

Feather Bricks



Cover Art by Elton Williams

Editor's Note: I asked Elton to paint a picture representing the impact of music in its role in saving me. Note the airplane in distress coming out of the clouds at the top? See the parachute comprised of music notes 'saving' the pilot? Elton did a great job capturing the movement of the survivor from the dark of the storm into the bright light of new hope. Thank you, my friend.

--Todd Smith

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

ASTORIAN CARE & COUNSELING
NETWORK AND SELF REFLECTION

MUSIC & LYRICS BY
BEN MEYER
REF. PSALM 13:1 & 30:5

HOW LONG, LORD?

$\text{♩} = 75$

Lyrics: How long, Lord? How long, Lord, will you be angry with me?
How long, Lord? How long, Lord, will you stay distant from me?
For your anger lasts only a moment, and your favor lasts all of my days
But this moment it feels like forever. Turn your face to me once more in grace
For the Lord is good, the Lord is good, and his love endures forever.
So I will praise his name, declare his name, exalt his name forever.

Cover Art by Ben Meyer

A Note on Cover Art by Ben Meyer: In reading the Psalms, I am struck by how similar the Psalmists' emotions are to my own. Psalm 13 is an excellent example of this, and I used some of those words in the opening lyrics of this song. Despite the Psalmists' frustrations, the psalms inevitably end in praise to God, for who He is, and for what he has accomplished. For this reason, I end this song in the same way, declaring how good God is.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the “All Things Music” edition of Feather Bricks. Why music? Allow me to answer that question with a recently discovered quote from a reading for Professor Bjorlin’s class: “Music is integral to our worship in that from ancient times to the present, music has filled in the gaps made by humanity’s attempt to express the inexpressible” (Readings in African American Church Music and Worship 2001, 203).

The Bible tells us that even God sings to express himself (Zeph. 3:17). Music and song are prevalent throughout the Bible. From one of the earliest mentions of musical instruments (Gen. 4:21) and the oldest recorded song in the Bible (Gen 4:23) to Revelation’s singing and worshiping God (15:3-4), music and song are a means of expression throughout Biblical history.

A regular part of worship in the early church was the singing of psalms (1 Corin. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). “Psalm” comes from a Greek word meaning “a song sung to the accompaniment of a plucked instrument.” In addition to the 150 obvious psalms in the book by the same name, there are other songs in the Bible such as The Song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43), The Song of Deborah (Judges 5:1-31), The Song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10), and The Song of Hezekiah (Is. 38:9-20).

An important side note: this “All Things Music” edition was originally planned for December/January but was pushed back. At the time, it seemed like a good idea to extend our deadline, not realizing it would encompass Black History Month. Thank you to the various contributors that skillfully incorporated both concepts into their pieces.

To wrap up; whether you use music as a means to worship or as a means to unwind, whether a fan of rock, pop, hip hop, country or disco, I hope you enjoy this issue as much as Luigi and I have enjoyed putting it together for you and God’s glory. Rock on.

Greetings everybody! I hope that you all enjoy this “music” issue of Feather Bricks as much as Todd and I enjoyed co-editing it. Music has always played a major role in the development of my person and I hoped to really capture the importance music plays in all of our lives here. For those of you who are wondering, my current favorite song is “Space Song,” by Beach House. Enjoy!



Todd Smith



Luigi Adamo



Dialogue & Discuss

Briana Travis: A Conversation Starter for Restoration and Justice

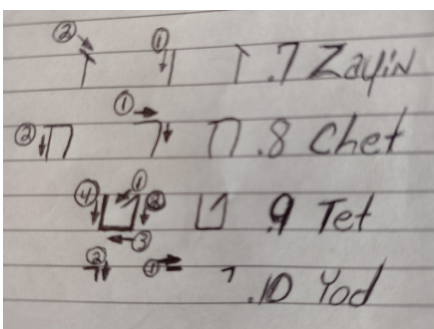
As of February 13, over a week after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake in southern Turkey/Northern Syria, the death toll is over 36,000 and expected to reach far, far higher. A lot of people do not watch the news because "it's all bad" or because "it's a propaganda" or whatever else, but I am crying out for us to start seeing people. Whether it is a family who lost a member due to violence or a country literally crumbling to rubble and burying its citizens, we have to see each other. It is our job as people created in the image of the God who sees us in our need (Gen. 16:13).

