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Feather Bricks Mission Statement: We provide brave spaces to celebrate creative, encouraging, and instructive expressions.



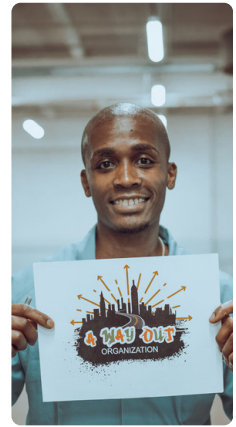
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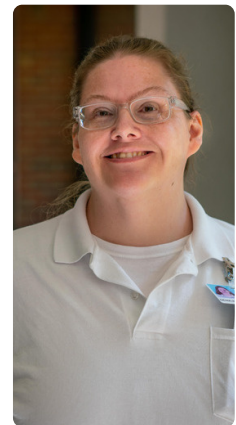
LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Wow!! This is my third edition of Feather Bricks as a Senior Editor, and it keeps getting greater and greater. With this edition, DeCedrick, Melissa and I would like to introduce our new mission statement, which says, "We provide brave spaces to celebrate creative, encouraging, and instructive expressions." As viewers and contributors, please know that this newsletter is your space to celebrate with and a place for us to encourage one another so that each unique voice is recognized beyond our confinement. I personally would like to dedicate Volume 14 of Feather Bricks to our beautiful sisters at Logan Correctional Center. We celebrate you with this edition. Enjoy, Johnny Marizetts, Senior Editor



Johnny Marizetts

Hello to you all from Logan Correctional Center on this beautiful chilly fall day! This issue is all about domestic violence; it's a dark subject that needs to be brought into the light. Too many suffer in silence, longing to scream out of their pain to a world that chooses ignorance over acceptance. No more! We will break the silence! I thank all who have contributed to this issue and my awesome co-editors. Those who speak out on these pages do so from their own places of pain. I honor them. It takes courage to break the silence.



Wendy Denzler

Hello, my name is Karin Anderson-Hargrave. I am a second year SRA student at Logan, and I'm co-editing with Tasha Kennedy and Wendy Denzler here at the Logan campus. I would like to thank all of those who have contributed to the October/November edition of Feather Bricks. Tasha, Wendy and I all have a heart for the survivors of domestic violence and found raising awareness an excellent way to shatter the silence and give them the voice which has been silenced within them for too long. Thank you for your time, and God bless you all.



Karin Hargrave

The June and July edition of Feather Bricks was dedicated to collaboration; however, due to my personality I had to push the envelope a little bit further. My thought was there is no collaboration without my Logan sisters, especially when the subject is domestic violence with the headline screaming "shattering the silence." As collaborators, we inspire each other to raise our voices even when we think we are not being heard. I had my sister to send in some quotes specifically for this issue, and this is the one that stood out to me:

"If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then you are an excellent leader." -Dolly Parton



Latasha Kennedy



Dialogue & Discuss

By Janet Jackson

Can you imagine walking into court and having the judge duct tape your mouth? As you sit there unable to speak the prosecution belittles you and lies. Unable to defend yourself you receive the maximum sentence and spend decades behind bars.

Most people say that's not true or it would never happen to me. However, those of us who have intimate knowledge of the court system know it happens all the time. I know as it happened to me.

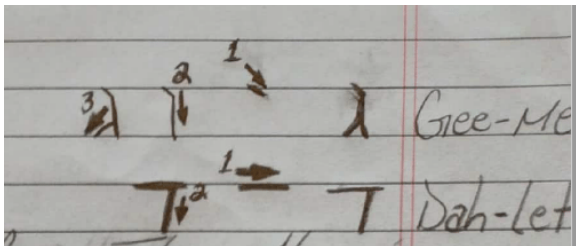
HB4847 would give us a voice where we have been silenced. Currently pending in the House, HB4847 allows those who were not allowed to present the defense of domestic violence and those who had an incomplete defense, limited by a judge, to file and receive a chance to finally be heard. It ensures those of us who were not heard decades ago a voice. We will no longer be left behind.

Part of this legislation deals with domestic violence and accountability. If one is forced into a criminal act by their abuser, they no longer will be held responsible for that act.

Lastly, HB4847 includes gender-based violence to include persons who were sex-trafficked and those who suffered domestic violence at the hands of another who was not an intimate partner. HB4847 gives voice to the ones who were silenced by the courts. It is time their voices were heard.



Learning More Hebrew
By Alonzo "Zohariel" McCorkle



3. 17 Hebrew consonants have only 1 form. The other 5 of them have a final form that they take when they appear at the end of the word.

4. Unlike English's alphabet, nearly always the Hebrew consonants and vowels are pronounced the same way. So you can learn to read Hebrew without knowing the meaning of the words.

Emotional and Mental Abuse (Anonymous)

Emotional abuse is a difficult topic for me as I both suffered through it and dished it out. Emotional/mental abuse can be tricky to define, especially in relationships that are stressed by difficult outside circumstances. In forming a healthy Christian community, one has to be aware of the signs and symptoms of emotional mental abuse in relationships, and one must be aware many are still overcoming the consequences of being in emotionally abusive relationships and learning to navigate in new ways. Generally, emotional and mental abuse precedes physical abuse. If the abuser in the relationship can assert his/her will through emotional/mental abuse, then they often times will not feel the need to exert their power through physical/sexual abuse. Very often people will not even know they are being emotionally/mentally "gaslighted" (abused), as they are conditioned to accept full blame for every negative relational encounter and fully accept another's perspective. Emotional/mental abuse occurs when one member in the community or the relationship is focused on achieving their will over connecting within the relationship or community. Edward Hallowell writes that for most people the two most powerful experiences in life are achieving and connecting. Hallowell points out that our society is increasingly devoted to, obsessed with, and enslaved by achieving and increasingly bankrupt and impoverished when it comes to connecting. Emotional and mental abuse is the severing of the connection to achieve one person's will over another's.

Emotional and mental abuse is about attack and withdrawal. We all understand the verbal abuse, the name calling, and the slurs. The withdrawal is to primarily show the other individual(s) that their well-being does not matter. Withdrawal is meant to show indifference. At the root, attack and withdrawal tactics are the expressions of the one great sin, which is a lack of love, the violation of the one great commandment.

How does one even prove or know that emotional abuse is a factor? Often trying to place facts around the existence of this type of abuse is like nailing jello to a wall and deteriorates into "he said, she said" and fuzzy dramas. Domestic violence cases are often solely centered on physical and sexual abuse violations because emotional and mental abuse (which is just as damaging) leaves no physical evidence. So, how does the attack and withdrawal of emotional abuse look like and feel? Here is one scenario:



Dialogue & Discuss

I have an argument with her along the general lines of my life is harder than your life so you should serve me more. My side doesn't do so well. I don't verbally attack her; I just create distance. I pay a little less attention to her, a little more attention to the kids. I give them a little more energy than usual. I don't look at her or touch her as I normally would, though I am civil and polite. When you know someone well, you can calibrate this behavior precisely. I am cold enough so she can feel my displeasure. But it's subtle enough so that if she asks, "What's wrong?" I can say, "Nothing, why – what's wrong with you?"

So, have I hit a nerve? Emotional/mental abuse can cloud reality and one of the signs/symptoms of it is "crazymaking." The abused feels like they are going crazy and the abuser deliberately says/does things to cause the victim to doubt their sanity. The three main markers of emotionally abusive behavior are belittlement, manipulation, and control. Caring or love crosses the line to abuse when it consistently exhibits any of the following characteristics: excessive overprotection, strings attached to things/activities/love, withdrawing/withholding of appreciation/love, and acceptance based on performance. Sometimes an interaction leaves you confused and wondering if it was abusive. Abusive interactions cause you to: hide your true feelings, sneak around, criticize, explode with anger, put yourself down, excessively apologize, fear disapproval, expect the worst, believe that your perfect performance is the key to acceptance, simmer, and feel an excessive need for privacy. Of course, not all abusive interactions create all of the above. While some types of abusive interactions cause some feelings and other types of abusive interactions cause other negative feelings and thoughts. Someone who had survived extensive emotional abuse told me: "I wished that he would beat me. I thought that if I could see a broken limb, a bloody lip, a bruise, I would know that what was happening was real – not just in my head." So if you find yourself apologizing for everything you do, allowing people to constantly put you down and feel you deserve it, believe you are the cause for someone else's wrong behavior, feel the need to sneak around, or feel that no one takes your ideas or suggestions seriously and/or your self-esteem is limping – GET HELP!

Cruel words do to the spirit what a vacuum cleaner does to dirt – suck you in and entrap you. It is important to recognize patterns of abusive behavior in people. These patterns include constantly correcting others, putting others down for doing things differently than they would do them, use jokes or critical remarks to ridicule, justify hurtful actions by saying "that's just the way I am," disregard the feelings of others, justify cruel treatment or severe punishment. So how does one keep their center and understand their responsibilities to a community or in a relationship without losing one's self. This may also be a guide to help gain and keep a center when faced with emotional/mental abuse:

I am responsible to:

- Refuse to see myself through the eyes of someone who only sees my failures
- Act responsibly, not blaming my actions on another
- Express my real needs and feelings
- Compromise and negotiate fairly
- Respect others and expect respect
- Find my own interests
- Set limits and boundaries
- Face the truth
- Carry out my commitments from a base of love not merely obligation

If you can meet these responsibilities, you are forming healthy relationships. The single most dramatic difference between healthy and toxic relationships is the amount of freedom that exists for each person to express himself/herself as an individual. Healthy relationships, in conclusion, encourage individuality, personal responsibility and independence; unhealthy relationships encourage dependency, therefore, the best defense to mental and emotional abuse is acquiring the skill of negotiating healthy boundaries and understanding your emotional, mental and physical limits, and your willingness to verbalize these limits. This is a short overview of a large multifaceted topic, but I hope this will bring awareness and understanding to our community of the serious harm caused by emotional/mental abuse, the red flags to avoid it, and to find help if the situation/relationship is becoming abusive and/or overwhelming.



Dialogue & Discuss

Parole Illinois' Corrective Clemency Campaign by Karen F. McCarron

Mass incarceration is now recognized as the civil rights issue of our era. We now understand that over the past 4-5 decades we have over-sentenced thousands of people to death by incarceration (LWOP) or other unnecessarily extreme prison sentences. Not only did those sentences fail to reduce crime, but they continue to waste unconscionable sums of taxpayer money that could have been, and could be, better spent on programs and community assistance that actually prevent crime.

Unfortunately, while the General Assembly will acknowledge the above facts, legislatures have thus far been unable to do what is needed to correct the issue of over-sentencing and overpopulation within the prison system. Parole Illinois (PI) has in the past introduced a bill for Earned Reentry (SB2333) that would have brought a hope of relief to long-timers within the prison system, but the legislators failed to pass it.

PI is a non-profit organization comprised of people inside and outside prison who are working toward more humane legal and prison systems. In addition to advocating for legislation that would bring back a more fair and true parole system, PI publishes reports, research, articles and campaign materials that promote and enrich public discussion and understanding of the issues surrounding the prison and criminal legal system in Illinois. Recently PI published a 140-page booklet on its Corrective Clemency Campaign (CCC) project. CCC seeks to unite as many people and organizations as possible in pursuit of convincing Illinois' Governor to take action that would remedy the humanitarian crisis of mass incarceration in this state.

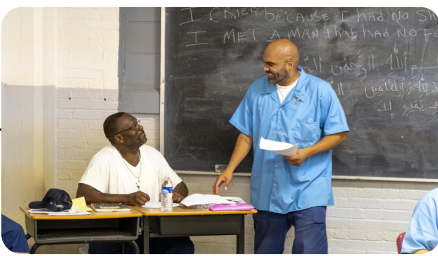
This booklet was designed for people in Illinois prisons and their family and friends, and it is constructed as an educational toolkit for people interested in mobilizing themselves, their peers, their loved ones, and sympathetic organizations towards accomplishing the goals of the CCC project. To review/order the booklet have family and friends, go to this URL address: <https://www.change.org/p/support-the-campaign-for-corrective-clemency>

CCC seeks to convince the Illinois Governor to exercise his executive clemency powers in a much more expansive manner to address the historical harms associated with mass incarceration and thereby bring the state one step closer to being the "beacon of humanity" he said he seeks to turn Illinois into. The PI campaign/project is specifically asking the Governor to do two things. First, grant everyone currently serving LWOP or a de facto LWOP sentence (40+ years) parole eligibility after serving 15 or 20 years in prison. Second, the CCC project is also asking the Governor to grant everyone serving a number of years subject to the Truth-In-Sentencing (TIS) provisions a partial pardon on that aspect of their sentence and have the IDOC to recalculate all such sentences under the 50% (day for day) standard.

