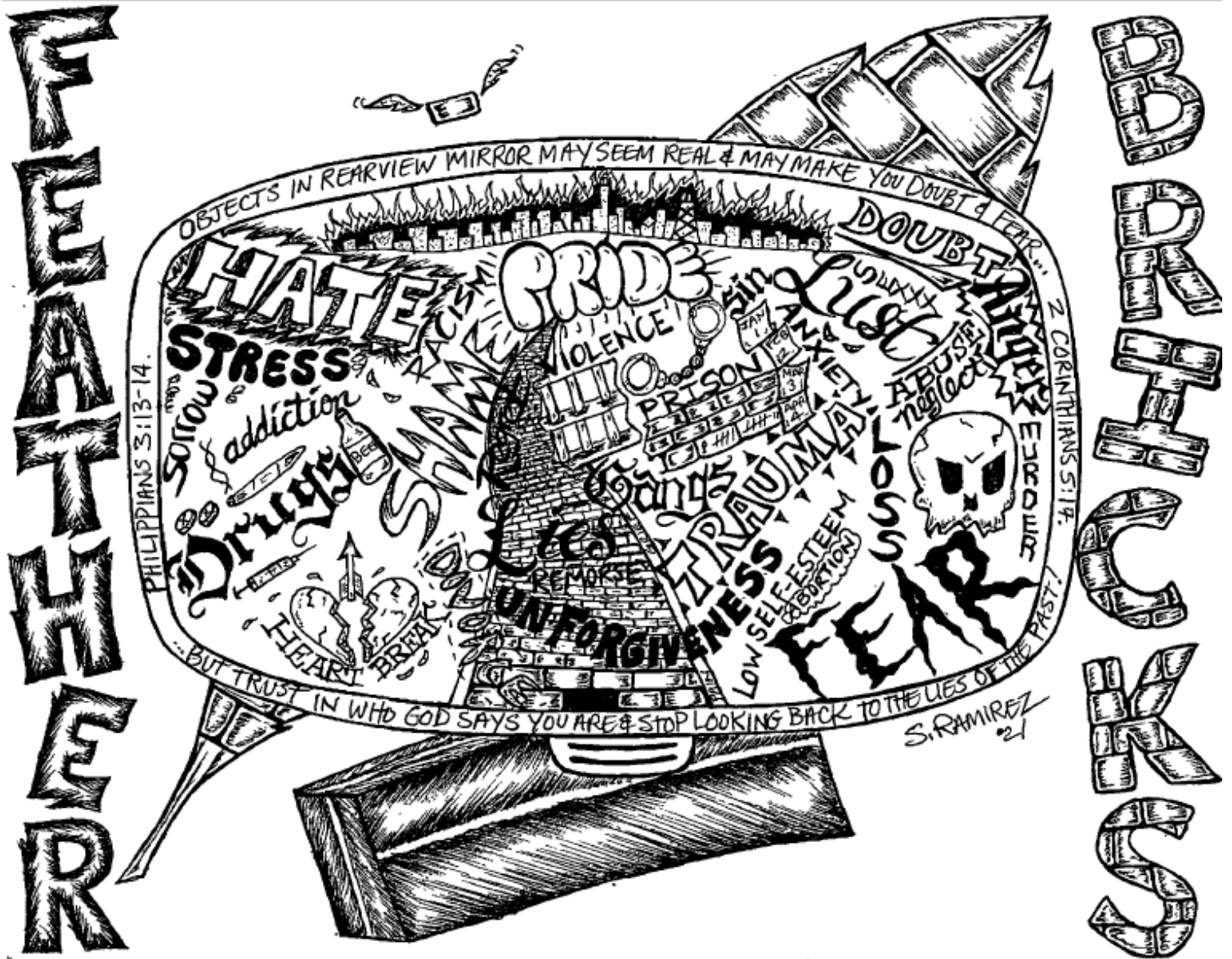


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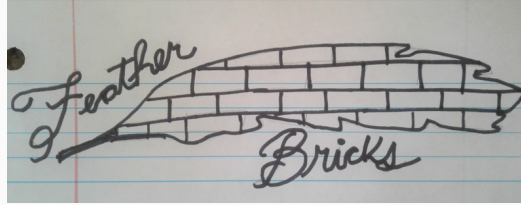
OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2021 | VOL. 8



Cover Art by Steven Ramirez

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

Feather Bricks



Logo by Steven Ramirez

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Dear Feather Bricks Community,

Letter from the Editors

Are you constantly looking in the rearview mirror? Do you struggle with the mistakes you have made in the past and have a hard time letting go of the guilt? Do you allow the guilt from those past made mistakes to disrupt the joy that is meant for you to have in life? Most people will tell you, "Get over it!" but it's not that simple, is it? Unfortunately, we have all done things in our past we are not proud of, and we all fall short of the glory of Christ. We need to stop placing those mistakes in the rearview mirror where we can constantly look back at them. It is one thing to look back at your past mistakes in order to learn from them and to make you a better person, but it is never good to place those mistakes in your rearview mirror where you can constantly look back at them. Doing this, you are allowing harmful thoughts and feelings to remain. Who wants to constantly be reminded of their past mistakes? I sure don't. Living like this is never good for the mind, body or soul, and it can even keep you from happiness and future achievement. So again, I ask, are you constantly looking in the rearview mirror? Well, I have Good News for you. When life seems too overwhelming, you can always turn to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the mercy, forgiveness, and unconditional love that Jesus offers to everyone. The Good News is Jesus loves us no matter what we have done and will help you to leave your mistakes in the past where they belong. Keeping your eyes focused on Jesus instead of the rearview mirror will help ensure you live a much better life. Shalom. --Jamie Thomasson, NPTS SRA Student and Writing Advisor

Amen to that, Jamie. Christ Jesus is the only One who can help reconcile our past with the present and into the future. Christ grants us a new identity (2 Corinthians 5:17) with the choice to move forward from our past and look to Him for the future (Philippians 3:13-14). Yet, if we choose to allow our past mistakes to become our only narrative, they will stick around as a fearsome constant regret in our rearview mirror that we'll never learn or benefit from. This will only cause us to stumble, doubt, fear, and it may chase us away from God's very best for our lives.

The "good news" as Jamie shared is that Jesus, regardless of what type of past we have (good, bad, or ugly), can use it along with ourselves as a true testimony of His great and amazing grace (1 Timothy 1:15-16). I love what Jesse Duplantis shared: "If we live in the past, our present will never see the future." I believe he was saying we shouldn't build our lives upon or focus too often on the past to the point that it prevents us from preparing for our future. Every now and then, when we get lost or the future seems uncertain, it's helpful to reflect in our rearview (past actions, choices, life lessons and experiences) in order to then look ahead so as to arrive where we need and want to be.

By keeping our eyes on God, the proper perspective comes into view, and all the lies and mistakes of the past get suspended by Jesus' truth (John 8:32). My prayer is that this issue of Feather Bricks will encourage us to focus our eyes on Jesus instead of our past rearview mirror, in order to light the road(s) before us. Our best days are not behind us but still ahead! Take care, Peace and Blessings. Sincerely your Brother In Christ, --Steven P. Ramirez

Dialogue & Discuss



Feather Bricks apologizes for not printing Marcos Gray's piece "What is Your Why?" in full format in the August/September edition of our newsletter. Please find the essay reprinted here in its complete form:

What is Your Why? by Marcos Gray

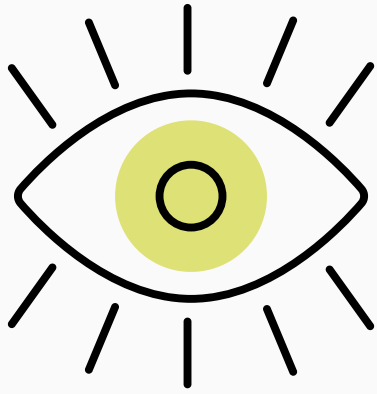
My initial reaction to seeing requests for a submission to *Feather Bricks* was one of indifference. I then said to myself, "if I write too often, what I share will have less of an impact." Then, it dawned on me that I don't submit enough for that to hold weight. Plus, since I reread Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon Press, Boston 2006), I felt it was incumbent upon me to explain "What is my Why?" I'll try to be concise (I know--fat chance) with doing so. But before I can do that, I'll explore what is my what.

My "what" is the fragile faith that I possess that compels me to forge on to the spiritual heights I read about in scripture, or even the enormous strength Frankl demonstrates in his book. If you haven't read the aforementioned book, in a nutshell, it is this: a successful Jewish psychologist lost his pregnant wife to the holocaust while he himself was in captivity for several years. His life makes me feel as if my faith were to be "weighed on the scales," that it too "would be found wanting" like King Belshazzar in Daniel 5:27. But, this could only be true if I attempted to add "pressure" to those scales by solving my own problems. This would mean that the Christ couldn't engage to his fullest capability because

I would be impeding his will (works) in my life, all because I didn't possess the faith to entrust him with the task.

