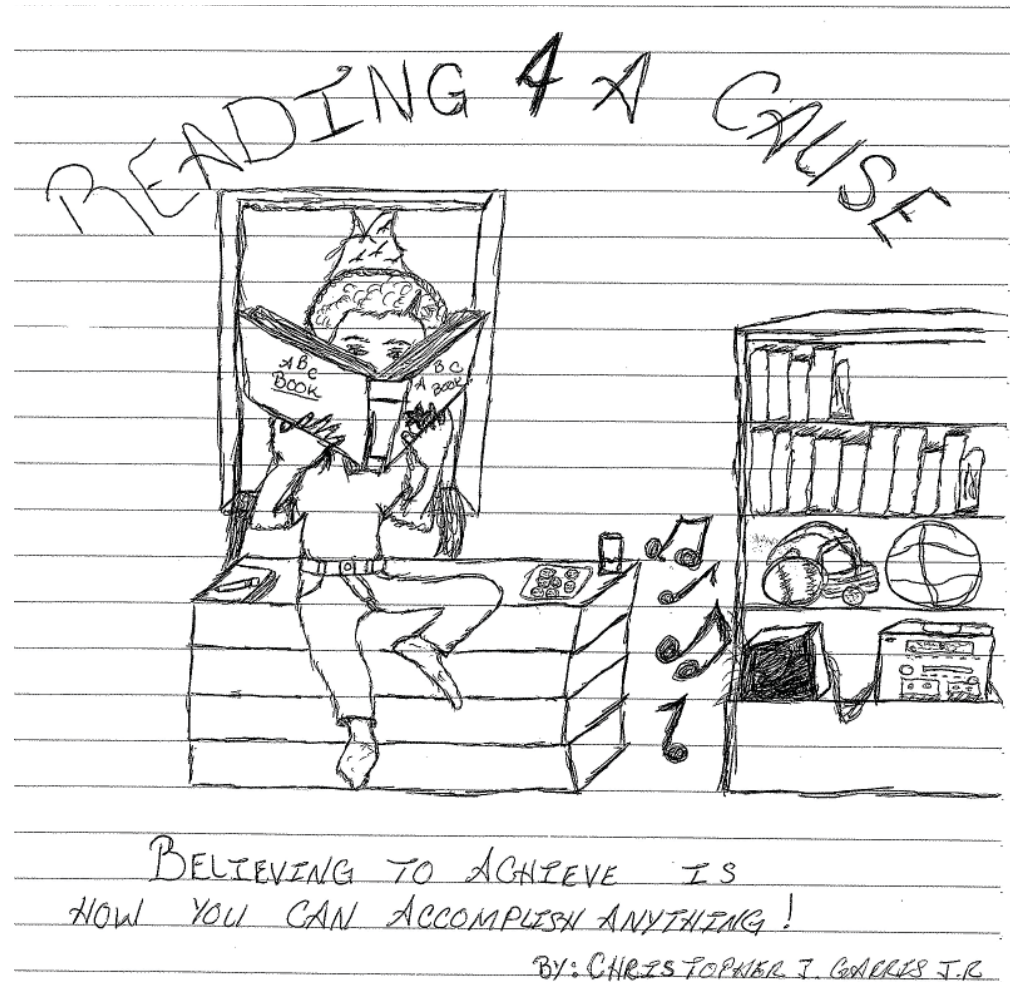
In doing so, who do we become? Maybe we justify our actions or beliefs because a set of conditions are in place or various circumstances take place; doesn't everyone has a set of conditions and circumstances that make them who they are? Yet, when you are the person seeking mercy – or “tryin’ to win” as it is called – you expect to be treated fair and humanely? Aint that a shame?? Sometimes we can create our own situation/turmoil, make excuses for why it transpired. And then, blame others for the negative results!

Keep in mind that I'm not asking for naivete! Simply this: when the ball is in your court to bounce, demonstrate an inkling of humanity towards others and you'll be surprised at the results you get; moreover, how you WILL genuinely feel inside!