The booklet educates one on the Governor's executive clemency powers and the plethora of reasons justifying the above clemency actions for "long-timers". The booklet suggests activities to do to support the campaign, including how to write GTL messages about CCC. The booklet also contains talking points, sample letters, and a survey. At the current pace of decarceration, it will still take 75 years to cut the total US prison population by half, raising questions about what additional solutions should be pursued to accelerate reform. Thus[1], to tackle the problem of mass incarceration at its core, reforms must target those living in and experiencing the crisis – those that are "locked up".[2] The Corrective Clemency Campaign is a viable solution worth looking into. Please encourage your family, friends, and peers to get involved and to reach out to others as much as they can about this Parole Illinois project.

[1] ___ Ghandnoosh, "Can We Wait 75 Years to Cut the Prison Population in Half?" The Sentencing Project, March 8, 2018. Available at <https://bit.ly/3cyRpju>

[2] American Bar Association, Resolution, August 8-9, 2022



Dialogue & Discuss

Unjust Politics by Marlon Coleman

You speak very eloquently in front of the people saying what “you” ordained or conceived, to be what the people want to hear. While at the same time your true agenda remains hidden in the darkest parts of your mind. Now, from where I am, I see with a clear focus and understanding of knowing; you with your high standard of speaking, are just a politician politicking and jockeying for a position, while at the same time looking the public straight in the eyes and lying to their faces.

You speak of equality, justice and liberty but with the same breath, behind boastful words, there is clear discrimination and a violation of the very declaration that was implemented to protect the people but now I understand that you are just a politician, politicking and jockeying for a position and not having one true care for the fundamental rights of the voting public.

Thus, through discrimination and violation of rights you imprison us at a high rate and subject us to a cruel, inhumane and degrading punishment. “Yet,” you say slavery is prohibited in all its forms. Now, tell me what do you call it when you hold someone in prison while knowing that person is innocent? As you work distastefully to permanently incarcerate him. You say, “innocent till proven guilty;” I say and you can quote me on it, “guilty till proven innocent.”

“Yes,” you may be a judge but you are truly just a politician, politicking and jockeying for a position. I am sure your procedure and preferences are founded on prejudice and discretion rather than fact and reason. Now, in light of this, you and your rulings are just what they are; Arbitrary. For you overenforce and abuse hearsay laws as a form of evidence when there is nothing else.

You know who you are; “prosecutor.”

Then you stand there speaking with a high standard of words twisting the truth to gain the favor of the jury; Is it not enough that you already have the judge in order to make the innocent guilty? I know it's just politics, right? But then you would “wonder” or shall I say “know” why there are so many struggling and striving for freedom; from not only the oppression of gangs and wars, but also the corrupt political rule of government.

Although we need some form of regulations to prevent outright calamity amongst the people, right now all we have is politicians, politicking and jockeying for a position. Not seeing, listening nor caring about what the people want but instead they impishly implant and impose upon the people that which seems to be of reform. Though in turn is truly a form of oppression; so how do you impose your views and ways upon the people? Let me name a few: lying and buying with full intent to deceive, a massive military, a control of banks, stocks and trade, and a high speaking of words in which you cast an invisible chain and dictate the way you feel the people can and should live.

Now that I see, with much understanding and a clear focus on and of life, I know now that when you speak in a high standard about equality, justice and liberty there is a hidden agenda, I know that you are just a politician, politicking and jockeying for a position. One more thing and it will be the last. I find it very disturbing that a judge being a trier of facts chose to ignore the facts and rule based on his emotions. Exparte: from a one sided point of view, like a true politician. Now? Tell me; what do you think?

Devotionals

Be Wise Like Yoda by Wendy Denzler

Yoda is possibly the coolest guy of all time. He had stupid crazy amounts of power through the force, yet he rarely used it. Did you ever hear Yoda talking non-stop about himself and his awesomeness? Nope. Did you see him living the high life with more money than Palpatine? Nope.

He lived in a little hut he built with his bare hands in the middle of a swamp on Degobah. Why? Because he was confident enough in the Force to know that he was special, chosen, and that was where the Force needed him to be. He didn't need other creatures to tell him he was awesome. His confidence in the Force was enough for him.

Yoda also never used his words to hurt. When he spoke, he had something to say that taught others or benefited them in some way. He never belittled Luke during training. Yoda was way better at everything than Luke was. Dude, he was a Jedi master! He was patient and encouraging. Yoda taught by example.

When Luke chose to leave training early to go help his friends, Yoda didn't curse him or zap him with the Force lightning. Instead, Yoda prayed for Luke in the Force and sent hopes and goodwill with Luke as he left, praying for his safety and eventual return.

Be like that. Be humble. Use your words for the good of others, not to cut them down. Be an example of what's good and right in God's eyes. Pray for those around you. If they've gone astray from God's path for them, keep praying and encouraging. Never lose hope.

"For even I, the Messiah, am not here to be served, but to help others, and to give my life as ransom for many." -Mark 10:45 (TLB)

If you're a Star Wars nerd like me, be like Yoda. If not, be like Jesus. Either way, you'll make God smile.



Hello my fellow peers,

My name is DeeDee Sims. I felt led to share this revelation I received while writing a letter to my younger self for Prof. Kim's Conflict Transformation class. As part of the theme for this edition of Feather Bricks is about Domestic Violence I feel it is appropriate. At age four my mom brought an alcoholic man into our home. With the entrance of this man, trauma entered my life. There is a Greek word holokleria (hol-ok-lay-ree-ah) which means complete in every way; perfectly sound (in body). In Acts 3:16 it is translated as wholeness on perfect soundness. This word is used in reference to a man lame for forty years being made whole.

My Dear DeeDee, our Father is giving you holokleria. You will walk out of prison at the age of forty-three years, eleven months and twelve days. Eighteen days later you will be forty-four years old – Forty years after trauma entered your life, you will walk out of prison in perfect soundness--true physical, emotional, and spiritual wholeness. You will walk out into the purpose that Father God has for you – free, no longer bound to the past, looking towards all Father has for you.

I pray this helps my fellow peers understand that Father God is a Healer and will gift you with holokleria just as he did for me and the lame man from Acts 3.

Devotionals

Buried Treasure by Karin Hargrave

“And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to use.” (Romans 5:3-5 NRSV)

Let’s begin with focusing on suffering which is to endure pain, affliction, or tribulations. While undergoing any of these it creates a tremendous amount of pressure and stress. Diamonds are formed after many years of pressure underground. While living in an abusive situation there is constant pressure, walking on eggshells is the norm, waiting for the other shoe to drop. Domestic violence is all about power, control, and intimidation that’s inflicted upon the victims. Abusers lie, threaten, and dominate the lives of those they believe are weak.

However, in our human weaknesses we turn to God. When we hit rock bottom God provides the strength. This is a pivotable moment in our lives, changing us for eternity. A God wink. When the dreams are shattered, the dust settles, walls are smashed, bruises are healed, bones mending, and tears wiped away. This is when God picks up the broken pieces of our shattered lives to create the miracle of restoration in our lives. Yes, there is still residue left, but God utilizes this to form His firm foundation. A glimpse of God’s original intent for our lives is uncovered. “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as He is doing today.” (Genesis 50:20 NRSV) Lives restored, dreams achieved, purpose renewed. This is when God unearths His hidden treasure, His demands, bringing forth rivers flowing of pure gold. This process of endurance takes time. Character is developed, producing good fruit. God heals our broken heart and spirit, creating change in our lives. God’s promises are fulfilled as he rebuilds our lives, built on the solid foundation of God’s word. Christ becomes the anchor of hope for a brighter future. God is a restorer, double portion is our reward for the shame we have endured. He gives us beauty for ashes. While being trapped in the cycle of abuse, we believed the lies of the enemy. We must realize that it was the enemy, not man who attempted to steal, kill, and destroy our lives. Fear is his weapon, cloaking his victims in shame, guilt and loneliness. BUT GOD is by our side, He saw all that was done and His truth prevails. Only God knows our hearts.

We felt like we were alone. Secrets were kept. “Don’t tell!” Our trust was broken, and our bodies were violated. Now, we know that God was there for every wicked, evil, vile word and action. Just waiting for His perfect time to rescue his sheep. To restore their light. Disclosing who they truly are in God’s kingdom. Shining their light on others suffering in the darkness of abuse. Drawing them to the light and the hope of Jesus Christ. Sharing our stories, assuring others they are not the only one. Demonstrating God’s unconditional love and compassion to them. Listening to their accounts. Sharing in their tears. Surrendering as God’s instrument to heal their hearts. Tilling the ground, planting good seeds, and watering tender sprouts. Directing them to their creator. Assuring them he knows how the story ends, with a victory for God’s kingdom.

We are the strong, the survivors, God’s warriors, on the front lines for justice. Kneeling in prayer and dancing in praise, basking in the wisdom of the scriptures. Being encapsulated by God’s agape love, grace, and mercy. Thanking God for all we have endured, because if it had not been for our suffering we would not be who we are today. Living out God’s destiny for our lives. Enjoying eternal peace and joy. Knowing we are forgiven and have been granted salvation, and are new creations in Christ Jesus. Keeping our eyes on the prize, shining as bright as a diamond.





with
DeCedrick Walker

Here's A Thought



Upon Those Who Sat in the Region and Shadow of Death, Light has Dawned

Can you remember where you were when light dawned on you? Where the light of Jesus or some other enlightened teacher penetrated your impenitent way of thinking? When the light of Christ dawned on me, I was in the midst of both a proverbial and literal cave; stuck in the region and shadow of death, the sudden light provoked me to scratch, claw and crawl toward its direction! Do you remember the promises or the vows you made to yourself? Could you recall the degree of sincerity you felt when you vowed to be better--to answer the call to live unselfishly?... Today, could an honest assessment reflect that the goals of imitating an enlightened teacher and remaining committed to a vow have proven difficult despite proof of your personal progress? For me, the answer is yes.

Since becoming a member of the North Park Community, imitating Jesus and remaining faithful to vows has been very difficult. On the one hand my success as a student, a learner or an analytical thinker has been nearly flawless. Engaging with course material, though difficult from week to week, hasn't overwhelmed me as much as I imagined it would. I'm proud I've been able to hold my own, to maintain a decent GPA into my final year.

On the other hand, who Jesus is and what he represents with respect to my commitment to live the Gospel as he instructed – to speak the truth in love to my neighbor – has been at an all-time low. Jesus instructs us to lovingly speak truth. I have failed at lovingly speaking truth to people in the way I'd imagine that Jesus would succeed. In part I believe I failed to succeed as Jesus would because I never really grasped the responsibility to love. Love as Jesus would have it isn't contingent on whether someone is sincere in their confession of faith. Another reason why I believe I failed at loving people was the fact that I didn't know how to love contextually.

Those two things, not grasping the responsibility to love and not knowing how to love contextually, present a unique conflict given that many of my failures to love have occurred during my participation in the North Park Community here at Stateville, a community that's abstractly built on restorative justice practices like naming evil and calling out injustices. To be clear, failing to speak the truth in love does not mean that I told lies. Rather, it means that I spoke truth—named evil and injustices or so I thought—at the wrong time, in the wrong space, in the wrong manner, and to the wrong person. I wonder, am I the only one who could make that confession? I actually wrestled with whether I should make the confession. However, in the spirit of unity and in an attempt to generate reconciliation within our community, I thought openly accepting culpability for my insensitive misappropriation could mend the emotional features in our community.