I cannot claim to be well-versed in current events. I don't always watch the news, either, but this earthquake shook every part of me and it hasn't stopped. The element that set this devastation apart for me is that a person with whom I am close was in Turkey at the time, so my compassion, admittedly, was triggered by proximity and the catastrophe to my universe. That is both a confession of my narrow vision and a message to each of us to see beyond ourselves. Proverbs 14:2 instructs us to see others through the eyes of compassion and to lend aid according to our abundance.

Here is what my source told me that I didn't see on the news:

The areas devastated by the 1999 quake in Turkey have not been fully restored; this includes the town in which her family resides. Additionally, the people hit by the 1999 quake still find themselves unable to discuss the trauma, so the quake a week ago simply retriggered all of the unprocessed emotions. This past week an "unaffected" part of Turkey was filled with non-stop news coverage and a lot of silent, grieving households. As far as the state of the areas most recently hit, no one really knows where all the survivors will go or who will be responsible for the rebuilding. In an autocracy, the question of responsibility is a recurring one. The Turkish people, however, are built of resilience; their history of trauma (not just natural disasters!) has made them who they are. They find hope in each other, not in the government. She says, "The question is 'who owes what to families whose buildings crumbled?'" and when the government's answer is silence or dismissal, the villagers support each other however necessary. In fact, she observed that businesses in Turkey seemed to survive the pandemic at a far higher rate than they did here, presumably by suspension of rent payments or similar measures, so she is hopeful that the traditional Turkish resilience and community spirit will rise up again.

That said, resources are necessary, and I still want to find a way to help. Too many people lost too much that matters to them, and justice means empowering others as we are able.



Learning More Hebrew
By Alonzo "Zôhariel" McCorkle



Shalom ahkeem veh ahkote!
(Hello/Peace Brothers and Sisters!)

Sorry for the absence. Covid took me down for a couple of weeks. That put me behind on all of my finals, and you know I got to have my "A." I'm finally caught up on all my school work. So let's get back to the lessons.

My Experience With and Through Music:

Music and writing has always brought me the most comfort, even now, as a 37 year-old woman who has overcome so much. Music helps to shift my focus. Music speaks to my soul on a different level. No matter the situation, a simple word can send me into song. Different genres evoke different feelings and responses. I particularly love neo-soul music (Musiq Soulchild, Anthony Hamilton, India Arie, Jill Scott, Macy Gray, etc....Don't get me wrong, I love my oldies, but goodies too (Al Green, Marvin Gaye, The GAP Band, the Delfonics, Barry White, etc...) I also dig when rap was rap and it had meaning: Tupac, Biggie, Dre, N.W.A., Eazy-E, etc...) There is also Gospel music that moves the soul while shifting your atmosphere, pulling you out of your hole of despair that speaks words to give you life. Music has definitely saved my life more times than I can count. Allow the lyrics to penetrate you and watch the shift. --**Phoenixx**

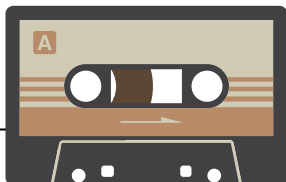
Music inspires me. Music uplifts me. Music encourages me. Music strengthens me. Music is one of my ministry gifts. To minister through music and movement is powerful. I get lost in the worship and all my worries disappear. No cares, no concerns--it is just me and the Lord. Amazing, Inspiring, Freeing--Music is all of this and more --**DeeDee Sims**