But now that I've explained my what, I go into my "why." My why is simply my desire to be obedient to the subject of my faith: the Christ. Although Frankl's assessment that "suffering ceases to be suffering if it finds meaning (p.113)" is correct, we oftentimes suffer because we've not practiced the art of contentment. And if we can't find contentment, we will never locate the sanctity within our suffering. If that is the case, then our whys will forever be tainted because our expectations of life or the circumstances we find ourselves in may not be ideal. I gravitate towards the suffering in this article because the crux of Frankl's book dealt with our capacity for dealing with suffering and the inevitability of it, even if it's not of one's own making.

Although I surmised that my faith was fragile, I don't mean to imply it's not sincere and deep. I mean its fragility comes in my not knowing how to always de-code the spiritual components of my suffering. So, in conclusion, so as not to take up too much space, I presume that if Frankl's spiritual components, in conjunction with his psychological components, allowed him to endure what he did, I have to be equipped to do so. The "what" (my faith) has to be determined by the "why" (desire to obey) the one who can strengthen and encourage me to find meaning in the things suffered. This will only be done because of whom we believe in: the Christ.



Vision vs. Visionary (Part 2)

by Steven Ramirez

In the first part of "Vision vs. Visionary" (April & May 2021, Vol. 5), Michael Pizarro (recently released) shared, "When you think of the word vision, sight tends to come to mind, and (with the word) visionary, you think of someone who can speak what they see into existence." I would even add that vision is having a revelation, dream, or foresight of a possible future. A visionary acts upon the vision by making it a tangible reality.

There is a direct correlation between vision and visionary (cause and effect) in response to accomplishing and receiving what was manifested in the vision. In Numbers 13, Caleb, who was one of the spies sent to scout the promise land and brought back a good report, had seen that the promise land/vision was a reality and that the Israelites could overcome and occupy the land with God's help (Numbers 13:30; Exodus 3:8). But as the narrative goes, the visionary lens of some of the Israelites caused them to believe a conflicting bad report on the promised land. Doubt, fear, and rebellion set in, which led to wandering around in the desert instead of realizing the vision (Numbers 14). It is not enough only to see, hear, or speak about the vision; it's imperative we pursue it and make it a reality through our beliefs and actions.

Later on, Caleb, along with certain Israelites, finally crossed the Jordan River into the promise land. Caleb never forgot the vision or his faith in God to help achieve it. In Joshua 14:6-12, Caleb looked back to reclaim his share of the promise/vision that God revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:8). He pursued the "good and broad land flowing with milk and honey (Numbers 13:27 ESV) and fought to make it a reality for him and his family (Joshua 15:13,14).



Vision vs. Visionary (Part 2) continued...

by Steven Ramirez

To put it another way about vision and visionary...imagine your faith as a vehicle, and the fuel we add is love, the engine or battery is hope, the windshield(s) are vision, and the person operating the vehicle is the visionary. Now, the windshields give sight to see where to go or not. The visionary operates and maneuvers the vehicle based on their vision. The visionary discerns the front and rearview windshields to make the proper choices/decisions of the vision that is reciprocated. This helps decide when to change direction or lanes in order to arrive at our set destination.

It's not enough to have a vision (dream, revelation) or just talk about it. We must act upon it for the vision to become our reality. Visionaries understand the process of planning and looking back to the vision to keep the faith, to keep from losing heart, and to avoid having amnesia. When (not if) many obstacles give rise to prevent pursuit, it is vital to trust in the One (Jesus Christ) who overcomes and gives life (John 16:33; 10:10).



Feather Bricks regrets to inform you of an error on our part and to offer the following revision: in the August/September edition of "Turabian Tips" with Marshall Stewart (p.30), the author signature should read "Marshall Stewart, LDF Chippewa Tribal Member." LDF stands for "Lac du Flambeau," or "Lake of the Torches," as this tribe is known for their fishing expertise.



Wisdom Blvd. *By Mishunda Davis-Brown*

While driving on Wisdom Blvd., my favorite song comes on, so I crank up the radio and begin to sing along. "Turn down for what?" As I'm singing, I see a man walking up the street moving his mouth. It looks as if he's saying something to me, but I can't make out the words. Heey! This my part right here when all of a sudden WHAM! I hit a pot hole. I instantly close my big mouth, stop the car, and turn down the music. I can now hear the man say, "I was trying to tell you there was a pothole ahead." (SMH). Had I not had my music up so loud and been yappin' my mouth, I would've heard him.

There are many times I let the noise of the world, my big mouth, and racing thoughts consume me to where I couldn't hear the Lord. We must not let that happen. The Bible says in James 1:19, "Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: you must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry." We hear better when we are not talking but listening. I encourage you to use your physical and spiritual ears more than your mouth. Turn down all the loud music in your life and listen. Don't let the world or yourself be the reason you miss something that God may be trying to tell you today. I'm sure He has a word for you always because He loves you.

Thanks for taking another trip down down Wisdom Blvd. This issue we will also hear wisdom from SRA community members. We invite readers to respond to these postings and look forward to publishing your responses in our next issue. If you have wisdom you'd like to share, please send it to Prof Melissa or have someone forward it to *Feather Bricks* editors.



On the Blvd with Pastor Jeff Hunter

Pastor Jeff mentions that, while processing the pastoral care conversations and general connections that he has been having with SRA students, he noticed a recurring theme around ongoing trauma. As a result of that processing, Pastor Jeff offers this question to any willing to respond as an addition to Shunda's Wisdom Blvd. column:

"It is one thing to process trauma that has happened in the past, and be able to transform that past trauma and not be stopped by it in our present work for reconciliation and transformative justice. But for many, we are currently experiencing ongoing trauma. How does one experience/carry/process trauma that is actively happening while still moving forward as an agent for transformation and good in the same moment?"

Brainstorm your response here, Dear Reader, and send it in for possible publication in the next issue of *Feather Bricks* :



On the Blvd. with Benny Rios

One of the things I struggled with when I first began taking higher ed. classes in Stateville was my insecurity about the writing that I produced. I was afraid that my professors would read my work and look at me like I was dumb or like if I just didn't know what I was talking about in my writing. In addition to that, it didn't help any that the readings assigned to us were very difficult (and sometimes still are). Those readings are intimidating, especially when it makes you feel like your writing should mirror the academic language in the readings.

In discussions that I've had regarding assignments or difficult readings with my peers and with those seeking advice, I noticed that we know more than we think. For instance, many times I've had peers talk to me about concerns that they had with their assignments. They (myself included) didn't know where to begin or felt as if they didn't understand what the assignment entailed, so I asked them to tell me about the assignment or reading. Before we knew it, they just broke down everything that needed to be written, which let me know that everything was pretty much stored in their minds. All that needed to be done was to get those thoughts on paper.

The thing to do is to just start writing. It's not going to come out perfect the first time, but at least you are getting your ideas down on paper. From there, you refine your thoughts and structure your paper to break down what you want to convey the way you did so in your discussions about the assignment. Remember that you do not have to sound like anyone but yourself in your writings. Another thing to remember is that no professor is going to look at you as if you're dumb. Whatever feedback that you receive will be constructive in such a way that will encourage you to move in the right direction and build you up to becoming a better writer. My advice is to just write with your own voice and don't be afraid of feedback because the main way to become a better writer is through practice and more practice. As Prof. Melissa says...
WRITE ON!



Sankofa: When Looking Backwards Creates Positive Change

by Jamie Thomasson

In Mae Elise Cannon's *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World*, we learn about the African word "Sankofa" which means "looking back in order to move forward." We also learn how the Evangelical Covenant church uses this concept as a way to combat racism and as a method for standing up for social justice.

The E.C.C. has created four-day road trips they call "Sankofa"s where they travel across the once segregated South and visit places where horrific acts of violent racism had occurred during the Civil Rights movement. These trips bring together many races and cultures and usually consist of about 40 or 50 people. This is done in hopes that everyone will embrace and learn from each other, creating a will for positive change. I would like to give special thanks to my fellow Writing Advisor, letter partner and Christian brother Thomas Mills for the great conversation we had on looking back to create a positive change.

My question for readers is this: After looking backwards into History's past—write about something that led you to make or that leads you into wanting to make a positive change for the future. (Responses to this prompt will be considered for possible publication in our Dec/Jan edition of *Feather Bricks*).



"A Lamentation to Humanity! And Look into the Rearview Mirror"

by Antonio "Slim" Balderas

My Sovereignty, My God!

