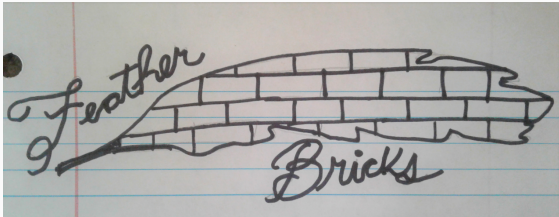


Feather Bricks

The Official Newsletter of North Park Theological Seminary's
School of Restorative Arts



Logo by Steven Ramirez

Table of Contents



Letter from the Editors.....2

Scholar Spotlight:

 Interview with Henry Cervantes.....3

 Interview with Christina "Doc" Rivers.....4

On Hoping and Hoping On

 Aryules Bivens.....6

 Antonio "TK" Kendrick.....7

 Lydia Vander Stelt.....8

 Jamie Thomasson.....9

Reflection

 DeCedrick "Ced" Walker.....10

Rhymes & Reasons

 Antonio "Slim" Balderas.....14

 Zachary Meeks.....14

 Rayon Sampson.....15

 Brandon Lewis... ..16

Book Review

 Ryan Wendt.....17

Writing Advisor Corner

 Sarah Fitzmaurice.....18

 Citlalli Cardenas.....20

The Amplifier

 Alex Negron & Ameerah "AB" Brown.....22

Grafted In

 C.D. Everett.....25

Word from the 'Ville.....26

Mike P.'s Grammar Corner.....27

Black History Month Crossword

 Rayon Sampson.....28

Closing by Prof Soong-Chan Rah.....28

Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Upon being chosen to be the co-editor of the February/March edition of *Feather Bricks*, almost instantly, the theme of “hoping” was imparted into my spirit. From a writer’s perspective, I constantly find myself in the state of hoping whenever I write. I am always hoping that what I put forth is understood, is felt, informs, and is worthy of the reader’s time.



Yet, in light of the conditions of today’s society, I found it necessary to have a theme that every person of faith could relate to. I wanted our community to be encouraged and reminded by some of the writings in this edition of some of the virtues connected with hoping such as faith, renewal, strength, resilience, and patience. Even more so as we choose to look back during Black History Month and recognize those who displayed such virtues in times of despair. I implore us not to stand still in our hope, but to look and move forward while hoping through this current time of despair.

—Rayon Sampson

Dear Readers, Writers, Thinkers,

My dog's name is Hope. She is a lil' low-rise, red-nose Pit Bull who fully embodies the definition of the word (and snores real loud, too--with her eyes open). So when Rayon suggested this theme for our newsletter, I was 100% on board.

A colleague mentioned something recently that stuck: "Hope has to live." He described the act of hoping as constant, habitual, hard work. He also referenced Malcolm X and Ralph Ellison by emphasizing the persistence that comes with hoping as an act of "turning the light on."

A lot of little lights turned on in the writing of the pieces for this edition of our newsletter. We hope these lights reach your corners.

Hope (and Write) on!

--Professor Melissa



INTERVIEW: a few words from

PROFESSOR HENRY CERVANTES



When I think of hope, I think of volition, the desire and motivation that drives us to make something better a reality. I often ask my students: What is your hope? What is your volition? Most importantly, how do we bring that into existence? How we bring into fruition our hopes in life is indeed a beautiful struggle. We live in a world where hatred and violence intentionally destroy communities. A world where oppression thrives on the destruction and destabilization of community. When I think of all the issues that confront our society today, it truly comes down to how those issues negatively impact the moral fiber of our communities. The forces of oppression always seek to turn neighbor against neighbor so that a real community is not possible. That is the history of humanity, the constant struggle amongst peoples to form part of a beloved community.

The good news is that faith, belief and hope can help us build community amidst such chaos. I would say that hope is not just wishful thinking, it is actually hard work. It is knowing that how we live our lives is our testament of our deepest hopes. I remember a friend of mine once wearing a baseball cap with the words "Hope Dealer". Apart from being the coolest cap i'd ever seen, I thought to myself, we need more people dealing in that type of work. To have hope and deal in hope is to be bold in this world.

Dr. Angela Davis once said "It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and activism." To me this means that thinking as a collective, thinking in terms of we, us and ours can help us find the hope and the courage to transform reality. It can encourage us to find our collective power. We must remember that hope, just like fear, are the greatest motivators.

I learn and teach in the hopes to enrich the life of those around me. Whether it's in the classroom or the prison cell, my deepest hope is to inspire people to realize their great power and potential. Isn't the purpose of higher education to seek truth and advance life so that our knowledge and practice make our world better? I think that only through education and our work can we improve humanity. I have been committed to teaching nonviolence in schools, in jails and at Stateville Correctional Center because I know the power of education and the power that exists in our community. Education has the power to open peoples' minds, and open minds combined with hope can change our society.

The current moment in the United States will be one that will belong to the dark pages of history due to the pandemic and the resurgence of racism, classism, bigotry and xenophobic violence towards minorities. Our communities are perhaps worse now than they were a generation ago. When we think of economics, education, and incarceration - things seem to be getting worse- not better- for our people.

What brings me great hope is the ancestors who came before us, the ancestors who waged their own struggles for our liberation. Our black, brown and indigenous ancestors who taught us ways to continue the struggle for social change. An unsung hero of mine is the brilliant strategist Ella Baker -

Interview with Henry Cervantes (cont...)



INTERVIEW *with Professor*

CHRISTINA "DOC" RIVERS

affectionately known by those who knew her as Fundi - swahili for teacher. One of the greatest titles one can be called in this life is teacher- and she was this and much more. Her life as an activist, advisor, trainer, organizer, coordinator, and director during the Black Freedom Movement is the finest example of what it means to be a leader. Her life and her teachings alone have contributed tremendously to our continued collective liberation. Ella Baker's words were always filled with powerful wisdom: "You didn't see me on television, you didn't see news stories about me. The kind of role that I tried to play was to pick up pieces or put together pieces out of which I hoped organization might come. My theory is, strong people don't need strong leaders." She would continue to remind folks - despite their race, abilities, class, gender, or level of education, of their own inner strength. She would support them in their own ability to bring forth movements to confront all forms of oppression. We need more teachers like Ella Baker to teach us more of who we are as a people and our deepest aspirations and hopes as a society. To live and not have some type of hope is to barely exist.

So I ask again, What is your hope? What is your volition? What is your vision? Most importantly, how do we bring that into existence? More than two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth said this to the people "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, shall he do also. And greater works than these shall he do." For those of us who believe and have hope in Jesus, it is not enough to just believe; we must act and do as if our hopes depended on how we live our lives.

Q: The theme for this newsletter, "hoping," is inspired by quotations such as the following:

"The hope of the world lies in what one demands, not of others, but of oneself." -

--James Baldwin

"It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and activism." --Angela Davis

"Hope is a discipline." --Mariame Kaba

"For it's our grief that gives us our gratitude, shows us how to find hope, if we ever lose it.

So ensure that this ache wasn't endured in vain: do not ignore the pain. Give it purpose.

Use it." --Amanda Gorman

What are your thoughts on (any or all of) these quotations and our newsletter theme?

A: I think that hope is existential. It keeps us lifted when times are tough or uncertain, and it helps keep us sure of ourselves when our problems seem insurmountable. Hope is aspirational and helps lead us, even—and especially—if we're not yet sure where we're going. In some ways, hope is kind of irrational.

Some might even say delusional. But this kind of hope can be the most important kind of all. So I guess in a way, hope is a form of faith. As described by Baldwin, Kaba, and Gorman, hope is concrete. It must have a plan, it can't just be random, or spontaneous, or passive. It's a strategy for survival and success.

According to their concepts of it, hope is work! The way Sister Davis describes it, hope is collaborative. Echoing Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., it's a beloved community. This kind of hope is creative, nurturing, humanizing, and reciprocal. Ultimately, it is the highest form of love. Taken together and especially as a theme for this newsletter, hope is brave.

Powerful. Almost forbidden. Which is why we must never lose hope.

INTERVIEW

with Doc Rivers (cont...)

Q: How do you see the idea of "hoping" apply to your work in the classroom in general and specifically during your tenure teaching at Stateville?

A: Well in the short term, my hopes in the classroom are very basic: to not accidentally disconnect my on-line classes, to remember to shut off my mike when I'm mumbling and cussing trying to figure out how to use a Zoom feature, and to evaluate student work more efficiently. All that probably sounds minor, but technology is NOT my strength. The struggle to teach well on-line has been real...

More broadly, I think that "hoping" has become more essential than ever to teaching in the time of Covid-19. College is a challenge on a good day, but at least it's usually consistent. It's a challenge not to get overwhelmed by so many more unknowns: new technology, teaching and learning from home, keeping students interested and engaged when we're stuck interacting via little postage stamp-sized images of each other, frequent school policy changes, etc. Students are facing more financial, job, housing, food, childcare, and health insecurity than ever. Hope has thus gone hand-in-hand with increased creativity, flexibility, and empathy between students and instructors. Working with students to overcome these challenges has been incredibly fulfilling and reassuring.

This relates to my hopes for Stateville. I pray for everyone's health and resilience—both as individuals and as a collective. I often feel immobilized by worries about how things must be here. But those moments are always overcome by the hope that I've observed since my first visit to Stateville in 2014 with Professor Moe. I was immediately struck that day by how much beloved community is here: academic, faith, and simply fellowship. I'm so very grateful for the opportunities to work with these communities.