All Things Music By David "Cap" Carter

There has never been a time in my (life that I can remember) when the joy of music has not filled my soul. The first sounds of music I heard were in my home, played on what we then called the "Hi-Fi", the sounds of Gospel Spirituals filling my tiny apartment as my Aunt and Guardian (Mrs. Matnell Combs) spun the records of Mahalia Jackson, The Soulstirrers, The Rev. James Cleveland & the Mississippi Mass Choir, the Gospel Caravans, and so many others. If these sweet melodic notes didn't touch your heart, you probably should check for a pulse. This music was then carried over into the church we attended, (Holy Miracle Church of Holiness) It was a Pentecostal church, where we sang until the power of Heaven came down upon our little church like a dove from above. I sang and played drums in the choir. At the same time, I would hear the sounds of "Soul Music" coming from the turntables of my neighbors, the sounds of The Temptations, The Stylistics, Marvin Gaye, James Brown, The Miracles, Aretha Franklin, The Supremes, the O'Jay's, and so many countless others. You couldn't help but to "Boogie on Down." My favorite "Karaoke Song" is "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye. I picked this song because it seems to be a "timeless" song, if it were made right now, today, its words and message would still be relevant. "Mother, Mother, there's too many of you crying", "Brother, Brother, Brother there's far too many of you Dying", "You know we've got to find a way, to bring some loving here today." Now, what's really going on!! The entire song is a timeless classic that unfortunately will be played by human beings a hundred years from now, unless we "Find a way to bring some loving here today." I love songs with rich harmonies, messages, beautiful melodies, and a wonderful musical arrangement. I really enjoy Ballads, love songs, I don't like to sweat while enjoying my music. No matter what the mood is, staying cool and smooth is my preference of song. As I sit here writing this, I am listening to music, music is not a distraction for me, I have written all my essays and other classwork assignments while listening to music. I put my headphones on, place a few of my favorite songs on my tablet Play Que, and I block the world out for a little while and create the world in my mind that I see and envision, for whatever task is before me. Another one of my favorite groups is "The O'Jay's. They have a song entitled, "I Love Music" and in its stanza the song says "Music is the Healing voice of the world, it's understood by every man, woman, boy, and girl." These words tied neatly in a bow sums up the impact of music in our lives. For every purpose under the sun, you can always find a song.

"Background"

"What's Going On" was written by the late great Mr. Marvin Gaye in the late 1960's, early 1970's, during the tumultuous era of the Civil Rights Movement and the War in Vietnam. This is said to be the artist' mindset when he penned the words to this song. It is both a Soulful Ballad, a Song of Protest, and a thoughtful message for our world, both then and now.



Chorus Art by Luigi Adamo

While speaking to my fellow Statevillians in my capacity as co-editor of the "music" edition of *Feather Bricks*, I happened upon something that I found quite exciting. Did you know that our previously disbanded choir has finally been re-established after about 8 months of absence?

If you are excited to hear this news, I can assure you, you are not alone. If you will recall not only was our choir the very beating heart of all Christian worship services here at Stateville, it was our choir performing their original piece "Till the Walls Fall Down" that was instrumental (no pun intended) in bringing North Park's School of Restorative Arts to this prison. Also, it was our choir again composing and performing those original pieces that attracted the likes of the famous artist Lauren Daigle to come and perform with them. So yeah, I am extremely hopeful to see what new and great things our re-established choir has in store for us.

We all need things like our choir creating and performing original content if we hope to ever rewrite that narrative that perpetuates all of those negative stereotypes that all of us incarcerated people suffer from if we ever hope to convince the general public, and through them our state's legislature, that we are worth the effort of a second chance.

Black Classical Composers by Charles Ludwig Bickerstaff

Most think of classical music as written by dead, white European men. Here are four composers, however, who break that mold and deserve more attention.

Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745-1799)

He was born Joseph Boulogne of a wealthy plantation owner and his slave in the French West Indies (Guadeloupe), moving to France at age seven, Saint-Georges grew up to be both a champion fencer and a widely recognized violinist. He dazzled crowds with his musical compositions and virtuosity so much so that he was dubbed "The Black Mozart". (Sample: Concerto for Violin in D Major, opus 4).