Words of Tomorrow

By C.T.
Butner, NC

Through darkness and through pain.
Through fear and through shame.
We live our lives however it must come,
everyone does wrong!
But not everyone pays the consequences,
only some.
Their lives succumb to the environments
hatred and bitterness,
Their souls begin a life lost to the wilderness.
Through our journey we must conquer
We must succeed.
Through our journey we must do whatever it takes,
for our lives to be freed.



By C.J.G., Jr
Butner, NC

Him, Her, and Me

By R.V.R.
Pearl, MS

Sail on my friends, of literary seas,
your quest of love, good souls help me.

Through the storms of work, finances, and fear,
you give so much, to us castaways here.

We grasp the lines, the books you toss,
that and little else, lest we be lost.

We can't be saved, nor brought on board,
so we float in the stories, to which we all look forward.

So as we tread, caged in this sea,
you are hope, for him, her, and me.

When days grow long, muscles weak,
your weary head, on hand lay cheek.

Close your eyes, remember back,
when you joined the crew, ship on this tack.

You've done so much, now can you see?
you saved so many! him, her, ... , and me.

Untitled 1

By T.J.B.
Holly Springs, MS

Grip it, Fight it another day
Leave me be and let me live my way
Controlling, constricted, and frayed
Believe, overcome, awake
nevermore will you hold me back
Keep me from whats beautiful and free
what a gift this curse could turn out to be
I will emerge from this shell
I shall arise from my hell

Untitled 2

By T.J.B.
Holly Springs, MS

Self-expression from a reflection always torn
She was misty before dawn like the day she was born
Lightning strikes as a reminder to us all
We wake up feeling immortal until we Fall
All the beautiful memories, all thats Great,
All this prison can't take
Musicians are drifters too far from home
But homes aren't for those broken and alone
There's always a choice, left or right, darkness or light, freedom or stripes.
Blessed be thy name, it suits me not
Survival's the game, wicked's the plot!
When life becomes a chore the bottom's been reached,
The legacys complete,
Even in death I breathe.



By W.S-B.
Bayboro, NC

Scorned, Torn and Yet Reborn

By L.M.K.
Raleigh, NC

"You spilled your milk you filthy brat!"
 Daddy's slap was not a pat
 The angry words that spewed from his lips,
 hurt far worse than his hands and fists.
 My tender butt, all black and blue,
 had been beaten by daddy's shoe.
 With my head hung low trying to disguise,
 Tears that flowed from blackened eyes.
 "You'll regret the day that you were born!"
 Daddy's voice yelled with haste and scorn.
 "Now get out of here and don't return!"
 "Or I'll use my fists and then you'll learn!"
 So with a bag of clothes and nothing more,
 This child walked out the front hall door.
 Wounded and scared he hit the road,
 With a pitiful bag, such a heavy load.
 Just 13 such a fragile age
 with many mixed emotions of tears and rage.
 I saw love as just another word,
 Its demonstration had never occurred
 How can I love when I've suffered so much hate?
 And is eternal hell my only fate?
 As thoughts drift through those fragile years,
 The boy kneels by his bunk in tears
 "4-give me lord for this rage inside"
 "I feel better to expel it B4 I die"
 "This leaves us all God so confused,"
 "When we grow up so badly abused."
 "And lord if you hear a child cry into the night,
 Woeful cries of pain, or scared cries of fright,"
 "Please, please, dear lord go to its aid,
 Cause its pain I've known, endured and paid.
 In you lord I've known a true fathers love."
 "That embraces me with tender arms from above."

From Darkness to Light

By R.W.
Spruce Pine, NC

For many years I wandered through this world without true light,
Bound and blind in foolish pride, no hope or peace in sight!
With pain and rage, I ran so hard, not knowing that true love,
Pursued me each and every day, for someone up above!
I kept groping in the dark, to fill my empty life,
Yet no amount of worldly things could take away the strife!

I tried to smoke and drink away the hurt and hate I had,
Yet the drugs and alcohol just numbed me from the bad.
It wasn't long before I sought to get another high.
That only lasted a short while, yet more and more I'd try!
It's a miracle for sure that I lived through it all,
To the lowest point in life is where I had to fall.

