



Cover Art by Steven Ramirez

FEATHER BRICKS

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

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Hi! I am DeCedrick "LFD" Walker. I'm a 4th year student in North Park Theological Seminary's School of Restorative Arts at the Stateville campus. In this edition, I'm coediting alongside J.M.; not a collaboration I envisioned, but one that he and I accept on the basis that we're both what's called "an acquired taste." Plus, Prof. Melissa posed her favorite feedback question, "I wonder how it might look if you and Johnny collabed on this upcoming edition?" Anyway...he, I, and Lyds (shout out to Lyds) thought it would be great to invite writers into the *Feather Bricks* space to share their experiences with writer's block as explained in the prompt. To those who find joy in expressing their voice through combining opposites, continue being courageous. Personally, I've never feathered a brick nor bricked a feather. Obviously, however, let's continue on collabing together.

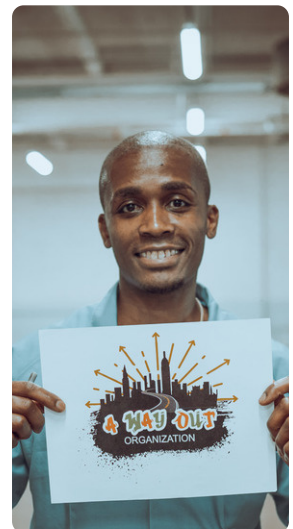
-DeCedrick "LFD" Walker

Thank you *Feather Brick* viewers and contributors for letting DeCedrick and I host this thematic edition entitled "Writer's Block." To be honest, this was solely DeCedrick's idea. As a matter of fact, I think I had an element of brain freeze myself because I had no idea what he envisioned with this edition. Anyhow, along with Prof. Melissa's encouragement and a push or two from Lydia, here we are. Who knows, maybe in the near future we can get Prof. Melissa and someone like uummm... Lydia to collab on an edition of *Feather Bricks*. That would be nice, right viewers? In the meantime, enjoy and thank Ced and I later. -Johnny Marizetts

As we get this writer's block edition out to all of the writers on all of our blocks, we welcome submissions for the Oct/Nov edition of *Feather Bricks*, theme "Fall Frights." Get your submission to Prof. Melissa or Senior Editor Johnny Marizetts via Principal Costabile, Co-Editors Karin Hargrave, Tasha Kennedy, and Wendy Denzler at Logan, or to the EFA at your facility.

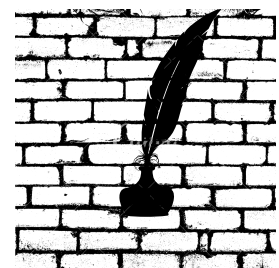


DeCedrick "LFD" Walker



Johnny Marizetts

WRITE ON!



PROF MELISSA



Dialogue & Discuss

A Walk around the Block by Elton Williams

I imagine that our North Park sisters in Logan, and know that our brothers representing the third cohort here in Stateville, have yet to partake in any of the several personality assessments that are (will be) an important part of the North Park Seminary experience. In light of this, I would like to take a walk around the block with you and share some of what you should come to expect when the time to take a "deep dive" into yourselves does come. For some of you, the adventure will be fun and exhilarating. For others, the experience will be sobering and thought-provoking. However these assessments affect you, I have no doubt that they will prove beneficial, shining a very different light upon you inner-selves, as you find yourselves blessed into the realization of the power of self-discovery contained within them.

Full disclosure, the entire 4-year program may, in fact, be one giant personality test. Alas, as such knowledge sits far above my state-pay grade, I digress.

Of those assessments to which I speak (from a personal experience perspective), I hope that you will honor me by taking in a portion of my own journey as it relates to the two assessments. I intend to provide you with some manner of a "heads up," The first being about the Enneagram and the second, an assessment on relational attachments.

The Enneagram is a test which "gives a snapshot" of the personality grouping under/into which you fall. There are nine. I was diagnosed as having a "type 5" personality, meaning that I am not a very emotionally available person, that I am fact-driven, that I despise messiness in life, and that I may, at times, appear distant or detached.

The second assessment is found in a book entitled *Attachment and Loss*, which informed me that I exhibit a blending of what are called "anxious" and "avoidant" attachment styles. This assessment further informed me that I am the sort of person who savors their solitude and that I work best when working alone (doesn't mean that I can't work well with one or two others). It also reminded me of the fact that I hate the idea of waiting to reach consensus among clearly indecisive people when it is clear that immediate certain action needs to be taken.

Of course, there is so much more to all of this, but I believe you get the gist. Most of what I discovered about myself during these assessments, I think I already knew. The results, more or less, served as a sort of confirmation of the truths that my life experience had already shown me. But I confess that I was left wondering more deeply about who or what made me...me. Was it God, in His wisdom, recognizing the need for so many diverse characters in this long-running opera? Or is it the world, its billions of inhabitants, and their myriad of impositions upon my existence?

Over the course of these years, you will read many books reminding you of the impact of outside stimuli in the shaping of your personality. And, again, this is a field of knowledge far outside of and above my state-pay grade, but I cannot help offering a couple of quotations from the above-mentioned books that might give you cause for pause as you contemplate the smorgasbord of ideas that will be set before you. The first is from Thomas Lewis and can be found in John Bowlby's *Attachment and Loss*, which says, "The genetic lottery may determine the cards in your deck, but experience deals the hand you can play." This quote, to me, speaks of the social situations that have been in play from time immemorial, having remained with us, blessing, troubling, and tormenting us, which generation after generation have "cut their teeth" (so to speak) wading through the waters.



Dialogue & Discuss

A Walk around the Block by Elton Williams (continued...)

The second quote is found in a book entitled *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Scazzero, Peter), which says, "God has shaped and crafted us internally--with a unique personality, thoughts, dreams, temperament, feelings, talents, gifts, and desires." The quote reminds me of Jeremiah 1:5.

Each quote lends itself to supporting an argument in favor of recognizing the almost complete fullness of God's hand in shaping each of us--individually. But my aim is not to convince you of this or that. Indeed, whatever the case may be, God or the world, it is a fact that as we journey through this life, as we encounter the multitude of scenarios and experience the many events that we necessarily must, we draw from the wellspring of thoughts...feelings...and desires within us and what we draw from that well determines the manner, tactfulness, and severity (or clemency) of our response to each of these complications and the actors involved.

With each storyline, we are given the opportunity to build upon the foundation of self, that unique personality, and further hone our ability to exist more amiably in an increasingly hostile world (Matt. 10:16, 24:12, and every news station), in accordance with the desire of the God we serve.

And here, this short walk must begin to embrace its end. This channel of thought must be brought to a halt and I must return to my earlier advocacy of the value to be found in the assessments you will encounter. To that end, I say to you that the best thing any person can do is to "temet nosche;" Latin for "know thyself" (or so Professor Ken has informed me. If I am mistaken in this translation, pleeeaaase take my error up with him...and no, Professor, I do not have your money). (Copy Editor Ms. McGrath's note: "Actually, 'temet nosche' should be 'scis te ipsum.')

Seriously...

...these assessments can and will aid you in the process of getting to truly know thy self, thy authentic self, which should be the aim of every person's endeavors. I mean, if you don't know yourself, how can you hope to truly know anyone else? Uncover your gifts and talents, expand those you are already aware of. Recognize and learn to appreciate your limitations (we all have them). Even as the world screams at you the harsh verisimilitude that you share such similarity with every other of the seven billion plus people inhabiting this amazingly beautiful planet that Yahweh made, the Holy Spirit continues to gently and quietly remind you of the fact that you are irrevocably unique, a special one among so very many.

You are each akin to what people call "Natural Resources" and in the case of heaven, "National Treasures." Yahweh made you--and the you that Yahweh made, no-one else can ever become. Let the idea of sameness motivate you to use these upcoming assessments to uncover and bring to bear upon this world every good gift inside of you, not to find the you that you think the world wants you to be, nor the you that you want the world to see. Be honest in your approach to the questions, find the real you (if you don't already know who that is), and know that it is okay to be the you that you were made to be...whoever that is...whoever you are. Especially you, Katie, Second Cohort's First Lady :-).



Dialogue & Discuss

Legacy by Michael Key

It must be understood first and foremost that I come from nothing. I learned nothing, so I knew nothing, especially something as profound as a legacy. You see, the legacy I learned was one of despair, injustice, poverty and pain, all learned at the hands of family, friends, and community. Why would I want to continue that? Not long ago, if I had been asked to describe myself, it would've been summed up in three words: Poverty, Pain, and Prison.

I was raised and grew up in poverty. All I left in my wake was a reflection of my own pain and destruction, which inevitably led to my incarceration – what a legacy, huh?

In prison, I've learned a great deal about myself, my capabilities and my limitations. I've also had plenty of time to assess the damage I've caused to myself, the people around me, and my community. But most poignant of all, I've learned to ask the questions of myself: Who am I and what would I like my legacy to be? Am I content to forever be labeled a murderer and a destroyer of lives? I can tell you the answer to that question and all others is absolutely not!!

So what do I want my legacy to be? What is a realistic expectation I can impart to my fellow man? The first part is easy. I have a son who is a successful young black man embarking on a journey of success, family, and community building. As for myself, I too am on that journey and in that light I want to create an anti-gang, anti-crime initiative. Something like a big brother/big sister program encompassing both inside and outside bodies to cover both one's mistakes as well as one's future successes. Because are we not better when we have something to aspire to, but more importantly, when someone we look up to shows pride and concern for us?

I wasn't there for my son – at least not physically – for more than 20 years, and though he turned out great, there are still gaps in his maturation from childhood to manhood. So, I also want to create something that teaches our young boys and girls to grow to be responsible mature adults, dedicated to God, family, and community. An initiative where manhood as well as womanhood is earned through rights of passage. Because as we know, something earned is appreciated and cultivated more than something given.

In conclusion, the earliest days of my life were spent in pain, anger, resentment, fear and destruction. I want my remaining days to be spent and known for breaking the cycle of fatherless homes, mending broken families, and letting my mistakes be the guiding light to a better future for both my future legacies and the legacy of my people. Because, as the saying goes, if not me – who? If not now – when?

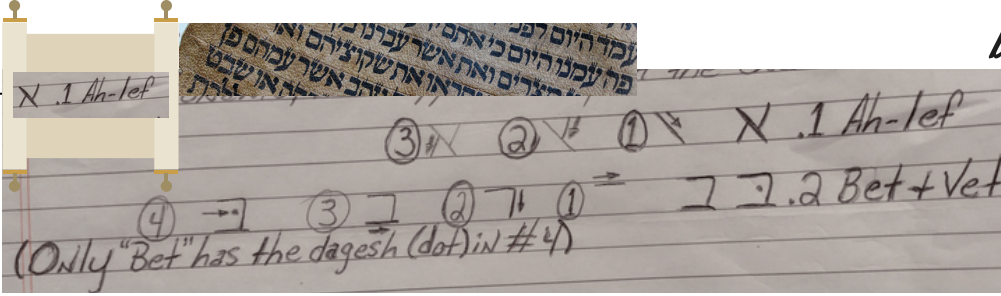
Global Leadership Summit 2022 by Luigi Adamo

Recently this past August, I had the opportunity to participate in viewing the 2022 Global Leadership Summit (GLS 2022) with 14 other individuals in custody, all drawn from various educational programs at Stateville. The GLS2022 is a series of seminars given by CEOs, Pastors, and industry leaders over a two-day, seven-session event that was held at Willow Creek Church in Barrington, IL, and was broadcasted live via Zoom to churches, auditoriums, boardrooms, classrooms, and correctional centers in over 110 countries, with an estimated viewership of 9 million.

Personally, I found the GLS2022 to be a wonderful experience chock full of the kinds of teachings everyone in IDOC custody could benefit from. Unfortunately, departmental limitations could not make that happen. So, being fortunate enough to attend the GLS 2022 myself, I figured I would share with the Feather Bricks community some of the overarching themes presented.

From start to finish, the repetitive 3-part message of the summit was for 1) hopeful leaders to get out of the bad habit of negative thinking and replace those thoughts with a positive mindset. 2) To take the time to form one on one relationships with team members, establishing authentic connections with them in a way that recognizes their humanity and demonstrates your own. 3) To always act with kindness and empathy in whatever setting or situation you find yourself in.

It is my hope that as many leaders as possible take these lessons to heart, as we find ourselves in a world where trust in government, institutions, and the media is at an all-time low, and apathy is at an all-time high. We, the Feather Bricks community, could rise to the occasion in this unprecedented time in history, filling the trust and empathy deficit by recognizing the beautiful humanity of God's image in all those we encounter on a regular basis. Let us all meet the world with our own authentic and honest selves, letting all in it know that we see, appreciate, and love them. What could be a better gift than letting all the people in our lives know that?