Scott Joplin (1867-1917)

Born in Texas, Joplin learned to play piano and became famous for his heavily syncopated ragtime compositions. His revival came when one piece, "The Entertainer," was used in the 1974 movie, The Sting. His music continues to influence jazz, rock, and classical composers. (Sample also: "The Maple Leaf Rag," and "Treemonisha").

Florence Price (1887-1953)

Florence Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. She is considered to be the first female African-American symphonist. Graduating from high school at age fourteen, she won a place at the New England Conservatory of Music where she was shaped by European traditions. The compositions, however, were strongly influenced by the Black Church. (Sample: "Symphony in E Minor", "Concerto in One Movement," and "Fantasie Negre No. 2 in G Minor").

James P. Johnson (1894-1955)

A ragtime legend, Johnson grew up in Harlem (NYC) and incorporated African-American themes in his compositions. Although a jazz pianist, he also studied classical music. He was to influence better recognized musicians like George Gershwin and Maurice Ravel. Unfortunately, Johnson has received little recognition for his two hundred songs and sixteen musicals – not to mention a symphony, a piano concerto, and even an opera. (Sample: "Harlem Symphony", "Victory Stride").

Even if you are not a fan of classical music, why not try to listen to each of these for even a few minutes? They are sure to enrich and broaden your cultural horizons.

How Music Affects Our Mood By Charles Ludwig Bickerstaff

(All music cited is available on the GTL Tablet)

“Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life,” (Berthold Auerbach, 19th century German writer).

Besides being cathartic, music has the power to instill fear, agitation, sadness, tenderness, and joy. Skilled composers use volume, tempo (speed), rhythm, the selection of particular instruments, and key to manipulate our mood.

Key refers to the use of tones in relationship to each other. Most music is written in either a “major key” or a “minor key”. What does that even mean? Let me demonstrate by means of a few examples.

Songs like “Happy Birthday,” “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” and the hymn “Amazing Grace,” are written in major keys. For minor keys, listen to the opening theme of the ‘50s TV drama, *Dragnet*, the shark music from the film *Jaws*, or the Darth Vader motif in *Star Wars*. Major keys evoke happiness, triumph, and tenderness (listen to the “Brahms Lullaby”). Minor keys evoke fear, anger, or sadness (listen to the theme music for *Schindler’s List*).

Besides the music itself, other factors influencing our emotions include age, music preferences, personality, and familiarity with the piece. That is why, to trigger a memory, we sometimes play a song over and over again.

Now, if you have a music subscription on your tablet, take about a twelve minute journey with me through minor and major keys and their mood changing effects. Although there are dozens of renditions of the “William Tell Overture” by Rossini (1792-1868), I am using one that is eleven minutes and twenty-six seconds long from the album “Opera Overtures Volume 2,” Track 6.

00:00 The piece opens in a minor key played slowly by a lone cellist, perhaps giving one a feeling of melancholy or yearning. It is soon joined by other stringed instruments reinforcing that mood.

03:25 About three and a half minutes into the work, the mood changes. There is an ominous feeling of an impending storm. A flute is used to sound like scattered rain drops. The music begins slow and soft. The violins, playing tremolo, anticipate another mood change.

04:15 Forty-five seconds later, the volume and speed of the music increases. Lower brass instruments such as trombones and French horns, along with the percussions, clash into our ears as a picture of a violent thunderstorm emerges. This controlled chaos, still in a minor key, continues for over a minute.

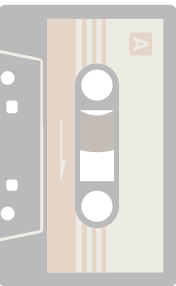
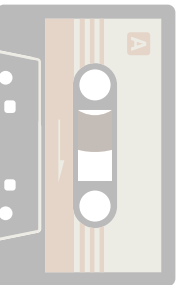
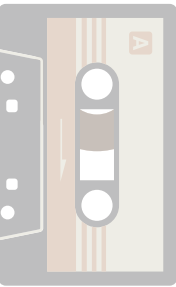
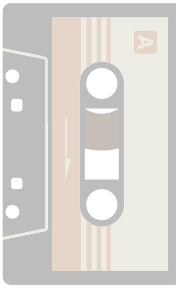
05:20 The music eventually slows, softens, and moves to a more serene major key. Led by an oboe and a flute, there is a feeling of relaxation as though one is walking through a peaceful wood. Birds seem to be singing overhead as we linger here for a good two and a half minutes.