Does anyone else agree?

Wisdom Blvd.

By Mishunda Davis-Brown



This semester on the Blvd. I would like to do just “good old proverbs.” I’m choosing Proverbs 26:20 and Proverbs 27:6.

Proverbs 26:20 reads “without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.” Even when we don’t realize it, we may be including or participating in gossip one way or another by being nosy, wanting to listen to everything or also passing on the information to another even if it’s without malicious intent. Continuing to listen or tell another keeps it going, but if there is no audience there is none to entertain.

Proverbs 27:6 reads “wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.” A true friend is going to tell you the truth to save you even if it hurts, but a person who agrees with everything you say and do even when you’re wrong or it’s no good for you doesn’t care and isn’t your friend.

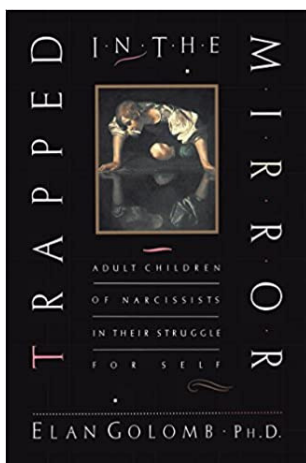
I would now like to thank Alonzo “Zôhariel” McCorkle who visited the Blvd. and shared his amazing wisdom with our spirit. I hope to hear more from the readers. So, whenever you feel the need, take a trip down Wisdom Blvd. with me.



BOOK REVIEW

By Wendy Denzler

Golomb, Elan, Ph.D. *Trapped in the Mirror: Adult Children of Narcissists in Their Struggle for Self*. New York: Wm. Morrow & Co., inc, 1992. ISBN #978-0-688-14071-7, 271 pages



This book was incredibly enlightening for me. It gives a glimpse into the lives of the children of narcissists and the ongoing struggles they face. I wasn’t aware that there are different types of narcissism. I also didn’t realize the monumental damage narcissism can bestow upon children of narcissist parents. This is an easy-to-read text meant to bring awareness. It contains great information, case studies, and hope for all who are affected by narcissism. It’s eye opening. I highly recommend it.



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.

This is a little off topic, but I would like everyone's help in wishing my nephew/son Lecole Ingram who we affectionately call "Colo" Happy Birthday. Colo, I love you so much and I'm proud of the man you are becoming.

I would like to thank my North Park brothers Amotto Jackson and Thomas Mills for their participation in SPOILED ROTTEN. You guys' voices are greatly appreciated and heard.



Now Amotto, to answer your question: what does a friend look like to me? The first thing is the ability to communicate even if it's saying you don't want to communicate, along with loyalty, compassion, dependability, and honesty. But it goes little deeper for me. The best way I could describe it is as a feeling: paying attention to how one responds to different situations and the emotions one gives coupled with the attributes you have already displayed.

Thomas, I am not leaving you out. First, I love the fact that you spoil your girls rotten, but your answer to question five was thought provoking and worthy of more dialogue. If God made people think and respond differently, why are we held to the same standard by law?! I wholeheartedly agree with what you said; however, the standard I wanted to address is the one they hold the defendant against due to their looks, acts, thoughts, or feelings. Every case cannot and should not be held to the same standard, as to say this happened and your response should be this, at the same time being convicted and demoralized because of it. All the while leaving one questioning self with the need to reflect with little to no knowledge of how to reflect in a healthy manner.

Which leads me to the question for this issue: Aside from your incarceration, what's the hardest lesson you've learned through the date?

Die to self and trust God.

-Karin Hargrave

To let God be in control of his timing of things.

-Karen Frank McCarron

I don't have enemies; I have things to observe and lessons to learn.

-Briana Travis

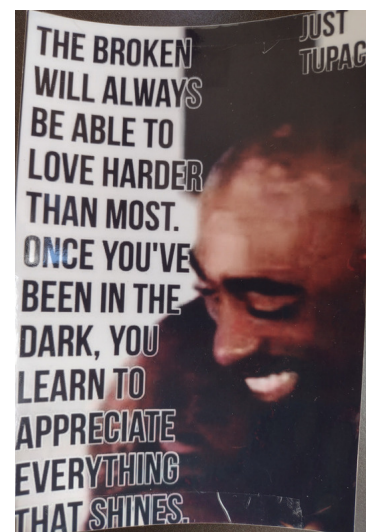
Who can take the randomness of me and not treat me any different afterwards.

-Savannah Pickett

Having the patience to wait on God's plan.

-Lindsay Anderson

If everything we know is like Paul said, "in part," just imagine what would happen if we allowed those parts to work together like God intended. -Latasha Kennedy



Poetry and Art Corner

Untitled

By Erika Ray

Hear the voices of the women folk
That catch the movements of a tribal dance
Hear the tones of the women folk
That hold the rhythm of stoic stillness
Believe the mouths of the women folk
They perpetuate the warnings of yesterday's
Pain
Believe the tones of the women folk
They endlessly speak the sorrows of
Silence
Orate the discourse of the women folk
If we speak, if we sing, if we rejoice,
That silence they circumvent is no more
Orate the voices of the women folk
If not, then silence can never be
Shattered



Art by Ann Marie Getz

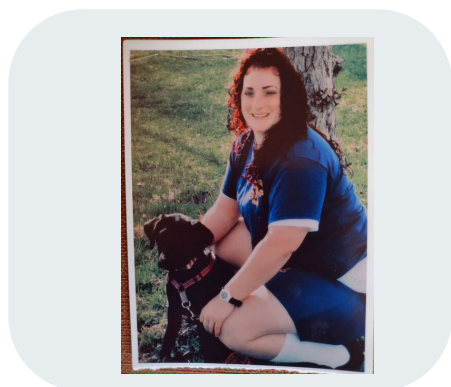
Survivor

By Mishunda Davis-Brown

A survivor I am because I took the first step,
To stop being a victim the day I chose myself,
No longer allowing a man to abuse and control me,
No more telling me what to wear or where I better be,
He won't keep the key to my happiness or have a say in
My present,
Because I'm no longer that girl allowing to be treated
Like a peasant
I'm priceless and worth more than I knew or
Accepted
The power he had... I took back, intercepted
I realize now that he could only do what I
Allowed him to,
He wasn't so big after all, let this be a lesson
Not just for me, but for you,
Love yourself enough to walk and stay away,
Because dead or in prison are the many victims who
Chose to stay.
Rarely does an abuser decide to change,
So for victims still suffering choose freedom and
Life today. Survivor.

Beautiful Broken but Blessed By Amber "Coco" Cannella

I am broken but blessed
I wonder can you relate to my stress
Cell doors slam I see how broken I really am
I would love to be free with the fam
Instead, I am where I am
I pretend to be strong and forgive my ex for trying
To break my neck
I feel like running away from what's next
I am beautifully broken but blessed
Some doubted my greatness
So I smile in they fake faces
I promise to my King to never be complacent
He made me far from basic
So I had to make a way out just to say I made it
A new creation out of my incarceration
7 years in still patiently waiting
Too much time they say I was facing
It's been God's grace and me leaning in on my faith
How I made it day by day
Soon walking out that gate
Like a newborn child out the womb
Finally closing this never-ending wound
My life ruined
Ego bruised
Watching the world go on without me was the
hardest thing to do
Inside became hollow
Heartless so I pushed away
No phone today
I don't want to face the truth
I'm locked up inside
So now I lock myself up in my room
I am who I am cause what I been through
I came out of it because I finally loved you
I was your plan all along
To lean on you press in and be strong
I am beautiful broken but blessed
I wonder can you relate to my stress...



Passion's Pursuit By Latasha Kennedy

I wanted love, but had no clue of what love
Meant or looked like to you.

I wanted affection, as a child I thought was missed
I didn't know your affection involved using fists.

I wanted validation, to see my self worth
What I got in return was the way your love hurts.

I wanted stability, to solidify and secure me
But all I got was your insecurities that depleted my
Energy.

I wanted intimacy to be part of the foundation to
Create unity, what I got was excessively misplaced
Anger that couldn't see into me.

I was searching for happiness from the bosom of
Your chest, I didn't realize that was where your
Self-hate rest.

Now I realize it, no longer lost nor confused, I
Was expecting too much from a child that grew into
A man that had been abused.

I thought my compassion would grow on you
And my strength coax you through.

I understand the abuse you endured was a
Battle within
But the constant swinging of fists would never end.

I tried to leave a few times and thought you'd
Miss me too
But your instant replacement of me showed
Your true complacency.

Please don't misunderstand this poem is not about
Your wrong
It's about how what I thought I lacked I
Was holding all along.

Be advised that I'm not bitter, mad, nor upset
This journey has given me insight and knowledge
I can't regret.

Concerning, love, affection, and intimacy to name
A few, are the attained attributes gained on
Passion's pursuit.

**A Survivor's Plea!!
By Tameka Newsome**

How do I put an action that I have no
Words for into words?
Although initially, it may seem
impossible,
Honestly, it's quite simple.
Shame...
Defeat...
Worthlessness...
Incapability...
All these words announce the way that
it's determined to make you feel.
Loved...
Needed...
Deserving...
Protected...
All words that your abuser uses to
Justify leaving you broken and bruised
Guilty...
Confused...
Hurt...
Denial...
Justification...
All the words that the victim
ascribes to themselves and their
abuser. It just had to be something I've
done... I shouldn't have said/done
that... if I would've just left it alone...
they didn't mean it... it was just an
accident... All these things and soo
much more go through your mind, how
to get out? Crosses your mind,
But sometimes you're so defeated, or
you feel so stuck that you just can't
leave. So then you begin to do things
that you never would've done to prove
that you're worth their love.
Drugs...
Alcohol...
Prostitution...
Robbery...
Whatever it takes to save your own life.
If they say do it, you don't question it.
Believing that if you comply, the
beatings and the forced sexual acts
will stop. The result is a baby, that you
have just to receive the unconditional
love that you soo desire, never mind
you just introduced another innocent
victim to an already hope-less
situation then it becomes generational,
my mom watched it happen to her
mom. I watched as it happened to my
mom. My sister watched it happen to
me, and now my nieces stand by

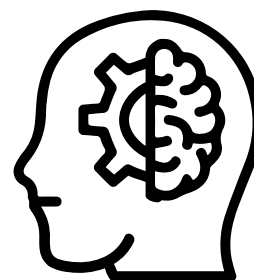
helplessly as it happens to their
mom. How do you break the curse
when you're taught that this is
normal?
Beaten...
Bloody...
Bruised...
Misused...
Praying for a solution, too ashamed to
talk to anyone, not wanting to be or
Become the subject of other's
conversation, you slowly find yourself
in an isolation that's filled with
devastation. Taught that "Whatever
happens in this house stays
In this house!", so you already know
not to run your mouth.
Broken...
Lonely...
Dehumanized...
You've fallen for all the lies, and
you've managed to get yourself into a
trap that you can't see no way out of.
The words that are spouted at you in
a moment of anger and rage seem to
ring true. No longer sure of what is
and what's not, or how to make it
stop. Now you go find yourself in an
even tighter spot. The solution is now
either you or them, and you have no
idea which decision will ring true.
Screams...
Shooting...
Yelling...
Sirens...
t's all like a bad dream that you can't
Seem to wake up from. You find
yourself stuck in this tiny room,
feeling the oxygen slowly leak from
your lungs? What do you do? What do
you say? Where's your abuser? All
Questions that scroll through your
mind, but are too far away to seem
logical.
Joy...
Peace...
Self-love...
Self-esteem...
Confidence...
Freedom...
All the things I've gained through our
forced separation. You've really
messed up because you let me find
God. All the things I've gained through
our forced separation. You've really
messed up because you let me find
God.

Now that I know WHO I AM and
WHOSE I AM, all of your lies have
been exposed. I saw you for what you
truly were, you were a distraction to
keep me from my destiny. The love
I've found without you. I'll never go
back. I can never be your sad, useless,
punching bag. Finally, I can look you
in your eyes and say "Look, what you
made me do?!" Kind of funny that the
tables have turned.