Shalom Alaikem ahkheem (Peace be upon you brothers and sisters),

My mother named me Alonzo McCorkle, but today I prefer my Hebrew name, "ZôhariEl", which means in one of the simplest ways of defining it, the admonisher or ambassador of Yah's (God's) Truth, word, teachings, warnings, etc. I learned to read and write basic Biblical Hebrew in 2008, here at Stateville under the instructions and tutoring of Ben KhaiyEl. But, I'm not fluent as of yet, due to my lack of community absorption and my failure to retain all I learn, due to lack of use. As you know, if you don't use it, you lose it! So, in order to become a better Hebraist myself, I would like to teach some of you what I've learned. In turn, help you along the path of learning the Alefbet, and reading basic Hebrew. I will show you by example and simple explanation how I learned to write, recognize, and memorize the Alefbet. If you do these lessons with me, I know without a doubt you will be able to write and read every Hebrew word you take the time to add to your vocabulary. From there, we can all begin to tackle grammar which will lead us to fluency together. I urge you to take the words of my spiritual father Ben KhaiyEl to heart, as I did: "Any job, big or small, do it right, or don't do it at all!"

Hebrew Facts: 1. Hebrew is read and written from right to left.
 2. There are 22 consonants in the Hebrew alphabet. All of these can have vowels added to them in the form of dots and dashes, below and beside them.
 At the top of this page is an example of how to write two Hebrew consonants. Please, follow the arrows like you did in kindergarten to learn English letters. Just draw the marks you see next to the arrows one at a time to create the letter. Please draw copies of the letter all the way across the page. In no time, you will have all 22 consonants and 15 vowels locked in, along with the 5 final forms of the consonants that appear only at the end of words.



God's Warriors by Karin Hargrave

We are a Royal Priesthood! The One true, living God is our "Commander-in Chief!" The Word of God is our "Code of Conduct" and guide! We follow His dictations! We fight our battles on our knees and praise Him with our dance! We don the armor of God. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and on the third day, he rose from the grave, and the veil was torn. The stone rolled away. Jesus defeated Satan. He took the keys and is sitting on the right hand of God. Jesus is awaiting His Father's command to come back to earth on the clouds for the great harvest of believers. We are redeemed, forgiven, and justified through the blood of Jesus Christ. We are filled with the Holy Spirit who instructs, comforts, and leads us to Truth and Understanding of God's Word. Through our suffering and adversity, we are strengthened, and our faith increases. In going through our fiery trials, we are purified and sanctified, and transformed into pure gold.

We will not turn back. We are moving forward, heaven bound, striving to take as many with us as we can. We are demonstrating God's love to one another. We walk in integrity with a pure heart. Our motives are pure and true. We are faithful to God's call in our lives. God has fully equipped His army. God has raised us up to serve Him no matter where we reside. We will not be defeated. We will fulfill God's destiny for our lives, as planned before the foundations of the world. We trust in His perfect plan and are ready to stand in the Battle for Righteousness. We endure for the sake of God's Kingdom. Bring on your persecution. Side with the accuser of the brethren, but God will prevail! God has given us all free will. Make your choice! I have made mine! I will stay fully committed to God and His ways. Yes, I will endure some disappointments, make mistakes, but I will never regret my decision to follow Christ. There will be trials and tribulations; that's life in this fallen world, but I've learned is it's not about me, it's about the Kingdom of God. I will cling to His path and precious truth. I've read the Book and I know the ending. We win! Pleasing my Holy Father is the desire of my heart. I'm no longer here to please man. God is my Creator, my life is not my own. God created me for His specific design. I'm fully surrendered to God, and I have His Word written on my heart. I'm "sold out" for God, and I am as bold as a lion! I'm His Warrior for eternity.

This is why I selected North Park Theological Seminary as my training ground: to serve the God of Justice and be a Kingdom Citizen, transforming on a daily basis into who God predestined me to be. Would you like to join me? This is your "call to arms" in the Army of the Lord.



Peer Mental Health and Self Care Information

By John E. Taylor, Jr.

In obtaining a Master of Arts in Christian Ministry degree from North Park Theological Seminary, there were some classes that impacted me in a significant way. Some of the things I learned from the Pastoral Care course created a thirst to learn more and to share what I've learned. For the next coming issues of *Feather Bricks*, I will share what I learned on the following topics: depression, anxiety, grief, addiction, abandonment, loneliness, stress, and anger. The information I will share is to be used for only informational purposes. I am not a trained mental health staff. However, if you learn anything from the information shared because it resonates with you personally, please seek out a mental health staff person to discuss your concerns with. I have found the information I have learned to prove beneficial and hope what you may learn will prove beneficial to you as well. Stay tuned in the coming issues for the various mentioned topics. Shalom!



Word from a Wildcat: Lynn Green NPEP (Northwestern Prison Education Program) Student

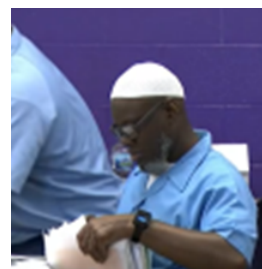
"Oh, what a journey it has been." This year (2022) presidential scholars walked across the stage draped in Oakton green to receive medals of academic excellence to pair with their associate's degrees. A few months prior, each was admitted into NU (Northwestern University) and became the first incarcerated individuals in United States history to enroll in one of the top ten colleges in the nation.

Shortly after, more than two dozen theologians from North Park Seminary received their Master's degrees, most with high honors. In each occasion, smiles illuminated the room, powerful speeches were given, and tears of joy ran freely.

Who would've thought that these deprived, marginalized survivors of a global pandemic that many deemed as incorrigible could accomplish such a feat? But we did. And in the process of transforming ourselves into better human beings, we ended up transforming an entire institution.

Stateville maximum security correctional facility, notorious for its violence, gangs, drugs, and seemingly perpetual lockdowns, is shifting gears and quickly becoming a multi-levelled institution filled with scholars and potential scholars, mentors, missionaries, and much more.

This is now a place where those in correctional institutions from across the state of Illinois want to come so they "too" can learn, become better, and transform. "Oh, what a journey it has been indeed." And we're just getting started.





with
DeCedrick Walker

Here's A Thought



My "writer's block" or the place I go to find inspiration is in the sacred pages of the Bible. All that I am today and all I will ever be rests on the faith I place in the life-giving essentials expositied in the pages of that sacred book. Had it not been for the promises of being forgiven, healed, and restored I would've remained chained to my depravity. At different and in difficult points of my incarceration, I questioned why I even bothered to get out of the bed. Some days the darkness of the depravity was so deep that I couldn't imagine a hope nor cultivate a desire to continue living. I wouldn't go so far as to say that I wanted to crawl into a corner inside of a cell and die. Nor had I contemplated suicide. Rather, I continuously questioned why I existed and I found it increasingly difficult to lay hold of any kind of hope.

I began openly reading the Bible when I was detained in Cook County Jail in 2005. Before then, because of my former gang affiliation, I secretly read the scriptures within the confines of the cell I was assigned to for fear that I would lose this "threat of violence" edge I imagined I had. Hope, as a guide for the heart, had always been a rare thing for me growing up. So, I quietly enjoyed the hope of being forgiven for all the crap that I put God and people through.

When I first began reading the Bible, I didn't quite believe that I could or should be forgiven. However, I knew I needed mercy and God, who's invisible, seemed like the only person willing to be gracious to me to that extent. Slowly but surely as I read through the pages of the Bible, the negative internalized characterizations I held of myself gave way to new and positive ones. I began buying into the concept that God was my father and that I was his son through Christ.

God's word (the Bible) broke through and shattered the paradigm of my depravity. Without the Bible, there is no North Park SRA graduate student named DeCedrick, Ced, LFD, Dude, etc. There would not be a bi-monthly contributor to *Feather Bricks* under the banner of "Here's A Thought." Most importantly, I would not have discovered my identity as a writer. Please enjoy these other writers' thoughts as they join me as co-contributors to this issue's "Here's a Thought" column. --DeCedrick "LFD" Walker



On Writer's Block by Carlvosier Smith

Several personal experiences with the psychological phenomenon convention labeled as writer's block have motivated me to recommend a time-saving hack I found helpful to reduce the anxiety associated with the imminent deadline of a writing project, and to circumvent inconsistent writing production. Various factors responsible for a writer's inhibition to draft preferable written content on demand will inevitably indicate individual results may vary. At a minimum, however, the recommendation I outline may solicit a smile from a frustrated writer confronted with blank pages. And at its highest potential, the hack I suggest offers a practical principle to encourage the disheartened writer that this too shall pass.

Subsequent to an hour-long gaze at a fifty-word paragraph I composed with no additional content to declare, the probability that I would struggle to complete the two-thousand word assignment in an efficient time period became painstakingly obvious. Indecision, coupled with an overwhelming desire for Sour Patch Kids, pervaded my thoughts until the first hack emerged in the wise lyrics of a 90's R&B song "Free your Mind and the Rest Will Follow." An unproductive fixation with how I routinely articulated the primary content in most academic assignments arrested my ability to communicate new material in an original context. The moment I relinquished my preconceived notions about academic writing, a reimagined inner commentary appeared with a voice and cadence sufficient to finish the assignment. If you struggle periodically with writer's block, reimagine what constitutes good writing for that particular prose, and write from the newly imagined space in your mind.



Here's A Thought



In his memoir, *On Writing*, Stephen King refers to it as losing the story, but you may recognize this abstract notion, colloquially speaking, as writer's block. It's that impulse that drives you to clean rooms, vacuum floors, wash windows, and launder clothes you forgot you even had. All to distract you from the glaring disconnect between your thesis statement and your third body paragraph in your essay on police reform, the climate crisis, or performative activism on social media.

So as a writer, you've either suffered from writer's block or you renamed it, not daring to speak its name lest it afflict you. Name it what you will, the reality is we all get stumped from time to time. And writer's manuals are never loth to prescribe the latest trendy remedies. (I refer you to your course textbook.) Some are well meaning, and, rarely, even helpful. But what's helped me is to stop seeing printed advice on writing as a universal remedy.

Your textbook's advice, though well-intentioned in its admonishment with respect to your not-being-ready-to-write-hence-the-writer's-block, addresses the issue from a strictly academic angle, almost suggesting that powering through it, giving it the old college try, as the cliché would have it, is the universal panacea we've been waiting for since the first clay tablet was inscribed with a saber tooth fang along the shores of the Tigris. That's not to say it's wrong or bad advice. But because there's no universal remedy, you'll have to find your own cure.

And it might come in the form of freewriting for ten consecutive minutes (or more) without thinking about structure or spelling or whether you missed a comma after that conjunction.

Or it might help you more to completely step away from the essay and into a warm bath with Epsom salt, during which you don't think about anything other than the water's temperature. Or maybe you take a bike ride, even if it's just twenty minutes and the essay is due at midnight. Or you walk aimlessly, anywhere, without thinking about writing. Let your subconscious do some work for once. It worked for Wordsworth and it might for you too.

By Robert John

My journey to the writers block started in two thousand and four. Amaranthine nights, concrete walls and a thick steel door.

No one to talk to, no phone, no visits to see.

My only friend--my pen, a few sheets of paper and me.

With screams of torment, fractured minds all around, letter by letter, page by page; I drowned out the sound.

Days turned to months, months to years; thirteen to be exact. Some ask how I made it with my sanity intact.

You can't run, hide, you surely can't fight. So I picked up my pen and I sat down to write.

For hours and hours, until my vision gets blurry. When you have nothing but time, there's really no hurry.

See, they buried me deep, in a place by design. That weakens the spirit and crumbles the mind. The goal was to uproot all inclination to fight. But they messed up when they left me my ability to write.

I'll admit once or twice I counted the bricks in the wall, but after that I hit the block and escaped from it all.

I guess what I'm saying--and I say from experience. They can take everything from you except your resilience.

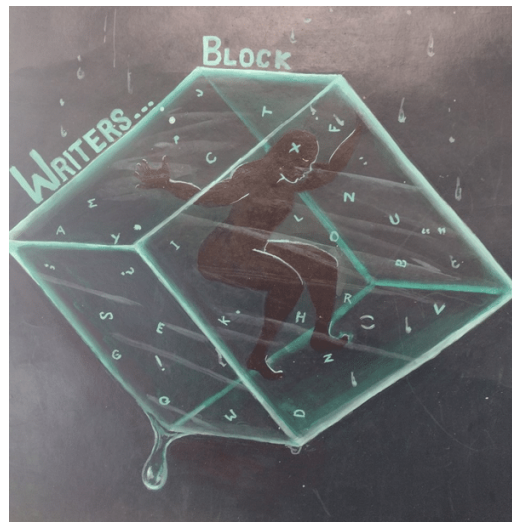
Just keep writing, don't ever stop. You just might end up on my writers block.