08:30 Suddenly, the brilliant sounds of the trumpets playing staccato triplets in a joyous major key interrupt our reverie. The pace is quickened and the familiar strains of “The Lone Ranger” theme song are heard. Other instruments join in the celebratory music. On occasion the music softens and modulates into a minor key for a few seconds, but soon returns to its main theme and its rousing finale, “Hi-ho Silver. Away!”

Music affects our mood. Be conscious of how it makes you feel. Now you may know why.

Suggested Reading:

Music Theory 101 by Brian Boone and Marc Schonbrun © 2017 Simon & Schuster
The Classical Music Book – Big Ideas Simply Explained © 2018 Dorling Kindersly, Ltd. (DK.com)
Why You Love Music – From Mozart to Metallica – The Emotional Power of Beautiful Sounds © 2016 John Powell (Little Brown & Co.)
Year of Wonder – Classical Music to Enjoy Day by Day © 2018 by Clemency Burton-Hill (Harper Collins)



Celebrating the Celebration by Vaughn P/Nut Washington

Black folks' love for celebration is definitely illustrated in their music, especially in gospel music and blues music. I first gained a sense of this from blues music in the 1950's. Although, I was really young I still remember some of those old tapes like it was yesterday. One song I recall that really celebrated the celebration was Hi Heel Sneakers. I have a version of the song on my MP3 player by Chuck Berry, but I do not think he was the original artist.

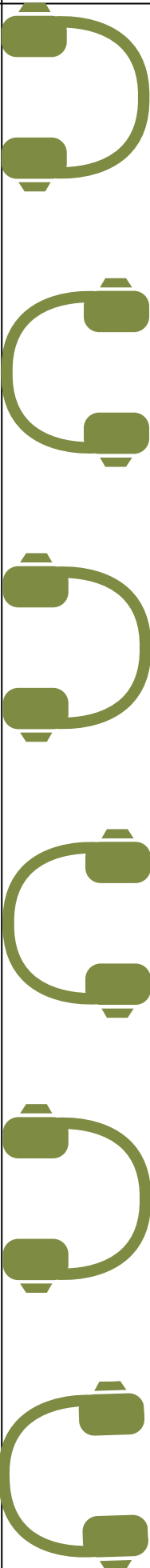
The song is a satire poking fun at how black people use to "cut loose" on a Saturday night in the "Juke Joints" down south. It begins: "Put on your red dress baby cause we going out tonight, and be sure to wear your boxing gloves in case some fool might want to fight. Put on your Hi Heel Sneakers, put your wig hair on your head. I know you're going to look alright, and I'm pretty sure you're going to Knock em dead."

Another song that captures the mood of this genre is KoKo Taylor's Wang Dang Doodle. As far as I'm concerned it is number one. KoKo's voice has got that graveling sound that makes you feel the depth of her soul when belting out a song. I can only think of one word that describes her interpretation of this song: Raw. KoKo seems to be growling in key. She is growling at the church folk, and the so called respectable folks of the town I suspect. Telling them where to get off. Check out this line-up of guests: "tell automatic Slim to tell Razor toting Jim, Tell Butcher knife toting Nanny to tell Fast-talking Fanny, we gonna pitch a ball down at that Union Hall. We gonna romp and tromp til midnite, we gonna fuss and fight til daylight, we gonna pitch a Wang Dang Doodle all night long. Tell Cuda-Crawling Red to tell Abyssinia Ned, tell Ol Pistol Pete to tell everybody he meet, tonight we get no nest, we gonna really throw a mess. We gonna knock out all the windows, we gonna kick-down all the doors. We gonna pitch a Wang Dang Doodle all night long." They are planning on doing so serious "[portin?]" and KoKo lets it be known nothing is off limits toward the end of the song she sings defiantly "and when the fish scent fills the air there'll be Snuff Juice everywhere."