What power of right does any human living have that gives them the innate ability to govern others without the Authority of God?

My Sovereignty maker is God!

I believe in and have faith that God does exist!

God created all things!

God created man and woman in his own image.

The right to exist comes from I am, and is fulfilled by the person that occupies a particular body or space.

My Sovereignty comes from God;

Therefore, I am that I am because God shaped and formed me in his own image.

Then let no man or woman take or destroy what God has blessed us with.

No man or woman has sovereignty or authority over another, and when they attempt to take these liberties upon themselves or to govern or control another, it's an act against God and a sin.

-Voice Of The Poor And Incarcerated
(V.O.T.P.A.I)

Strolling down Memory Lane

By Benny Rios

As I write this piece, I honestly do not know where I'm headed with it. The beauty of reflecting on the past is that there's somewhat of a lifetime of material to write about since we have experienced so much in our lives. No matter what we are—we have stories to tell. This issue's theme "rearview mirror" reminds me of Professor Ken and Professor Rah. I'm reminded of terms like "thinking historically" and "looking in hindsight," which were planted in our minds as we began our "Church History" course. And then there are terms like "social analysis" and "pastoral circle" that we became familiar with in Prof. Rah's "Mobilizing for Justice" course. If done correctly, we could use these reflective methods in a constructive way that helps us to prepare for a better future instead of looking to the past in a way that we remain stuck with our past hurts, keeping old wounds fresh into the future. Personally, I choose to look to the past with the objective of carrying good memories in the present and to move into the future with the intent of not repeating past mistakes, as a person who has been fully healed from past hurts.

I'm 43 years old, so I won't reflect on my whole life; if I did, volumes could be written. Instead, I'll focus on certain aspects of the past two decades of my incarceration. I think that one of the things all incarcerated people could relate to is the desire to have a connection with friends, family, and people in general (especially from the outside). I would say that I was well known in my communities. I knew a lot of people, and I have a fairly large extended family. People claimed their loyalty to me and declared their love for me when I was out, but only a fraction of those people actually made any effort to make it known to me that they remembered me since I've been in prison.

However, there were a select few who made an effort to write me a letter, talk to me on the phone, came to visit me, or sent me money. Whether anyone did at least one of those

things, it's something

I'll never forget. I've been hurt by some of those people in the process; most just disappeared, some of them died, and a select few have been there since day one. For someone who may look back at all of the disappointment caused by the expectations they had of their friends and family who abandoned or deliberately hurt them, one could easily be a bitter person. Every time one looks back and remembers the people who have disappointed them, it leads to keeping past wounds fresh and resentment constant. That is, if one looks back in a way that doesn't seek healing for the present and into the future.

When I reflect on the past two decades, it's hard not to think about the many friends and family members who have passed away tragically, naturally, accidentally, purposely, and violently. I know of at least 30-50 people who have passed away since my incarceration, especially throughout the pandemic. Most recently, my buddy "Fish" was murdered. We used to greet each other with the phrase, "My brotha of anotha color." He was a few years older than me, but we've been friends since I was 9 or 10 years old, and he's one of the select few friends that stayed in touch with me throughout my entire incarceration. He is someone who I could remember and just smile because he was a fixture in our neighborhood and loved to make people laugh. For instance, there was a period when he would just greet everyone with, "Whaaaaat's uuuuuupppp!" Just like in the old Budweiser commercials. He most likely had a Budweiser in his hand as he did that greeting as well 😊.

It's things like these that we have to endure and overcome when we think about the people from our past. It's a difficult thing to do, and sometimes I wonder if I have dealt with such experiences and hindsight reflections in a healthy way. How does one look to the past without reigniting past traumas and opening up old wounds? One thing that was helpful to me



from the very beginning was the mindset that I developed, which was to go on about life in prison without any expectations from anyone. Another thing that helped me out was to understand that people would come and go in and out of my life, so I just chose to cherish and appreciate the moments that they were a part of my life. However, the most important thing that kept me going is my relationship with God. He is the main reason that I have been sustained throughout my incarceration. This worked for me, but different methods may be more suitable for other people.

Looking back though doesn't necessarily mean that all you see is hurt. As I reflect on the past five or six years, I would say that these have been the best years of my incarceration. What? Best years in prison? Don't get me wrong—these past years have been extremely difficult, but so many good things have happened for me. For one, God has brought my wonderful wife into my life. She has been 100% devoted to me and our relationship. Through her, I now have a wonderful family of my own. In addition to her and our family, my mom and brother remain a constant in my life. Another great thing that has happened was the new spiritual and academic community that I am now a part of. For the first 12 to 13 years of my incarceration, Stateville was as dry as a desert with regards to higher ed. Even our spiritual community was a bit dry, but with the influx of new programs, a renewed sense of hope was instilled in my revived life.

There's no question about it, these higher ed. programs, whether it's North Park, PNAP, DePaul, or Northwestern, have helped shape our thinking. We have been taught to look back on our lives and on history with the goal of correcting past wrongs and making things right for the future, which brings me back to Prof. Ken and Prof. Rah. They introduced us to "thinking historically," "looking in hindsight," "social analysis," and "pastoral circles" so that we could learn how to look at our past in a corrective way. One thing that is encouraged by all of our educators and volunteers is for us

(incarcerated students) to tell our stories. The purpose for that is so we could change the negative narrative that society has spun for decades about the incarcerated. Telling our stories helps show our humanity and reveals how past traumas and structural injustices contribute to paths of incarceration. That's what "thinking historically" is all about; such thinking leads to identifying the things that keep us marginalized, cause traumas, and so on. We see that things didn't happen by chance; rather, things happen deliberately by the systems put in place in our environments and other identifiable factors that cause traumas, downfalls, and misfortunes. With these things identified, we then can move forward with socially analyzing these things in an effort to break the cycles of events that lead to trauma, violence, and incarceration. Looking to the past with this mindset certainly helps pave the way for a better future, but it takes work you must be willing to do.

I began writing this piece not knowing where it would lead me as I strolled down memory lane. Yet, I managed to point out that looking to the past could be either destructive or constructive. It could bring pain, joy, correction, and healing, depending on your approach. Certainly, when you journey to your past, you will remember both painful and joyful experiences alike, and it's important that one looks to the past in an uplifting way. When you remember people and events that caused you harm, think of ways to learn from those experiences. When you remember the good old days, let those fond memories guide you in the present and the future with the goal of creating more fond memories. So remember, adventure into the past with a purpose: a purpose to let go of past hurts, disappointments, traumas, and misfortunes by analyzing their causes and moving in a direction that leads to healing and the elimination of destructive cycles in our lives. Also, move forward with the purpose of carrying the positive things from your life that will keep you and others uplifted, motivated, and encouraged. As you continue to create history in your lives, do so in such a way that avoids repeating past mistakes and reliving old traumas. It's easier said than done, but it's very doable.

Looking Backwards by Steven Ramirez

I can recall back in 2014, I was in Menard Correctional Center down south, and I was about to be tested in a way that I had not known before. My mother (Lupita) was in and out of the hospital battling Alzheimer's disease and at the end of her life. This was a very difficult time for my family and me. My mother, a strong, independent, and tenacious woman, was the matriarch of our family.

Two years prior to when she had begun to forget things, my mother would come down to visit me and share..."Okay, let's talk about all the things you don't know about, ask all the questions you want the answers to. Because the inevitable is I'm going to get old and pass away one day." This was hard to hear at the time. She went on to share, "Mi'jo (son), start praying and ask God to prepare you for when that moment comes, that He keep you and give you peace to grieve properly." Again, this was difficult, but I followed her advice.

When she passed away (May 24, 2014), that whole last week family and friends were coming by the house to say goodbye. Some of them were even camping and cooking out, waiting to hear if she would improve or pass. My family mentioned that when my mother

finally took her last breath, she had her family around her to send her off to the Lord. When they came for her body, instead of a body bag, they wrapped her in sheets and as they led to place her body in the ambulance, my family just sang. My sisters and nieces said it was so beautiful, "bittersweet," sad because we'll miss her, but she had a nice send off with all her family around.

My mother taught me many things about the Lord and how to pray. I don't believe I would have gotten to know my mother the way I did if I had not come to prison. When I was free in the world, I took my mother for granted, and she was better to me than I to her. When you're young, you don't realize how special your mother is or learn to appreciate her if she's in your life. It seems we always had our best moments saying goodbye to each other. Looking back to the moments we shared, I'm grateful she knew how much I truly appreciated her. Her words and prayers were not in vain. When the moment came for me to say good-bye, it was God who comforted and held me together as I prayed He would.