Doing so has transformed my work, and me, in more ways than I can express. It feels like forever since I've been at Stateville. But knowing that these communities are flourishing despite the horrors of incarceration during a pandemic gives me and my fellow instructors hope every day, and it fortifies our commitment to our work here.

Finally, I'm hoping for more access to remote instruction for college and related programming at Stateville. Ideally, this would blend into the full resumption of in-person instruction once Covid allows, and it would include options for classes during second shift and on Saturdays. These hopes might sound audacious—so here's to us all speaking them into existence!

Q: Do you have a favorite quote or saying to share with readers that is related to our newsletter theme and/or these times?



A: Every winter I teach a course on Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, and this quote by Malcolm X always stands out. "I for one believe that if you give people a thorough understanding of what confronts them and the basic causes that produce it, they'll create their own program, and when the people create a program, you get action." This quote doesn't directly mention hope, but it captures how Kaba, Baldwin, Davis, and Gorman have defined it. I think it also really reflects the aspirations of and the outstanding accomplishments that folks are making in the SRA and beyond. You all have so very much to be proud of. While I hope that you'll all continue to excel, I also know that you will.



by *Aryules Bivens*

Of all things in Human existence, why is it the heart that suffers the most? It is the most hurtful, most damaging, most traumatized part of a human! Both physically and emotionally or symbolically. When your heart is broken it is very, very emotionally damaged! When a person has a heart attack it's physically damaged! Often one can lead to the other.

Did God know exactly this effect in creation of humans? I ask, when we suffer a loss by death or loss of love for a person, why are these so very, very, very difficult to get through? I have little doubt its purpose is for us to fear something deep enough, to go through some thing(s) that would cause us to change, to turn whole-heartedly to God. To look for answers outside ourselves, to build HOPE!

"HOPE", You know— when you feel fairly confident about something that you can't see at that moment. The Dictionary says, Hope — "a feeling of expectation and desire combined, a desire for certain events to happen." Scripture says, (KJV) "We...rejoice in hope of the glory of God" [have confidence in]." And not only so, but "we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope; And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom 5:2-5). So when it comes to matters of the heart, the pains and trauma we go through build hope in God.

If experience brings hope, then that means we have went through some things, some tribulations— troubles, some difficult to handle circumstances, such are the matters of the heart such as the passing of my sister on New Year's Day -2021! Who knew I would be going through something- God knew! And I have HOPE in God, because Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Everyone who believes in me will live, even though they die" (JN 11:26 CEB).

My sister Margaret Annette Bivens believed in Jesus, which makes me not ashamed to look to Jesus for comfort during this period of grief. Through my experience— meaning the passings of three other sisters and mother— during this now 38th year of incarceration, I've acquired Hope.

God has helped my Heart, not all at once but by shedding of tears, feeling those losses, remembering the Good times and Compassion from people. Through this experience of losing my sister, though my Heart was hurt, I was reminded of my hope in God because I know this is another tribulation of the heart that I am going through.

Hope made me angry, yet causes me to act, to research and be filled with the scriptures. Which is the word— the spirit of God all dwelling within me. Hope causes me to do something in effort to obtain freedom from prison, like study and research the laws that got me in here. For the scriptures tell me "all things work together for the Good of those who have the Lord and are called according to his purpose." Thus, all these tribulations, trials, acquiring patience and hope work together with my prayers of freedom; like the Hebrews and Peter and John were freed, so shall I be.

Conclusion

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you. So trials in our life are matters of the heart that give us hope in God" (WA Abby, 2021 feedback). I could not have said it any better than Abby. Our hearts are fragile little things. Yet they are made strong through experiences that we, our hearts, deem troublesome, hurtful, traumatic or just very, very, very painful. Looking for answers to stop this hurt, we turn to outside sources. But only one offers and actually gives us the answers to stop the hurting. That's Jesus and his word, or God's word, which is his spirit that dwells in us. So, rejoice in your tribulations because tribulation brings patience, patience experience; experience, hope, hope in God.

Unshakeable Faith

by Antonio "TK" Kendrick

Last year, 2020, was one of the hardest years of our lives. It was a year for the ages. The Covid-19 virus attacked us mercilessly and held us under siege. We lost friends and loved ones, and we felt the pain of our neighbors because we realized that their losses were our losses as well. The crazy thing about hard times is that most of us think we are exempt from them. We think that if we live right and follow the tenets of our faith, God will shield us from life's storms.

However, scripture tells us something different.

In the book of Matthew (7:24-27), Jesus tells us the parable of the two men building their houses. The wise man built his house upon a rock (5:24), and the foolish man built his house on sand (7:24). Jesus tells us, "and the rains descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the house (7: 25, 27). The wise man's house didn't fall because it was built upon a rock, but the foolish man's house fell because it was built on sand. From an exegetical perspective, we could do a lot to unpack this passage, but that's not necessary to make my point. My point is that the wise man, who listened to the Word of God, and the foolish man, who didn't, went through the same trials and tribulations. Both of them had problems (the rain descended). Both of them felt despair (the floods came), and both of them felt pain, frustration, and beat down by life (the winds blew and beat upon the houses).

The difference between the believer and the nonbeliever is perspective. The unbeliever is befuddled by the travails of life and often cracks under the feelings of despair, frustration, and feelings of hopelessness. On the other hand, believers know that God is hope and that "God makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). Believers understand that it is necessary to be tried so that our faith can be perfected (1 Peter 1:6-7).

I believe the apostle Paul sums it up perfectly when he says, "We are experiencing all kinds of trouble, but we are not crushed. We are confused, but we are not depressed. We are harassed, but we are not abandoned. We are knocked down, but we are not knocked out" (2: Cor 4:8-9). After I read this passage, I always add, "We are delayed, but we are not denied."

We are living in difficult times. We haven't seen our families in almost a year. We haven't been able to fellowship with one another. Covid-19 cases are at an all-time high, and our democracy that only works for a few is under attack by white supremacists. However, I genuinely believe that it is darkest before dawn. I believe we have built our houses on the only rock that counts, and that "God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).

*"We are delayed,
but we are not denied"*

One of our North Park seminary brothers, James Degorski, gave me a sheet of paper that read, "Sometimes, God will allow us to hit rock bottom so that we will discover that He is the rock at the bottom." So, know that we are in good hands.

No matter what we have gone through or are going through, know that God is with us. The new year is a year of new beginnings. Speak positive things into your life and the lives of others. If you want a breakthrough in 2021, you've got to do some things differently. You can't think old thoughts and act the same way and expect different results. I heard someone say, "I'm acting different because I want different results. Old keys don't open up new doors." Build yourself a new house, and make sure you build it on a rock. That way, after the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds beat upon your house (Matthew 7: 25, 27), you will still be standing and equipped with God's gift of unshakable faith.

Apricity and Hope

by Lydia Vander Stelt



Apricity (*a-PRIS-i-tee*) Meaning: noun: **the warmth of the sun in winter.** I hold this unique word close to my heart since learning its meaning because it has become a tangible description of the meaning of hope.

I have always understood plants' basic needs to include sunlight, water, and love. Two of those things—water and love—are in my control. Sunlight, on the other hand, is not. Apricity sticks out to me because I need the warmth of the sunlight more than ever as I slowly cultivate my own collection of indoor plants. From a leafy, five-foot tall "Birds of Paradise" named Duke to tiny Basil seeds sowed ¼ inch deep in dirt, to everything in between, they each provide life around me other than just my own. I sometimes laugh at myself because I don't have much of a green thumb—evident by the number of google searches I have made—but I have a sincere fondness for each of them as they continue to grow. And yes, they all have names.

One of the recent things that I have noticed is how my plants' growth patterns shift based on the season. In the summer, my plants were happily moving and growing freely in the abundance of sun and warmth as they lived on the window ledges facing the western light. Yet as we move deeper into winter and the sun shies away, its rays don't reach as far. As a result, my plants visibly change. Shorty, Pip, and Delilah plaster their leaves against the window pane, soaking up every single bit of sun they are afforded. The big leaves from Duke tear themselves along the edges to allow the sun to reach to the lower leaves. Lupita becomes dry and withered because she hasn't been getting enough sunlight. Yet I continue to care for her in ways that I can control, shifting my hopes from her growing bigger and broader to simply surviving. I still water my plants and show them love, but they naturally adapt. This got me thinking about where humanity is today related to this practice of hope.

I have come to the realization that hope is exhausting. To hope is to constantly put energy, thought, trust, and faith into an anticipated

outcome. The yearning for this outcome creates a dissonance between your mind and heart's presence in the future, and the reality of where you find yourself physically now. This liminal space takes a toll on us. For many of us existing in the loss and the pain experienced over this particular season, the only thing we may have left to hold onto is hope. To hope is to wait—but what does that waiting look like?

I look back to my plants plastered against the window pane. If plants shift their growth patterns to lean as close as they can to the sun or break themselves to allow the source of light to darker parts, what if we were created to do the same?

In both collective and individual ways, we all have shifted our growing patterns over the past year. We may find ourselves plastered against the window panes of life, trying to soak up any ounce of this light of hope that we can, only to be met with days of overcast skies and cold drafts coming from the windows. Others of us may find that different parts of us have to tear to allow light to reach the deeper longings that we carry, only to realize that the process is painful and tiring. Sometimes we don't feel like we have a light to turn to, but we stick to what we control and find hope in simply surviving.