Shorty-Long sang about a more sophisticated crowd in his song Function at the Junction, but they are still celebrating like it's no tomorrow. He sings, "I'm getting ready for the Function at the Junction, baby you better come on right now, cause everybodies gonna be there we got people coming from everywhere. We got long ting tong from China, long tall Sally from Carolina, we got 007 the private eye and he's bring all the guys from I spy come one, come all, we gonna have a ball down at the function at the junction, baby you better come on right now." The menu has changed also, instead of fish "We are serving egg-foo-young and bar-be-Q, we having chicken and dumpling and kidney stew. Having heap big fun til the break of dawn shake-a-tail feather, shoot em before he runs, pull the shot-gun on the Rooster and dare him to crow, catch anybody sleepin, make em get out on the flo, come one, come all... ball.

All the soul brothers, jitterbugs, hipcats in tank-hats, pretty girls with pretty smiles all decked out in the latest styles, all the earth-shaking, hip-shaking beauties now talking bout the fascinating devastating cuties now. We'll be gathering here from far and near down at the function at the junction, you better come on right now."

These are just three of my favorites there are many more that celebrate the celebration — I could not list all the words to the songs. Do yourself a favor and pull them up on your tablet.



Musical Influences by Briana Travis

I grew up in a musical family with musical interests and ambitions of my own. I was blessed to be raised in a very musically gifted church and in a school district that hired excellent music teachers and had great programs for us to be involved in. God equipped people in my path in such a way that the music in me was nurtured and developed. I'm so thankful.

All that said, I am not a fan of performing. Hair and make-up to be presentable on stage? Nope. So, I swore all of that off as a young adult. That did not dispel of the music in me, though. I chose North Park University specifically to study under Dr. Rollo Dilworth (now at Temple University) because in him, I recognized a love of music meant to connect to people and connect people to God, vast knowledge of diverse musical traditions and certainly not the least of all, his unrivaled talent. Again, God planted a person in my path that fed the music in me.

While at North Park, I was privileged to see various artists perform, and one artist and one band, in particular, became firmly enmeshed in my musical spirit. The band is Salvador, and their self-titled album (I'm dating myself) and my attachment to it helped me to become comfortable enough with dual-language worship to incorporate it into my church music. Thankful for those super cool guys and their excitement for praising the Lord.

The artist I saw who influenced me is Nichole Nardeman. I was moved by her performance in the university chapel, but it was the use of her song, "Small Enough" at our first prayer service after 9/11 (yes, that's how old I am) that won me over permanently. Her willingness to cry out to God with utter vulnerability breaks through any walls I might build and helps me to pour myself out in that same way.

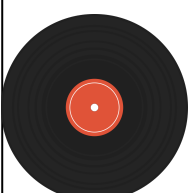
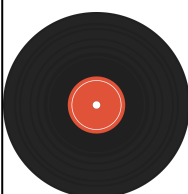
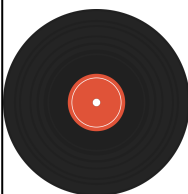
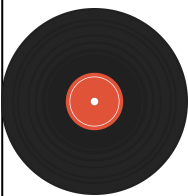
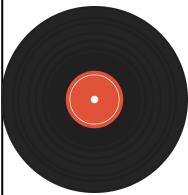
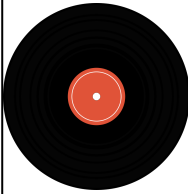
As of today, worship is still my love language with God, and it seems that my style has remained consistent. The music I turn to most on my tablet includes artist Evan Craft (there's that Spanish-English blend again) and artist Ellie Halcomb (as beautifully raw as Nichole Nardeman). I discovered Holcomb's music through her collaborations with NEEDTOBREATHE (<3 !), but she has a lot to say in her own music.