Book Review



(Available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble and in the Stateville Resource Room/North Park Brandel Library)

BOOK REVIEW ON ROBIN DI'ANGELO'S WHITE FRAGILITY

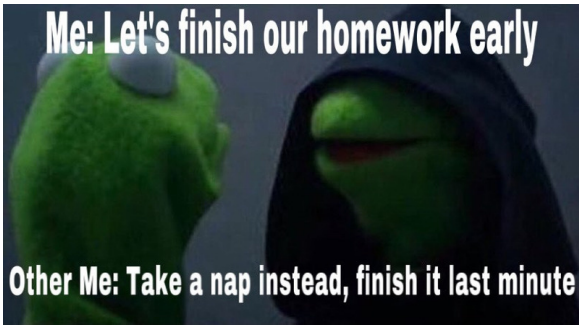
By John E. Taylor, Jr.

The main theme or thesis of Robin Di'Angelo's book *White Fragility: Why it's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* is about how white people identify with racism in a covert way by exposing their emotions to circumvent from having any meaningful conversations about race or racism. Di'Angelo employs three portable ways to back up her thesis. She uses the systems, which include various institutions, to help cultivate "White fragility and racism." Next, she used social exposure by White people that helps carry "White fragility" into society for the perpetuation of racism. Lastly, she personally admits it is a struggle to confront and capture further causes of why White people are uncomfortable with discussions with racism. In other words, it is systems and various institutions that allow White people to embrace "fragility."

I learned from Di'Angelo that White people insulate their racism in various systems and institutions. Another major insight I gleaned from the writer is that it is a legitimate struggle to abandon what you have been taught or exposed to corporately, and even personally; this is why "White fragility" is an outlet for White people to activate if pushed too hard on racism. Di'Angelo revealed examples of how White people struggle with racism. Just like any other negative characteristic, once you're exposed, you have to employ other ways to carry on your negative characteristics. For example, the writer used the words "color blind" that White people say to try to liberate themselves from racism, but from a closer perspective on the usage of "color blind," Di'Angelo explains how White superiority still exists. Basically, Di'Angelo maintains that not to say racism exists is the perpetuation of racism. Also, when you bring racism to the attention of others is when "White fragility" becomes a reality.

I have heard over the years how White people say they are "color blind," but the author introduced me to a new way Whites struggle with the discussion of racism by what she calls "averse racism." Di'Angelo writes that "averse racism is a manifestation of racism that well-intentioned people who see themselves as educated and progressive are more likely to exhibit" (43). Basically, averse racism is played out when a White person says they have many friends of color as a claim to support why they are not racist and why structural racism does not exist. I could also feel and sense how this author struggles with her own "White fragility" as it relates to discussing racism just by the use of the word "color" in this book because many Black people see the usage of the word "color" as racist.

This issue's Meme:



*Maxims & Memes
with Marcos Ramirez*

with an assist from Sara Woody

From Marcos: Thank you for the memes & maxims you submitted to our column for this edition of *Feather Bricks!* I am a collaborative learner, which means I cannot do this column alone. I need you all--our inside/outside family/community, to co-create this content with me. Thanks again!

Our theme "Rearview Mirror" made me think of trauma and healing. I've discovered that the first step towards this goal of healing is forgiveness. If we can start making a daily practice of forgiving ourselves and others, even as we look in the rearview mirror and reflect on past trauma, we will be able to move forward towards the liberation that healing brings to our whole being.

From Sara:

As I read Marcos' reflection on this theme, that's what came to mind - of course we need to look back, to listen deeply to our past trauma, so that we can move forward. Unlike driving a car, however, when we check the rear view mirror of our life, it's the past - it isn't rushing at us. Years ago, I heard a definition of trauma as this : trying to presently avoid something that has already happened. Checking life's rear view mirror, it can feel like the past is screaming up the highway at us. It takes a lot of help to realize it's not. It's my prayer that each of us have the courage and strength to check our rear view mirrors, and realize that we are not in danger and can move forward.



This issue's Maxims:

"When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be." -Lao Tzu
 "Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it." -Mark TWain

Call for Maxims (for our next edition, create and submit an original maxim that goes with this meme):

Call for Memes (for our next edition, create and send in an original drawing that goes with one of these):



-A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.

-Some days you are the bug, some days you are the windshield.

-Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

Community Sharing-A Key to Positivity!

Believe It by C.D. Everett

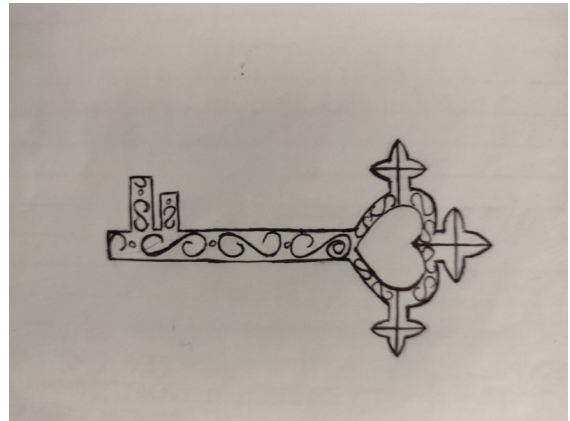
Disillusioned through trials
vexed by valleys.
Testing the heart for smiles
weighing the soul for maladies.

Blinding the way are facsimiles
only by faith retarded.
Scoring the feet and bruising knees
Only those who endure are rewarded.

Bombarded by doubt
As dreams lay stain
Our futures plucked away like trout
No solace for the torn and maimed
Scant visibility -
pernicious effects -
By God's grace believe - serenity
The supplication of the righteous attest.

The future of the righteous
In the gutter among the vexed
Atop the hills with sound doctrine to guide us
Heirs by grace where their seeds are blessed
Though cruel walls make haste
The prayers of the faithful
Shalt NONE separate
From our God who is able.

From on High the Spirit descended
giving gifts to men
Sisters and brothers - confident manifesting
God's will for man.
The hungry are fed, the blind see
Like a child we are led, by The Spirit that sets us
free.



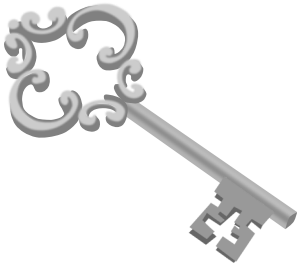
Found in a crucible
Signs of unremitted desolation
Facilitated by alienation
without reproof or visitation
Yet totally un-fascinated
No intrigue but consternation
Obviously twisted and turned
How bittersweet this sovereign nation.

Restricted visions
of untapped potential
concentrated tension
Vastly differential
such incapacitated ambience
Yet undaunted by the superficial
who excogitate evil -
befuddled by our victory

Sensory control
mitigating meretricious illusions
Refined like smelted gold
Embracing the esoterically divine infusion
Broadening Territories
Yielding Blessings Seriatim
As the Fruit of The Spirit give glory
And the Paraclete reveals us Him.

Community Sharing-A Key to Positivity!

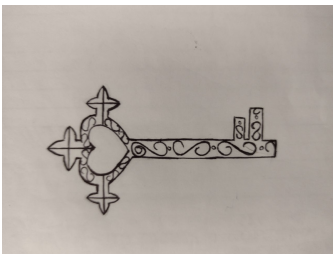
Redeemed is a Song - A poem by Marcos Ramirez



Interpolations of distant memories mixed with pain and bliss
Watching the rain as it washes the shame from my wind-pane-
mistakes as a kid
And though the windshield wipers bring moments of clarity-
-rhythmic glances of understanding
The elements of brokenness obscure the rarity
of these intimate dances with God I'm having

Yet I coast along listening to that song
on my 2-knob-radio remembering the throngs
of golden mean ratios
protesting structural wrongs

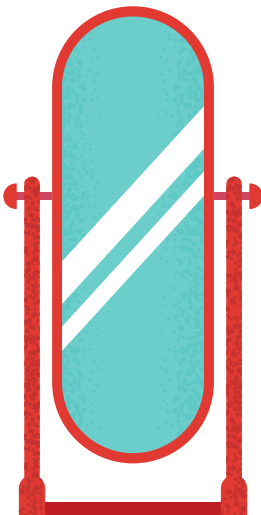
I try to carry this cross but it's heavy because
it's linked to a chain of many more crosses
behind me in the land of the lost
on our way to the calvary where we gotta count the cost
in this land of losses



Variations of historical harms, marked with the scars
of my dad's rhetorical shards
Shattered like the rearview mirror in my metaphorical car
A kaleidoscope of intercultural garbs
Intertwining my senses as I peer through the lenses
of postmodern violence into my modern past-tenses
Or rather, adolescence as I transcend these essences of truth
to draft these sentences and pass these lessons on to the youth
In my family to transform the tragedies
of domestic batteries we've been through

Still I coast along listening to that song
on my 2-knob radio reflecting on God who never let me go
He sustained me, even through my backslidings, He always
kept me close
Like Deuteronomy 8, I will always remember it was God
who gave me gold and it was God who brought me through

So I coast along listening to that song
on my 2-knob radio and it feels so good
while I'm looking at the world
through my rearview...