Here's A Thought

"Writers Block," what is it really? It is claimed that it is psychological and occurs when a writer's mind (when writing or thinking about what they are going to write) draws a blank, or "block" as is the term, and the creative juices stop flowing. When I think of writers block, several questions arise: Why does it occur? Will anybody ever really know? And can it be treated with some form of psychiatric medication or psychoanalysis? Although these questions may be tough to answer and a complete answer may never be truly found, let me give you a little food for thought. Now before we begin to perform many hours of psychoanalysis, diving deep into a writer's mind, examining their subconscious mental state in order to determine what is actually blocking their thought process, may we first consider this: could writers block simply be the thought process of the mind shutting down due to fear? I could go on and try to prove this by giving you a scientific or medical explanation of how fear affects the mind, producing a fight, flight, or freeze response, but this would take way too long to explain. So instead I will just give you some simple thoughts on the matter. I believe there are reasons why fear would cause a writer to develop writers block and one of these reasons is due to the fear caused by stress, drawing from when a writer is trying to meet a deadline that, to the writer, seems impossible to meet. This fear caused by stress affects the writer's mind and allows the mental blockage (commonly referred to as writers block) to be developed. Another reason fear would cause writers block is when a writer is afraid of not producing their best work and generates a fear of letting down their audience. The writer gets so caught up in worrying about letting down the reader, their mind shuts down and writers block quickly begins to form. Think of writing like a painter painting a picture upon a canvas with a brush, except as writers we paint our our picture on paper using ink from a pen. As writers we must be able to capture our audience by painting a picture with words. Writers must put as much detail into the story they are trying to tell in order to really captivate the reader's imagination. If I cannot paint a vivid picture using as many descriptive words as I can, I feel I have let down my audience and failed as a storyteller. When this happens my mind will quickly induce writers block, and the creative juices will not flow. However, if writers block does occur, I think I have discovered a solution. Next time you are experiencing writers block, may I suggest you try the following: Stand up and start to walk around for a few minutes and begin to perform some simple breathing exercises. If you do this you just might discover how well your creative juices will begin to flow again.

North Park Cohort 2 Writing Advisor Jamie Thomasson, U.S.N.V., United States Naval Veteran





Here's A Thought



A variation of a psychological impediment (or brain freeze) would be a self-imposed writers block of sorts. I submit that many people are afraid to be alone with their thoughts.

Like most people, I was always busy. A husband, father, and dedicated family man, running two businesses, a homeowner with all its responsibilities and a new puppy that I was training. Whew!

But wait, there's more! A smart phone with constant phone calls, text messages, music, emails and the internet. One need never be bored, or alone with one's thoughts! Sitting in the car waiting for a gas pump to become available? Check your emails! How about standing in line to pay for groceries? Send a few texts! Doctor's appointment behind schedule? Google the latest movies or listen to your favorite music. Feeling vain? Take a selfie! Self-conscious while eating lunch by yourself? Call your mom!

With the advent of social media, people spend too much time checking their likes, memes, and messages, They follow others, respond to friend requests, and take pictures of their lunch. Envy drives them to outdo the Jones' vacation photos and new vehicle acquisitions.

News stories abound about people walking into traffic or falling into holes while their eyes are glued to their screens. Our peers on the inside watch T.V. 24 hours a day or use their tablets to play games, listen to music and read news and messages. They over-eat or constantly complain on the gallery.

What is my point? Many people are entertained or occupied every minute. They don't attempt any form of self-improvement, introspection, self-reflection or meditation of any kind.

We need to recognize this self-imposed writers block. Don't be afraid to hear your inner quiet voice. Write down your thoughts. If given a chance, that may lead you to a revelation. You may discover a hidden talent or a solution to a long-standing problem. God may use this opportunity to speak into your life.

I challenge you to sit quietly for a few minutes. Don't try to accomplish anything. After a few moments, then, reflect on your day. Review earlier decisions and conversations and consider choices that you could have made to create a more positive outcome. Listen for that inner voice. These may just be the most meaningful moments of your day.

Finally, reward yourself! Pick up your tablet and slay some zombies or listen to "Just Be Held" by Casting Crowns. Or better yet, write me a message and let me know if any of this was helpful to you. --Peace

Essay on "Writer's Block" by William "Shafiq" Peoples

For me writer's block is not an impediment to creativity. I re-imagine it as a stepping-stone, an etymological building block upon which my ideas, visions, and conceptualizations are structured. The block can take shape as the result of a single word, the lyrics to a song, or a cherished memory. I write from emotional, and spiritual inspiration, driven by a passion to reveal to others the "dreamscapes" of my mind.

Of course, I realize that "writer's block" has a common negative connotation; but that, to me, is the beauty and power of "transformative creativity." One can take that which is generally perceived as problematic, and re-purpose it in a way that empowers, encourages and emancipates the mind, heart and soul to achieve artistic sovereignty.

The most constraining bindings are not material shackles but those that chain up the mind, that disable our ability to see beyond our immediate circumstances. The most impenetrable prisons are not constructed of concrete and steel, but of doubt, fear, and a slavish capitulation to accepting things as they are, never imagining something better. "Writer's block" is only a stumbling block if the writer accepts it as such.



Here's A Thought

Overcoming Writer's Block By Charles Ludwig Bickerstaff

What was the name of that actor who played Atticus Finch in the 1962 film *To Kill A Mockingbird*? It's a simple name. I remember it was based on the 1961 book by Harper Lee. I know it. I just can't think of it. My synapses aren't synapsing. It'll come to me. I just need to relax my brain.

I could have answered my own question by grabbing an almanac or movie book. Instead, at 2:00 A.M., reached for my *American Heritage Dictionary* to look up "senior moment." Yep! "...Unable to remember something or to focus adequately on the matter at hand..." Although typical of aging, that last phrase sounded a lot like writer's block to me, something that affects even the youngest among us.

Reminiscing or jumping into research may be one technique famous authors use to move on past their first lines. For example, Harper Lee's character Dill was based on her childhood friend, Truman Capote, who would go on to write *In Cold Blood* by interviewing police, psychiatrists, and even the murderers themselves.

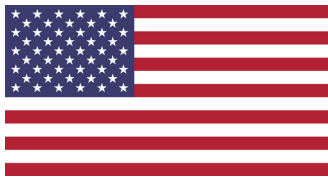
Our brains need oxygen and nutrients, as well as rest, in order to function properly. When mine goes blank I've learned to relax or, when possible, go for a walk. I also pray. Both the release of tension and the increase of blood flow have allowed me to continue. My dammed up memories begin to be released into a refreshing, free-flowing stream of consciousness. My synapses are synapsing. Aha! It was Gregory Peck. That was the guy I was trying to think of. Now, where was I?

16 August 2022

By Moses Stamps

As I write this piece about "writer's block," for the first time it is actually giving me a brain freeze. However...being in Pre-GED, I'm so thankful to be inspired by my teacher Ms. McGrath! The amazing lady pushes me past my limits. She always says, "Believe in yourself." Even though I have a hard time dealing with a comprehension impediment, I'm very grateful to be able to share with you all how I'm inspired every day to better myself...getting up in the morning to be in class by 6:00am only to learn something new and challenging. Writer's block/brain freeze motivates me to go harder in my writing skills...As Ms. McGrath says, writing will help you become better in what you write! This will not be my last piece I write to you. In 2017 I had to get real with myself and make the choice to get up on a positive through everything, to learn as much as I can. I want to become a better writer and you can look forward to reading more of my work as I continue to increase my writing skills.

As Ever,
Moses Stamps



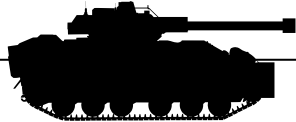
Combat Corner The Veteran Voices of Stateville



The Military Veterans incarcerated at Stateville are very excited to announce the arrival of our additions into the *Feather Bricks* newsletter. We hope you will enjoy reading our (sometimes) humorous and informational stories about some of the crazy things that happen in the Military. We would like to share with you some of the insider information most people don't know about, including some fun facts. In this "Combat Corner," you will discover announcements about Military holidays or other special days where a remembrance or your thoughts and prayers are called upon. We will also be posting any of our upcoming events hosted by us incarcerated veterans here at Stateville with hopes that you will attend and join our efforts in helping to make this world a better place for all of us.

Our mission statement is to serve our community. We, American Veterans who served in the Armed Forces of the United States, fully realize our responsibility to ourselves and our community and associate ourselves to come together as a group to share our experiences. We hope that we will continue to grow as a group, assisting our fellow veterans and community by seeking strength and courage from each other. We hope to perpetuate the friendships and associations of our Veterans' group and community and dedicate ourselves to the cause of mutual assistance and to all American Veterans at large. We look forward to finding ways we can proudly serve our community. Please Take Care and God Bless.

--WA Jamie Thomasson, United States Naval Combat Veteran
North Park Writing Advisor
2nd Cohort, North Park University
Stateville Veterans' Group Warrant Officer
Co-founder of the V.V.O.S.
Veteran Voices of Stateville



By Charles Ludwig Bickerstaff

Most of us have watched old navy flicks like *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1975), *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), and *Crimson Tide* (1995). But unless you've served, the nautical jargon used may be unfamiliar. That's much like a newcomer to prison trying to figure out "kite," "crib," and "Orange Crush." Although I never served on a sub, surface ships largely use the same terms. Here are a few to get you started:

***Scuttlebutt:** Although it is also a point on a ship where water is served (a drinking fountain or bubbler), the most common meaning is gossip or a rumor.

***Bulkhead:** It is like a wall, but on a ship or boat (subs are called boats), and it is a vertical divider running through the vessel. A water-tight bulkhead not only aids in structural strength, but it prevents the spread of fire or flooding.

***Bridge:** This is the area from which the ship or boat is controlled for speed, direction, weapons deployment, etc. by the Commanding Officer (also known as the C.O. or an officer of the deck).

***Crow's Nest:** In the old days, this was a platform near the top of the main mast used by lookouts. Although modern ships use radar and other tracking devices, human lookouts on elevated areas of a surface ship are still used.

If you hear an unfamiliar term used in a film or on the news, ask any Veteran. I will be on stand-by to help. Next issue I will talk about directional and navigational terms you may want to know.



For the past two months, Tall Mike and I have been teaching and learning with Pre-GED students. The experience has been awesome, not only for the opportunity to teach, but also because of the opportunity to learn.

We were given our own classroom and given the freedom to teach as we saw fit. This gave us the opportunity to introduce a style of learning to our students that decentralizes the authority from the teacher and transfers it over to all participants in the class. What this does is show the students that they too have much to offer in educating their peers and teachers. It also encourages their participation in the learning process.

Our approach to teaching includes methods that educate in a holistic fashion. This is done by a simple PIES check-in at the beginning of class where everyone let's us know where they're at Physically, Intellectually, Emotionally, and Spiritually. These check-ins set the pace and the course on how the class will be conducted for the day. It truly is a blessing to witness the eagerness and the intelligence that our students share with us on a daily basis, and to see the rapid growth in their lives.

My Teaching Experience by Michael Sullivan, Teaching Fellow, Pre-GED



The first thing that I quickly learned about teaching is that you are not teaching a person anything, you are merely provoking them to think. Having been exposed to that reality, I instantly became aware of the high intellect of my pre-GED students.

Building on this new knowledge, I proposed a question to the second cohort of North Park. I asked them...When you think of the phrase "brilliant people," who are some of the people you think of? I heard shouts of Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Jr., DuBois, and Langston Hughes. None of them thought to say my pre-GED students, even though all the men I asked this question to know my pre-GED students and were familiar with their high intellect in terms of street smarts.

The point of that experiment was to highlight how we disassociate the high intellect of street smarts with academic work. Author and UIC Professor Gerald Graff, in his article "Hidden Intellectualism," also highlights this practice, but he believes that book smarts and street smarts are one and the same. Graff explains, "What doesn't occur to us is that schools and colleges might be at fault for missing the opportunity to tap into such street smarts and channel them into good academic work." What Graff made me realize is that people who possess great street smarts have the highest potential to excel academically.

By Pre-GED Student Darrell "Tyson" Wimberly



First and foremost, I want to thank everyone who has allowed me the opportunity to let my voice be heard. Most of all, I give all honor and glory to the man above. There is simply not enough words to express exactly how grateful I am to have tutors such as Tall Mike and Benny that are so dedicated, understanding, and most of all patient to deal with a guy or guys like our caliber.

What I mean by that is I got to know everyone individually. I learned our weaknesses and learned to understand whatever it is that needs to be understood for community purposes. It takes a certain kind of person to bring the best out of someone and a certain kind of talent to motivate someone to know that the best is within them. Getting someone comfortable enough to do anything is a challenge within itself because you have to get them to the point where they feel as if you're not judging them or being biased in any way possible. Ultimately, being in this pre-GED class under such tutors like Tall Mike and Benny has made me feel like I could accomplish whatever I put my mind to. Thank You.