It is her album, Canyon, that I want to draw your attention to specifically. "I Will Carry You" gets radio play, so you may have heard it, but there is so much more. The song "Bridge" inspires all the social justice that you and I dream of. "Color" reveals the same God we see in the streams of light pouring out from behind clouds and meet in the visible blooming of each perfect blossom in the garden. "Constellations" pulls me into that very private space with the Creator and rips my heart wide open. Holcomb's music brings me back to my place of communion with God, and that is especially vital today.

Music is the Rod, Part 1 by Rayon Sampson

"Music is the rod, and we are Moses, leading God's children to the promise land, music is the voice of his brother Aaron, reaching and comforting at the Father's command." –Garnett Silk

Often during times of troubles I've contemplated what that means for a music aficionado, avid listener, consumer and promoter. I'm that type of guy, and then some. My whole spiritual, emotional, and physical ethos could partly be attributed to Music. So as my life of pandemonium unfolds, it's only natural that I would lean on music as my therapy: a canopy of hope as my one selected item on this deserted island. Yet when it comes to music, I don't feel alone. I feel as if so many of us drown our sorrows within the confines of a song, a melody, a chorus, a verse, a beat, a bar, a sound, a word, or a key. Music then becomes a compass for many as we navigate through the depths of our pains. A barometer that helps us gauge and make sense of our experiences. Oftentimes our flair when we are lost at sea, weighed down by the anchors of a toxic world. When ushered to re-imagine music as a tool of God, it begs for thoughts about the responsibility of music, and for those



who have been blessed with the talent and assignment to wield God's tool. In order to do so, I invite each person on a **voyage** that analyzes how music has reached, comforted, and led in my life.

In this **box of memories**, as a person forced to exist in the **same space** as **caged birds**, it **satisfies my soul** to fly back to where the sky interchanges between **turquoise** and **lavender** hues. None of that beauty mattered much as my focus was strictly auditory. Chants of "**Get up, Stand up**" and "**Buffalo Soldier**" would pierce the air, accompanied by the shaking of my imaginary locks. Every 25 cents I earned would **faithfully** go towards the **juke box** in my grandparents' bar. The **brighter dawn** of Sundays typically brought wailings of hymns by old widows at church, sandwiched between tails of "**Lucille**" and "**The Gambler**." It seemed as if that was the only tape my grandfather owned. I smile with wonderment at the memories of a child of the sun filled with adventure and mischief. **Unruly**, even my whippings came in chorus, a thousand dance moves couldn't evade the sting of a switch from a pomegranate tree. The rod exercised in that manner could not keep me **in tune**. As **Beenie Man** says, "When the music hits, you will feel no pain."

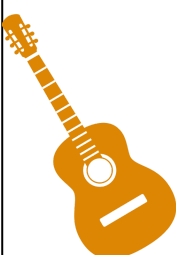
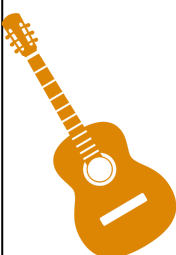
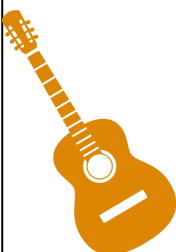
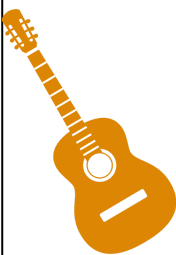
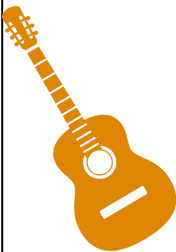
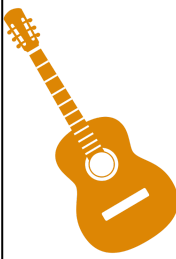
My very first tape purchase "**Totally Crossed Out**" came **in the midst** of a drastic scenic shift. It was indicative of my backward thoughts. How is that for **Sankofa**. I witnessed as the skylar grey faded behind louder **blueprints** and **black albums**. Top of the Pops became a staple while I was enriched by a diverse South East London culture. **Even after all** the failed guitar **lessons**, the xylophone, flute, and choir attempts at school. My own household would serve as a school of music, my mother would bellow karaoke style hits from : Diana Ross, Barbara Striesand, Bette Midler, Gloria Estefan, Celine Dion, Michael Bolton, Luciano Pavarotti, Anita Baker, Dionne Warrick, and my very first heartthrob...Sade. At every opportunity, I would sneak into her vinyl record collection, finding **gems** such as: Patti Labelle, Kenny G, Christopher DeBurgh, Salt-N-Peppa, The Commodores, Buju Banton, Stevie Wonder, and Michael Jackson. I watched the Motown Awards show on VHS tape so many times, it felt as if I was there Jan. 2, 1983.