Mary J. Blige by Ja-Hee

i cannot say enough
cause my sista you are tough
you touched my heart
takin time to visit lenard clark
many chicago celebrities coulda
but not many would or shoulda
just you
keep on singin in the business
im glad you chose to get into this
no wonder you songs are about struggle
cause life is more than love a kiss a tell and a snuggle



THE FIST by Ja-Hee

carlos and smith held it up at the olympics
kwame huey elaine ridge assata
and bobby raised it
fred sr died because of it
muhammad used his
to float like a butterfly
and sting like a bee
chuck d put a mike in his
he rapped bout revolution
a pen or pencil in mine
watch and see how i express bein me



"The Cycle of Life as Seen Through the Rearview Mirror by Antonio "Slim" Balderas.

In the cycle of life as seen through the rearview mirror,
you live, you suffer, and then you DIE....

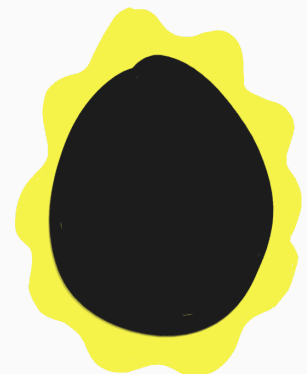
In the cycle of life you often hear the mothers of young
and old dead and dying
cry out for mercy and ask, why God, why?

The cycle of life provides for once you're here, you can
very well be gone tomorrow and
Nothing or nobody cares about the living and their
sorrow!

In the cycle of life the crooked politicians continue to
eat from the trough of the tax payers and the poor.

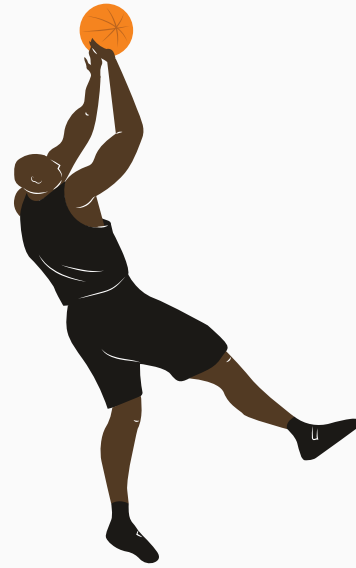
In the cycle of life the crooked lobbyist and slimy
politicians work you over until there's no more!

The reality is that in the cycle of life it's all about the
have and have nots,
Everything's fine until a have ends up sleeping on some
dirty stained mission room cot.



“Remembering Connie Hawkins by Joseph Ward-El

The original game changer
First jam and slam dunk arranger
Without you and the finger roll
There was no Doctor Jay to behold
No Michael No Kobe or LeBron
No Blake, Dwight, Nate, or Kevin
Years with the Globetrotters in heaven
Marcus, Meadowlark, Geese, and Tex
ABA, NBA, your moves were complex
Suns and Lakers on the West Coast
The Feds robbed you of the best years
No jail time, just old racism
They believed gang times not playcism.



The Stranger by Luigi Adamo

The strangest thing happened on this very strange day,
I encountered the strangest of strangers while I was making my way.

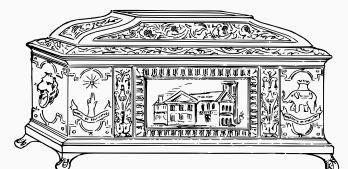
The strange stranger from far seemed old, weird, and peculiar.
But as he drew closer he looked somewhat familiar.

Recollection dawning, I had known this stranger before.
The stranger was recognized and was a stranger no more.

Strange friends we once were, so I stopped to shake hands.
I peppered him with pleasantries as strange custom demands.

In a strange hurry he was to call on his dear dying brother,
So as strange as it was we hurried our goodbyes to each other.

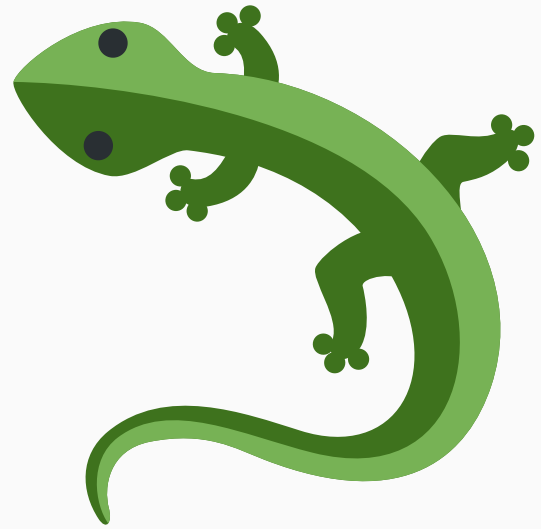
It was the strangest of encounters, I won't try to mash it.
For the last time I saw this stranger, he lie dead in his casket.



Although my brother and I are four years apart in age, our birthdays are only two days from each other. I pestered my parents to give me a baby brother, and once he was born and could understand such things, I would often tease Tony by claiming that our birthdays were so close because he, in fact, was my birthday present. This teasing was out of love and was much more playful than malicious. Having two children with such close birthdays gave my parents little choice about how to reasonably celebrate them. Tony and I have had a shared birthday celebration for as long as I can remember. I have heard how some people who have had to share their birthday with another family member or with some holiday like Christmas or Thanksgiving will often feel cheated, but I never did. Mom and Dad would go the extra mile every year to make sure neither one of us ever felt cheated. My 11th birthday was no exception. None at all.

Mom really outdid herself. She had invited not only our friends from school, but a throng of cousins over to celebrate our entry into this world. We celebrated with a day of swimming, “safe” fireworks, and by eating every kind of meat one can cook on a Weber grill. By dusk, we had already sung “happy birthday,” opened all of our presents, and said goodbye to all of our many well-wishers. By nightfall, I was absolutely exhausted. My skin was still pruny, and I felt waterlogged from swimming most of

“Ootu – Part 6” by Luigi Adamo



the day. My eyes were burning from the combination of smoke from snakes, sparkles, and witch whistles I had lit off, the pool’s chlorine, and the pee of about 40 children.

I was relaxing on the living room couch, watching Tony play “Rygar,” a new Nintendo game my brother had just gotten as a present, when I drifted off, but not to sleep. It was like my spirit drifted up and out of my body, and I saw my own physical form still sleeping on the couch watching by brother play his video game, my eyes glazed over. There was this silver cord which connected my spirit to my catatonic body, which grew and stretched the further I’d get from my body, but somehow I knew just wouldn’t break.

Writing Advisor Corner

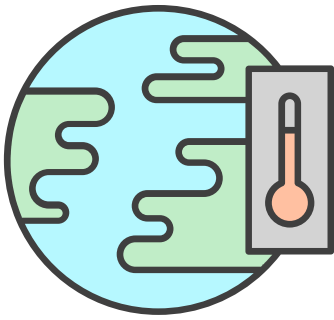
Although Something pulled my spirit form back behind the pool to the place where Ootu and I would meet, and there he was waiting for me, a toothy grin spread across his little face. “Happy birthday!” he said, while projecting the image of cake, confetti, and balloons into into my mind. “I have a gift for you. Open it.”

A box, the same dimensions as a Rubix Cube, but jet black, popped out to me from out of nowhere. Like it just sprang up from out of the ground. “How am I supposed to open this? There’s no lid or opening,” I complained. There was no wrapping paper either, I noticed.

“Use your mind, like you do during our ‘Stonemen’ game,” Ootu explained, smiling and pressing his fingers together into a steeple. I put my concentration to this obsidian box, willing it to open. I focused my will on the inside of the box and pushed the top of the cube from the inside out so that it would open much the way a “Jack-in-the-Box” would. I pushed and pushed with all of my will, and slowly, very slowly, the top of the cube began to swing open as if it were on a hinge. There was a bright golden light that came out of the opening and surrounded me like a shell, warming me to the very core. That’s when all understanding broke loose.

“Ootu – Part 6” by Luigi Adamo





Global Warming and the Boogieman by WA Antonio "Slim" Balderas

I believe at least half the world would concede that God does exist on some level or principle related to a deity. A new scientific study as reported on WTTW World News reveals that one in ten Americans have written to Congress about global warming. Relatedly, it is world widely known and researched that the Antarctic is wildly changing for the worse. Correspondingly, big corporate special interest groups and lobbyists look the other way and promote the non-belief against the science for global warming.