Hey Everybody. My name is Mario Ortega and at this moment in my life I'm at Stateville attending mandatory ABE school. I've been enrolled for 9 months now. My goal is to successfully complete this course so I can move on to the next level and get my GED. My main focus while I'm incarcerated is to get the best education I can get. You see, education to me is not just about learning the subject at hand. It's more like a way of life which will bring a more higher education. With that I know I will experience new life opportunities that can make it easier for me to have a brighter future. This is why higher education for me is the main key in life for success. Peace, Mario Ortega.

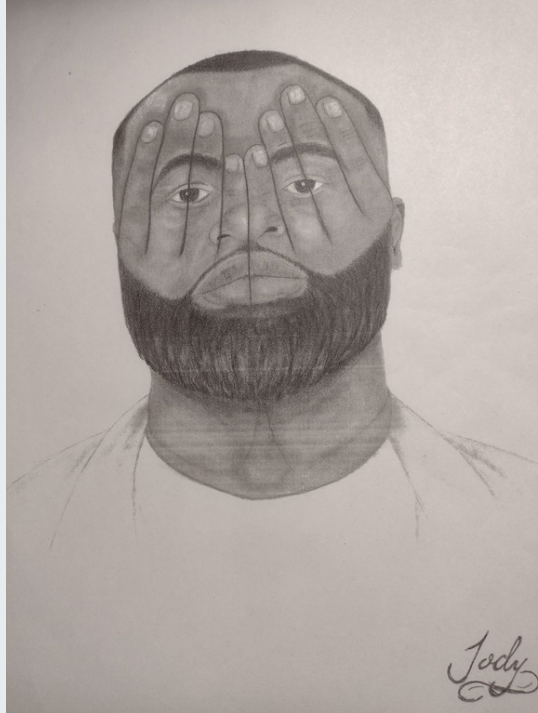


Poetry and Art Corner

My Pen

By Jody Montague

My pen bleeds red ink. That symbolizes it lives.
And it leaves hidden messages as His life force drains
As you read you can feel, you can see the pain in each line
What talent was confined in this pen of mine.
Unappreciated during his time that was oh so short.
Hopefully the 'gifts' it leaves behind will be cherished
As things of legend
Maybe help someone think, or reach an opal.
And really that's all it ever wanted.
For its message to be heard as more than just word;
For its wisdom to be shared, to just be cared for.
Instead it was used without abandon, then abandon
Nothing more than an empty shell
But its legacy will continue on to influence by the next
ballpoint that takes its place
It lays itself down proud of a job well done
As it bleeds out onto his final sheet!



Art by Jody Montague



"Self-Portrait" by Ameerah "AB" Brown

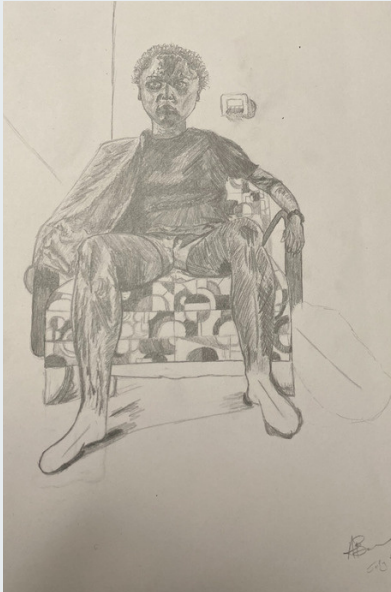
"I looked at myself at work at McDonald's The blue part is supposed to be a mask. The style is cubism and the background is based on my thoughts of consumerism society."

TRAFFIC JAM

By Marlon Coleman

Sitting in the cell, up in the top bunk
Composition book in hand
Pencil sharpened to a point
A pen full of ink
It's clear I could use both
So why is this page still blank
Picked up a dictionary to find a word to inspire
Still no spark nor fire
Grabbed a book, began to read
Hoping this will give me the kick I need
Turn a few pages, halfway through the third
Seems my thoughts don't want to be heard
I got traffic jam in the brain, signal
Due to a bad connection
Checked to be sure there's no wires crossed
After some time past, looking at the clock
I say surely my mind is lost
In that moment, my brain was infused
With electrical impulses
Of pure thought
For it was just another case of
Writers block

Poetry and Art Corner



"Untitled" by Ameerah "AB" Brown

The main point of this drawing is to have a powerful pose (not so much a portrait). Some words related to the artist's intention are "regal" and "dictatorship."



Cosmic Melancholy-Blues by Willie Spates

"You have Jesus...we have space...Melancholic rhythms devoid of time or place.

'Your sad sweet blues bringing down my tears...I swear I ain't cried in a hundred years.'

But you have Jesus to deal with your fears...all I've got is a spaceship gettin me from the stars to here.

'There is no salvation in any other name...Satan's only playin his 'Quantum-Cosmic' games.

He wants to turn you from the light...but way out here - aint nuthin but night - dark and cold-desperate souls.

So, I leave y'all widda lil ole tip, Jesus is comin for his chillins - life's greatest eternal trip..."

Antares Jamie Regulus'

"What do you see?"

What do you see when you look at Me?

Do you see the person that the judge Said I would be?

The person not fit to ever again Walk in free society?

I can't be no-one's father,
I'm not no-ones brother,
I'm not the son of a mother,
How could I have ever been
Some ones lover?

Or a grandfather to a daughter's Daughter.
This story isn't getting any shorter,

So I'll ask you again, what do you See when you look at me?

Do you see the man that's been locked away for first degree,
For the past thirty!!!

Or the man that's soon to have a Masters degree..
Now can you see me!!! Oh, and by the way, "I'm just one of many!"

So look at me/us now!!!
Walk on my sisters and brothers.
Peace!!!



Poetry and Art Corner

By Michael Broadway

On Normal Street,
Mrs. Johnson tends to her beautiful backyard garden, while
the Williams sell flaming hots, quarter juices, and
Mike & Ikes out of their garage,
On Normal Street,
MacKentees and Mitchells share Matching Bungalows on
opposite ends of the block, while
Mr. Taylor cuts and waters his grass, and rants non-stop
about property prices and picking up the trash,
On Normal Street
Mr. Green waxes his brand-new Cadillac and brags to his friends about the
benefits of his city job, on Normal Street,
Ms. McDonald refuses to sell her home to anyone Black,
even after the Redline has gone,
On Normal Street,
Crazy Wayne, who hasn't been the same, since the Jungles of
Vietnam, hurls himself out of the top floor window, while
Kelly struts his stuff in biking shorts for all the boys
to see,
On Normal Street,
Uncle Walt sells coin sacks of skunk weed, while
Raynard barbeques and sips on his Wild Irish Rose,
On Normal Street,
Cartoom puts pony packs in pockets for profit, while
Plug provide the pistol to warn off Potential Punks,
on Normal Street,
We run from light pole to light pole for quarters and Boo
Mr. Wilson starts a dice game in the alley,
Loaded craps gets Derrick shot,
On Normal Street,
It's aesthetically beautiful, its people, beautifully flawed,
but its my Writers Block,
On Normal Street.



Beyond the Walls by Steven LaMont Feagin

If we can think only of our desire for **Freedom** to be what is beyond these walls, then **Freedom** will never be enough. But, if we can consider the possibility of having **Freedom** that is within our minds, then these walls no longer have the power to restrain us from the very promises that **Freedom** holds. **Minds Free!**

Poetry and Art Corner

"And 2morrow" by Aaron Smith

I've been locked up a long time and cried out a lot of tears. I hope this message reaches out to a lot of people, so please lend me your ears...

Today is filled with anger, fueled with hidden hate. Scared of being outcast, afraid of common fate.

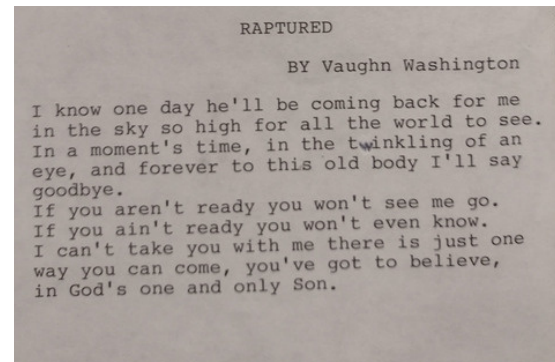
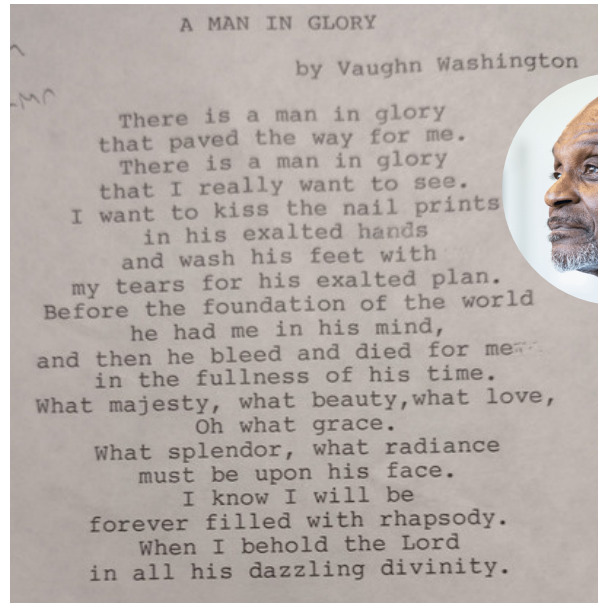
Today is built on tragedies, which no one wants to face. Nitemares 2 humanities and morally disgraced.

Tonight is filled with rage, violence in the air. Children Breed with Ruthlessness, because no one at home really cares.

Tonight I lay my head down, but the pressure never stops. Growing at my sanity, content when I am dropped.

But 2morrow I see a change, a chance 2 build a new. Built on spirit, intent of heart and ideas based on truth.

And 2morrow I wake up with a 2nd wind and strong because of PRIDE, 2 know I fought for my life with all my heart 2 keep my hopes and dreams alive :-).



Reality To Me by David "Nazeeh" Bailey

It took until now to realize now important it is, and can be, to an incarcerated individual...

I'm dealing with this reality at this particular era. A never ending sentence, life, and reality too...

Having to spend the rest of my days behind these European walls of strange and unknown captivity...

As my time goes by, a multitude of things would have changed, for the good and bad, which will also become a reality to me...

As I sit here now after having spent the last thirty-nine years and four months consecutively, I must and do realize that no matter how much I want to, feel or think, I'm mentally and physically free, like all the beautiful birds and trees...

"I'm not," which has made this the toughest reality to me...

Call for submissions to POETRY CONTEST! Submit to "POETRY CORNER" with Antonio Balderas, North Park Theological Seminary Poet Laureate and Voice Of The Poor And Incarcerated. Winning poems (1st place and 2nd place) will receive special recognition and publication in the Dec/Jan edition of *Feather Bricks*. Deadline: October 31st. Send your submission through your EFA to EFA Costabile at Stateville or to Prof Melissa via EFA Costabile. All poems will be read by 2 inside and 2 outside judges and will receive feedback.



Spoiled Rotten with Tasha Kennedy

Objective: To help women know their brokenness and understand how to begin to heal while learning how to exist with others and embracing their differences.

Hello Tasha Kennedy,

Let me start by saying, "Keep up the good work with your column." Also, please know that the Brothers here at Stateville will do our part at helping to heal our Sisters' brokenness, as well as our own. Now, to answer your questions. 1) The things that I look for most are "actions." You can tell me anything, but your actions will show me a lot more. 2) Just being a good friend, meaning becoming an "ear" when you need to talk or turn into a napkin when you have tears in your eyes. 3) This has to do with how the person is looking at the picture. What seems to be worse might just well be what's better for you. What lens are you looking through? 4) I want someone that's been around the block a few times, someone tried and tested and ready for the long haul. Why? Well, because I've been through a lot myself, so we'll have a lot to talk about. 5) Because we are dealing with man-made laws and not God's laws, we are faced with what we're seeing! White man's law means black and brown bodies overrunning in numbers in prisons. Now, I have a question for you and your readers: What does a friend look like to you?