Wiser...
Better...
Stronger...
All the things I need to say to you. I
Am now defined by God, and no
longer
by you.

**Think Twice
By Jae Hee**

Before you beat your woman
down
Think twice
Before you walk away from your
family
Think twice
Before you drink and drive
Think twice
Before you snort a line or swallow
a pill
Think twice
Before you neglect your kids
Think twice
Before you pick up a gun and use it
Think twice
Before you cuss and fuss
Think twice
Before you ignore this poem
Think twice

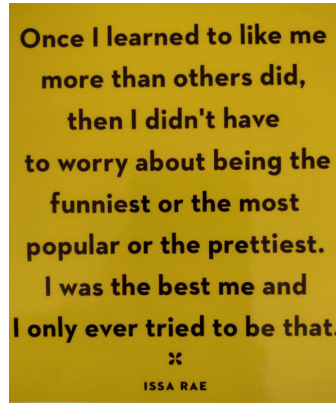


Shatter Silence
By Shareaf Fleming



There's a violence in silence
But the truth overrides it
Please! Speak from the heart
Let Truth be your guidance
If nobody knows
Then how can they help
At the sound of your voice
They may notice themselves
When the silence is shattered
The oppression is battered
And aggression is rattled
Act free with the truth
ALIVE and WELL-LIVING PROOF
That if someone will listen
Their silence will be shattered too
Talking is healing
Listening is life-saving

Shatter Silence



SEE ME
By Verna Colbert

Domestic violence almost destroyed me!
From birth to date, come on I want you to see.
Please just close your eyes and listen to me.
As far back as I can remember domestic
Violence has had a hold on me. My dad beat
My mother every day, right there for me to
See! SEE ME! At around 8 years old my
Oldest brother was molesting me, I used
To lay in my bed waiting for him to come
Touch me like this was supposed to be. SEE
ME!! At the age of 10 years old my step-dad
Would take me to the movies every weekend
So that he could rape me. I told someone but
They didn't believe me. SEE ME!! My sister
Always told me that I'm not shit, never have been shit
And never will be shit, and everyone will
Be better off without me, so I tried to kill
Myself, SEE ME!! Domestic violence
You turned me to the streets broken and
Alone!! I slanged, gang-banged, and became
Addicted to drugs!! SEE ME!! Domestic
Violence you almost destroyed me!! Even
Though I'm in prison literally fighting for
My life in hopes of one day being free,
God has blessed me with people that actually
Love and support me and those are the ones
That I call Family!! SEE ME!! Domestic
Violence you tried to destroy me but you
Didn't succeed because I'm a strong, loving,
Caring, sharing person with a heart of
Gold!! SEE ME!! I got my GED, I've
Taken college classes and I've just
Completed a paralegal course!! LOOK AT ME!!
Domestic violence you broke me, you tried
To end me but you didn't!! Please open
Your eyes and look at me!!



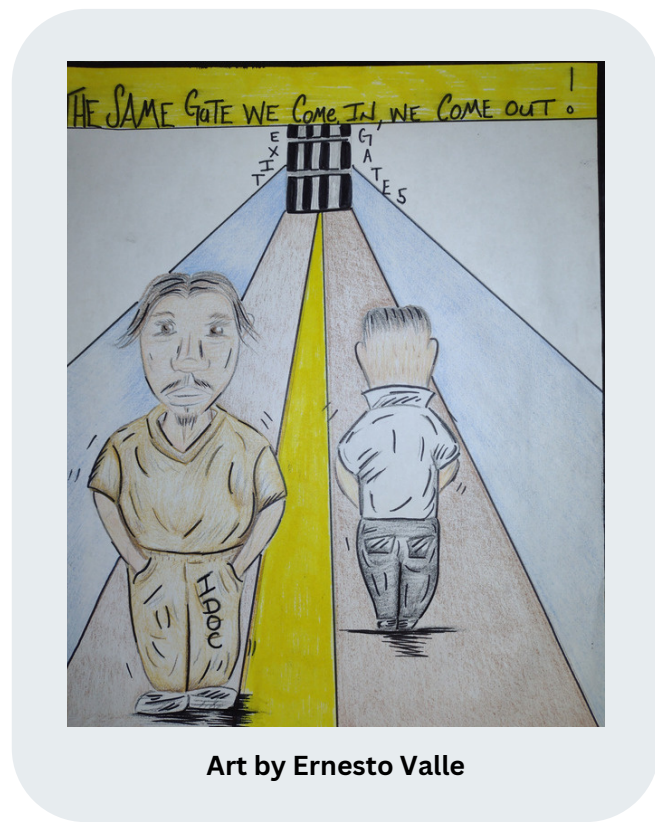
Liberation is my Vaccination
By Charles M. Hill

This poem is a contribution to the Campaign for Corrective Clemency (CCC). The campaign will be asking Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker to exercise his executive clemency power to address the historical harm and injustice of mass incarceration. They will be asking him to make parole available for everyone serving a life or de facto life (40 years or more) sentence after they have served 15 or 20 years. They will also be asking the Governor to sign off on partial pardons for everyone affected by truth-in-sentencing (TIS) and recalculate their sentences under the S.O.I. standard (day for day). There is a petition we need to have all of our supporters sign on change.org. You can find more information at: www.correctiveclemency.org.

My poem is written from a perspective that I know many of US in these penitentiaries can relate to. If we don't say or do anything we can't expect any results. We have to let "them: know that there are flaws in the system. This poem is one of the ways I am playing my role in our struggle for freedom. Getting our people to connect with the CCC movement is a way that we can all be involved in the fight to hear "them" say to US, "Pack your shit, you are free to go!"

Liberation is my Vaccination

I'm watching the world through a 13-inch distorted view
The black and white pixel exposes
The truth.
The color of my soul's abode still matters,
Even after more than a century of emancipation
Corona Virus is a devastation, much like amerika's
Legislation and the assimilated negro.
Just like you make an appearance in the political
Minstrel show doesn't mean you understand;
Your honor, Mr. or Ms. Prosecutor and every other
Counterfeit of an honorable human being that I've met or will
meet
Six feet;
I could go for much more distance if I didn't have to socialize
In order to live again.
Channels change but my life remains the same and
My future is as fuzzy as the picture of the
T.v. screen
That I am watching from a prison cell.
Press conference after press conference;
Mass Incarceration is a virus too!
"Mr. Hill, pack your shit, you're free to go."
The proper dosage of those words in a vial will vaccinate me
And it will finally be time for the world to
Watch me
Rise.



Art by Ernesto Valle

Breaking the Silence
Anonymous

Just a point of view from a man's
perspective. Being quiet is like being
invisible. You can't be heard,
and won't be seen.

Meaning giving voice to something
that's unthinkable, we hear your
trauma, we feel your pain.

But we can't be the star witness,
We are your brothers and sisters
Standing strong with you

Go to the mountain top, let it be
Known, I will be seen, I will be heard,
My people are standing with me.

Most of all, God got my back,
He'll never leave me or forsake me.
Shatter it!

Shatter the Silence By Antonio Kendrick

Her lip was busted, and her eye was black
She winced as she walked...due to the lacerations
on her back
I asked, "Mommy, what's wrong?" and she stared
off into space
And I looked at her questioning, studying her tear-
stained face
Why didn't she answer me, after all that I saw?
Maybe it was because of her shattered eye socket
Or maybe, it was her broken jaw
My mother didn't call the police, so my father
didn't go to jail
Like so many victims of intimate partner violence
My mother refused to tell
Each year there are 5.3 million incidents of
intimate partner violence
That's 5.3 million reasons why the silence should
be shattered
Even if victims speak up and out, it's still after the
fact
Our focus should be on stopping abuse, which
means stopping the act
If we change our approach, everyone will see
The answers are preventive education, empathy
building, and bystander accountability
Whatever solutions we discuss, abuse prevention
should be the core
And we will know the war on domestic violence
has been won
When domestic violence victims are released from
prison
And domestic violence shelters must close their
doors
Because there aren't enough victims to keep their
doors open.

Warrior

This is a story that I have never told
I gotta get this off my chest to let it go
I need to take back the light inside you stole
You're a criminal
And you steal like you're a pro
All the pain and the truth
I wear like a battle wound
So ashamed, so confused
I was broken and bruised
Now I'm a warrior
Now I've got thicker skin
I'm a warrior
I'm stronger than I've ever been
And my armor is made of steel, you can't get in

I'm a warrior
And you can never hurt me again
Out of the ashes, I'm burning like a fire
You can save your apologies
You're nothing but a liar
I've got shame, I've got scars
But I will never show
I'm a survivor
In more ways than you know
'Cause all the pain and the truth
I wear like a battle wound
So ashamed, so confused
I'm not broken or bruised
'Cause now I'm a warrior
Now I've got thicker skin
I'm a warrior
I'm stronger than I've ever been
And my armor, is made of steel, you can't get in
I'm a warrior
And you can never hurt me again
There's a part of me I can't get back
A little girl grew up too fast
All it took was once, I'll never be the same
Now I'm taking back my life today
Nothing left that you can say
'Cause you are never gonna take the blame anyway
Now I'm a warrior
I've got thicker skin.
I'm a warrior
I'm stronger than I've ever been
And my armor is made of steel, you can't get in
I'm a warrior
And you can never hurt me again
No-oh
You can never hurt me again

Sung by: Demi Lovato
Album: Demi
Year: 2013
Songwriters: Lindy Robbins/Emanuel Kirakaou/
Demitria Lovato/Andrew Goldstein
Submitted by Karin Anderson-Hargrave

By Anonymous

Black eyes	Try and leave
Why wasn't I wise	You better believe
Broken arm	Point a gun
Says he meant no harm	Not in fun
Push and shove	Bullets don't fail
It's you I love	Off to jail
Shattered jaw	
Above the law	

Precious Made Jewels

By Cindy Shepheard

The face in the mirror that looks back
At me, battered, bruised, broken.
Silently screaming- words left
Unspoken.

From the outside, I appear whole, healed underneath a shattered heart,

With your scars won't heal,
Won't seal, the hurt, the pain,
The guilt, the shame.

Quiet tears fall, like icy shards of
Rain cutting deep, re-opening into
Still raw pain

It's been 15 years since you last hurt
Me, but I'm shattering my
Silence at last. You said you
Loved me with your heart
And soul. You wore a mask to hide
Who you were. A beaten and bruised
Child, hidden inside. You didn't
Know, didn't understand how to be
A grown-up man.

But I took it your anger, rage,
Ugliness, I took it and hid it

From all the world, so no one
Could see- no one, but my
Reflection looking back at me.

"Who are you?" I asked

"The broken woman from your past."

"It's time to let go, it's time to move past,
You are beautifully broken, smartly shattered
.... Nothing of that former life matters,
You know there's more to see, beyond
These wounds...."

My reflection reminds me.

I love who I've become, a heavy
Burden no longer to bear.

As the full moon rises, as the stars
Align, it's now my time, my time to
Shine

A precious jewel must be beaten and
Battered in the rough edges to soften
And shine, for the multi-facets to be
Seen.

This is my wish, this is my dream
I shatter my silence, for every
Woman who has been verbally abused
Physically, mentally, emotionally
Sexually abused.

You are a precious jewel-
Radiant in coin and cut.
We see you, I see you....
With brilliant clarity.