Global warming is as real as the sun that warms the planet every day, even when you can't visually see the sun; it's doing its job. The rich politicians and government comen deny the existence of global warming, and some of them openly deny the true existence of God and racism, as well. The belief in God and global warming both have the components of what I coin the boggieman component attached to their believability and existence.

To put it another way, there is an uptick in groups like QAnon who use a non-factual belief system to scare people away from Truths and things most of us agree about. In like fashion, people are misguided by strange belief systems about both God and global warming. God created the heavens and earth and all things thereof; however, once we put humans in the picture, the view changes and becomes distorted simply by use of an opposite and negative opinion by another group or faction.

Global warming when balanced against nature does okay; it's once man gets involved that the heat is turned up!

The planet is overheating and causing the ice caps to melt prematurely, thereby releasing extra moisture into the air, which then helps fuel hurricanes and tropical storm belts. Nevertheless, we continue to overuse all our natural resources. Groups like QAnon use fear to disguise and take away from the truth by also claiming fake news simply because they don't agree with science and facts.

Most important is that fear-mongering is the basis for the fake news. Moreover, it's the fear of the boogeyman that's used to suggest global warming is a hoax, just like some people believe about God...

Antonio Balderas (V.O.T.P.A.I. and N.P.T.S. Unofficial Poet Laureate)

Your Ghetto Ain't Worse Than Mine: An Essay and Reflection on Who and What Motivated Me to Continue my Education by Antonio "Slim" Balderas



I obtained my motivation to finish my education not by happenstance, but through the innate sense of self-defense to fight off growing up in the urban ghettos of Chicago and during a brief, 2-year period of living in New York, New York at the age of six, during the Malcolm X and MLK riots.

My immediate family consisted of my mother and two older siblings, a sister and a brother. My mother, a single parent, by choice did the best she could for as long as she could, before becoming a victim of mental illness and alcoholism. She died young at 54 years on a cold operating table.

Correspondingly as embarrassingly as it is to write, I readily admit through these reflections that education in no way was a priority in my always hungry and poor household during the sixties and seventies. Most families that experience poverty and other hardships use other disciplines to restore or balance the family structure. To say the least, our family structure was broken by poverty. My father wasn't at home with us because of my mother's choice; my father not being around to provide for us allowed welfare to make his presence a crime if my mother wanted to continue receiving A.D.C. benefits. A single Black mother was no match for the massive state of poverty that was plaguing the urban ghettos during my childhood.

My mother, a native Mississippian who grew up in the rural South and stood well over 6 feet 2 inches tall at 235 pounds, was no pushover, but simply couldn't raise the family right without the help of my Native American and Mexican-born father who was a little more equipped to deal with the ravenousness of an urban ghetto, being that he had served in the army along the South Pacific. My mother herself served in the WAC (Women's Army Corps).

By the time I turned 13 my mother no longer could function as the family adult provider, so my sista took over and never flinched or looked back nor made any excuses. She was just 15 years young, and she on numerous occasions would cook and clean for me, and my older brother and now mentally ill and alcoholic mother. My sista showed a hunger to overcome poverty, and the ravaging effects of the ghetto. Moreover, she showed a selfless approach to survival, often times getting up before dawn to wash herself in cold water because the heat and electricity wouldn't get paid, so we could buy food and other essentials. My sista had a hunger unmatched by anyone around me to attempt to climb out of the ghetto by use of educating herself, unmatched by people who had more tools and incentives to do so. It's no contest that this is the bravery

Your Ghetto Ain't Worse Than Mine Cont...

that shined the beacon of light in my direction in an attempt to guide me toward education...Needless to say, I didn't take heed at the time and foolishly took to the inner-city streets. I became a juvenile delinquent, constantly committing crimes to buy food, alcohol and marijuana. Once I came to be known as a full time delinquent, nothing mattered except my false hood reputation. I was going no where fast, and consequently, I became a child shooting victim in 1974 by being shot in the face by the Chicago police for of all things breaking into a school building. I was 14 years young when I got shot and almost died, but that didn't stop me or change me; those conditions only weirdly validated my street cred.

I was sent to the Illinois Youth Commission at 15, and it was in this confined and disciplinary environment that I started to appreciate my own brain and ability to learn. In Youth Commission, I attended an off-grounds vocational school; I also took Driver's Ed. In vocational school I did bindry work and paper cutting on a huge paper cutting machine that was used to help manufacture business cards and books. As for my juvenile criminal career, those behaviors led me to being committed to adult prison 4 times with my new current sentence carrying with it a life without parole sentence. On the second committed sentence, I was on a work-camp assignment because I was only serving a short time, which made me eligible to be at the work camp. The events that

happened at the work camp changed my mind about the power of education.

I was studying for my G.E.D. in 1985 while at this institutional work camp. A group of us, around 26 I.D.O.C. students, were eligible to take the high school equivalency exam. The work camp school educator gathered us all together in the school work camp trailer to hear and learn the results. The G.E.D. teacher sat us down with a weird look on his face, and then announced that he had good news and bad news. The bad news, he proclaimed, was that out of 26 pupils, only one of us had passed out-right. The good, he finished informing us, was that anyone who came within a certain percentage of 5 % could re-test. I immediately started laughing out loud because I just knew I was one of the twenty five that had failed.

The teacher tapped me on my shoulder from behind, and as friendly as he could exclaimed, without being insulting, and out loud to everybody listening, "What are you laughing about, stupid? You're the one who passed, and with a perfect score in Science." On that day in 1985, in spite of my previous poor educational habits, I didn't feel stupid at all. In fact, because of the efforts of my dear sister helping me with school papers and homework, I wasn't stupid at all, but the smartest person in the room on that day! My future is bright today because of recognizing education as a strong force towards survival related to any situation.

Today, I am just as proud of my G.E.D. as I am of one day receiving my Master's degree from North Park Theological Seminary. My dearest sister was my early motivation to spark the innate thirst to better myself through education because she never gave in to the excuse of being poor.

The Amplifier with Alex Negrón and Aryules Bivens



From Alex Negrón:

When it comes to different genres of writing, producing a sermon manuscript is a very difficult task to take on. There's research to understand the Biblical author's intent and cultural context. The expositor must also be in prayer and be patient for the Holy Spirit to guide them, and she/he must also know their audience.

In the textbook *Biblical Preaching*, Haddon W. Robinson says, "In light of the audience's knowledge and experience, think through your exegetical idea and state it in the most exact, memorable sentence possible" (69). This will allow your intended audience to "live and love and choose" on the thoughts the expositor has on that passage.

In this sermon by Aryules, he believes that strife is something that needs to be addressed in our beloved community. Hopefully, his thoughts can move our community in a way that ceases strife from existing within it.

Strife Amongst Family--In The Body of Christ by Aryules "Yillie" Bivens

Lately, the Holy Spirit has moved me to write on a few issues that have been troubling my spirit. As I was moved to write and speak about "FEAR," but as I began to read scriptures and pray about fear, another issue came up. This issue, "STRIFE," appeared to be more pressing than "FEAR" because it was amongst the student body whom I consider as family, family gathered to learn or educate ourselves for a purpose for which we are called.

After coming off this pandemic restriction into new ways of connecting with outside professors and students, I guess it is no strange happening that I have found myself answering questions such as, "Why am I able to join in on others' sessions or classroom time?" or, how it is put..."Man, you're like Puff Daddy—in everybody's video!" So, I thought I was intruding, and I stopped. But then came, "Why do brothers have to be in our video, taking up our time?! They're more advanced. Didn't they do this class before?" Well, you get the picture.

This is troubling because the reactions of students—community members, individuals of faith, believers in Christ, weren't and aren't as I have learned. This brings to mind Luke 22:24, which says that "an argument broke out among the disciples over which one of them should be regarded as the

greatest (CEB Study Bible). And mind you, this was at the last supper, which was actually the "Day of Unleavened Bread," called Passover. On this day of all days, they disputed over such minor things! This dispute obviously was not a one-time thing. Where in Matthew 20:24 and Mark 10:41, when the ten Disciples heard what two of them were asking of Jesus, they became "displeased," to put it mildly. They perhaps believed James and John's requests were an insult, an infringement on their "video time" and opportunity to obtain something; they thought the other two disciples had or were getting something that the other ten disciples were not getting.