Peace to you ALL. From your North Park Brother, Amotto Jackson



Dear Tasha of Spoiled Rotten,

I want to congratulate you on using your voice in such a positive and uplifting manner. As you can imagine, being raised by black women, I look for strong women's voices to share with my two daughters. YAS! Know that I spoil them rotten! I admit the mission statement you shared contained many of the things we all need. We all are broken in some fashion. The list of the topics you highlighted in the last issue I found myself re-learning, or seeking to. You presented some thought-provoking questions which caused me to rethink some of my responses after some group discussions. So, know your words are causing a positive and impactful dialogue. To answer your questions,

- 1) To know someone cares, I look for actions that match their words because without actions there are just empty words.
- 2) My love language in a non-romantic relationship is empathy, so I feel seen and heard!
- 3) It seems life gets worse before it gets better because there is a spiritual struggle taking place, so I believe that our bad situation increases our appreciation of the good moments.
- 4) Would I rather talk with someone who has been through trials and tribulations of many sorts or someone who has not? I'm on both sides of this question for different reasons. On a personal level I'd choose the person who has life experience to share. However, if I could help someone with no experience navigate the highs and lows of life, I would find that more fulfilling.
- 5) In response to the question, "If God made people think and respond differently, why are we held to the same standard by the law?" First, I wish there was just one standard when it comes to the law. Some factors like economic status, privilege, and ethnicity affect the scales. This brings me to the short answer: laws are passed by a group (Congress) to give some kind of order to society. However, the problem begins with the make-up of the group, as it represents only a small amount of a much larger society. --Thomas Mills

Wendy Denzler writes: My love language when it's not a romantic relationship is my time, as in spending my time with the person whom I love. I deliberately set aside time to spend with my friends and loved ones. I choose to listen intently when they speak. My time and my words are all I have to offer when "inside." I spend my time with them, pay attention to them, listen to them, and deliberately withhold my opinions and words so they can fill our time together with theirs. They talk. I listen. I use my words to encourage and empower them after.



ON A LIGHTER NOTE

with Luigi Adamo

1. There is a great wall that separates Heaven and Hell, and it is St. Peter's job to maintain the upkeep on the Heaven side of the wall, and Lucifer's responsibility to upkeep the Hell side.

Well, although St. Peter does a wonderful job maintaining the wall's Heaven side, its Hell side has fallen into disrepair. The situation has become so bad that St. Michael has had to begin patrolling the perimeter of the wall to round up the residents of Hell who have been sneaking into Heaven through the holes in the wall's Hell side.

St. Peter has spoken to Lucifer several times about this and even wrote a few strongly worded letters to Lucifer, emphasizing the need and importance of keeping His side of the wall in good repair. All to no avail.

Finally, at his wit's end, St. Peter writes one final letter to Lucifer, threatening him with litigation in God's Court of Justice. To his threat, Lucifer actually responds, "I welcome any attempts you or the Heavenly Host might try at litigation. I was wondering, though, who would you use to represent you when every Judge, lawyer, and lawmaker reside on my side of the wall?"

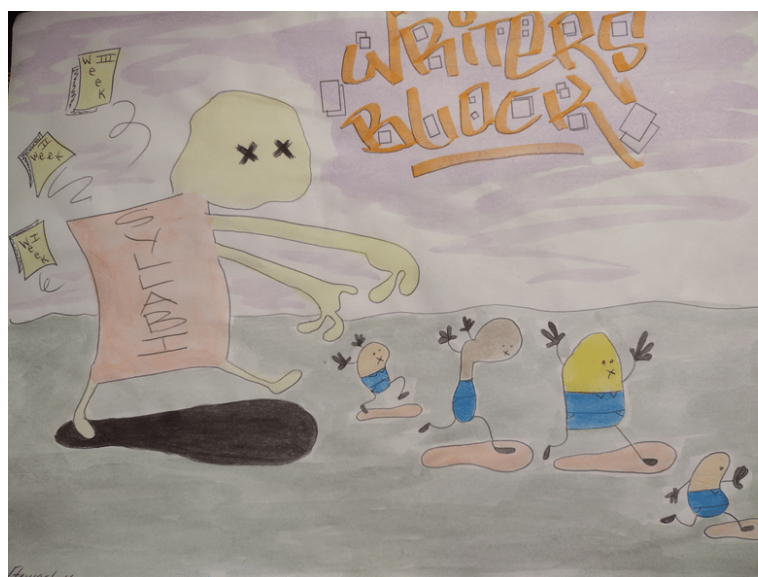
2. What did the High Priest say after sounding his trumpet to signal the beginning of the Sabbath?

A: Shofar So Good.



3. Why did Babylon invest so much effort into conquering Jerusalem?

A: They had heard that there were always great prophets to be found there.



Writers Block by Marshall Stewart



ON THE JOURNEY WITH JOHNNY



In 2002, rapper/artist Jay-Z said in his album entitled: The Blueprint 2: The Gift and the Curse on his song called "Some How Some Way," whether we dribble out this (explicit word)....rap metaphors and riddle out this (same explicit word)....work second floors hospital out this (same explicit word)....somehow we gotta get up out this (same explicit word)....I don't always wanna be this drug dealin (same explicit word)."

While lyrics like these represent the ground breaking, dedicated, and hard work that artists achieve throughout their career, in order to overcome the typical struggles of the African American culture and experience of the marginalized toward success, who would think that their very own art and creative expressions could be used against them? Actually, this has happened to numerous artists. Especially with rap music, often referred to as the rap music on trial, laws give prosecutors certain powers to prove if rap lyrics are literal rather than figurative or fictionalism in a court of law.

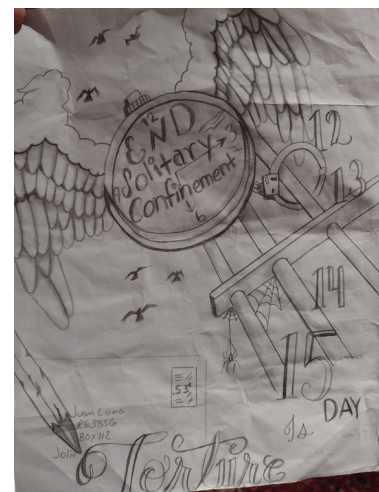
As an inspiring individual artist, it's traumatizing enough to 'rise out of the trenches' like Michael Simmons explained or have to overcome internal issues caused by the mere presences of police officers as Jamal dealt with and wrote about (in this column in the previous issue of our newsletter). So, what happens when after expressing their trauma, struggles, life, and triumphs, these inspiring artists' stories are used against them?

Unfortunately, we live in a sensitive world where one word can be deemed offensive. We live in a world where inspiring writers are interpreted the wrong way. After displaying a portion of their most vulnerable moments, they are later used as a weapon against them. Elaina asked so well in our last edition, "How often do we ask people 'What's your story?'" instead of creating ones ourselves that are based on assumptions and stereotypes from our own prejudice? So while we tell our stories through writing, creative art, music or any piece that we experience, we have been graciously given a space that allows us to tell our stories and be our own authors. On this issue's journey, I asked inspiring artists of all kind on our writers block to share their art in detail and what it represents to them. And finally, I asked what do they wish to express with their displayed art? Here are their stories:

End Solitary Confinement! by Juan Luna

As people we are meant to be free, to move around, to interact with other people and to experience new things in life. Now for those who are doing time like myself we are unable to experience true freedom. All we have is our dreams and thoughts that help us escape from these prison walls. In solitary confinement you don't get to see really anybody and especially not your home-boys. The only people you will see are the c/o's when they make their rounds and a cellhouse worker when he passes the food. Nobody should be in a gray box hearing voices of guys that he does not know or his own thoughts because with time your thoughts will start to play some mental games that you will lose track of time.

In my drawing I want to show that when you do solitary confinement, time does not fly by at all! Even if you are doing only 15 to 30 days in solitary confinement, it needs to stop now! Being locked up and doing time is another form of solitary confinement. We are being kept away from our loved ones, and we can't even move around the way we want or interact with new people and experience new things. I don't know about you but I don't like being confined in any way or form. I want to meet new people and experience new things. Therefore, we need to end solitary confinement and be free to experience new things!



ON THE JOURNEY WITH JOHNNY

Chopstix! By Lazarus (aka Ryan Miller)

This that fish scale that sushi
w/ the looseleaf I'm Bruce Lee
A Yakuza w/ the Uzi
Rev the ninja Suzuki
Spit that wasabi teriyaki sauce
Sriracha Tabasco loogie —
Even on my Blues Brothers
Aykroyd Belushi
Gotta yes and can't block me
I'm IP Man Miyagi
Hiroshima Nagasaki
Suicide bomber kamikaze
Moonwalk backwards atop of tsunamis
I'm movin' Everest Mt. Fuji
The poet master splinter Picasso
Sensei martial artist DaVinci
Raphael w/ them double sais
Syntactical lyrical throwin' knives
Vernacularly bladed weaponized
The Lord of Flies I pulverize
Pulitzer Prize when I poetize
Snake Eyes shogun samurai
Daniel-san I crane kick
& Immobilize you Cobra Kais —
When I wax on wax off paraffin
Millennium Falcon Peregrine
The mutagen baptized terrapin
w/ twin katana testaments
You Baxter Stockman pestilence
& Accuser of the brethren
You puttin' that buzz in the air again
But all I need is a pair of pens — Chopstix!
Cyborg Terminator infrared fiber optics
Cyclops w/ the lazer lenses molten iris retinas
Subzero w/ the bars I create the Polar Vortex
No Beelzebub No Fly Zone Miyagi w/ the Chopstix!
Ryu I Haduken Super Maneuver nuclear option
Your contamination sequence all your gossip & comments
I'm doin' this blindfolded all you opps ain't no contest
No Beelzebub No Fly Zone Miyagi w/ the Chopstix!

But all I need is a pair of pens — Chopstix!
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No Beelzebub No Fly Zone Miyagi w/ the Chopstix!

Commentary:

This piece was an assignment for Professor Alicia Reese's Spiritual Re-Story class & I'm basically speaking to all of the gossip, rumors, lies, & politics that plague our community here at Stateville. The point being, not only have I mastered this particular art form, but spiritual welfare as well & Beelzebub, The Lord of the Flies, is merely a nuisance—I will never be defeated. Lastly, & most significantly, like Miyagi, I'm not squishing the "flies"—but letting them go...



ON THE JOURNEY WITH JOHNNY

Cell Blocks (Tried and True)

Living in a cell can cause a psychological avalanche, so many evolutionary blocks can be caused by isolating a man.

Or an individual renovation could occur, oppose to its purpose, a man could enter a cell and become a brand new person.

Rather than crumbling like the cement blocks that confine me, I've used the cell as a resourceful grounds to found me.

One block at a time, subsequent to an internal destruction, skyscrapers come to mind as my plenary being is under construction.

Endurance is essential when executing the mission, but nothing can stop me after serving 17 years in prison.

After standing the test of time, my ambitions exceed the stars, and every cell that I've lived in, is a block, in a foundation as strong as prison bars.

By Charles Hill

What the poem is expressing

A prison cell is one of the most depressing and degrading things man has ever created; it can also be one of the most unproductive places to live. My poem gives a person living under these circumstances the incentive to utilize their time in a cell as a time of evolution; whether it be physically, spiritually, mentally or all of the above. I vaguely use myself as an example so that people can insert themselves and their own circumstances in as they read and reflect on the poem. By doing that the poem becomes an affirmation that they can refer to when they need the encouragement that people whom live in a cell on a regular basis. I hope that I fulfill my objective of encouraging people that we can come out of prison stronger, smarter, wiser rather than the same or worse. The prison cell is a block in the foundation of a better them. Thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,
Charles Hill

Frozen by Ernesto Valle

Frozen somewhere finding ways to say and write
words that are seized, understanding is
in chaos the maze of these walls are closing in
Keys!
unlock!
Somewhere in the mind Hidden Jewels are Hope
to find-we Are Kings and Queens, That's how God
Made us to Be.
Pray!
Hope!
Into Dreams let all my people Be free!
My mind wonders when I'm In FREEZE Into
the Bliss as These words I write are lost & found
Tung Tie - Babble - frozen
As my mind wonders to the unknowing of Hopes
and Dreams, memories - Into the Imagination I
might Just Be In, frozen with the wisdom of
knowledge of my own understanding, that my
Mind is the Key to Be Free!

My poem expresses how we try to find the words to explain what we want to say or write. But sometimes our mind is in chaos of understanding on what we are learning, reading, or seeing, as we daydream and lose focus into a memory or into imagination or to that bliss, knowing that the world has many locks as we are keys to all of them. But the power of our mind finds all the answers because in that moment everything you were thinking or wanted to say was lost but is found. The wisdom and knowledge and understanding is the only way to be alive and see. We just have to unfreeze ourselves and believe in what is the truth of being free.

ON THE JOURNEY WITH JOHNNY



Reiteration by John 'Tha Baptist' Hall

Stripped from society is simply me being incarcerated. My notebook is a diary filled with memoirs of anxiety, me pouring my pain through my pen. Now I spit bars while behind them, being behind bars hits the irony of the lines of a rap being called 'bars.'