My hardened heart was broken that I had built for years,
Locked up in jail upon my knees, I cried great drops of tears!
Remembering what mama said, that Jesus did love me
So very much that on a cross he died to set me free!
In ignorance and unbelief I chose to go my way,
Yet now I see this life is real, and not some game you play!
I thought about all I had done, my life was one big lie,
Yet I believed that there was hope, if to the Lord I'd cry!
I'm sorry Lord for everything, and how I lived so long.
Without a care of your great love, oh how I was so wrong!
Please forgive me of my sins, and make this man brand new,
I believe in you Lord, and that your word is true.
In loving kindness Jesus heard, when I sought his face.
Forever now my story's theme – I'm saved by God's Free Grace!

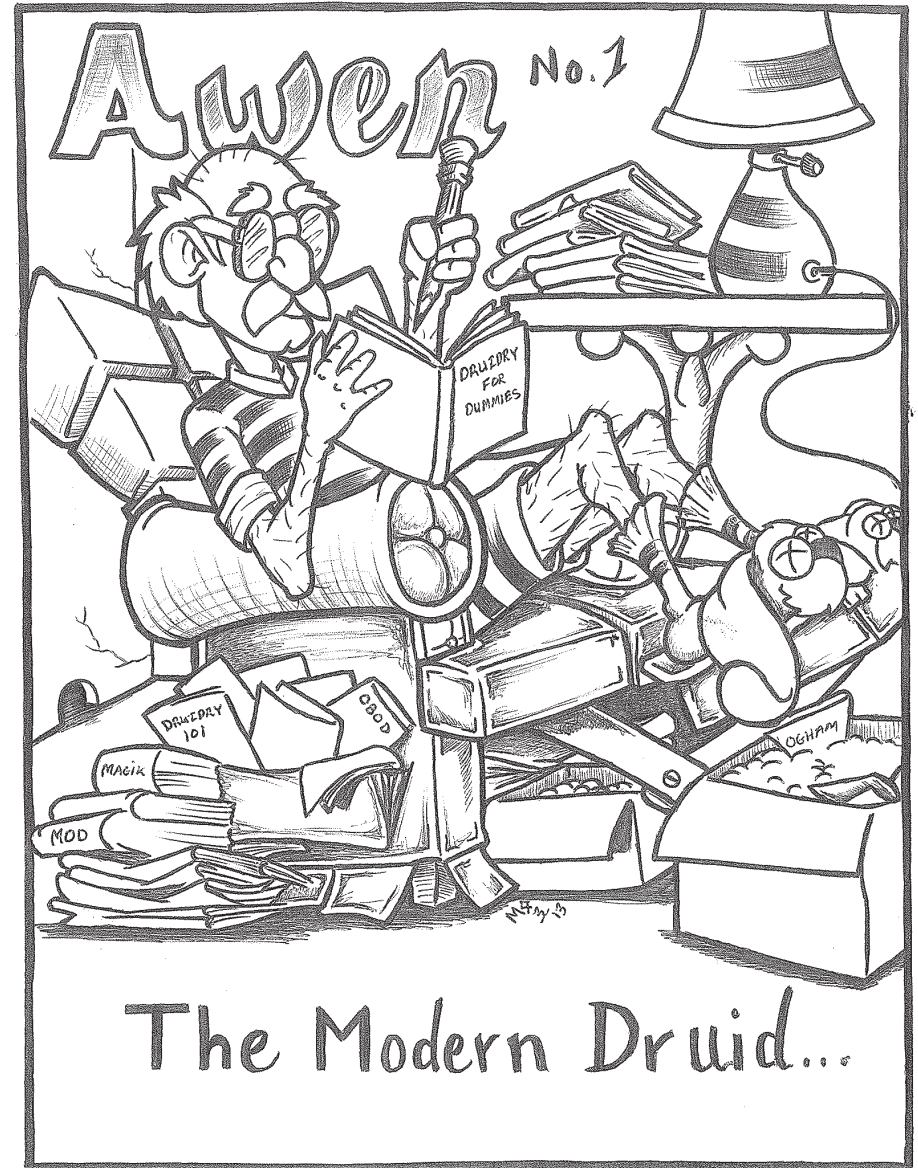


By J.B.
Raiford, FL

Born 2 Win

By Odell McRae, Jr
Tabor City, NC

As I sit behind these walls.
Listening to the rain as it falls.
Thinking about all the pain I caused.
To my family and friends.
Wondering when will it all end.
Just watching my dreams blow with the wind.
Life seems to throw fast balls.
Its up to us to keep up and not fall.
I been on a mission for 27 years.
All I found was blood, sweat and tears.
Back in prison for the fifth time.
My family say I'm losing my mind.
Sometimes I wanna give up.
Lord know that I had more then enough.
Guess I'm coming to my dead end.
But still I'm born to win.



By J.B.
Raiford, FL

In Light of Lies

By M.L.T.
Lumberton, NC

If God is the truth, and Life is a Lie.
Where is the Proof, and why ask why
I don't believe, it's all such shit.
I can't receive, the truth I admit.
Words in red, sometimes I feel dead.
he who Bled, Dreams are fed.
So called Preacher, he tells Lies.
a wicked teacher, hear the cries.
a souls story it just disappears
I don't need glory I taste tears.
Gone is the crutch, I don't miss it much.
I thought I felt the touch, dreams and such.
dreams they go, to the unknown.
deamons they come, in the dusk the glow.
Suspended in time, Do you even know
The uphill climb, or even where to go.
hate is my way, it got me here.
It keeps me going that is clear.
Where was God, did he forget.
Was that rain or his spit.
You feel love, I sense hate.
all the above over the gate,
heavens gate, were not allowed.
Bend your knee, pleasantly cowed.
I've seen religion, it's a lie.
I've seen the answers, ask me why.

My Brother

By Lataró Pittman
Marion, NC