It always takes tremendous
Pressure from the universe to
Create sparkling flawless
Diamonds- we survivors are
Those diamonds

Reimagine This Space, a graduation poem by Reginald BoClaire

As I look into this crowd
and I look upon all your faces
I ask each and every one of you
to reimagine this space

Where you see a penitentiary
We the graduates of 2022
see a University Without Walls
One filled with classrooms,
not cells
Each room containing human beings
with the potential for self-actualization
that has yet to be fully realized

Here, education represents hope,
and hope is what you see in us
Can you hear us?
Can you feel us?
Although marginalized and incarcerated
Our collective spirit remains unbroken,
undeterred
Even as we struggled at times to understand
our existence as defined by a moment
But in this moment,
we are the Marvelous
being conveyed to you
But only if,
You can reimagine this space

The conditions
that cause us to convene
Represent the power of community
to institute the agency of change

This moment is a contemporary future thing,
grounded in a past contemporary thing
If society has the courage and the imagination
you can spatially see
punitive confinement

being transformed
into a space where
study
planning
and flight
can happen,
do happen

Where society is told a penitentiary,
you too can see a University Without Walls
Where life experiences are valued,
validated,
and incarnate as praxis, living theories
Here we learn the art of being
and yet becoming
But only if,
you can reimagine this space

Today we celebrate,
the culmination of our educational journey
during a global pandemic
From the margins to the center
Along the way,
deconstructing
social binary constructs
that violently keep us divided,
and keeps us from realizing
our desires to live in a world
free from oppression,
free from exploitation
A transformative world where
incarcerated nightmares
give way to
freedom dreams
Remembering the words of visionary writer
Octavia Butler who said
"there is nothing new
under the sun,
but there are new suns"
But only if,
you can reimagine this space

The Dark Place By Amie Thornton

I have a Dark Place. When people look at me and judge me, they don't know that I was a victim of domestic violence. I hide all that violence in my Dark Place. My story is not going to be easy to tell because I've hidden these things for so long.

I remember so clearly watching my mother get beaten by men. We, my sister and I, were forced to sit and watch it at times. I remember being so scared and helpless because I was young. I was too little to defend my mother. I was scared to death she was going to end up dead one day because of the beatings.

Witnessing these terrible beatings has made a huge impact on the individual I've become today. It made me stronger. I'm very observant of those types of people now.

I remember being 13 years old and standing up for my mother for the first time without being afraid. I was willing and ready for all consequences. I was never again going to witness another man putting his hands on my mother.

I put those memories in my dark place. I kept it such a secret for years. I never wanted anyone to know what I went through. The tears are pouring down my face as I'm telling it. I had to replay and relive every moment of it so I can write this story.

As I get older, the violence was over for my mother, but now it was my own. In the past 25 years, I have been abused by 4 men, physically, mentally, and verbally. My children have witnessed the verbal abuse and seen the bruises. They have never witnessed anything close to what I saw my mother go through, but what they saw was still too much.

After seeing these things as a child, I thought I'd be more aware of who I chose as an adult.

I have four children and three beautiful grandchildren. I'm 42 years old. I've made mistakes and bad choices in my life. I'm not proud of it. I've put my kids in situations of violence. I wish I wouldn't have. I know that I cannot change the past. I can only try to make a better future.

Rethinking some of the things I've been through literally throws me into a panic attack. It sends chills up my spine. I'm going to put these things back in my dark place at the end of this story and bury them once again.

Be strong. Be kind and love God. We live in a world of violence but with God's help, we can get through it. My past haunts me every day of my life. I don't want anyone to suffer as I did. I don't want anyone else to have their own Dark Place because it leaves permanent scars.

If you or anyone you know is suffering from abuse, please get help. I dedicate this story to my mother and my children. I love you and I miss you all very much. I hope to see you soon.



"Job's End Time Shuffle..." by Willie Spates

Help the stranger-the alien in need-
Even "if" you think they're of a
different "Breed."

Remember what goes up 'must' come
down-it's not up to you--where or
how.

Today you got it good-tomorrow may
be bad-what once made you happy-
might make you sad.

Reach out to others who you see in a
fix-not just someone crashing from
the Star "Bellatrix"...

An' dis ain't about no mystic belief-
but proof we've bowed down at
Jesus' feet.

'Is one thang to claim to praise His
Holy-Name-but without lovin' ars'
neighbors-ain't no 'skin in da game'.

'Sigma Canis Majoris'

Poetry and Art Corner

Where I'm From By Larry Luellen Jr.

I am from high rise buildings rippen with violence,
roaches, and rats,
Expressway views and spontaneous people dying
from lack.
Where pittie-pat, dueces-wild and funk, strong arm
mommas for
days while kids' stomachs elude to their backs.

I am from the food stamp era where Arab
cornerstore owners
Gave O.G.'s groceries on credit, and government
cheese, powder eggs,
And free lunch boxes was a necessary care package
to keep the
entire neighborhood elated

I'm from the tenth flo, surrounded by skyscrapers,
stressed landscape,
Bare trees and nowhere to play. Where pushback is a
joke and
Politicians routinely blow smoke.

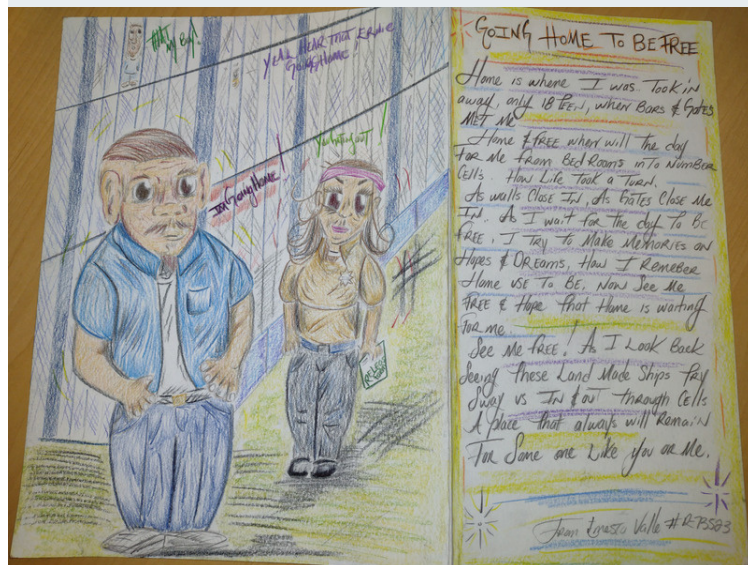
I'm from the misguided uneducated folks, that fled
the south with
Holes in their shoes and hatred embossed on their
backs.

I'm from the most segregated and underfunded
communities in
Chi-Raq, where mental health, affordable housing,
and trade schools
Are abstract. Where baseheads steal household
items and sell them
For crack and police extort gang members as an early
pension factor.

I'm from the generation of Girhaud jeans, 8-Ball
jackets and
Shell Toe Adidas. MC-Lyte, Lit. Cool J and R. Kelley
for instance.
Where white T's, wheat Tims and Du-Rags are a viable
part of
My cultural experience, and hip-hop took flight at the
tragic deaths
Of Tupac and Biggie.

I'm from the land that titles itself, "America," where
white priests
Sexually abuse young brothers and black preachers
secretly court our mothers
A land full of fast-talking pimps and hustlers that's
desperately in need of
Jesus' covering and Jehovah's omniscient governing

I'm from the wealthiest land in the world, one that prides
itself on a
False discovery. One that desires my kids and your kids to
suffer repeatedly
In the likeness of all Blacks who lived before us. A place
where Whitey
Refuse to digress from the drama, but don't worry because
our prayers are
Finally being remembered!



"I'm Going Home" by Ernesto Valle

You Are Not an Accident By Anonymous

You're who you are for a reason.
You're part of an intricate plan.
You're a precious and perfect unique design,
Called God's special treasure.
You look like you look for a reason.
Our God made no mistake.
He knit you together within your mother's womb.
You're exactly what God wanted you to be when He
created you
The parents you have are the ones He chose.
They were custom-designed with God's Kingdom plan
in mind
And it bears the Master's seal.
No, the trauma you faced was not easy,
And God wept that it hurt you so.
But it was allowed to happen to shape your heart.
So that you will be transformed into His likeness.
You are who you are and where you are for a reason.
You're being formed by the Master's nod.
You are who you are, Beloved
Because there is a God!

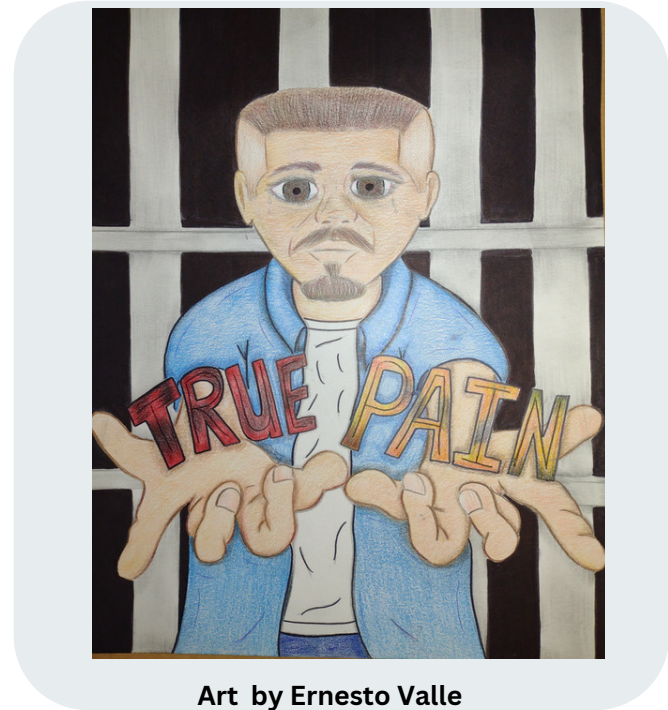
Poetry and Art Corner

Untitled

By Amber "Coco" Cannella

Thank you for not being there when times got rough
You just tuck your tail and run
Let me know you wasn't the one
Nobody was there when I needed 'em
Forgot about me when I got my time in the Penn
So I sat down I cried through my pen
Prison walls confine me
I won't let my circumstances define me
Only guide me
I'm a diamond in the dark still shining
Loyal chick to the bone
Counting the days till I'm home so I can right my wrongs
Hustle smarter changed my grind
No money slips letters or pics
That ain't it
Fake friends vanished ya man laid up with another chick
Daddy's dead 'n' gone moms is sick
Got me feeling like cracking a chick
I remember them days nobody picked up the phone
I felt abandoned and alone praying for parole
So I can make it home
Who gone be there with me in the eye of the storm
I can never shake the pain
I will never be the same
I see past them gates
I know my fate
Only the real gone relate
I fall apart when I hear her say
You have one minute left
Anxiety fills my brain
Chest tightens up making hard to breathe
I want my tears back
I want my years back
You can take my fears back
Thank you for not being there when times got rough

Art by Ernesto Valle



Art by Ernesto Valle

The Stranger

by Luigi P. Adamo

The strangest thing happened to me on this
Very strange day.
I met the strangest stranger of all who was
Heading my way

A strange stranger no doubt, he looked odd, weird,
And peculiar.
The closer he drew his strangeness dissolved, and
seemed
Somewhat familiar.

Recollection dawned suddenly. I had seen this
stranger before.
The stranger was recognized and was a stranger no
more.

Strange friends we once were, so of course, we shook
hands.
We shared greetings and pleasantries as strange
custom demands.

In a strange hurt was he to see his dear dying brother
So as strange as it sounds we said goodbye to each
other.

It was the strangest of meetings, there's no trying to
mask it..
The last time I saw this stranger, he lie dead in a
casket.

FEATURED VOICES: HOW TO GET WRITE CLASS

The Environment Vs. Culture by Dwight "West Side" Thomas

The environment I grew up in has dictated that I accept death and destruction of my community, while the culture embraces this aspect on TV and in music. Do the illegal drug sales actually tear down the community? Or is it the pharmaceutical drugs approved by the FDA that don't cure anything but bring forth a slow death? Am I a product of my environment because I used to belong to an organization(gang)? or when I go to school outside my neighborhood not belonging to an organization, do I not have to ride with my neighborhood because the culture dictates I can't go back to my neighborhood? When I lose friends in gangs should I not mourn their death? Are they not worthy of love or compassion? But the society outside of my environment controls the narrative, and they promote incarceration which isn't a solution but a means to make my environment worse. The culture supports the dislike of police or twelves because incarceration is a father being killed-one going in the ground and the other being buried alive. In my neighborhood politicians donate money to churches and aldermen for publicity and votes, but do they want the violence to stop in my environment? The culture knows without violence in the neighborhood, what reason would the environment vote politicians in office, so with that said do they want the violence to end? Now in the courts we have judges making decisions in our life that don't understand our culture or the environment we grow up in and this is not an excuse it is a fact. The judges have an educated response which is "you made a decision to not be a productive member of society" but fail to acknowledge that the society they know and the society I know are not only different but opposite in certain aspects. How can I be a productive member of society when I don't know what that is? Because I never experienced it or saw it in my environment. All I have seen is survival which is frowned upon by outside society, and this is my norm and my life and not just for people in gangs. No one is immune to the trials and tribulations of life but my environment is judged by it and plays a part in what it has become with no means to stop it or get a hold of a solution. How can you change what a person went through or experienced? You can't, but you can accept who they are and try to go into the situation to bring them out.