We were all bought at a price and that purchase was in a perpetuity—refers to Jesus Christ becoming a propitiation for our sins, past, present, and future.

Trying to avoid condescension of God saying 'who is he?' Is me referring to scripture specifically Matthew 25: 1-12, where the Lord said, "I do not know you." I got two cheeks I can turn is simply referring to turning the other cheek. The line, 'let em tell it they burnt Christ on a cross then stuffed the whole thing in a urn,' is a dig at those who butcher the word of God, and take it way out of context, like saying Jesus was married, etc.

People take lies and attempt to disguise them as proof also refers to people rubics-cubing scripture to mean what they want it too. In a courtroom where inmates keep instructing blind men to shoot—is someone in custody urging a public defender to fight for him. In the hole trying to find me a loop—is me looking for a due process or a constitutional rights violation, better known as a 'loop hole.' Railroaded and the court was a train—refers to being deprived a fair trial which is called being railroaded.

In My Lifetime by John 'tha Baptist' Hall

I, was stripped from society
now my notebook is a diary
filled with memoirs of anxiety,
now I spit bars while behind them
I can't help but laugh at the irony
they wanna silence me,
but they know I can't go quietly
regardless of what they do to me
let me speak truthfully,
we were all bought at a price
and that purchase was in perpetuity
demons pursuing me,
cuz I can speak in tongue fluidly
praising God with continuity
secular fans keep on booing me
trying to avoid condescension of God saying 'who is he?'
so if you rude to me, I got two cheeks I can turn
from ashes till Jesus return
I ain't even concerned
let em tell it they burnt Christ on a cross
then stuffed the whole thing in a urn
start reading your word, and what really symbolizes the truth
so be wary of what vines taken root
cuz some people take lies and attempt to disguise them as proof
things I didn't recognize in my youth
man this bit was an eye for a tooth
gave me 83 years but they still can't deny me the booth
thought they sentenced me to death,
not the needle or the chair but that public defender they assigned me to was a noose
bout time I got loose
I don't want a continuance but every court date buddy finds an excuse
since I'm spiritually aligned I'm astute
in a courtroom where inmates keep instructing blind men to shoot
in the hole trying to find me a loop
I done loss I done gained
I've been hurt but I fought through da pain
railroaded and the court was a train
I was saved by the blood I can even feel it course through my vein
(just a grain of)

my lifetime/Jesus Christ is my lifeline/protect and serve like I fight crime
I'm encouraged to be a vessel, but I'm really more like a pipeline
Jesus Christ is my lifeline, I see clearly at nighttime
I'll join the Lord in paradise, even if it's not in this lifetime

ON THE JOURNEY WITH JOHNNY

Take this Pain Away" by Vernon "VMac" McCormick, Jr.



"A place to spend my quiet nights-time to unwind,
Er'body see me smile a lot-thinking I'm fine/
But I'm going through it-They say I'm guilty but I didn't
do it. I contemplated suicide but I couldn't do it/They
only see my struggles-but they don't feel my pain, my
daddy left my mama lonely so I joined a gang/ I let it
bang and my life it forever changed, if I was lame I'll be
married with a wedding band/They took Chunky and
that's only where it started, then I started acting bad
like my first time was Darvis/Rest In Peace-he stayed
on Arizona Street, I was a shorty on the porch couldn't
leave the street/And if I did-you heard Deneen scream
my name, And as a kid-I always looked up to James/
(Yeah) Look past the tats and I'm still Vernon, call the
guys leave the guns meet on 4th and Sherman."

Someone asked me, "Why is rapping so important to
you?" Rapping is not only a way to tell my story, but it's
also very therapeutic for me. I actually started taking
rapping serious after my brother was killed. That was
back in 2012 and I have been rapping since. I told
myself that my brother will live on through my music
and that I will be his legacy. Everytime I write a rap

I have his picture in front of me so I can go crazy like he
would want me to. My brother is my inspiration and my
motivation.

Rapping is therapeutic for me because when I find
myself going through some trials or tribulations I
pickup my pen and write about it. Instead of getting
mad I channel that negative energy and do something
positive with it, and when it's all said and done I feel a
whole lot better. My body locked up, but I allow my
mind to roam freely. Not only is my brother my
motivation, but my son is as well.

The verse I present you is almost self-explanatory if
you digest it the way that most young black men in
America live, but let me let you into my psyche. The
first two bars is me expressing that I need somewhere
quiet to relax and just because people see me smile a
lot doesn't mean I'm ok. My next two bars explain the
pain I felt from a guilty verdict to an innocent man. The
following two bars tell you how many people see your
struggle but don't feel your pain. People see my face
tattoos and automatically assume that VMac is a bad
person, but I'm not at all. I'm still Vernon at the end of
the day. Rapping is important to me because if you do
it right lives can't only be changed, but they can also
be saved. #PTSD: Put Them Switches Down.

BOOK REVIEW

By Wendy Denzler

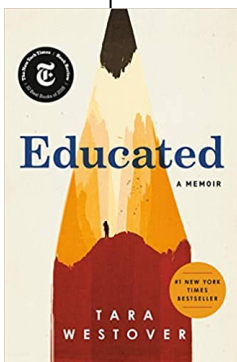
Review of *Educated: A Memoir* by Tara Westover

ISBN # 918-0-525-58998-3

Published: 2018

493 pages

large print edition softcover



This book is amazing! It's also deeply emotional and troubling for
anyone who's been affected by mental illness. This is Tara
Westover's autobiography. She tells her story of childhood in the
mountains of Idaho. She never attended school until she pursued
education on her own as a 17-year old. This incredible young woman
went from no schooling whatsoever to a doctorate! She weaves her
life's hardships and beautiful moments together beautifully. The
reader grows up with her in her extremist, survivalist home with
submissive mother, mentally ill father, and 6 siblings amongst the
debris of her father's junk yard on the mountain. You feel every pain
and celebrate every joy with her as Ms. Westover learns that this
huge, scary world is actually one full of wonders and that her
family's extremist Mormon beliefs aren't always true or right. This is
the story of a child of the mountain growing into a woman of God in
this wide, wide world.

WRITING ADVISOR CORNER

Reaching New Heights with Peers Teaching by Johnny Marizetts



As a way to exhibit their credentials and qualifications in restorative and transformative practices, master's degree graduates Michael "Tall Mike" Sullivan and Benny Rios Don Juan who have been graciously tasked with serving as Teaching Fellows for a pre-GED course for individuals in custody here at Stateville.

This pre-GED course's main objective by Tall Mike and Benny is to help students prepare for the language skills and reading comprehension portions of the TABE test. Peer teaching or teacher assistant jobs like these are game changers for the new face of the education here at satellite. North Park, which is just one facets of the higher education programs here has helped change and enrich so many lives. Now graduates like "Tall Mike" and Benny have new desires to pay it forward.

One concern for Tall Mike and Benny was the level of comfort that the pre-GED students would experience with being taught their very own peers. "At first some of the guys enrolled in the pre-GED class were a 'bit hesitant' of walking into the unknown from the regular settings. However, after a week of classes they become more eager," Tall Mike explained. Seeing and hearing both the teaching assistants and these motivating students interact in class has been a goal ever since the first co-hort of North Park School of Restorative Arts graduated with master's degrees. Now that this goal has become a reality, one important element in their classroom setting consists of each day sitting in a circle as a way to change the traditional classroom format of rows with the teacher in the front. Before class starts everyone has the opportunity to check-in which peer tutor Benny discovered "it draws energy for everyone to

participate." Not only do these students learn the basics of writing essays like forming thesis statements, body and conclusions they learn from their own vantage point.

For example, one lesson so far involved comparing and contrasting famous basketball players; something that they know too well. not only do these students compare and contrast with essay materials, but these brilliant individuals have also found commonalities in each other. "Coming from the same urban neighborhood and now seeing us learn and grow together makes me feel good. It gets my mind off other things. Now I feel like I can do better" said one pre-GED Darrel Tyson Wimberly.

Motivation has been the theme and driving force in this class. Now these inspired men have new desires to reach new heights of learning seeing their own peers help them excel academically. Carail "Ace" Weeks has been enrolled in pre-GED class for a little over a year now. As I sat in with Ace he expressed how his new class has impacted not only his goals of passing the TABE test but also his whole experience of getting there. "To be able to receive this chance to sit here in the class with brothers of the same goals in education is amazing! Even sharing their (Tall Mike and Benny) knowledge in order to help us break barriers goes beyond education." Ultimately that is the goal of all students here at stateville; to reach new heights in higher education and pay it forward both inside and upon their release.

WRITING ADVISOR CORNER

By Marcial Guerrero

Recently I was given the task of writing my first-ever academic style essay, for the first ever writing center workshop taught by the first ever graduates of Stateville's North Park Theological Seminary. Before this class, I thought I was an adequate writer, but they (Mr. Scott Moore and Mr. RóDerick Zavala Sr. who are amazing teachers) showed me different. More so because they are incarcerated. If you took them out of prison right now, stood them in front of a group of college students, you wouldn't know they spent years inside. They are articulate, patient, and very organized. They provided information in both layman and academic terms in order for me to gain a full understanding of the lessons needed to complete an essay. My assignment was to choose one of the three prompts. I chose: "Does religious conviction really matter in religious activism? Is there only one way to advocate for spiritual freedom? Or, can one know of God and not be a follower of any denomination, yet still bring people beyond their racial barriers?" I was also given a book and I had to incorporate two quotes from it. The book was written by James Baldwin and titled *The Fire Next Time*. I spent days trying to pair the two, all to no avail. I had major writer's block. How did I get past it? RóDerick Came to the rescue.

He explained that activism comes not just by walking in large crowds holding up picket signs, yelling out catchy slogans. Just making someone aware of an issue is a form of activism. With that information, the flood gates opened and the next few weeks were spent putting together the best essay the world will ever have the honor of reading. (Good job, Melissa!) So, if you have issues with getting started, just ask for help.

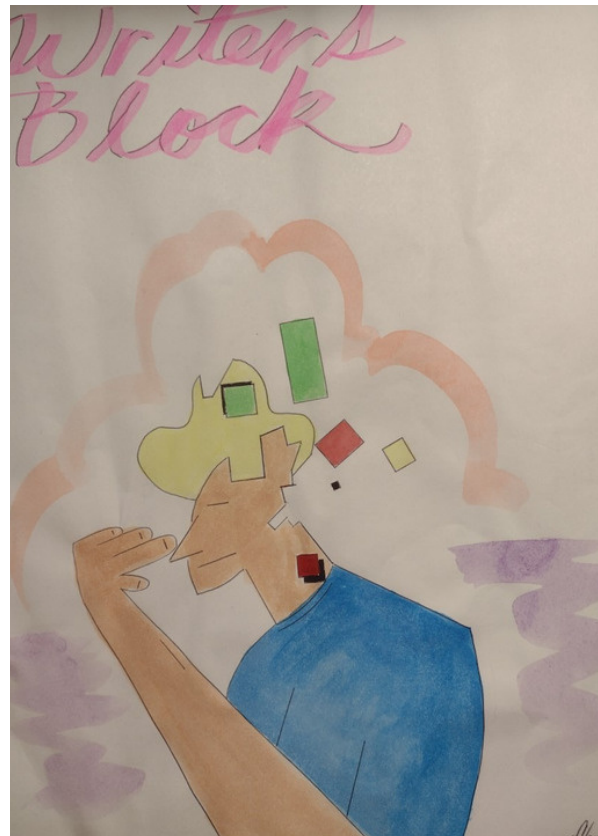
Editors' Note: We received *many* more submissions from students in this "How to Get Write" class that we plan to feature in our next edition of *Feather Bricks*.



"Is this a writing conference or is Sosa setting a day and time for his next Scrabble match?"



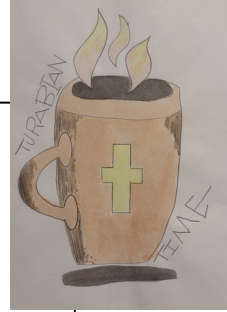
"Is that a thesis statement or a bowl meal recipe?"



Writers Block by Marshall Stewart



Turabian Time with Marshall Stewart



Whoohoo, a new semester! After organizing our deadlines for papers on calendars, we begin dismantling our reading assignments for each syllabus. It is at this moment in scheduling our major projects and deadlines that the thought flashes: “How will this material be utilized in developing our papers, and how will these papers be organized?” My prayer is to help decrease any anxiety we may encounter as the semester begins and to help our inner voice.