Waiting—hoping—is not for the faint of heart. It takes courage and the release of things that are out of our control so that we can allow the light to reach us. It requires a shift in our growing pattern to lean towards the light. This light could come from external sources—from above, from your loved ones, from your community. The light could come from within—from your passions, your gifts, your goals. You might even be someone else's light. Wherever you experience that shining light, lean towards it. Cling to it. Feel the hope in the apricity.





Black History Month: A Time to Celebrate Unity and Love

by Jamie Thomasson

As we celebrate Black History Month this February, I want to explain what this celebration means to me, being a white man who grew up in the Midwest around the mixed races and cultures of St. Louis, Missouri. This February, I would like to pay special homage to Rosa Parks for her courage in helping to end racism and segregation. Not many people know that there was a street near the downtown area of St. Louis named by the KKK many years before, and because of the unity and love that came about because of Ms. Parks' actions, the street was renamed the "Rosa Parks Expressway" in her honor. This all took place not too far from where I spent a lot of time watching my beloved St. Louis Cardinals baseball team play. This street renaming proved that one person's actions can bring love, hope, and unity to a hurting nation.

Rosa Parks was an extraordinary woman who worked hard, and after one of those hardworking days wanted to rest her feet, feet made by the hands of God. Due to no room in the colored section in the back of the bus, Ms. Parks took the nearest seat available to rest her tired body and feet. When the bus driver told her she would have to get up, she was too tired to do so and remained seated. Rosa Parks never thought her actions that day would lead to our nation changing for the better. This action led to a boycott of the bus lines, helping to change segregation laws.

Rosa Parks just wanted to take a seat to rest her feet and for that, Ms. Parks, I salute you. Due to Rosa Parks' valiant actions in the beloved community, I, a white man growing up several states away, got a chance to see changes in this nation I have witnessed so that I too can celebrate Black History Month.

We should take time this month to remember other extraordinary people who helped this great nation's fight to end racism and discrimination: Jackie Robinson, Bob Gibson, Roberto Clemente, and especially Hank Aaron who had recently passed away. These are just a few of the athletes that faced segregation and racism, standing up to make a change. As a Nation United, we must also remember the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his valiant efforts that even cost him his own life. Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech should always be remembered. It pays great homage to Christ when King mentions the beloved community he longed for, a community in which we can all come together, truly loving one another, just as Christ mentioned in his sermon, "loving they neighbor," found in the Gospel of Luke.



To all of our beloved black heroes of history, we appreciate your valiant achievements. We will remember your efforts and pass them down to our children so they can learn from them. May we not only celebrate your legacies this February, but any other time as well. God Bless you all. Shalom

-From North Park Writing Advisor
Jamie Thomasson
and Cohort

Reflection: "Leading through Traffic"



by DeCedrick "Ced" Walker

"Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When he had made a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And he said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make my father's house a house of merchandise!' Then his disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house has eaten me up.' So the Jews answered and said to him, 'What sign do you show us since you do these things?' Jesus said to them, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.'"

-(John 2:13-19)

The first time and only time I stepped into a leadership role, I was part of a street gang. I was young, in my mid to late teens, and looking for leadership when I heard the adage "too many chiefs and not enough Indians." According to that adage, when everyone sees themselves just as capable of leading as opposed to the one who is currently authorized to lead, it will be difficult to get things done. I had never thought much about the adage and am currently reluctant to use it to explain someone's inability to galvanize people to achieve a singular goal because I have always thought that adage was representative of a leader externalizing his failure: blaming his followers for what he was not able to do.

Without going into too much detail, my leadership involved unifying my group's membership, which had been scattered. I was in my twenties and incarcerated in the Supermax area of the Cook County Jail called Division 11, also known as the white house. I had been thrust into my role because the individual I had followed had been abruptly removed from the tier we were on to another location in the division. Without the guidance and stability—the respect he commanded through his leadership—navigating the chaotic jail environment would have been difficult.

From the time I was thrust in the leadership role and during the years that followed—including during my post-gang life—I learned some valuable lessons on how to be a leader. The most significant thing I learned was saying and doing the right thing as much as possible because when you say and do the right thing, you can expect others to adhere to that standard. However, saying and doing the right thing will also cause you to be unpopular. More often than not, the unpopularity will come from those who are hostile towards your views. Those who are hostile may not so much base their grievances on your ability to thwart their advances against structurally disadvantaging others while advantaging themselves. It is likely, however, that they will base their grievances on your ability to enlighten others to structural disadvantages and on your ability to inspire action against them. I have found that, when you

achieve this level of leadership, your opponents will simply want you gone because your presence threatens their way of life. Further, though you may be saying and doing the right things, you will be considered a bad guy. However, God told Ezekiel the prophet to persevere by saying, “Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellion house” (Ezekiel 3:8-9).

What I have found through the counsel of the Scriptures and in the interest of justice is that, in saying and doing the right things, sometimes you have to embrace the bad guy distinction. Throughout the four Gospels, Jesus was viewed by opposing leaders as problematic—as the bad guy. Although he did not identify as a bad guy, his interest in justice posited him as such. However, his interest in justice was not limited to or patterned after how justice appears to the imagination in the American context, like justice being primarily and dominantly understood as retribution for crime. Jesus’ interest in justice was and is primarily built on the premise of what was intended originally by God with respect to how leaders should relate to other persons, places (temple areas), and things (laws) to objects. In this text, (John 2:13-19), Jesus’ interest in justice is centered on what God originally intended the Temple to be utilized for. However, while considering Jesus’ pursuit of the interest of justice in the temple context, it is important to note that possessing knowledge of God’s original intent with respect to the purpose of the temple is key in understanding how to be not just a leader but an effective one.

Leadership—effective or inspirational—is therefore tied to possessing knowledge of God’s original intent for all phases of social life. Leadership also means declaring and acting on the intent to the extent that you will be labeled a proverbial bad guy by your opponents, and to the extent that your opponents will attempt to have you removed because your leadership enlightens and inspires others to act against structured social disadvantages. The late Dr. Myles Monroe defined leadership in his audio series *The Complete Leader* as “the capacity to influence others through inspiration generated by a passion, motivated by a vision, birthed from a conviction, produced by a purpose.” Leadership, therefore, is a catalyst for change.

The first time I learned I was considered a bad guy by my opponents caught me off guard. To be clear, I was not the head man in charge. I was mostly appointed to lead on issues of security, but in my situation, the leaders who adhered to the letter of the law were negatively described as “nation station.” Try to imagine these kinds of leaders as hypervigilant ambassadors to a foreign culture or as people who are, as Scripture said, “..in the world but not of the world” (John 17:14). In addition, think of someone Lisa Sharon Harper described in her book *The Very Good Gospel*, who uses his “voice to guide and direct” and “his mind to make the choices that impact” (29). The embodiment of the aforementioned usually commands an adherence to a strict standard of being and acting while in foreign territory because lives depend on it.

During my stint at Cook County Jail in the Supermax Division, I picked up on ways to maintain peace toward and among others. You could say that I somewhat understood that “the peace of self is dependent on the peace of the other” (Harper 13). In often hostile environments, it is important to maintain open lines of communication between the various parties because as long as talking remains an option,

Reflection: Leading through Traffic
by DeCedrick "Ced" Walker (cont...)

violence can be avoided. For example, during a time when tensions were high in the Cook County Jail, I observed those from opposing groups going in and out of two specific cells on the tier we were placed on. Normally when you observe that kind of behavior coupled with the tension in the air, you could pretty much guess that weapons were being made or refined in preparation for a potential conflict. While I observed this behavior, I also noticed that the scrub brush our tier used to wash clothes wasn't on the washing table where it was supposed to be.

Immediately, almost instinctively, I knew one of those lines of communication that I had been fortunate enough to establish with the leaders of other groups needed to be accessed. The scrub brush, not being where it was supposed to be, signified to me, in addition to weapons being made and refined, that there was an effort to structurally prevent others from making weapons to defend themselves if need be. In my mind, there was an injustice taking place and it needed to be thwarted. When I was granted the audience that I sought, I pointed out to this particular individual what I had observed and suspected. I also pointed out that such actions, were they to continue, would only aggravate an already hostile environment. I made it clear that keeping the scrub brush hidden would not stop the other groups from arming themselves. Finally, I suggested that from that day forward the scrub brush should be left on the washing table. The leader of the opposing group agreed, and we were able to maintain a sense of peace moving forward. However, my actions that day branded me as a bad guy.

Personally, I did not take being branded as a bad guy as an insult. Quite frankly, I took the trope as a social achievement—a badge of honor because the environment substantiated the need for that kind of personality. At the same time, upon reflection, the label signified to me the kind of impact I had on others and the environment as a leader. When I think of a bad guy, I think of a status quo of injustice interrupter, a disrupter of the plans of those who structure social disadvantages for others while they advantage themselves. Jesus, likewise, disrupted the money changers' activity in the temple. The thing I want people to latch onto is the fact that, like Jesus, I saw a particular injustice taking place.