My brother from another mother that's what I call you
but the bond that we hold it's like we're twins from the same womb.
We are cut from the same cloth or maybe even the same shirt
my brother you are and will be even when I go in the dirt.
Thru the struggle we have been and prison gates we have seen
against all obstacles and odds we stood by each others side.
But no matter what my brother aint no storm we can't stand
you more than my right hand, you my brother to the end.
It's now 2014 and we focused on success
giving our mothers the world and living life at it's best.
Aint no way to say it better, yeah you my brother true in deed
loyalty makes us family and its true we will succeed.
I got it tatted in my flesh for everyone to see its permanent
its us against all odds you my brother we got purposes.
To build a foundation and carry the legacy
Naquaen you my brother yeah the other half of me.

But She Will Bloom Again

By J.H.
Nelsonville, OH

She sits at her bed & tries not 2 forget who she is; her luscious pink lips are softly sealed as she tried not 2 forget again; though the smiles around her stretch from ear 2 ear & the spirits are at most moments high; the battle between love & pain deep inside of her could easily bring this beautiful grown woman 2 cry → “But She Will Bloom Again”

She endures countless moments of wonder as she tries not 2 forget who she is; her bright shining spirit is the sturdy armor that she wears 2 protect her heart throughout courses in her life like this; toe 2 toe with the nature of her most inner feelings that she is forced 2 shelter as she journies through this lost world of abandonment that she has found herself in, she reminds herself that she is no stranger 2 the dark & decides 2 once again allow herself a chance 2 try not 2 forget who she truly is → “But She Will Bloom Again”

As she has trained her blue starlit eyes 2 stay focused during every heart-beating second of the day; consciously unaware as the seconds multiply she again allows herself 2 slip in & out of the thoughts within her mind 2 pray; only time itself can be the one 2 tell her all of the explanations she direly searches for that are tucked & hidden somewhere deep within this sea of pain that seems 2 be here 2 stay; she refuses 2 be imprisoned with the torment of this troubling false reality therefore she momentarily vanishes 2 somewhere else where she can happily dance beneath the comforting showers of the rain → “But She Will Bloom Again”



By W.S-B.
Bayboro, NC