Let me live for today because God has blessed me with another day and loves me in the midst of my debauchery for He knows my yearning to live and my faith in Him is strong because I know He exists not only in books but in everything around me. God has allowed me to live and experience the true harsh realities in life that very few experience or understand and that is why I am blessed and chosen by God. So I write this for who I was in the past and who I am today because they are one and my past makes me who I am today. So love yourself in your debauchery or your lower self because you will not always be in that state and know the light shines in the darkest places, but I advise you to let the light in or your pain and frustration will be meaningless. When you have reached the bottom and experienced the worst that life has to offer, the only way from there is up and all I ask is that you enjoy the ride up because you have experienced the pain going down. I write this to let you know that you are not alone and that you are loved because I am you and we are one: "The Environment vs. The Culture."

"The pain we feel when someone leaves our life is in direct proportion to the Joy they bring while a part of our life." -by Terrence Woods

Addiction by Gilbert Harris, aka "G"

There are many different forms of addictions, some big, some small, some short, some tall, some out in the open, and some behind closed doors. Most of us identify addiction with drugs, alcohol, food, sex, technology, gambling, but the list goes on.

Too much of anything is bad for you, the reason why is we overindulge in one area of our lives, causing us to neglect other areas. We as human beings need balance. Now, without it we can get so high on ourselves, allowing us to see nobody but ourselves, or we can get so low on ourselves, pushing us into a deep abyss.

We all are addicted to something, rather it be this or rather it be that. We all have the freedom to like what we like, but in order to sustain ourselves, we must exercise balance. If we learn how to become addicted to life, we will learn how to love and respect life, ourselves, as well as others, giving us balance and inner peace that we are all in search of.

FEATURED VOICES: HOW TO GET WRITE CLASS

Introduction Paragraphs

by Jonathan Hernandez

Why do I have to stand with people I dislike? Well, I really don't dislike people, but I disapprove when people try to force you to accept their sexual preference, like some in the LGBTQ+ community. I was raised in a home that taught me that being gay was not right. Even in church, the pastor would tell us that being of this persuasion was not OK. Coming to prison and being Latino, you were also told not to interact with anybody that was engaged in such behavior. However, I can put my personal conviction to the side to fight racial injustice with people of the LGBTQ+ community because I have learned from both family members and within the community that the oppression they faced and experienced is similar to the inhumane treatment that institutional shakedowns and inadequate healthcare have done to people like me. The inhumane treatment and injustices that people experience are oppressive no matter what community you belong to.

No matter what community you're from you could be in prison or you could be outside of these walls, you can still experience oppression. While sitting on my bunk watching a really good movie or when you are sleeping and you hear a loud noise, the clang of metal on metal piercing my ears, and causing my heart to race. A correctional officer comes to my door and yells "shakedown," and that statement comes with the knowledge that my personal belongings could be taken away or destroyed. At that time I know I have no choice. A similar thing happened to the co-founder of Black Lives Matter movement (BLM), Patrisse Khan-Cullors, at her community. She writes: "The banging on my front door began again, and this time we are told that we are to come out. We are told we have no choice." These are some of the things we face in the midst of oppression.

For a very long time, the LGBTQ+ community has been harassed by the police for no apparent reason. These are the type of injustices and inhumane things that could happen to anybody. Patrisse Khan-Cullors understands that we go through the same or similar situations in here because her brother was once incarcerated, and he was also beaten when all along he needed treatment for his mental health problem (paraphrase Kham-Cullors pg. 157). Also, we experience injustices when we go

to commissary and want to buy some noodles or something healthy to eat, but instead they sell you candy bars and stuff that will kill us. Along the same lines one is treated either with abuse or torture, and even though they both leave scars; one is more intentional than the other (paraphrase Kham-Cullors pg. 157). When people see you and don't like the way you look or the way you act, you are treated inhumanely.

All in all, I stand with people of the LGBTQ+ community because we are fighting against the same racial injustices, and inhumane treatment from those in power. As I have shown you, the treatment by institutions can be both tortuous and abusive of power. We can be treated as if we don't belong in this world. If you believe that you are treated this way, then I would like for you to come and stand with us to fight against racial injustices and inhumane treatment of all.

Source: Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele, *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*

Reflection on "How to Read a Book"

by Hugo Ocon

As a free man I was held captive, now in captivity I am a free man. My life has been a tale of two mindsets. In the past I easily blamed others and failed to take responsibility for my own thoughts. Now, I fail to blame others and easily take responsibility for my own thoughts. "To regard anyone except yourself as responsible for your judgment is to be a slave, not a free man." These words allowed me to deeply reflect on two parts of my life. Being a part of society physically did not represent my freedom because I became a product of my environment, enslaved and anchored down to a lifestyle so powerful and dominating that it controlled all of me. Looking back to it, I unconsciously allowed this life to dictate every move I made from the moment the sun rose until it rose again. Incarceration ironically has become my freedom of that life, shattering the fetters that once confined me. The ability to see life from a different viewpoint has helped me realize that no one can tell me how to move, act, or think. There is no one to blame but myself for what I do, and everything we do in life has repercussions, so now all my repercussions hopefully would be good. There is no point to keep grounding my plane when all I want to do is fly.

Source: Adler, Mortimer and Charles Van Doren. *How to Read a Book*.



ON A LIGHTER NOTE

with Luigi Adamo

ACROSS

- A scene of shifting illusions
- Living Dead Person
- CRYPT
- ELmo/nessie
- What the dead do
- Bad Guy's H.Q.
- Fog's Color
- Thriller's Vincent
- A Pocket Full of
- Where a knight keeps his arms
- Frab's Giant Spider
- Earlier than now.
- There is no Jona, only _____
- Planter's Product

DOWN

1. Mischievous Ghost
2. Dr. Phibes & Snowman
3. Boston's best Pastrever
4. Visible Ghost
5. Bomb that Made Godzilla
6. Dracula's Hometown

ACROSS

15. see androids Sverring Brad and Janet. And Frances stars in Forbidden _____
16. The Shinners' Backwards Lyrics
17. _____ of the Century
18. Missing the Mark
19. Gestalt's condition
20. Thunder God
21. Street of bad dreams
22. Himalayan Sasquatch
23. A Horsey Says,
24. Cornish Sairey

DOWN

7. Author Stoker
8. Saba's Mister
9. Nordic Apocalypse
10. Spanish He
11. Ghastly sphere
12. something with real existence
13. Mumy's Secret music
14. Poe's bird
15. Pharaoh's corpse
16. Angry mob violence
17. British Beer
18. Aboard of Seven
19. Male Pronoun
20. Tombstone Headings
21. Prince of Lullachia
22. Headless Roseanna's Prey
23. Ghost slime



Did you ever wonder where gargoyles came from? I mean, don't you find it odd that there are monsters carved out of stone acting as downspouts on many Gothic cathedrals? Why would such things ever be found on places of Christian worship? Here's what I know: supposedly, in the mid-5th century there was a dragon that came out of the Siene River in France, and it tortured the countryside around Rowen (again in France). Unlike your traditional dragons who breath fire, this one spewed torrents of water out of its mouth, drowning then devouring its victims. It was also responsible for causing a huge tidal wave that struck the city of Rowen itself, causing great damage. St. Romanus, the Archbishop of Rowen, had had enough of this beast's nonsense and had set out with two prisoners condemned to death to help him stop it. Once these heroes found the dragon's lair, St. Romanus took the dragon captive by showing it a cross (made by crossing his two fingers) and tying his stole around the dragon's neck like a leash. St. Romanus then walked his pet into town where it was executed and burned to ashes. Only the dragon's head survived and was placed atop a wall of the local cathedral as proof of God's triumph over Satan. When it rained, water from the cathedral's roof would shoot out of the dragon's mouth like a water spout. Some Medieval architect must have seen this and...Voila! Because of the sound the dragon made when it spewed those torrents of water at its victims, they called it La Gargouille or The Gargler in French, hence Gargoyle.

ON A LIGHTER NOTE



Comic by Ernesto Valle

	3	9	6		4
4					
		5		9	
			8		1
	5				
3			1		6
			2		
	2				8
5	6	3			2

Sudoku

Editors' Note: The theme for the Dec/Jan Feather Bricks is "The Collective Experience of Parent and Child." Feel free to write on your own or collaborate with your parent or child!

Some prompts:

- *What have you learned/observed throughout your involvement in the legal system? Or what has changed in your relationship with your child?
- *What do you miss sharing with your parent(s) or child?
- *What lessons from your parent(s) (or child) stand out?
- *What would you tell your parent/child if you could go back to the time before legal problems?
- *Share your joint (parent/child) plans for the future.

Submissions can be sent to Stateville EFA Ms. Baez in care of Feather Bricks/Prof Melissa or given to senior editor Johnny Marizetts (Stateville Campus) or co-editors Tina Jones and Briana Travis (Logan Campus). Deadline: December 15.

THE AMPLIFIER



with Alex Negrón

Wow! This was an amazing essay written by Micah! A few things stuck out to me: 1) We all have a story to tell; 2) Resiliency matters; and 3) We find peace in the stories we can relate to.

In Stateville and in so many of the incarcerated communities across the nation, so many lost their childhoods through abuse, violence, demonization, and oppression. I felt like Micah was regaining her childhood through this essay. That's the beauty of storytelling and being able to tell your story--you are able to regain the piece of humanity you yearn to reclaim. Telling stories is what allows us to be human, or in this case, children. The SRA (School of Restorative Arts) focuses on the ability to tell your story in places it has never been heard. Let's continue to tell our stories and reclaim our humanity.

–Alex Negrón

Let Children Be Children

by Micah Pelegrino

Every person, no matter their ethnic background, economic status, and religion, all has a story to tell. Who better to tell the stories of their lives than the new adults of this world? Such young and passionate hearts who all deserve their respective time in the spotlight, hearts that contain lessons, stories, hardships, and accomplishments that if told, could change the world and its inhabitants for the better. Growing up, I needed to hear the stories of others so I could find peace in not being alone in my experiences. Sadly, the experience I thought I faced alone is quite a common one, especially amongst those who are my age and younger. Too often children get pushed into adulthood too early, many times not because they wish to but because they have to.

Losing precious years of joyful, stressless childhood has left young adults such as myself, to struggle on our own to figure out how to tend our wounds from the past. Ever since I've been considered a legal adult, I've been hit with a new kind of crisis; I'm no longer a child and will never be one again, but is this really the only time I've had to say goodbye to childhood? I vividly remember when I signed the rest of the good years of my childhood away. It was when I turned 8. It was when I just woke up

that morning that I realized the bubble that my parents made for me didn't protect me from everything. Loud, booming screaming that rattled the walls jolted me awake. I remember calling out for my mom because of how alarmed I was, only to find her at the foot of the bed trying to protect me from the harsh words my father spewed out. I'll be the first to admit that my family was a happy one so I, out of everyone, was most confused as to why my dad was turning red from anger and my mother blue from sadness. It wasn't until my mother and I were on the highway did she explain everything to me. "Your dad broke apart." She cried in Bisaya. My heart splintered into small pieces that seemed to impale me from within when she elaborated. "Life is hard, child. Your father works hard for his family. He's tired but he will always love you more than anything." It hurt me to hear though I never fully understood why. We ended up spending the rest of that week at my uncle's house where 3 of my favorite cousins lived, but I somehow still couldn't manage to shake that uneasiness off. No matter how many times we played my favorite games or ate my favorite foods, it was still always there. For the first time in my life, I didn't know what to expect. I found myself more worried about my mom than worried about what new exciting game my cousin wanted to try out. There I was, 8 years old, trying my damndest to figure out

what I had to do to fix things. I never was able to fully run away from that problem. I would go on growing up constantly trying to figure out how to mend things that had nothing to do with me.