Both of these injustices could be described as factions, though their philosophical or cultural views were structurally disadvantaging others while advantaging themselves. The same thing could be said with what Jesus witnessed at the temple. The fact that the temple was not being used according to its purpose highlights an injustice, nonetheless. But a more nuanced injustice that would require knowledge of God's original intent for how leaders should relate to places, like temple areas and jail tiers, also comes into play. According to *Eerdman's Dictionary of the Bible*, under the money-changer section, "The money-changers tables were set up in outlying areas approximately a month before Passover. As the pilgrims began to flow into Jerusalem before Passover, operations moved to the temple (probably the Court of the Gentiles) (Eerdman 916). 'Because the area of the temple was ascribed to the Gentiles, the leaders of the temple used...' their relationship to the temple to hide their unjust behavior (CEB 44, NT; Mt. 21: 12-14, footnote)." By moving the money-changers' tables into the Court of the Gentiles, temple leaders lessened the capacity that that area of the temple originally had held for worshipping Gentiles who traveled to Jerusalem from far away cities. Try to see the operation of moving the money-changers' business into the temple area like the Urban Renewal operation George Lipsitz described. According to Lipsitz' *The Possessive*

Reflection: Leading through Traffic
by DeCedrick "Ced" Walker (cont...)

Investment in Whiteness, “The process of urban renewal...set in motion a viscous cycle: population loss led to decreased political power, which made... the areas of minorities...more susceptible to...projects that further depopulated these areas” (374).

Though Jerusalem was under occupation by Rome and thus Roman customs or at least Roman interests dominated most, if not all, of Jerusalem, the temple areas were dominated by Jewish culture. One source I consulted, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, said, “During most of the first century the temple was the focal point of Jews throughout the world” (DeSilva 44). Inside the temple, of which Jews were the authority, and in the temple area in question, Jewish leaders disadvantaged and decreased the political power of the Gentile worshipper by lessening the capacity of the temple area ascribed to the Gentiles and by advantaging themselves economically.

In this, Jewish leaders also dominated the principles of dominion. According to Harper, “... Elohim set the boundaries of each domain” (28). In other words, each domain had a set of principles (laws) and practices particular to maintaining the cultural intentionality of an environment. The culture of the temple’s environment, particularly in the Court of the Gentiles, was intended by Elohim to be a culture of prayer for all nations (MK 11:17). The culture of the Cook County Jail, which was and is a center designed to detain innocent-until-proven-guilty people who can’t post bail, were denied bail, or were detained until found not guilty, had devolved into a culture of violence. Nevertheless, the need to be safe and secure in our own individual persons drove many of us to be at peace with ourselves and one another as much as we were able to. In order for us to be safe and secure, we had to rely on cooler heads prevailing in one respect. Normally in a jail or prison context, when factions disadvantage other factions by advantaging themselves, it is because they are about to bully and take advantage of those who can’t defend themselves.

Although the jail environment was fundamentally different than the first-century temple environment, both required a certain level of leadership in order to restore an environment’s cultural intention. In both examples, discrimination played a major role in how leaders decided to act socially. A quote that comes to mind which elucidates that point is from a book called *The White Racial Frame* by Joe R. Feagin. Feagin says, “people are ‘multiframers.’ They have numerous frames for understanding and interpreting social life in their minds...” (18). The actions demonstrated in the biblical text by the money-changers and the temple leaders as well as those demonstrated by gang factions in the experience I shared could be understood as reasonable given the specific context of each environment. When you consider the consequences of what could potentially be who could worship Elohim, the actions demonstrated in both contexts now look unreasonable.

When Jesus chased the money-changers, sheep, and oxen out of the temple, he was restoring the environment’s cultural intention of prayer being offered to Elohim by all nations. Likewise, when I reached out to those who were preparing for conflict while at the same time seeking to deny others the opportunity to prepare, a sense of peace in the environment was restored; the right to be safe and secure in our own person was revived. In the interest of justice—in saying and doing the right things or in thwarting the plans of those who structure social disadvantages while they seek to advantage themselves—leaders are substantiated, effective, and inspiring.

Reflection: Leading through Traffic
by DeCedrick "Ced" Walker (cont...)

Rhymes & Reasons

NOT HOPELESS, BUT UNHOPEFUL... BY ANTONIO "SLIM" BALDERAS

Author's Note: I wrote this poem after reading an excerpt from W.E.B. DuBois' The Souls of Black Folk which stated, "The black race is not hopeless, but unhelpful...a land whose freedom is to us a mockery and whose liberty is a lie."

Not hopeless, but unhelpful, I want to believe that
one day all of White Amerikkka will change and
white supremacy and racism will end...

I want to believe that one day all human beings will be
simply judged by the bright enlightened color of their character
opposed to the hue of their skin

I'd like to believe that love for self will transfer into
Love for thy Neighbor as we finally evolve into
one COUNTRY!!!

I am not hopeless, just unhelpful because although
the Biblical Scriptures suggest all things will pass
Racism just seems to keep going and going and going

I am not hopeless, but unhelpful because racial,
oppression accession is experiencing a crucial
increase and has reached the highest point in the
WORLD!!!



UNTITLED BY ZACHARY MEEKS

There's a lot of words left best unsaid,
Things probably left better screaming in my head.
Voices whispering to do evil deeds.
Rejoicing, cause; lets face it; I'm easy to mislead.
For me; its hard to judge right from wrong;
In my world; doing wrong for the right reason makes you strong.
Maybe I should flip a coin like Two Face from Batman.
A good side and a bad side; when it lands, be that man !?
Seems like when I be good and try to follow the rules:
The Evil that I've done comes to collect it's dues.
On the flip side of that; I can swim out in bad tides.
And mingle with the parasites and be deemed a Good Guy.
So how can you say I'm doing bad things;
When I live in a world where Good and Bad don't mean the same thing?

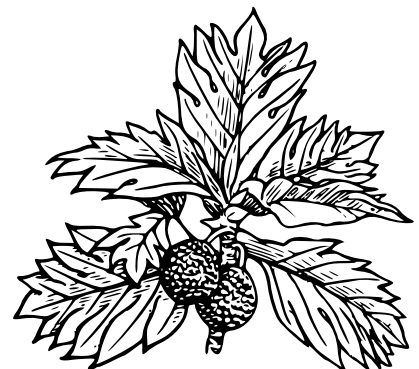
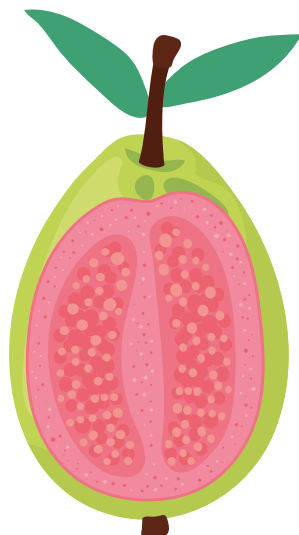
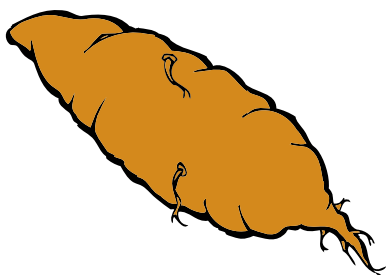


Rhymes & Reasons



Sweet Jamaica! by Rayon Sampson

Sweet Jamaica! How I miss the kiss of your sunshine against my skin as it dances and competes with the cool breeze for my affection. My heart frantically palpitates at the thought of your beauty. Whenever I contemplate and anticipate my return to you, I become overwhelmed with anxiousness. I long to experience the things that made us close: the familiarity of a rooster's crow waking me up, and the feel of the morning dew against my feet as I walk through your fields. I miss when I used to admire your dense countryside filled with fruits that I attribute to your fertility: guavas, mangoes, guineps, sweetsop, and soursop are all signs of a blessed land. Your uniqueness is aptly represented by the hummingbird. You stand out! The energy of your people is like a lightning bolt among clouds. What you may lack in power, prestige, or stature is made up by talent, resilience, and creativity, all of which vibrates and permeates through your music, dance, athletics, and undoubtedly through your cuisine. Ackee and saltfish, breadfruit, plantain, kalahou, yam and dumpling. And I can't forget the scent of jerk seasoning wafting through the air. Your influence is felt worldwide as your children are leaders, trendsetters, and motivators such as Marcus Garvey, Nanny, Bob Marley, and Usain Bolt. We are proud to hail your name anywhere we go, displaying respect for fellow man, love for life, and appreciation for each day that your nurture instilled within us. It is one of the many reasons why so many are intrigued and why your allure brings so many to your shores who need to experience your warmth. Jamaica...Jamaica...Jamaica... Jamaica land we love.