In here, individuals in custody are (during a pandemic) feeling overshadowed or neglected because some Brothers had advanced in academics and came back to formal writing class, which was opened to everyone. But I don't want to forget those who are advanced looking down upon those who aren't yet! There's always more than one interpretation to troubling situations. So, try on more than just your pair of shoes because advanced Brothers are thinking, "How could these other students not be advanced, considering our confinement? They are not trying," or "They aren't dividing their time



Strife Amongst Family--In The Body of Christ by Aryules "Yillie" Bivens

correctly! They are here for the wrong reasons!" In this situation, both sides were giving way to "STRIFE." Keep in mind that we are in an abnormal environment, but most of us trusted in GOD before classes, and even more during this Covid-19 pandemic!

It can be assumed that whether asked by the Mother of James or John, or asked by James and John, James and John thought they were worthy of such honor to have seats on the right and left sides of Jesus in the Kingdom of Heaven. WOW!! Can you imagine how highly James and John thought of themselves, even more so of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom? Sure, they had learned some things, Yeah! They even casted out Demons and healed the sick. Amen! But because they had obtained that much, they felt a lil' puffed-up! Perhaps a lil' more than the other ten Apostles.

What kind of talents or gifts must they have had to see themselves worthy of such seats? Who have they served? Who blessed them with power? Were they even ready to take on such seats?

But we, in our incarcerated community, are dwelling in our carnal selves, feeling ourselves, as I say! Yeah, the Disciples were feeling something! We are concerned about the wrong things. Our accolades should not be envied by each other. Nor should we let our ego puff up our heads. When we do good and people start patting us on the back, some of us feel encouraged. But some puff up; heads swell up! Carnally, all this new found attention, after a pandemic, and acknowledgements for accolades has us shining! Some even before the isolation of Covid-19 adopted the "just me" attitude, no longer grounded in that of which we were first learned.

Let's remember the strife between Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37-38). Joseph was a lil' puffed up when he told his brothers about the dream he had (Gen 37:5-10). His father told him not to tell his brothers about the dream, but he did anyway.

The brothers were very envious of Joseph and very angry. So, their reaction was to get rid of him (Gen 37:20-30).

Let's walk in these other shoes for a minute! I am speaking from the Spirit!

Here we are, seeing from our carnal selves (instead of from the spiritual selves) those that came before us, those even in the same class, advance or show some growth, even the arrogant ones! Yes! My Brothers, we are not all so humble with this thing called knowledge. Amen! However, we start to C-O-V-E-T. Desiring those same earthly accolades, acknowledgements, admirations, proverbial pat-on-backs. Then the "phat-head" it's all about You! "I know! "I" am capable of scribing, of speaking eloquently, of learning formal Standard American English writing because "I've" done it all.

Oh LORD! Jesus! Like the disciples, it's a mess, I tell ya. Amen!

But hold on; look at what Jesus said, "Oh, you will drink from my cup (meaning they'll suffer too) for the sake of the kingdom!" However, Jesus didn't have the say so as to who will sit next to him. He said, "It belongs to those for whom my Father prepared it." But let's go back a minute and look at the time in which this is happening: Jesus had just told them of impending death, and that he would be "ridiculed, tortured and crucified" (Mark 10:33-34). Wow!

People do pick some inappropriate times to bring up some selfish (what about me) issues, don't they? I mean, right off a pandemic! Brothers have passed on, even family members have passed on. When Jesus saw this strife happening between his Disciples, he basically checked them, saying to them, you are not like the Gentiles, the Romans, who are concerned with prestige, but show yourselves to be my followers, by exhibiting humility and service (Mat 20:20-27). So envy and strife should not be amongst us. Humbly serving each other should be between the student body. And yes! There are those of us who would speak very harshly in our attempt to offer guidance, but Jesus

has utilized restorative practices to show us that “love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best as showing honor to each other” (Romans 12:9-10, CEB Study Bible).

When the ten Disciples heard what James and John requested, they were “indignant” (Mat.20:24), meaning that they weren’t very Christ-like. As I am sure those of us who think some of us would not feel “some type of way” about others’ academic shine, advancement, favoritism, or “P-Diddying” classroom time!

People! Student Body! Amen! Speaking from the word of God (Romans 13:14), let us walk honestly, not in strife and envy. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the carnal, to fulfill the lusts thereof (KJV). We shouldn’t envy one another’s gifts. We all have gifts that should be nurtured and used together as a whole—in one body. We are given gifts to utilize, to show the Glory of God. Amen! Showing that we are all working together for the good of us who love God, those which are called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28). I say this because some of us might be thinking that we “just happened” to be here in this student body, but we know that’s not the truth. Come on now! Praise the Lord! Nothing “just happens.” Romans 8:28 tells us, “We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose” (CEB Study Bible). Romans 8:29 says, “We know this because God knew them (us) in advance, and he decided in advance that they (we) would be conformed to the image of his son. That way his son would be the first of many brothers and sisters” (CEB).

Let me give you an example. I was put in the place or position I’m in not because I wanted it, but to be a servant, as abnormal as it may be. Who amongst us asks to be placed as a servant in the idle of an “incarcerated community,” with death circling around us? Having to deal with multiple forms of grief, pain, suffering, and death? I had to be called, much like this student body. But as a student body in this abnormal

environment, we should do as 1 Peter 4:10-11 tells us: “...serve each other according to the gift each person has received, as good managers of God’s word. Whoever serves should do so from the strength that God furnishes. Do this so that in everything God may be honored through Jesus Christ (CEB, 1 Peter 4:10-11).

In closing, Brothers and Sisters, recall what Jesus said to his Disciples concerning how their relationships should be. First, he pointed out an example of how not to be (Matthew 20:26-27), saying (and I’m paraphrasing): Y’all know how the Gentiles (Romans, non-believers) act, flexing the power and prestige they have over people.

But, Praise God! Check this out: Jesus told them that’s not what we are on. “We ain’t on that!” “That’s not the way it will be with you” (Mat 20:26).

Jesus goes on to say whoever wants to be great (CEB Study Bible says “first”) among you, (Right here, Amen, Jesus is letting them know there is nothing wrong with trying to be great or first; it’s not a sin to be the best or use your gifts to raise up, change, narratives, grow yourselves, especially for individuals in custody!) The Disciples were to show people what it meant to be blessed. Praise the Lord! “Whoever wants to be great among you, let him be your minister (KJV, Mat 20:27). (CEB Bible says whoever wants to be first among you will be your slave—which translates to servant.) Jesus goes on, using himself as the example now (and I’m paraphrasing again): “Like me, I came not to be served or ministered to! I came serving you all (I know Jesus washing their feet came to their minds!) and I will give my life for you all and many others who believe” (Mat 20:28).

My people, my fellow student body, my family, Praise God! This is what our purpose is; this is what our gifts are for. We are to use them so serve—serving others! All of us needs to be like “P-Diddy” and get in everyone’s video in doing the ministering for the glory of God, sharing our gifts as good managers of God’s word.

Do this service without envying or strife amongst family—student body—and especially not in the body of Christ. Amen! Praise the Lord!



God's Gift of Creativity" by the Minister C.D. Everett

The Lord called me into ministry as an adolescent, but I had no clue in terms of the specifics of that calling. Youth Ministry had the greatest impact on me, as it introduced me to many levels of volunteer service – But it still wasn't clear. It was not until my incarceration when it struck me, for "when the ascended on High, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to me...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:8; 12).

I love, live, and breath South Shore (Chicago), as I am a product of its greatest possibilities. This is the community responsible for the shaping of the creative appetite. Though I'd taken a number of classes and participated in various school projects, I was still uncertain as to my potential. While a sense thereof was surely being developed, drawing Ninja Turtles, air brushing and creating paper models of buildings didn't quite catapult me to the next level. So, from Adam Clayton Powell Elementary to Thornton Township High Schools, I'd developed a sense of Artistic Freedom – without Fear! I recall Jesus telling the ruler of the synagogue in Mark 5: "Don't be afraid, only believe." But it still was not until I witnessed a Native American Brother creating life-like figures that I experienced that "spark" of inspiration, and right then I believed God for the fullness of that gift. It surely didn't come in an instant, because 20 years later the Lord is continuing to pour into me all that I need to serve at this time.

By the Grace of God, I have taught color concepts as well as varying drawing techniques, all the while being asked, "How did you learn to paint and draw?" And my answer is always as simple as, "The Holy Spirit taught me through prayers." And He continues to do exceedingly abundantly above all that I can think or imagine, according to the power that works in Him. I understand this to be my calling, even as a Minister.