As a young child, I wasn't even fully aware that what I was doing was trying to hold things together. It was only after I finished my freshman year of high school that I realized that all those times that I apologized for nothing, all the times I kept my problems to myself, and all those moments where I had to put myself second were so that I could make things easier for my family. I grew up witnessing my mom lose her free time and her hobbies to compensate for her nursing job, her children, and her relatives. In a Filipino family, it's common to leave most members of the family in the Philippines and send US dollars regularly so that they can maintain life there. Both my parents had to do the same and both had to leave a child behind. I grew up here in Chicago thinking that because I was fortunate enough to live with them that I owed them everything. So ever since the age of 8, I took on more and more responsibility in the best ways I could think of. Grocery shopping with the money I received for special occasions, fixing the house up with dangerous concoctions of bleach and cleaning products, and even learning how to time manage everything so I could complete anything my parents would appreciate before they came home from work. But as I grew older, my parents grew busier than I could keep up with. I started to miss the times my dad would take me to the park to play or the times when my mom would scold me for doing something stupid and unsafe. It felt like there was no one there to help me out the way I needed when I was younger and just like that, I was my own adult.

School has always been there for me, sad to say. It was the only thing in my life that ever made sense even if it has gotten

progressively more stressful and draining. I've been grown for a long time, and now that I'm 18, it scares me that school is still the only thing that makes sense. To me, it feels as if I have one of the most enriched minds ever to exist in my family but a weak, exhausted heart that just can't keep up. I struggle with basic things now, things that I should've learned how to overcome as a child-like making friends, figuring out what I enjoy doing on my own time, and who I want to be as a person. I'm trying to figure those things out but I find it so much harder now that I'm older and it makes me wish I just focused on myself growing up. Something that has made things easier is finding my guy, my very own person who sees the struggle, understands it, and helps me the best way he knows how. But I know not everyone has a person like that for them.

Whatever the problem may be or however hard our stories have been on us, one thing amazing about my generation is that most of us are still standing. It shows we're resilient and too stubborn to lose to our problems. I know many of us have had our childhood cut short for reasons we couldn't prevent, but considering that I'm still standing and so are the rest of my peers, it gives me hope. There was a time when this essay was nothing but an assignment to do over the weekend, but it has become an opportunity to reflect, mend, and heal for me. Just yesterday I attended a family party where I witnessed children around the same age as me when I first started becoming an adult, playing carelessly. It was those kids that made me write this essay because they are proof that children can live as children. They made me see the difference between what I could've had as a child and what I did have. It is my only hope that those who share similar stories to mine can find peace in their adult lives, and that these children remain children until they too are legally adults.



PROJECT CORNCAST

Officer Cornelius is back with a "fall leading into winter forecast." This November, he urges us to stock up on supplies and prepare to drive slowly on the highways because "it's not the weather that kills you; it's the fast driving." He also reminds us, with snow coming, "have fun in it because snow can be fun!" So, what is this winter we are preparing for? And why (you might ask)? To answer those questions, I will share a story Officer Cornelius told me about a legendary feline named Sebastian.

According to the CornCast, Sebastian is a bobcat with all white markings who first made his presence known as a kitten nibbling on Corn's food scrap offerings. This white bobcat is legendary because, as Officer Cornelius attests, "When I see Sebastian, we always have bad snowstorms." In 2012, for example, the last time Officer Cornelius saw Sebastian, we had 20 inches of snow. Now, Sebastian is fully grown. He made his presence known during a recent camping trip, happily accepting Officer Cornelius' offerings of skirt steak and beef jerky. Officer Cornelius assured me he would try to revisit Sebastian at the end of the year to check out more predictions and give Sebastian a Christmas treat.

In the meantime, Officer Cornelius closes with this important update: "Sebastian never lets me down! This CornCast, I'm predicting 15-20 inches of snow early, in December leading into January."



View of a Non-believer

I (Prof. Melissa) had the privilege to speak with Officer Montgomery for a brief chat on his column in the Education Building at Stateville in October. Officer Montgomery explained that he hoped to receive responses to his "View of a Non-believer" column from readers, and that he would like to then respond to those responses in a follow up column. He mentioned hoping this column could be a way to foster conversation. Therefore, we present two responses to Officer Montgomery's August/September column below and look forward to our columnist's responses in the next edition of *Feather Bricks* and thank him for holding this space for dialogue.

Response #1 by Alex Negron

A lot of people who have been hurt by the church put the blame on God. They mistakenly relate "Churchianity" with true "Christianity." A good example is in Luke 9:51-56. Jesus and his boys cut through Samaria to go to Jerusalem. Because the Samaritans have been so traumatized by Jewish religion, they booted Jesus out for looking towards Jerusalem. His disciples used a biblical example in 2 Kings 9-16 to command God to bring fire upon them. But Jesus, in this text, rebukes them for wanting to use Scripture as a weapon. God is the author of love, restoration, and healing--even when we hurt others in His name. God showed the entire ancient world 2000 years ago what life truly is. The truth is, God's way is always life-giving, life-sustaining, and life-refreshing; never death. So when there's death being dealt in the name of God, that's Churchianity, not Christianity.

Response #2 by Michael Simmons

Growing up in a Baptist household, I can relate to Officer Montgomery's fear-based religious upbringing, which was instrumental in his formation as a self-proclaimed realist. At a very young age, I intuitively rejected messages of domination from the pulpit for "other" groups outside of our system of belief. I could not quite articulate what I intately knew to be right (or wrong), and wouldn't dare trying for fear of hands being laid on me in attempt to cast out the devil in me. As A Christian, I too consider myself a realist. I believe there is some truth in all things, so my motto is simply to "take the chicken and leave the bones," as my mom would say.



Hello Everyone, it is time to huddle up with ya boys, Mr. ESPN and Mr. Right. This month's column features two topics we're sure will grab your attention. First, let's talk about college football predictions with Mr. ESPN and finally, Mr. Right hits us with the reprise of women in the National Football League.



College National Champion Predictions by "Mr. ESPN" Lonnie Smith

The tide may not roll this year into the National Championship. Dynasty falters at times. It's hard to keep reloading even though Nick Saban has been a guru at it.

The eye test has been on the Buckeyes. They have a prolific offense with playmakers at every position. C.J. Stroud is playing at a high level, and his favorite target is a bigger, faster, and stronger version of his Hall of Famer dad Marvin Harrison Jr. Their defense is a little suspect; however, they have some four-star defense backs that are getting healthy at the right times.

Seeding for the play-offs will be SEC top heavy. I predict the SEC will be matched up on our side and Ohio State will play the other. I would love to see an Ohio State-Georgia match up. Georgia looks good but they haven't played anybody, and they struggled with a weak Missouri team. Trust the expert...Mr. ESPN. Ohio State will bring the National Championship Trophy home to Columbus.

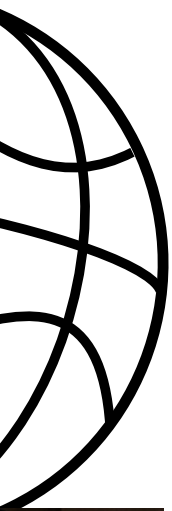
Women in the NFL by Steven Feagin, aka "Mr. Right"

The National Football League (NFL) has been changing right before our faces. There are some things in life we are taught not to question, things like: you don't put ketchup on your hotdog, pink is a girl's favorite color, or that football is a man's game. These things have been explained into our psyche and are now a part of American culture. We never stop to question why; we just accept it. Perhaps there was a time when football was just a man's game and women accepted it.

Or, is it just a microcosm of what's taking place in our society? At least for now, that seems to be the case in the world of professional football. The lyrics from the classic rock song, "We're not gonna take it. No, we're not gonna take it. We're not gonna take it, anymore!" by Twisted Sister reverberates in the minds of those men who stand guard as women make their slow but seemingly strategic entry into pro-football. They are popping up throughout the league and are making their presence known. They are coaching, refereeing, and helping run billion-dollar franchises as executive directors and vice presidents. Is this the end to the biggest boys' club left on earth?

"Traditionally, football has been known as the final frontier for women in sports," says Jen Welter, who became the NFL first female coach in 2015 as part of Bruce Arion's staff in Arizona. The door is open and now there's a pathway for those who are willing to enter into a truly male-dominated work environment. The NFL is no longer an exclusive club, and seen, like it or not guys, the NFL is slowly becoming an equal opportunity employer of the sexes. Kelly Kleine is the Executive Director of Football Operations/Special Advisor to the General Manager of the Denver Broncos. Prior to her current position, she had spent nine years in the scouting department of the Minnesota Vikings. And the list goes on. Washington Commanders' Jennifer King became the first woman to serve as a game-day position coach (running backs). It wasn't King's first time in the spotlight, as she had already made history as the league's first African American female assistant position coach.

These opportunities exist today because of the "Rooney Rule." This rule was put in place decades ago, when the late Pittsburgh Steelers owner, Arthur Rooney I, stood with and supported minority coaches in the NFL who sought opportunities in the league other than being players and position coaches. He was a man who believed in diversity. Amidst the controversial ruling of former Dolphins head coach Brian Flores (who's African American), the NFL revamped the league's "Rooney Rule" in March of 2022. The





rule would allow target classes to include women. It also requires all 32 teams to employ a "female or member of an ethnic or racial minority as an offensive assistant." During the 2021 season there was a total of 12 women who held coaching positions across the league, and that number is projected to double by the start of next season.

"No one is really sure when the change began, but it's clear that 2015 was a pivotal moment in the revolution of women in professional football," says Sarah Thomas, because that's the season she became the NFL's first full-time official and remembers Welter on the Arizona Cardinals. But Welter praises Bruce Arians as a culture-first person. "He likes a staff with a diversity of opinions," she says.

Well, coach Arian carried that commitment to diversity with him to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers where they won Super Bowl LV. On that staff they only had two minority coordinators (Byron Leftwich and Todd Bowles), but they also had a pair of female coaches (Assistant Defensive Line Coach Lori Locust and Assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach Maral Javadifar).

Maybe Arians, who's now the Senior Advisor to the General Manager for the Buccaneers, should be credited with starting a revolution for women in pro-football. But if you were to ask me, I would credit Arthur Rooney I of the Pittsburgh Steelers who sought it fit to implement the "Rooney Rule" decades in advance to insure that inclusion and diversity in professional football would not only change the game but change the American culture as well.



Sports with Sarge by Sergeant Brown

Did you know that I (Prof. Melissa) had the opportunity to speak with Sergeant Brown and his colleagues about Mr. Right's "Women in the NFL" article? The main question we talked about was, "Do you think we will ever have a female head coach in an all-male professional sports league?" Sarge explained to me how while there are some female coaches in the NFL today, there aren't any women in head coaching positions. Furthermore, he asserted, "I don't think there's enough teams in this chosen profession where an all-male league will bring in majority female coaches." Because he sees the MLB (baseball) as too traditional to want to modernize and the NFL (football) as just starting to open up from its more traditional past, Sgt. Brown predicts that the NBA (basketball) would be the first space, if any, to welcome a female head coach, and then only if a female owner of a team is behind the decision. He also clarified how crucial the role of team owners is and explained how rich owners who are male are most likely not going to have a female head coach. Therefore, if (or when) owners of teams are female-identifying, more opportunity opens up for the possibility of those owners to support having a female head coach as part of their team.

In our discussion, Officer Pulido agreed with Sgt. Brown to a certain extent, adding that this kind of female leadership "is gonna start in the smaller sports and then get to bigger ones like the NBA." Officer Pulido also had similar reservations to Sgt. Brown about the ultimate success of these actions. For example, when asked about female leadership in a major league sport, Officer Pulido expressed that "culture's forcing this to happen. She'll get in. Then she'll fail. Because she's not ready."