Rhymes & Reasons

tryumph by Brandon Lewis

Bulletwounds tattoos and dreadlocks speaks for my image >
 Add the money and the fame wouldn't change who I been from the beginning
 Look at us winning, all the struggle is in our face
 though it's hidden >
 I used to wonder if death or jail was my ending, I'm back
 with them M's so I splurge with a vengeance >
 I beg for forgiveness every sin I've committed,
 regret every day every minute >
 from my adolescent years yet I'm holding back tears
 I acknowledge my dead niggas in it >
 Army fatigue, G.I. Joe, foreign, and forgiato's
 Big Bro he matching the snow >
 You get a chain, he get a chain, she get a chain
 what you think we getting money for >
 Now I'm showing you growth, my balmain pulled up
 I be doing the most >
 50 thousand a show and I'm throwing money across
 the stage celebrating my growth >
 balenciaga across the toe, May the lord take my
 breath if I tell on my Bro >
 Twelve chains for myself one for every year I've been
 gone the game is cold >
 The 8th amendment article 1 section 11 aint
 protect me >
 Although mental health neglect's me I can show you
 change if you let me >
 I pray my Granny live to see the day
 Im resentenced I fight with resentment >
 To show the world that I can stay committed
 to Christ, I admit it let's get it!! >

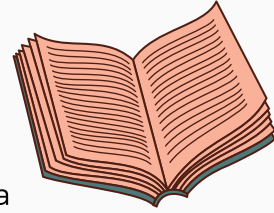


Book Review

Lost Innocence: The Life of a Juvenile Lifer by Marcos Gray

(Available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Semicolon, Google Books, and anywhere great reads are sold.)

The Wounded Soul by Ryan Wendt



So many men in this world have experienced lack of love from their own fathers. Not having a father who is there leaves a hurt in the heart. Being rejected by a father causes pain, frustration, and wounds the soul. Many men have bouts of anger and act out violently at some point in their life. As a result, some men become incarcerated.

In his memoir *Lost Innocence: The Life of a Juvenile Lifer*, North Park Seminary's School of Restorative Arts visiting student Marcos Gray writes about his experience of being rejected and unloved by his father. In this book, Gray describes moments of rejection, frustration, and torment of his wounded soul. It is very unfortunate that the self-hatred that Gray experienced in his soul caused him to enter the legal system and land behind the concrete walls of prison. Gray refers to his incarceration as being in a "cemented coffin."

At certain points of reading the book, I felt as if I was in Marcos Gray's cell with him. His words gave me a glimpse as to what life is like behind bars. As a white man I have privilege, and incarceration is something I've never experienced in my life. I can only imagine what it's like and how being in the kind of environment Gray describes can have a long-term effect on someone. In addition, I had moments reading where I felt Gray's pain of rejection, frustration, and torment as well. In my own life, my own father was never really there for me; his absence tormented me for many years. He never really expressed his love for me. Experiencing his rejection caused moments of anger and frustration.

Eventually, I came to know God and was able to find the healing and restoration that was needed. No longer do I feel the hurt I experienced from my father. God has reconciled me to him. Finding healing has taught me to be a wounded healer to others. Just like I experienced the healing that was needed, so has Marcos Gray. That is why I believe Gray wrote this book: to share his story with others and experience healing at the same time. One point in his book that illustrates steps in the healing process happens when Gray becomes a believer and renounces the gang lifestyle.

This book has taught me that finding hope is always possible, even in the most unlikely circumstances. Marcos Gray documents how he found God behind the concrete walls of a prison and began his journey of transformation. This book gives voice to and testifies to the fact that change is possible, no matter what we have done.



Writing Advisor Corner

Writing Tutoring Cannot be One Size

FITZ All by Sarah Fitzmaurice

Coming in as a new tutor in the writing center brings an entire onslaught of things that a tutor needs to learn. How can you help your advisees grow to their full potential? What style of tutoring is the best for you and your advisees? Unfortunately, because of everything that we hear to be a best practice, we get lost in these ideas and sometimes end up trying to use everything or one consistent set of ideas. Writing advisors can fall into this trap that they have to try everything, or they will risk not using the one thing that works for a specific student. Within conferences, advisors tend to fall into this trap rather than choosing a few things that a specific student may need. Due to the personal nature of writing advising, if we try a one size fits all approach, we will end up losing the student's individual voice instead of giving them the tools they need to be an effective writer.

In our WRIT 2100 class, I remember each week hearing about an ideology we could implement into our writing tutoring, and I always thought that it was such a good idea to implement into my writing advising. When it finally came time to begin my first conferences, I tried to work on each of my advisee's papers using these new techniques I had learned in the course. I began to leave comments for my students and find new things that I should advise them to do. Quickly I would become nervous that I was doing something wrong and try to erase some of the comments, worried that I was overshadowing the student's voice with my ideas of where they should go with the writing. I was torn between the idea of writing comments that could guide a student with their grammar, but wasn't sure if that was something I should do because of the ideas coming out of minimalist tutoring. Because I had all of these ideas running through my head, I began to do a bit of everything: some portions of minimalist tutoring, some of addressing higher order concerns only, some of encouraging free writing.

I was so caught up in the idea that I had to stay away from these ideas that were perceived as bad, like using an editorial style, until I met one of my advisees during my first set of writing conferences. This student had come to me near the time that their paper was due, and she had a fantastically written paper. Her thesis was strong, and she drew the connection

throughout the whole paper well. The only problem was she had some grammar issues that made her paper not as strong. I feared helping on these grammatical errors until I remembered a quote from the Nicole Gonzalez-Howell Zoom conference, where she said, "It's okay to be an editor sometimes. Professional writers hire editors to look over their paper." I was quickly reminded by this that the needs of every student are never going to be exactly the same, and we need to take time to understand the individual strengths of the student to find the method that will push them to better places with their writing.

One problem that especially new writing advisors face is they try to use every different technique that they have learned and fit them all in one meeting. They want to try and do everything so they feel that they are able to reach the advisee, but instead this often only leads to confusing the student, losing them in the myriad of things they should work on with their paper. When we decide that we want to address everything we have in our head, we end up stealing away the autonomy that we should be seeking to give to students in their writing conferencing. Our goal as advisors should be to prepare writers to move away from relying on us to catch things they need to improve, and into being able to identify these places for improvement on their own. According to the *Craft of Revision* text, we can move students into this autonomous state "by placing the opportunity for discovery in [the student's] hands" (Murray 30). When we push students to do thinking for themselves while guiding them to make effective decisions about their writing, we can develop in them effective decision making skills for writing. If we give them so many things to focus on, they become paralyzed by what steps they need to take and in many cases never end up making any decisions. When we instead take the student and allow them to read through their essay and determine some of their own ideas on where they can improve as we guide them, they become equipped to bring these skills into their future writings. As the *Oxford Guide* explains, "... a tutor creates another opportunity for the writer to engage in the session because it can demonstrate to the writer that she can literally have a say in the direction of the conversation" (lanetta & Fitzgerald, 63). The advisor cannot always sit with the student and help them figure out every step they need to take, and sometimes we don't even know what they

are trying to say, but if we allow students to determine things on their own, instead of imposing everything that we want them to do, they stay engaged with the paper and can help themselves improve. They have the autonomy to direct the paper to where they want it to go and can make decisions on what they need the most work on.

Another problem that occurs when advisors are working with students is that they often can get into a groove of using specific writing styles, they continue to use this for every student and focus on the same topics during each conference. The problem this ends up bringing into the conference is one of working to help every student with the same concerns when in reality students struggle with different things to different degrees, and it does not improve the student when we work with them in this way. If we take two students, one who needs to better develop their thesis and one who needs to work on analyzing their quotations, and we work with both of them on developing their thesis and developing their voice, the student who needs to work on analyzing quotations will not receive appropriate instruction in this area and never realize that it is something they need to fix. While the first student will actually benefit from this specific instruction topic, the second student gets information that is irrelevant to their struggles, not helping them truly grow.

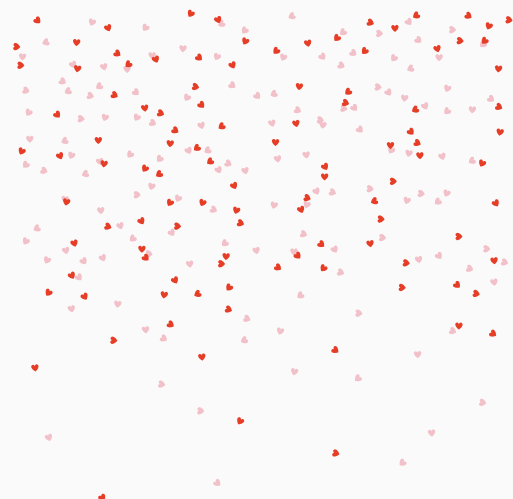
A piece by Peter Elbow talks about how different students struggle often in very contrary things. He says, "It's a matter of learning to work on opposites one at a time in a generous spirit of mutual reinforcement rather than in a spirit of restrictive combat" (Elbow 63). In this, Elbow is reinforcing the idea that in order to improve the writer as a whole, we need to focus on the area that they struggle with the most. When a student is struggling to work on one piece of their writing, sometimes we need to focus on that part of their writing specifically, so that when they bring it up to speed with the rest of their writing, they can have an overall strength in their writing. If we get into a mode where we only comment on a small range of things, our students will suffer in the improvement of their writing because we are not helping them with their specific needs. It is so important to take into account exactly what it is that a student needs and to tailor our sessions and comments so that they can improve those things.

Some may say that the one size fits all approach is helpful and sometimes even necessary to deal with so many students in advising. Especially when dealing with so many students all at once, there is a level of which we need to determine a few things to work on with each student. Many times it is simplest and quickest to just tell students exactly what to do and how to do it because it ensures a level of completion that we deem to be good writing. The problem that arises with this style of tutoring is that our students have their unique style that can also grow if we really foster it. When we force our own ideas onto a student's writing, it loses their voice in the writing, sacrificing the individuality for what we deem as ideal writing.