In the 1800s, roads were often built on mountains in order to avoid traversing the longer, more dangerous routes below. Oftentimes these roads were built with little inspection; sadly, not taking the time to systematically inspect what the mountainous roads were built on doomed many wagon trains to destruction. The culprit was often found under the roads where the shale was located. This was important seeing that shale shifts up to one foot annually; therefore, if an expensive road was placed upon shale– soon it was destroyed by the movement. We may think the solution would be to repair the one-foot breaks or repair the road with a heavier, more expensive, and better material, but unfortunately, no matter what the road was made of next, the water-logged shifty shale, when wet destroys what was placed upon it. The actual solution was not to remove the water-absorbing shifty shale– impossible!, but to move the road elsewhere and abandon the previous location.

In the same way, organizing and developing our papers for the new semester begins with an inspection, and then building outlines. Developing papers for class calls us to think about grouping related ideas into sections and organizing these sections into a clear order. A short process like this may allow us to see a budding plan for our papers. Amazingly, many of us already follow a process like this in our mind or even scribbled it on a sheet of paper, or even go so far as to form an outline.

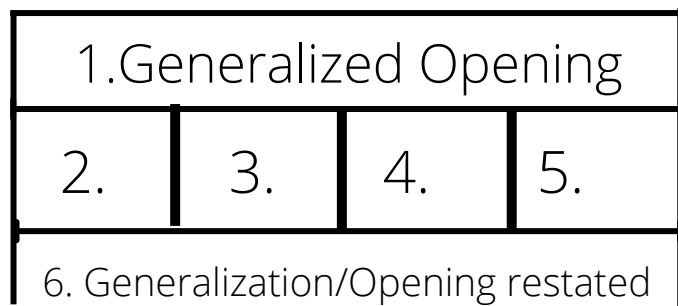
INSPECTION: if we rely on the chief method of development, our inspection begins with developing what our large blocks of information are, and then deciding the best order these blocks can be organized.

For some of us, it is easier to view large blocks of information if the points of importance are listed by placing related material in columns or on individual sheets of paper; or by drawing squares and writing down related ideas in different squares.

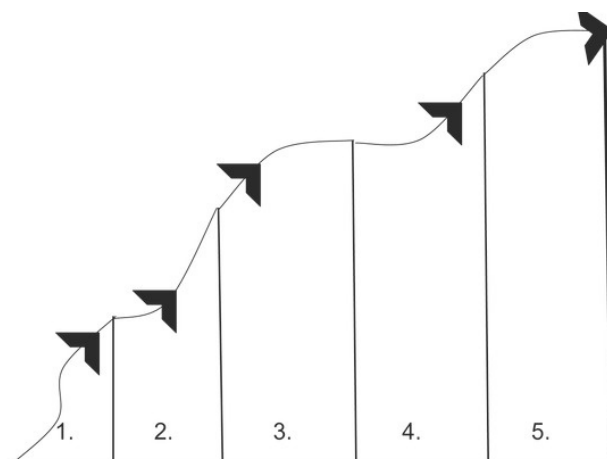
Outlines for Everyone

For example, smaller particular ideas can be organized under the main sections to which they belong. Occasionally, these points will form several groups which will stand under subheads in an outline. Once these sections are decided then the order can be chosen. Of course, our order depends on the nature of the material and the paper’s purpose.

On occasion our papers are expository; which consists of two main types: order-of-support and order-of-climax. The order of support paper has an opening that serves as a preview of the whole paper; here we notice the stated order or main points, sometimes in the form of questions that the paper will answer. Following this type of opening is a series of supporting sections, and each section deals with a question or main point. When material seems complex or difficult, the paper that utilizes this plan ends with a section to restate (in a new way) the points made at the beginning.



The order-of-climax paper begins with stating a fact or situation, and then unfolds the subject until at the end it stands complete. This type of plan illustrates each preceding block of information is roughly parallel to the next block.



As we notice in the order-of-climax, this plan is especially helpful when we desire to lead our reader to a conclusion that has in it an element of surprise.

OUTLINES: The importance of outlines cannot be overlooked, if our papers follow a generated outline we not only assure that the rubric and the readers' needs are being met, but also we prevent any thesis shifting or having to place heavier material (i.e., big ten dollar words) in our papers to shore up an already suspect document. Outlines are schematic statements of the material to be disseminated in a paper; they list the order of topics and general relationships between them. The outline (skeleton of the entire paper) illuminates the thesis and/or the syllabi rubric in greater detail before writing actually begins. Once we decide on the skeletal shape, (a few are discussed below), we are afforded the ability to give more time to one section of the paper at a time, and who doesn't need more time? This practice builds confidence as we no longer need to worry about where a specific point may belong. For SRA students, on occasion faculty will require outlines for approval to assess and evaluate, at a glance, the strengths and possible weaknesses of its organization. As students, we may already be familiar with a few outlines like:

- Scratch outlines– which are generated from casual notes, typically jotted down with proper attention to meaning, but without regard to form. These outlines contain most points grouped according to some system of the writer's own devising.
- Topic outlines– (the most common type), the main points are noted in brief phrases or single words and are numbered consecutively.
- Sentence outlines– differ from topic outlines only because each point is a complete sentence. This type of outline is more formal and requires more effort to draw up, however, its chief advantage is that it forces us to think through our ideas thoroughly in order to create complete statements. (Perrin 1968, 50)

Charting a deeper path to fashion an outline begins with first securing the main topics or divisions of a paper by converting our storyboard into an outline. *A Manual for Writers* directs us to:

- Start with a sentence numbered I that states [our] claim
- Add complete sentences under it numbered II, III..., each of which states a reason supporting [our] claim



- Under each reason, use capital letters to list sentences summarizing [our] evidence; then list by numbers the evidence itself. (Turabian 2018, 67)

This is exemplified in an outline of “Wars” seen below:

I. Wars of the nineteenth century

A. United States

1. Civil War, 1861-65

a) Cause

(1) Slavery

(a) Compromise

(i) Missouri Compromise

(ii) Compromise of 1850

(b) Result

II. Wars of the twentieth century

A. United States

1. First World War

(Turabian 2018, 341)

Additionally, if we desired a minimalist approach a sparer outline would only contain phrases, without defined sections of I, II, III, etc..., which can resemble the example below:

Introduction

Different uses/different effects

More words

Writer's block

Revision studies

Study 1 longer sentences

Study 2 longer essays

Study 3 hardcopy better

Conclusion: Disadvantages outweigh advantages

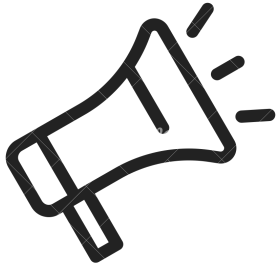
(Turabian 2018, 68)

Employing some of these techniques of inspection and organization to create and refine our outlining practices may help prevent any thesis/rubric drift, which often occurs below the structure of mere words. I pray this communique has added to your toolbox as an effective writer so that we may organize papers and have less anxiety and stress.

THE AMPLIFIER



with Alex Negrón



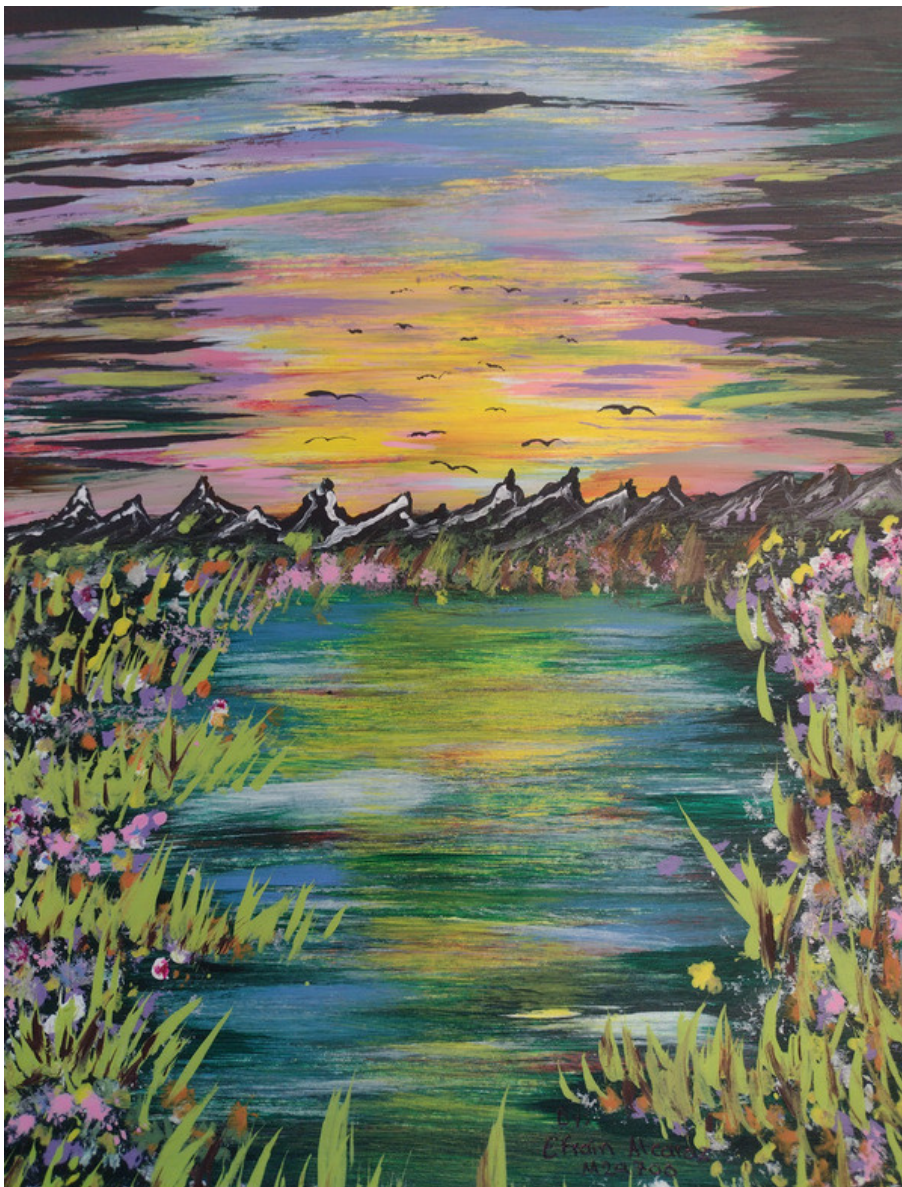
One of my favorite authors is Junot Diaz. He calls all of humanity to champion the arts because the arts is where "the rhythm of humanities" truly lie. In this edition of "The Amplifier" column, Efrain pairs his visual creativity with a poetic piece. He visually and literally makes the case for all of creation to be in harmony with one another. Our differences compliment one another. The image of this piece does exactly that. Whether its visual, performing, or literal, the arts helps us recognize the humanity of those who have been neglected in this broken world.

-Alex Negrón

The Big Tree: By Efrain Alcaraz

I begin to take shape at the bottom of the
Ocean, like bacteria living inside of a Volcano Vein.
I obtain my freedom slipping away between the
wrinkles, on the crust of Mother Earth.

Like a steam that evaporates and enters the
atmosphere, to come back in the form of rain, rain
that floods the land, like an octopus swimming at Sea.



My Race grows high as an African tree,
yet my body is on fire, gravity calls my
name "Black come down, Black come
down." Look How Tall I Am, you still
don't see me, here I'm like a tree being
transformed into a drum, laying down in
the Forest, my heart makes an echo that
melts into the air,
Please let me breathe,
Let me breathe.

Then I ask my Self, How was it possible
for my Indigenous ancestors to conquer
the whole globe,
just with the moon and the stars?

Yes they were resilient,
they were like the Sunlight,
powerful and everywhere.

Now here we are Native, Black, white,
yellow, and Brown like My Mother Earth,
all confused by the street lights.



The Big Tree: by Efrain Alcaraz



PROJECT CORNCAST OR CLASSCAST

As Officer Cornelius is bundling up his winter weather predictions to present in our next issue of *Feather Bricks*, he graciously allowed a guest columnist to take on this issue. I (Prof Melissa), know nothing about the weather, but I do know something about North Park classes. Therefore, we are going to re-write this issue of CornCast into a ClassCast.

North Park's Logan cohort has been deep into "Conflict Transformation" with Prof. Kim and "Life Together" with Prof. Mary and Prof. Liza Ann. Liza Ann emphasized how intense, meaningful, and complex discussions have been, and outside student Harlem confirms that assessment. I ran into Prof. Will at the photocopy machine the other day, and he reminded me that Cohort 3 at Stateville is working on exegesis papers in his Old Testament class (as well as taking "Conflict Transformation" with Prof. Kim). Will also noted how excited he is to get to know this new cohort of students. Cohort 2 at Stateville is a "Preaching" class with Prof. Sandra, so check in with them if you would like to hear a sermonette. Cohort 2 also finished Prof. Alicia's class over the summer; Alicia told me they did the best job she ever witnessed with their "Once upon a time" stories. (Of course they did; it's Cohort 2.) We also have Teaching Fellows working with undergraduate "Intro to Bible" and "Fundamentals of Composition" courses this semester.