Officer Harper's response to this question was a little more optimistic, maybe, because he offered that he could see a female head coach succeed in an all-male professional sports league, saying, "maybe...years down the line." Our discussion trailed off onto other interesting topics, and Officer Harper left us with an interesting question to think about: "Should a transgender male be authorized to play in the WNBA?" Talk amongst yourselves...



Combat Corner The Veteran Voices of Stateville



The Military Veterans incarcerated here at Stateville would like to give special thanks to all of our readers for taking the time out to see what we're about. We hope you will continue to be entertained and informed when reading our (sometimes) humorous and educational stories about some of the wild and crazy things that happen while serving our country. In the "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 upcoming events with hopes that you will attend and join our efforts in helping to make this world a better place for all.

Our mission statement is to serve our community to the best of our ability while incarcerated. We American Veterans who served in the Armed Forces of the United States fully realize our responsibility to ourselves and our community. We will continue to assist our fellow Veterans and community by seeking the strength and courage from each other. We hope to dedicate ourselves to the cause of mutual assistance and to all American Veterans at large. We strive to do our best and will continue to hold each other to a higher standard in the hopes of becoming better men. Gentlemen for the love of God, our Country, and our Mothers, Please Take Care and God Bless.

-Writing Advisor Jamie Thomasson, United States Naval Veteran,
2nd Cohort, North Park University; Stateville Veterans' Group
Warrant Officer, Co-founder of the VVOS Veteran Voices of Stateville



"Thank you for your service." This year, Friday, November 11 was Veteran's Day. It was the annual time when we honor and recognize all former service members of the six branches of the American Armed Forces: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Space Force. There are so many staff, employees, and persons in custody who have honorably served the US, its territories. Please be sure to tell them "Thank you for your service." I am Marcus E. Bland, US Army Medic Veteran.

From the Crow's Nest By Charles Ludwig Bickerstaff



When driving a car you learned to "yield right," that is, when two vehicles meet at an uncontrolled intersection, the car on the right has the right-of-way. Now imagine if that other car had a red light on its left side. Since we learned that red means stop, or at the very least, to yield, it would be a visual clue to avoid a collision.

That is why ships (and aircraft) have that red navigation light on their left side, to warn oncoming vessels on their left to give them the right-of-way. The navigation light on the right side (facing forward) is green, meaning it is OK to go if coming from the other direction. That said, here are a few more nautical terms for your toolbox:

*Port- the left side of a ship. The red navigation light is port. To remember: port and left both have four letters. Also, port wine is red. When a ship is in port, it is normally the left side of a ship from which the crew boards and departs (disembarks).

*Starboard: the right side of a ship. The green navigation light is starboard.

*Fore and aft--stem and stern" : these terms are often used interchangeably and mean the front and back of a ship. The idiomatic expression, "from stem to stern" means from one end to the other.

*Bow (rhymes with "cow"): This term is also used to describe the front of a ship. (However) Bowline, a typed knot which does not slip, is pronounced like the bow in "rainbow" and line is pronounced like "lyn."

Next month we'll look at a few more oftne mispronounced words in naval argot (pronounced "argo."



“It’s that season again, Halloween, aka: Fright Night”
by **Janis Elmore, Stateville Law Librarian**



Good morning and welcome back. Since you were here last, we have made a variety of changes. Check out our “Hispanic Heritage” display. It was created by Benny Rios, who works at the Law Library. “Hispanic Heritage Month,” which is celebrated from September 15th-October 15th, pays tribute to the generations of Hispanic Americans who have positively influenced and enriched our nation and society.

“The Day of the Dead” drawings were created by Ernesto Valle. Day of the Dead (Dia De Los Muertos) is a two-day celebration that reunites the living and the dead. Families create offerings (ofrendas) to honor their departed family members that’s passed away. “The Day of the Dead” is observed on November 2nd each year.

Have you ever wondered what the meaning of Halloween is? Halloween is the evening before the Christian holy days of All Hallows Day (also known as All Saints or Hallowtide) on November 1st and All Souls Day on November 2nd, hence giving the holiday on October 31st the full name of All Hallows Eve (the evening before All Hallows' Day). The season usually begins when the leaves start turning autumn colors and doesn't finish until Hallowtide ends in November.

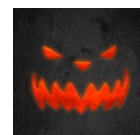
In honor of the season, we have featured some of our classic horror books to help you get in the mood for fall and Halloween, like:

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley. This story has been revised several times since the original publication in books and movies. To better appreciate this classic, it is important to study the philosophical belief that influenced Mary Shelley’s writing of this original story.

The Book Thief is historical fiction by the Australian author Markus Zusak. The novel is about the adventures of Liesel Meminger in Germany during a time of war. By humanizing "Death" as a tangible thing, the novel gives a unique perspective into the world of the victims of the war.

Stories of Terror and Madness from the Borderlands is stories of terror and madness by Stephen King, John Farris, Whitley Strieber, and many others. These tales of doom, chaos and menace will chill your blood and haunt your soul and expand the boundaries of fear and madness.

Drop by and check out our displays as well as some of our current books guaranteed to keep you up late at night with fright.



Shout Outs

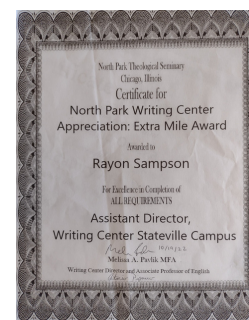
***CONGRATS to Barber College Instructor Mr. Beene and his graduates!**

***CONGRATS to GED Educator Ms. McGrath and all of her graduates: Jonathan Hernandez, Choice Enge, Robbie Mueller, Tyrese Crawford, and Christopher Harris.**

***CONGRATS to UWW/NEIU graduates: Micahel Bell, Reginald BoClaire, Darnell Lane, Juan Luna, and Daniel Perkins.**

***CONGRATS to NPEP graduates: Quayshawn Baily, Jeffrey Campbell, Travis Tyrone Dortch, Edmon Duffin, Broderick O. Hollins Sr., Pierre A. James, James Lenoir, Brian McClendon, Flynard N. Miller, Paul Modrowski, Ramon Montague, Leon Robinson, Kevin Scott, Charles Castro Serrano, LeShan Smith, and Orlando Watkins.**

Shout-out to our Extra-Mile Award recipient **Rayon Sampson**. Since being the Assistant Director in the writing center here at Stateville Campus, Rayon ensures and directs the best services for everyone who comes to the study halls, and he is relentless in his efforts to make sure everyone completes their tasks. Congratulations. We appreciate you.



Shout-out to **Mario Ortega**. He has made the effort toward completing ABE courses and now he is enrolled in the advanced ABE program here at Stateville. Congrats and stay focused!

GRADUATION SHOUT OUTS

NPEP Graduation and UWW Graduations by Benny Rios



On October 12, 2022, 16 students from the 2nd Cohort of Northwestern's Prison Education Program (NPEP) received their Associate's degrees in General Studies through Oakton Community College. Many of these students are continuing their educational journey with Northwestern University with the goal of earning their Bachelor's of Science degrees. Their motivation and determination is certainly inspiring. There is no doubt that transformation is taking place in each and every one of their lives.

I was fortunate enough to serve at this graduation event and witness this wonderful occasion of accomplishment, humility, pride, success, joy, and celebration. Each of the students had the opportunity to get on stage and address their audience, and they did so with eloquence and confidence. While each student shared their excitement for their accomplishments, their gratitude and appreciation, and their dedication to continual transformation, there was something significant that stood out to me: several of the students, Muslims and Christians alike, gave thanks to God/Allah for bringing Jennifer Lackey to Stateville with her vision of bringing an opportunity for incarcerated students to earn a degree from a top 10 university in the nation.

When asked, "What does this accomplishment mean to you?" graduate Jeffrey Campbell answered, "Getting my degree opened my mind up to a world I didn't know existed. It erupted loves and passions inside of me I didn't know I had. It has shown me opportunities and set my feet on paths I've never imagined. Getting my degree changed the course of my life forever." I encourage you all to find the paths in your lives that are life-changing. Also, continue to pursue your goals and transformation no matter your circumstances.



Once again I was blessed with the opportunity to serve at another graduation on October 22, 2022. The 2nd University Without Walls cohort, which consists of five dedicated students, graduated with Bachelor of Arts degrees in their own respective depth areas. They are now proud graduates from Northeastern Illinois University's UWW program in collaboration with the Prison and Neighborhood Arts and Education Project (PNAP). These brothers certainly deserve the recognition and credit in the amazing resilience, dedication, and determination they have demonstrated in earning their respective degrees.

The journey in reaching their educational milestone did not come easy. They each had to take the bulk of their courses during the height of the pandemic through mail correspondence because of the nearly year and a half long quarantine lockdown in IDOC. If that weren't enough, on the eve of the graduation ceremony, the graduates were uprooted from their cells and moved to another cellhouse around 8pm because there was no running water in the main cellhouses at Stateville. Yet, they persevered and were up and ready for their graduation the next morning--a ceremony that must be written in the history books.

Graduate Darnell Lane Sr. stated, "The attaining of my BA in Youth Advocacy for Social Justice from NEIU is significant as it represents the actualization of breaking barriers and tearing down walls of exclusion and oppression. Earning my degree from such a prestigious university amidst a global pandemic within the enclosure of prison walls affirms the tenacity of the human spirit to overcome and excel against all odds." These wonderful words of wisdom and insight demonstrate that each graduate is transformed, motivational, and an asset.

Shout Outs



Goodbye from
Ms. Costabile



Hello
to Ms. Baez

CONGRATS to
Ms. Baez,
who is now
serving as
Stateville's
interm EFA in
the school
building!

**Strong women don't
have 'attitudes',
we have standards.**



MARILYN MONROE

Dear North Park past, present, and future students,

We all have visions of what we want to achieve on our chosen path. We set goals, make choices, take chances, and commit to turning visions into reality. As many of you know, I am a firm believer that Everything Happens for a Reason. At times we may not understand the reason, but we have faith we are guided by a higher power.

When a group of people come together with similar visions and walk the same path, there is a mission to be carried out. As individuals, each member of the group has so much to offer, and the group collectively has even more to offer peers and colleagues who walk onto the path, no matter how brief or extended the walk. Programs started here at Stateville decades ago, but what programming can truly offer changed significantly in 2018 when members of Cohort 1 committed to a new vision and mission. You went from committing to a few weeks of completing a class for a certificate or a few college credits to committing to four years of classes to achieve personal growth, academic knowledge, and ultimately college degrees. This was no easy task in an environment which by nature has necessary boundaries and limitations for the safety and security of all students and staff. As such, a brand-new path was created through all of you. This new path came with many unknowns, obstacles, challenges, and ultimately intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that have positively impacted you and the culture of this environment. Through determination, perseverance, dedication, and will power, you are the positive impact and will continue to be for so many who need you and your guidance.

I believe Cohort 1 created the path, all cohorts to follow will continue the path, and the path will spread far and wide to make room for some you to create new paths that branch off and invite others in to benefit from all you have to offer their mind, body, and spirit. It is because of this belief that I can leave Stateville with pride and not regret to fulfill a need in the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ).

Prior to my walk with all of you, I spent nine years in IDJJ. For a variety of reasons, I chose to transfer to Stateville in 2016, and it's much clearer to me today why I made that choice. Look what WE accomplished. I have seen tremendous growth and change in so many of you: your state of mind, your knowledge, your ability to adapt, and a truer understanding of your purpose, which has made each of you stronger and wiser.

My walk with all of you is ending for now, and my path will take me into somewhat familiar territory with a stronger sense of my purpose, thanks to this experience with all of you. Know that I am humbled and honored to have walked this path with you.

Change is often thought of negatively; leaving a comfort zone has so many unknowns, but change is what we make it. Life changes are necessary to remain purposeful, and one thing we all need is to know our purpose is meaningful to not only ourselves but in the lives of all who cross the path we are on. In the big picture, remember the three C's of life: Choice, Chance, and Change. You must make a choice to take a chance, or your life will never change.

Ms. C

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/>