Ultimately, when we take students and force a set pattern of work for them to do, we ignore the nuances that each student brings to the table in their writing. To foster their individuality, we need to take the time to determine their specific needs and help them develop their voice within that. What we are really doing when we tell students that they all need to do something in a specific way is imposing our own style of writing onto them. We need to allow our students to develop this for themselves and then foster their growth by putting in the time and effort to be specific and individual in our work with them.

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WA Corner

Intersectionality in the Writing Center

By Citlalli Cardenas



I grew up living in my underfunded community library. I would spend hours sitting on the dusty carpet, reading comics and books about vampires and such nonsense. It was juvenile of me, of course. It was until one day where I realized how important writing was, especially in books. My cousin took me to the library and plopped me on the chair of the kid's section. He handed me a bunch of books and told me to pick one. I saw one with a blue and white cover, it was flimsy and seemed like a short read. What intrigued me as a kid was the illustration in the back, two hanging bodies. I thought it was a Goosebumps type franchise, since I loved scary stories. I began reading it, and without realizing, I finished the entire book. I was so fascinated and afraid of the content; no way could this story be real. I remember rereading the pages because the writing explained situations in such a bizarre manner. A year later I found out that I had read *Night* by Elie Wiesel. A real story that happened to a real person. I understood how important our personal experiences connect to our writing. As a child, I began to understand how we can always contribute something meaningful when we write. As I went on in school, I always try to implement my own experiences and my identity to my writing. It is my voice that I am trying to convey in almost all my academic writing. Now that I am in college, I see how essential it is for me to have my own voice in my writing. In my job as a writing tutor, I have come across students asking for help in finding their voice in their writing. Thanks to the library incident, I can guide students in their writing process on how to convey themselves. To be a writing advisor is to implement our personal experiences and methods of tutoring in the North Park Writing Center. It also means to help students amplify their voices as writers and thinkers.

In the article, "Composing Queers: The Subversive Potential of the Writing Center" Jonathan Doucette makes the argument on the importance of LGBTQ+ recognition in the world of writing. Doucette explains how the classroom and academia are usually confined by Heteronormative standards (Doucette 344), I add that it is also predominantly white and male. There is nothing wrong with identifying as these, but the problem lies when it becomes strictly the majority for hundreds of years. He calls for writing centers to "be continually aware not only in various ways we interact with tutees, but how we engage with one another" (Doucette 351). The students at North Park University contain different experiences and backgrounds, whether it is sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, etc. Our job as writing advisors is to provide that intersectional environment to all. By doing so, we help students incorporate their voices and learn how to think logically and sentimentally. I find intersectionality is crucial for academia because it provides different perspectives on various topics.

During my drop-in hours on Sundays, many students come without a paper. They meet with me to converse about ideas for their essays. Many of them want to connect back to personal experiences, their background, and interests. This experience of mine exhibits how students want to incorporate themselves in their writing. As a writing advisor, I do my best to provide a space for them to have discourse about it and give feedback on how they can do so. Although writing advisors do not need to have extensive knowledge on a million topics, I think we can follow through with the solution that Doucette imposes. He expresses how making the writing center interdisciplinary encourages students, such as LGBTQ+ students, to connect their identities to the way they view the world (Doucette 353). This ultimately encourages students to apply their background to the arguments of their writings. The role of a writing advisor is to provide that support and be the person that a student can discuss personal matters with their writing, no matter what the subject is.

Outside of the realm of experiences, what it means to be a writing advisor is to implement different tutoring strategies in various circumstances. In the article "Got Guilt? Constant Guilt in the Writing Center Community," Jennifer Nicklay conducts a study of why writing consultants feel guilt. In her findings, it is apparent that the students she talked to feel as if directive tutoring is the opposite of what their writing center is founded upon (Nicklay 478). It is important to collaborate with students, but not everyone can learn in this way. Nicklay concludes with her research by saying how it is important to address the guilt writing advisors feel and to be flexible with the methods we are taught, not just for our job but in our personal lives as well (Nicklay 481).

Writing advisors will come across a variety of students, all having different kinds of consulting and things they need help on. To be flexible is an essential part of being a writing advisor at North Park University. It is a more crucial aspect now, especially as we work remotely. In my experience, I have had students not want to discuss through a call, thus I had to adjust to messaging them the feedback I had for their paper. Other times, students did not want to focus on grammar at all, just the content of their paper. Different circumstances call for different methods. This not only helps the student feel recognized in what they need during the meeting, but it also helps us acknowledge how diverse the student body is in the way they learn and collaborate with us.

Some may argue that it is not necessary to help make a writing center intersectional and a safe space. One example would be the figure of Stanley Fish, an American literary theorist. In the article "Should Writers Use They Own English?" Vershawn Ashanti Young describes and criticizes the stance Fish has regarding the English standard. For Fish, students should strictly adhere to the English standard in academia, not incorporating their multilanguage identity. Young criticizes this approach because it is not beneficial for the student to morph into a standard that is difficult and makes the chances for BIPOC students to reach high academia very low (Young 111,113). Stanley Fish is not the only academic to have this perspective. It is apparent in various professors, institutions, and such. To many, it seems useless to make writing intersectional and a safe space for all identities and backgrounds. It can seem detrimental to the English standard, as Fish believes. However, the point of being a writing advisor is not to enforce a white, heteronormative standard; it is to help students amplify their voice in writing. Elaine Maimon describes the process of helping a student like gardening. Students come to the writing center with unlabeled seeds, asking for us to help. As writing advisors, we consult with them on how to nurture and identify the seeds (Maimon 735). Our job is to provide the space for students to discuss and grow as writers, even if it is a simple advice we give out. In a time where we are finally having a conversation about systemic racism, we should be aware of how we talk to students that have been affected by it in the world of academia.

As my first semester as a writing advisor comes to an end, I have learned a lot about my role as a tutor at the North Park Writing Center. I learned how amplifying the voices of students, especially regarding their identities and backgrounds, is important. It helps them connect on a personal level to their writing and I can serve as a safe space for them to consult with. The methods in which I work as a writing advisor is also important. I have come across many theories and methods of teaching, sometimes feeling overwhelmed as to which one I will implement the most. However, it is crucial to be flexible and adaptable as a writing advisor. Taking into consideration the different scenarios I have experienced this past semester; I hope to apply and be adjustable to the many methods I have learned in the class. I know this experience will help me for a long time, just as my experience in the library as a young girl did.

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The Amplifier with Alex Negron



Over the semester break (in December and January), a group of inside and outside Writing Advisors read the non-fiction book *Hood Feminism* by Southside Chicago author Mikki Kendall in preparation for a North Park "Catalyst on Campus" MLK tribute event through the Office of Diversity and Intercultural Life. At the virtual event, Kendall spoke about her writing and answered questions supplied by members of our book group. Here are a few takeaways from those who participated:

"I really enjoyed the privilege of being able to read Mikki Kendall's *Hood Feminism* for our gathering of the writing center's book club. What I enjoyed most is that Kendall speaks about issues that all marginalized people can identify with. As a child growing up, I had not one positive male role model in my life. The only people I had to look up to were my mother, grandmother, and aunts. They had to bear the brunt of the issues that we faced in our impoverished community, and they had no time to address the violence and trauma they had to endure. Many people who don't understand the definition of intersectionality and those marginalized the most within the margins may quickly dismiss Kendall's perspective on feminism. But if we seek different ways to address the plights that women of color face in our society, we can help cure some of the epidemics that our ailing communities continue to sustain as a whole. As restorative agents in our beloved community, sometimes we have to be more cognizant of what an author like Mikki Kendall is saying despite the fact the perspective might not necessarily suit us. In this case, the liberation of women of color from the system of patriarchy liberates us all." --Alex

A Letter from Hood Feminism to Mainstream Feminism By Ameerah "AB" Brown

My senior year of high school, during a sociology class, I remember learning that most Americans will end up living in a lower socioeconomic class than their parents. This information was just another strand of devastating information to me: a problem I had already sensed and was facing. My approach towards feminism was no different. Don't I want equal pay and reproductive rights and more? Of course! But I also have other things to worry about like a roof over my head when I leave the school dorm for the summer, and Mikki Kendall couldn't have expressed such views any better in her book, *Hood Feminism*. She argues the role of mainstream feminism, dominated by White women, hinges on the respectability of a person rather than feminism addressing concerns that focus on the responsibility of a person. How can feminism promote such things like job advancement without considering that women of color are struggling to even get a job because of their hairstyles not being professional? Kendall was right; mainstream feminism is no true

movement when the goals only apply to the advancement of women who are already privileged by their skin. In order to serve in true Solidarity, feminism must reach out to the women of color who are far behind in this race for equality because together all women can accomplish more for each other when we all have the same resources to build on.

The beginning chapter, "Solidarity is still for White women," immediately spins the normative view that feminism plays in, that the advancement of a group of women, who are seen as respectable, will eventually lead to the advancement of other groups of women. Well, ladies and gentlemen, that concept only advances women who have the privilege to worry about their representation: "Feminism cannot be about...requiring them [women] to be more respectable in order for them to be full participants in the movement. Respectability has not saved women of color from racism; it won't save any woman from sexism or outright misogyny"¹.

The Amplifier

A Letter from Hood Feminism by AB Brown
(continued...)