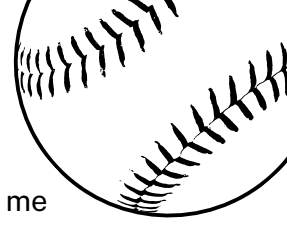


View of a Non-believer

Can you believe that I (Prof. Melissa) had the privilege to speak with Officer Montgomery for a brief interview in the Education Building at Stateville in early September? Our conversation gave me a lot to think about, and I hope sharing it here will leave readers with some knowledge. After all, according to Officer Montgomery, "If you don't know the other side, you don't know your side." Here's what else he had to say:

Officer Montgomery explained to me that he was exposed to Christianity during childhood when he attended many churches and was taught from Bible studies and faith-based activities "don't question, fear God, and fear hell." He explained that this upbringing related to the church was mainly fear-based. In terms of his current belief system, Officer Montgomery identifies as a realist. Furthermore, he noted that one major component of being a realist "is the non-belief in theism." That response was so interesting that I had to ask Officer Montgomery if he felt there are any potential dangers related to theism, and he responded that doctrines based on killing people who don't believe in such doctrines can cause all kinds of harm; moreover, he illustrated this claim with examples such as slavery, genocide, and discriminative actions against members of the LGBTQ+ community.

In closing, Officer Montgomery noted that his aim in voicing his views in this column is not to change readers' opinions but to let them know that there are other worldviews out there, especially since here in the Education Building we have so many students studying for their Master's degrees through the faith-based North Park Theological Seminary. (Please note: students in the North Park program do not all identify as Christian, but they do all take required classes in Theology, Old/New Testament, and Church History.) Officer Montgomery emphasized that the best way to learn different world views is to talk to people or ask your people to assist you with research so you can inform yourself on a variety of viewpoints out in the world. No matter what you find out there, Officer Montgomery reminds us, "The truth is always gonna be the truth."



Hello Readers, it is time to huddle up with ya boys, Mr. ESPN and Mr. Right. This month's column features two topics that have taken the sports world by storm: the WNBA's most dominant player is now a prisoner of war, and "Show me the money," the name, image, and likeness of college football!

Prisoner of War by "Mr. ESPN" Lonnie Smith

Since the arrest of Brittney Griner in Russia for carrying cannabis oil, there has been a chess game player out on the world stage with two former Cold War enemies. The US and Russia are once again at odds with another. Griner is the most high-profiled person in custody exploited by the Russian regime of thousands held in detention in that country.

Cries have been made that more professional athletes and President Biden should come to her aid to free her from the Kremlin. It's been pointed out that since she's a woman, black, and lesbian, she is less-valued. The tricky part of this battle of super powers is that everybody else are just pawns in the game. This is a chess matter of Putin and Biden over the war in Ukraine. Under normal circumstances, the negotiations might go smoother. But the US is sending military equipment and hundreds of millions of dollars to fund Ukraine's side of the war to kill Russian soldiers, above all turning Brittney Griner into a Prisoner of War.

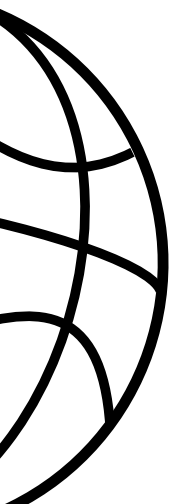
In a world that uses human beings as pawns, there should be an interreligious initiative to pray for world peace. A great start would be to pray for the thousands taken into custody by Russia amid its invasion of Ukraine. "The prayers of the righteous is powerful and effective." What a privilege it is to be able to pray for others, to call on the power of God to be focused on someone's need! For all the POWs (Prisoners of War) there should be more (Prayers of Warriors).

Show Me the Money by Steven Feagin, aka "Mr. Right"

As the college football world focuses its attention on all the Marquee coaching changes of the 2022 season, the second year of name, image, and likeness has raised the stakes for both players and schools alike. For those of you who are unfamiliar with name, image, and likeness or NIL, it's an agreement between the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), student-athletes, and schools allowing student-athletes to finally profit off of their name, image, and likeness. They must follow the rules and regulations that have been put in place.

However, this off season tested the limits of college football's NIL policy, as Power 5 programs, (ACC, Big Ten, Big-12, Pac-12 and the SEC) flexed their muscles, attempting to lure players into the transfer portal with massive NIL deals. More than 3,000 players entered the transfer portal between August of last year and the start of the 2022 season. But "show me the money" deals aren't for just any players; they are relegated for starters, mainly those who attend D-1 Power 5 programs. The average D-1 Power 5 starter will be paid six figures or more, says Blake Lawrence, CEO of Opendorse, which works with many top athletic programs on NIL frameworks. So, where does that leave the backups or the walk ons, as they wait their turns? Now, that's a question worth asking.

There have been mixed reactions throughout the college football world concerning NIL, with schools accusing others of tampering with players who weren't in the transfer portal. In fact, Nick Saban, the head coach at the University of Alabama, believes NIL "creates a situation where you can buy players." In other words, "free agency" has made its way into college football. Wake up. This is today's college football: a brave and new world of unfettered capitalism and free competition. In my opinion, all the blood, sweat, tears and broken bones of former football players were not in vain. They are the very foundation that today's NIL is built upon, and new players all across America, including my son, can seize their own slice of capitalism by telling the college football world to "show me the money."





Sports with Sarge by Sergeant Brown



Did you know that I (Prof. Melissa) had the opportunity to check in with Sergeant Brown and ask what he thought about the topics written on in "The Huddle" by Mr. Right and Mr. ESPN? Here is what I learned: Sgt. Brown commented that the situation with Brittney Griner is unfortunate. He explained his view that everything happening with this athlete is more political than anything else, and he mentioned that Russia used this situation with Brittney Griner to their advantage. To conclude, Sgt. Brown stated that, "In Russia, they are extreme." In reference to college athletes, Sgt. Brown offered a little insight. He broke things down for me so that I could understand how higher profile programs have more resources than smaller colleges, and that this situation with paying college athletes is a big thing--with pros and cons to both sides of the issue. In other words, Sgt. Brown confirmed that "anytime you have anything like that, someone's gonna exploit it." Finally, Sgt. Brown used an example to illustrate his claim, as he described to me how there are college athletes who are getting paid for things like sitting in autograph booths and getting paid for that. Furthermore, this kind of opportunity contrasts with the NCAA simply making money off of college athletes because some of these athletes are overcharging and might ask three to four hundred dollars--or even one-thousand dollars--for an autograph.

The biggest news Sgt. Brown had to share is that we are experiencing the NFL Season Start! If you remember from last issue's column, Sgt. Brown is a Chicago Bears fan, so he admitted to being kind of biased, but he also wanted to share that he sees positivity in the Bears' philosophy to "build their program from within." He commented on how a lot of people don't see the Bears performing well this year because their season success will be based on relatively newly drafted, unknown players and not the "superstars" that NFL teams usually win with, the kind of talented, established players that get a team to the playoffs and then to the superbowl. The Bears have young, unproven players, and according to Sgt. Brown, they also have the right coaching staff and the right leadership. Therefore, Sgt. Brown predicts that the Chicago Bears "will win 6 games this year out of 17," and that the team "will be competitive with each game."

Libraries Are Always Evolving by Janis Elmore, Law Librarian

"Good morning. Welcome back to the library," says Janis Elmore, Law Librarian. "Are you looking for a particular author or something in general?" After almost 2 years of being closed due to Covid, the General Library is now open to all the residents and students and is located inside of the Law Library of IDOC's Stateville Correctional Center. Ms. Elmore explains, "Prior to reopening the General Library, our goal was to create an environment that fosters intellectual curiosity and promotes literacy, individual learning, creativity, and the enjoyment of reading. We have updated the collection with new titles and current authors. Library Clerk Harris and I have restored the library to make it more welcoming with a fresh new look. We have created displays of popular authors and artwork created by local individuals in custody as well as displays of read-a-likes for those who want to read something new or different."

This fall, we are featuring an author a month with a display of their works or a theme, like Hispanic Heritage Month in September. A library plays an important role in helping students to build their confidence with reading comprehension. Our goal is to eventually have a summer or winter reading program where we can read so many books during a certain period. I would like to create an Audio Center for those who need help with reading comprehension and vocabulary. That way, individuals could read along with the audio version of a book. At the end of your visit, Ms. Elmore will tell you, "Hey, thanks for coming in today. Let us know what you think of that title, or you can write a review of it to add it to our Good Reads Bulletin Board."

Shout Outs

Shout-Out to Cohort 3

Special congratulations to all of North Park's Cohort C (2.5) and Cohort 3 emerging as one. Welcome to North Park Theological Seminary School of Restorative Arts. On behalf of Cohort 1, I want to offer you some words of encouragement as you were ushered into your academic orientation on August 23rd. As a first year graduate of the SRA here at Stateville campus, I was often encouraged by what I call the 3 Cs: "community, curriculum, and Christ." As a community, we all have one goal, but the most challenging but rewarding task can be getting to know every one of your classmates. You all will bring your own uniqueness to your community. Ultimately, your individuality will help shape your classroom identity and help carry you to the finish line. It's worth the ride! While you immerse yourself into community, do the same with curriculum, keeping in mind that this will bring out the best in you personally and help shape your future. Don't wrestle with your curriculum but allow it to cultivate you, and you will flourish. Trust me. Finally, class of 2025, learn of Christ. Christ will be a true friend and He will even carry you if needed. He carried me. And now I'm learning to lead others as a calling and honor to do so. If you find your faith somewhat opposing to your academic studies, then readjust and come back with an open mind and heart. --Johnny Marizetts

Huge Congrats to all of the administrators, educators, and students who participated in summer pilot writing classes taught by North Park Teaching Fellows and Teaching Assistants. These classes included "How to Get Write: Structured Writing in Theory and Practice," "GED Extended Response Writing Workshops," "Pre-GED Workshops," "Academic Writing," "Creative Writing," and more. Special shout out to those of you who passed the GED extended response exam and others who jumped up multiple levels in reading comprehension on your TABE scores! (And Matthew Rosario, I still cannot wait to read your essay!) -Prof. Melissa

To the writing and editorial team of **Horizons newsletter** at Kewanee Reentry, we admire and respect your work! Readers, if you aren't also checking out *Horizons* on your tablet, you are tripping. Submit news on accomplishments at your facility through your EFA for possible publication in *Horizons*. Check out details in the latest *Horizons* issue for how to submit.

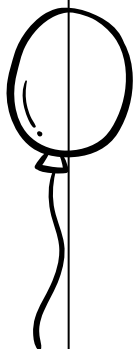
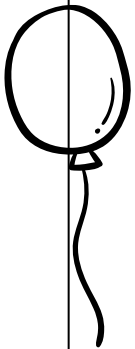
Thank you to the congregation Mt. Vernon UU Fellowship who has used *Feather Bricks* for workshops, especially highlighting the writing of Ignacio "Nacho" Alvarez!

Much gratitude to Educator Ms. McGrath for copyediting!

Nice publication on the tablet, Graham Correctional--we see you!

Thanks to Sgt. Brown and the Officers in the Education building at Stateville for helping to keep educational program up and running smoothly. We can't do this without you.

WELCOME



Shout Outs



Kudos to the **SRA Alumni /Teaching Fellows/Keynote Speakers**

for their plenary address at North Park University's Fall Faculty Development Day, which helpfully reminds educators to emphasize a dialogic approach in the classroom that recognizes and incorporates students' lived experiences.



Infinity times infinity Thank You to Principal Laura Costabile, EFA, for her innovative ideas, positivity, and support for the North Park Teaching Fellows and Teaching Assistants working with students from a wide variety of educational backgrounds and placements. We also recognize Ms. Costabile and her Education Staff for their energy and enthusiasm that keeps our classes and programs up and running. Her brief speech at the North Park August orientation day was well-received and is widely-quoted among students in the School Building.

**YOU CAN
DO IT!**



Shout Out to Dietary and Kitchen Workers and all who provide sustenance for this community; if we don't eat, we can't write.

Apologies: *Feather Bricks* is sorry for any errors and typos presented in our previous issue and is trying to devote more time to proofreading as part of our overall editorial process. Some apologies include a sorry for not acknowledging writers Jerrold Davis and Gregory Reed on the "Table of Contents" in our July/August issue and misprinting content in Alonzo McCorkle's article "Soul-Saving Prayer."

Editors' Note: Outside readers can find an electronic version of this issue (and past issues) of *Feather Bricks* on North Park University Writing Center's website: <https://www.northpark.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/academic-assistance/writing-center/>