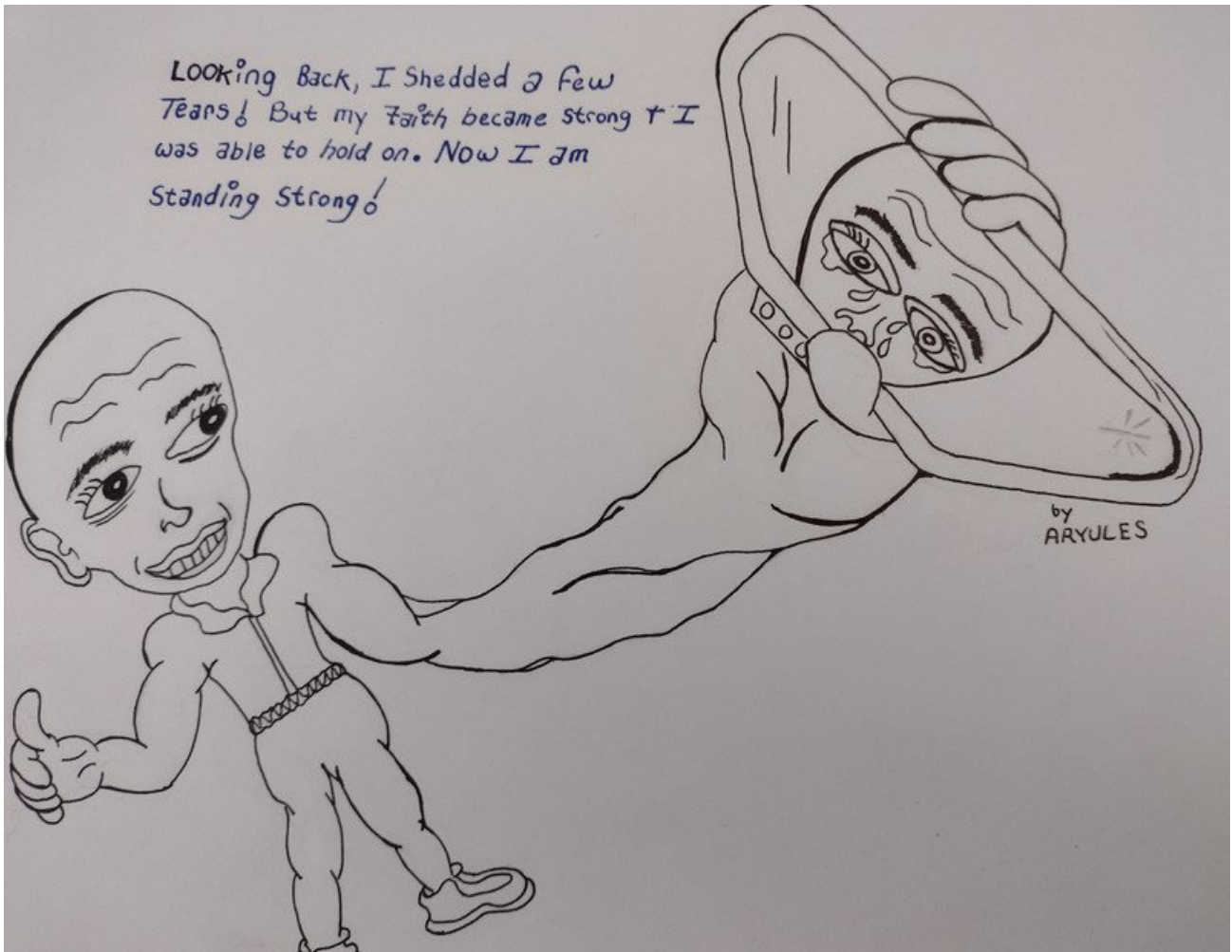
So, I encourage all budding artists and poets to continue to believe in God that He might enhance your gift for the edifying of the body of Christ; to serve your communities well while sowing seeds of change (life) along the way. Many of you have also inspired me by your work and I would love to see more. Especially from our cohort at Logan. Express that Gift and continue to share it for the benefit of us all. God Bless.





The Power of Prayer **by C.D. Everett**

By Aryules Bivens,
NPTS SRA Student, Stateville Campus



Sketching Space: Outline an idea for you can submit to our December/January "Artists' Edition" of *Feather Bricks* below. Deadline for submissions: 12/7/21

Turabian Time: Citation Tips

North Park Seminary students may be aware--due to their experience reading through the "North Park Theological Seminary Writing Handbook" (available in the resource room in the Education Building or by request made to Prof. Melissa)--that the style and format generally accepted for submitting formal written assignments in the School of Restorative Arts program is known as "Turabian Style." But what does that even mean?

According to a variety of internet sources, Kate Larimore Turabian (1893-1987) worked at the University of Chicago, where part of her job was to approve final writing projects submitted by graduate students. Turabian wrote and published her book *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* as a way to assist graduate students in understanding the main best ways to cite sources and format papers that required following what is known as the "Chicago Manual of Style." In 2018, the University of Chicago Press published the 9th edition of Turabian's book, and the press indicates that over 9 million copies have been sold since. One study in 2016 of over one million college course syllabi concluded that Turabian was the most commonly assigned female author, due to her publication of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Academics often refer to this book and the formatting guidelines it explains simply as "Turabian."



Do you need to purchase your own copy of Turabian's manual in order to succeed in North Park SRA classes? Not necessarily. You can find the basic best tips for how to give credit to the sources you use in your papers in the "North Park Seminary Writing Handbook." Course Professors also often provide a model in their writing prompts for how they expect you to give credit to your sources and format your formal writing assignments, and from time to time Professor preferences for citation styles may differ. The Writing Center also provides handouts with tips for how not to plagiarize and how to apply the advice Turabian outlines in her manual. That said, some SRA students do find it helpful to have their own copy of Turabian's manual, or to know who in their vicinity might have a copy or be a "Turabian expert" to rely on when a tricky question about how to cite a source comes up.

What are the two main options for how to use Turabian format to credit your sources in a formal writing assignment? Source citations in the Turabian manual come in two varieties:

- (1) notes and bibliography (or simply notes) and
- (2) author-date. These two systems are also sometimes referred to as Chicago-style citations because they are the same as the ones presented in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

In (1) the notes and bibliography system, sources are cited in numbered footnotes or endnotes. Each note corresponds to a raised (superscript) number in the text. Sources are also usually listed in a separate bibliography.

In (2) the author-date system, sources are briefly cited in the text, usually in parentheses, by author's last name and year of publication. Each citation in the text matches up with an entry in a reference list, where full bibliographic information is provided.

In (1) the notes and bibliography system, an example note and bibliographic entry can be found below:

NOTES

1. Katie Kitamura, *A Separation* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2017), 25.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ENTRIES (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Kitamura, Katie. *A Separation*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2017.

In (2) the author-date system, an example in-text citation and reference entry can be found below:

IN-TEXT CITATION

(Kitamura 2017, 25)

REFERENCE LIST ENTRIES (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Kitamura, Katie. 2017. *A Separation*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Are you using either of these Turabian systems in the papers you are working on this semester? Talk amongst yourselves!

THANK
YOU

Salutes & Shout Outs



Feather Bricks would like to thank all Illinois Department of Corrections staff for their support of educational programming such as North Park's School of Restorative Arts. We'd like to give a special Extra-Mile award to those in the Education Building at Stateville Correctional Center (Principal Costabile, Sgt. Brown, and all of their staff) for doing all that they have done to keep classes running smoothly until this midterm semester point. A million thanks to Ms. McGrath for copyediting. Much appreciation to all at Logan Correctional Center, such as EFA Davison and educator Adele Wheeler, for their ongoing support and assistance. **We welcome your feedback and would love to publish staff writing and artwork in future editions of this School of Restorative Arts newsletter.**

Shout out to SRA student Raymond Nesbitt for providing a copyediting assist for this issue!

Kudos to SRA student DeCedrick Walker for his recent publication in the writing center journal *The Peer Review* issue 5.2. DeCedrick Walker's article is titled, "Writing, Incarceration, and Healing in the Writing Center."

Special recognition goes to all SRA students whose previously published writing will be presented on November 6th at the Midwest Modern Languages Association annual convention by our Writing Center Chicago team in two "Prison Writing" panel presentations moderated by Professor Will Andrews. These student authors include Scott Moore, Benny Rios, Rayon Sampson, and DeCedrick Walker.

Closing by Jamie Thomasson

(Inspired by North Park University and the class "Life Together" taught by Professor and Reverend Cheryl Lynn Cain and Professor Soong-Chan Rah)

North Park University Professor Reverend Cheryl Lynn Cain inspires and encourages us into taking pride in who we are and to not let the past define us. When we let the past define us, it prevents us from becoming who it is we want to become. When we can take pride in knowing who we are, it helps us build a better life together within our community. We must not let our past mistakes define who we are; we must learn from those past mistakes and let them shape and transform us into who it is we want to become. I would like to give special thanks to the North Park Community, University staff and Professors for their dedication and devotion into helping to shape our lives and for inspiring us into becoming the best versions of ourselves. You are greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten. May God Bless You Always.