The responsibility women of color have in their community will always outweigh their chances of respectability because responsibility keeps the children fed and a roof over your head. A job is a job, when it comes down to it everyone, and respectability should play no role in that. Yet, mainstream feminism seems to forget this when advocating for more women CEOs (which is still great) but with all things considered they should also be advocating for removal of employers to fire (or deny hire to) Black women based off their “unprofessional” hairstyles. That should be a feminist agenda too and not just a racial equality agenda.

I’ve never felt connected to the idea of feminism. In my head, only white women represented feminism, and if that’s the case then only white women’s problems were going to be their focus (this is probably why I never joined my high school Feminism club) not who was going to watch my little sister when her school was closed but mine wasn’t. After reading, I’ve figured the disconnect lies in that movements centered around a White agenda (mainstream feminism) seem to have a more individualist purpose, while movements of People of Color (POC) have a more community driven purpose. In the “hood”, I’ve seen more advocacy for childcare, food, medical assistance, and better educational resources (all which help develop the community). It seems that no one really cares about the hood, except the people in the hood. While mainstream feminism is advocating for reproductive rights, black women are also advocating to end healthcare discrimination and disparities that lead to a high mortality rate for Black women.

During the book club, inside writing advisor, Benny Rios², relayed a news story surrounding the arrest of a mother that left her 7 children in an abandoned apartment. In the news cast, they painted the young mother in no respectable way. But he wrote of one sole activist who came to the aid of the young mother stating, “She’s [the mother] not a bad mom, but that poverty, the environment, and lack of resources all played a major role in the family’s circumstances.’ These are the very things that Mikki Kendall mentions that mainstream feminism fails to address.” We discussed that, so often, people are quick to criticize others for their decisions that don’t match the respectability politics. Instead of asking “how could she abandon her children?”, we should be asking “why was she placed in the position to make that decision?”

As we enter February, a month filled with hope and reflection, what have we gained from reading this book? Former President Barak Obama once said, “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” Mikki Kendall’s book is the start of changing that we are looking for in developing a more liberal and equitable society. Her book shows the holes in the Feminist movement that need fixing, and through her book she provides the information on what women of color are struggling with while being left behind by the advancement of White women.

How do we fix these issues within the feminist movement, especially in education? It is no mystery that education has changed over the years. The struggles of my educational journey are different than the struggles of my mother and my grandmother.

A Letter from Hood Feminism by AB Brown

(continued...)

Kendall relays the “harsher school policies in the wake of desegregation, and safety practices that include bringing law enforcement into schools have combined to create the school-to-prison pipeline, in which troubled students are subject not just to detentions, but to suspensions, expulsion, and even in-school arrest. Instead of counseling or intervention services, schools are increasingly using law enforcement tactics to deal with misbehavior, even for minor incidents.”

According to the National Women’s Law Center³, NWLC, Black girls are 5.5 times more likely to get suspended along with Native American girls being 3.3 times more likely. What can schools do about this issue facing girls of color in their school? Stateville writing advisor, Mike P.⁴ claimed that “Educational sites can make people feel more comfortable on the individual level by examining their own stereotypes, preconceived notions, and prejudices. The goal is to see the humanity and get to know the person.”

When reading books such as *Hood Feminism*, you are forced to take in the issues that others face and reevaluate your previous perceptions on that group of people—more diversity training resources should be provided to educational institutes. How do we expect schools to be a safe place for our children when they are run by people with no understanding of the struggles of the students from different cultural backgrounds? These people should learn more about their students before being placed in an authoritative position.

Writing centers can take on a small part in helping with these educational disparities. Hiring more people of color to the center allows for a more diverse pool of voices. Other examples include having meetings led by people of color to inform about experiences, situations, or places that could be improved when dealing with people of color, or even holding book clubs just as the North Park Writing Center has done with this book. Representation and education matters.

The Amplifier

When we take in what other people from different backgrounds than ours have to say (verbally or written), we learn so much more rather than coming up with our own biases and stereotypes. The road to achievement is not a linear expedition; the road is filled with highs, lows, and challenges. However, all great things are discovered through difficulty, as Kendall shows in *Hood Feminism*. The respectability ethics of mainstream feminism is leaving behind women surrounded by responsibility, the flaws creating a hole for women of color.

As we move forward, the feminist movement is a journey I hope that will take me, a Black woman, and my fellow women of color along with it—learning from each other and how we can help each other as we move for higher heights in tackling problems that women face together. And with this, I’d like to thank writing advisor Ariana Muniz and the Director, Melissa Pavlik, for letting me be a part of this book club and listening to all I have to say.

References

1. Kendall M. *Hood Feminism*. Penguin; 2020.
2. Benny Rios. *Hood Feminism Book Club Discussion #3 Summary Notes: 1/6/21*. Accessed January 31, 2021.
3. *Stopping School Pushout for: Girls of Color* | NWLC. Accessed January 31, 2021. <https://nwlc.org/resources/stopping-school-pushout-for-girls-of-color/>
4. Mike P. *Hood Feminism Book Club Discussion #5 Summary Notes: 1/21/21*. Accessed January 31, 2021.



Grafted In

Hope by C.D. Everett

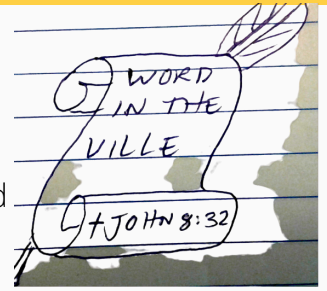
For over a hundred years of struggle and loss, the close of each season carried with it a glimmer of hope for the year to come. The hope that next year our drought would end. Next year will be the year we have waited for, to celebrate the end of what some have believed to be a curse and the beginning of a new era. But expectations would not be easily met, as they'd often fail to have met up to what all have hoped for. Yet against all odds, hope continues to flourish. After many seasons of sitting next to my Grandpa in his dim, smoke-filled man-cave, I often imagined the day that came in November 2016 when the Chicago Cubs reclaimed their place atop the World of Major League Baseball. Down three games, they made history as they fought to win back the World Series. I only pray my Grandpa had lived to see it.

In my experience, I have been well-acquainted with the trials and tribulations of life that produce perseverance, character, and hope. Being constantly told what I could not do as a youth, all I had was my faith and the love of God, which was poured into my heart by the Holy Spirit who was given to me. I quickly learned to rely on this faith, as things always seemed to get worse before they got better. Early on I discovered the truth in, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is like the tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12). In many cases, unlike the game of baseball, the resilience to hang on to hope and the promise of next year does not always exist. Many peers had not survived to see the day when they could be delivered out of their unimaginable circumstances. So, when I faced adversity at any time, I would begin to operate in the spirit of hope. Next time...Next year...One more step...One more breath. I can do it.

This hope for me began long before I had any conscious motivation or knowledge of God's love. I was a growing fetus in an unplanned pregnancy when the doctor announced that it was too late for an abortion. From then on there was hope as I imagined the spirit of the Lord encouraging me to grow. As the youngest and smallest, I hoped for the day I was older and bigger, but like the Spirit that saw for my growth, He also supplied me with an unusual strength unlike any of my peers. So, I began to push the limits for my endurance in everything from weightlifting, running, and even swimming. I nearly drowned four times before becoming a lifeguard. When I began to believe in God, I began to understand my gifts and his call for me to glorify Him. So what I knew as faith, hope, and love really kicked into gear: a longing that was willing to see beyond the suffering and death that surrounded me because that same faith, hope, and love assured me of God's saving grace.

It is in this hope that I've witnessed the supply of food, light, and gas (when there was no money to pay the bills) and a roof over my head. That very hope is what allowed me to see beyond my 21st birthday. Hope for me looked to God for the extraordinary. It was always God doing exceedingly, abundantly above all that I could think or imagine (Eph 3:20). My community appeared to have this hope, but with the constant barrage of violent deaths and bad news, few spoke of this hope. Yet in the face of all the poverty, shame, and injustice, children retained the ability to dream. So it is today, that same child within, looking at current circumstances, believing in God against the forecast of skeptics reaching beyond the present and into the hope of tomorrow, where the promise of God is expected to be in living color and in full bloom for all to enjoy. So, whether it be the chains of oppression that marginalize or the diagnosis of some grievous malady, the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). With this hope, I am able to see life where death's sting is still visible. At last, hope does not disappoint. Amen. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalms 30:5).

Word In the 'Ville



- **Call for Papers:** *The Journal of Religion and Violence* is currently seeking submissions on the theme of Women, Religion, and Violence. Submissions should be in American English prose style, with CMS short in-text note citations and with a complete bibliography. Articles are typically 5000-7000 words, although shorter articles are welcome too. It is anticipated that this issue will be published in mid-summer 2021. Deadline for submissions is June 1.

- **The University of Southern California Prison Education Project** announces their National Systems-Impacted Writers Award contest with a submission deadline of April 1. Writers must be currently enrolled in educational programming. 1,000 word limit. Compelling submissions will demonstrate a genuine grappling with the topic, employing specificity and detail.
TOPIC: In a creative essay, describe who or what motivated you to continue your education. In your essay, include anyone or anything that helped you throughout this process. We're interested in learning about your life in general and your life as a learner as well as the rewards and struggles that have defined your experience. Winning essays will be published in a chapbook by the Dornfire Prison Education Project. In addition to a monetary reward, winning writers will receive 10 copies of the book. Send your essay and verification of educational programming to USC Prison Education Project, National Systems-Impacted Writers Award, P.O. Box 1361, Santa Ynez, CA 93460-9110

- The Writing Center would like to give "Extra Mile Awards" to **Antonio "TK" Kendrick** for his avid participation in our inside/outside Mikki Kendall *Hood Feminism* book club over the winter break and to **Professor Will Andrews** for supplying New Testament students with a sample paper they can study and use as a model for their own papers that they are currently writing.

- Kudos to **Benny Rios**, whose piece was accepted for publication in the book project *Balancing Student Stories of Scholarship and Self Discovery in Writing Center Spaces*. While publisher details are still being finalized, the editor writes, "I can say now, with certainty, that we will include Benny's piece."

- Congrats to **Scott Moore**, whose piece "Stop Me if You've Heard This One: Sir Isaac Newton Walks into a Prison Writing Center" has made it to the penultimate round in the review process for possible publication in *The Journal of Higher Education in Prison*. Upon receiving reviewer feedback (which we are still waiting for...), Scott will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit.

- Representatives from the writing center will present on the topic "North Park Dual-Campus Writing Contests" at the Midwest Writing Centers Association virtual conference at the end of February.

- Big thanks to **Peter Lawrence** for attending writing center drop-in conferences in February. We wish you success with your "New Testament" paper!

- The Writing Center has matched 15 inside/outside students as writing partners this semester as a way for all parties involved to receive writing feedback, support, and engage in reciprocal learning. We still have a few outside Writing Advisors looking to be matched with inside students as writing partners. Contact Professor Melissa if interested. We ask you to commit to at least 4 feedback exchanges throughout the semester.

Mike P.'s Grammar Corner



WITH AN ASSIST FROM VALENTINE'S DAY CUPID

This grammar corner will focus on vague pronoun usage. The errors that create faulty or vague pronouns consist in the use of an antecedent in conjunction with a pronoun. An antecedent is defined as going before; it is the word or phrase to which the pronoun refers. A pronoun is defined as a word that functions as a substitute for a noun. Vague pronoun usage can lead a reader to (1) ambiguity, (2) obscurity, or (3) an (incorrectly) implied reference, all of which may blur the interpretation of the writer's intentions. The rules and instructions provided here are from the book *Barron's Pocket Guide to Correct Grammar*.

Rule 1. Ambiguity: This is when a pronoun refers to more than one antecedent and the reference is ambiguous.



Unclear Example: In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Dubois considered “the planting of the free school among Negroes and the idea of free elementary education among all classes in the South as the greatest success of the Friedman’s Bureau” in 1870. Many put in a lot of work for the cause, “yet it died, and its child was the 13th amendment.”

(*Cupid's Note:* The above example is unclear because the reader cannot understand which of several antecedents—“cause,” “work, or “Friedman’s Bureau”—the pronouns “it” and “its” refer to. Was it the “cause” that died? The “work” that died? Or “Friedman’s Bureau”? How ambiguous!)

Clear Example: In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Dubois considered “the planting of the free school among Negroes and the idea of free elementary education among all classes in the South as the greatest success of the Friedman’s Bureau” in 1870. Yet it died, and its child was the 13th amendment.”

Rule 2. Obscurity: This is when undue separation of pronoun and antecedent cause lack of clarity and confusion for your reader.

Unclear Example (taken from an early draft of Ryan Wendt’s book review): “At certain points in the book, I felt as if I was in Marcos Gray’s cell with him. His words gave me a glimpse as to what life is like behind bars. As a white man I have privilege, and this is something I’ve never experienced in my life.”

(*Cupid's Note:* The above example obscures the fact that the writer intends the pronoun “this” to refer to “what life is like behind bars,” and the reader may interpret the antecedent for “this” to be “privilege.” How can a “white man” who has “privilege” never have experienced that privilege in his life? How obscure!)

Clear Example: “At certain points in the book, I felt as if I was in Marcos Gray’s cell with him. His words gave me a glimpse as to what life is like behind bars. As a white man I have privilege, and what life is like behind bars is something I’ve never experienced in my life.”

Rule 3. Implied Reference: This is a reference that is not clear.



Unclear Example: Those individuals rebelled in 1655 and were never conquered by the British colonists, who had a habit for invading the lands of numerous peoples. They made a compromise of alliegance and exist as a separate race today: Jamaicans.

(*Cupid's Note:* The above example implies that the pronoun “they” may align with whoever “those” refers to at the beginning of the sentence but may also align with possible nouns “peoples” and “colonists.” How unclear!)

Clear Example: The Maroons rebelled in 1655 and were never conquered, but they made a compromise of alliegance and exist as a separate race today: Jamaicans.

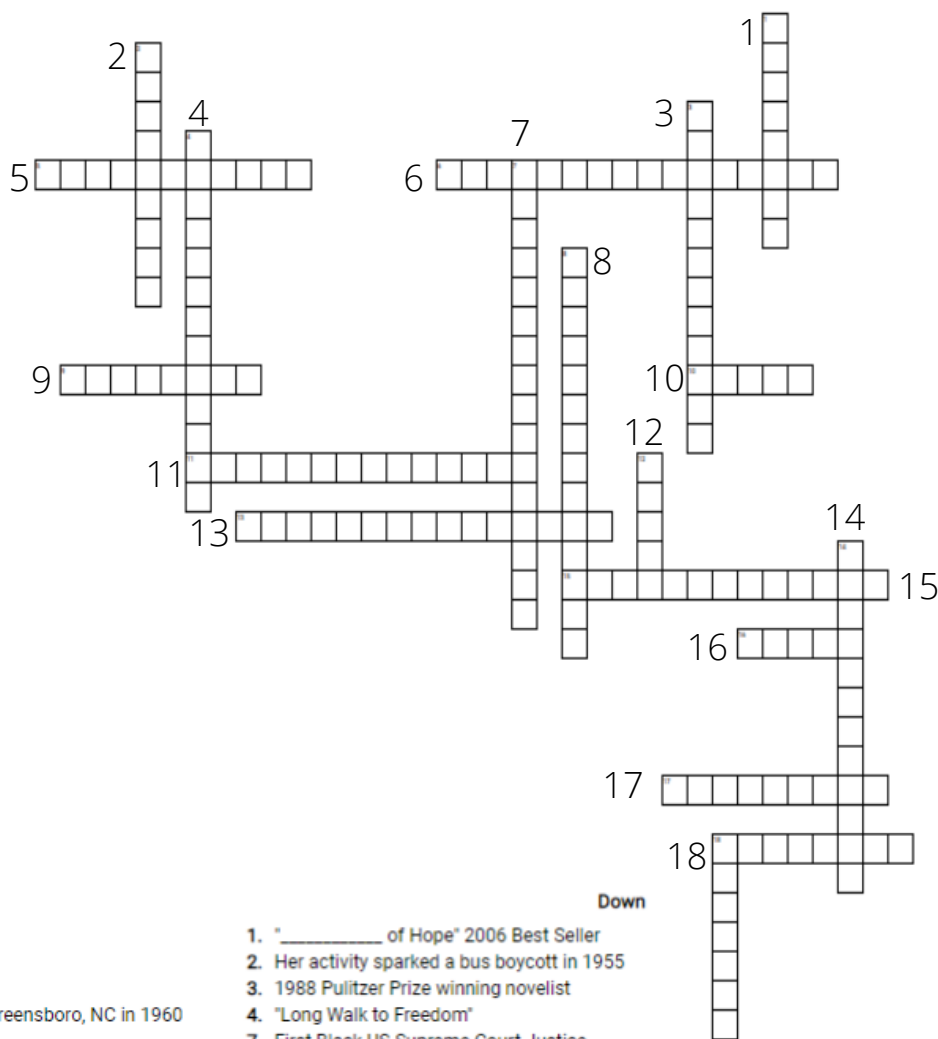


Black History Month Crossword by Rayon Sampson

(answers provided in April/May edition of Feather Bricks)



“ If you don't TRY → you'll never KNOW ”



Across

- 5. One of the founders of the Black Panther Party
- 6. ____ voice ____
- 9. State of first Black governor's election
- 10. Important civil rights activity at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, NC in 1960
- 11. First elected Black governor
- 13. "Underground Railroad"
- 15. Female Abolitionist and political activist born into slavery in 1882
- 16. Founded May 30, 1909
- 17. Double-consciousness
- 18. State of prominent "Black Wall Street"

Down

- 1. "_____ of Hope" 2006 Best Seller
- 2. Her activity sparked a bus boycott in 1955
- 3. 1988 Pulitzer Prize winning novelist
- 4. "Long Walk to Freedom"
- 7. First Black US Supreme Court Justice
- 8. Nation of Islam Leader
- 12. Slain civil rights leader
- 14. "Invisible Man"
- 18. College first to adopt co-education in the US

Closing by Soong-Chan Rah

Three years ago, I taught my first class at Stateville Correctional Center. I had no idea what to expect that first day as I walked past the heavy metal gates and heard them clang to a close behind me. As I reviewed this newsletter, I was reminded that over the last three years, I have found Stateville to be a place of unfailing hope. It's not the circumstances, it's not the environment, it's not the facilities that provide hope – I found hope in the faces of the students, my brothers in Christ, who have become my teachers. As I prepare to move to California to begin a new position, I cling to the renewed hope that the students at Stateville have taught me.

Your teacher, your student, and your friend,
Professor Soong-Chan Rah