Imitations switched rhythm from dance moves to DJs that I saw scratching and making duplicates.

Hold On! I can't talk about music in my life without Bigging up di yardman dem. Killamanjaro, Metro Media, Bass Odyssey, Renaissance, and all the sound systems that throw the best dancehalls **south of heaven**.

Steppin out of the 80s meant being **born into the 90s**. Bold and rebellious, cross colors, Jodeci boots, thug life! "There are some things you'll see that's gonna make it hard for you to **smile**." What a prophecy! Clap **one time** if you **relate**. Spoken word style with the **snap** of fingers. When you wish you had thought of a concept first. "**Can it be all so simple**." By the rush hour the prophecy is usually fulfilled, as calamity strikes while driving my life through the **red lights**, while staring through the **rearview mirror** at the **blue lights**. For those who have not caught the beat yet, I am talking **Hip Hop** now. I am talking the **love/hate** dynamic of the **art of hustle** that creates its own lingo, while displaying the ability to captivate the plight of the oppressed with **perfect** usage of the English vernacular. See, or better yet, hear "That's them poor babies on their way to the candy lady. It's looking bad! In need of some hope, like the words if, maybe, and probably."

Music exists for me as more than art or **entertainment**. It's a social apparatus even amongst those of us who are **locked up**. **Everybody** has a soundtrack to their lives, some of the best and worst **orchestrated** are within these walls. **Legendary** tales like **Jenny of Oldstones** traded like modern day baseball cards. I'm enriched and expanded by them all. I am not confined to language, could **care less** about genre, or era. As long as music is the **matteh** that leads me out of this contemporary **Egypt**.



Dialogue & Discuss: all things music

Playlist/Glossary

1. Music is the Rod – Garnett Silk
2. Troubles – Harry Belafonte
3. Aficianado – Fernando Sanaka
4. Consumer (Bobret Reword) – Somalgia
5. Rap Promoter – A Tribe Called Quest
6. I'm that Type of Guy – LL Cool J
7. And Then Some – Midland
8. Spiritual – Ramsey Lewis *John Coltrane*
9. Emotional – Etta Bond
10. Physical – Dua Lipa
11. Pandemonium – Niki
12. Therapy – Ria Mac
13. Hope – Emdin Samde
14. Desterted – Freddy Butler
15. Island – Will Downing
16. Feel – Black Atlas
17. Alone – Jessie Ware
18. Feel -Destardy
19. Sorrows – Laurie Brisa
20. Lost – Coldplay
21. Weighed Down – Deonte Hitchcock *Generational Weighed Down*
22. Anchors – Chanel West Coast
23. Toxic World – Peter Foldy
24. Voyage – Yanni
25. Box of Memories – Georgia Webster
26. Same Space – Tiana Miora Mijora?
27. Caged Birds – Tobe Nwigwe
28. Satisfy My Soul – Bob Marley
29. Turquoise – Leonara
30. Lavender – Richard Stanley Jr.
31. Get Up Stand Up – Bob Marley
32. Buffalo Soldier – Bob Marley
33. Faithfully – Faith Evans *Meshell Ndegeocello*
34. Juke Box Heroe – Foreigner
35. Brighter Dawn – Laura Mvalva
36. Lucille – Kenny Rogers
37. The Gambler – Kenny Rogers
38. Unruly -Fivio Foreign
39. In Tune – Robert Glasper
40. Kette Drum – Beenie Man
41. Totally Crossed Out – Kriss Kross
42. In the Midst -Jaha
43. Sankofa – Cassandra Wilson
44. Blueprints – Boogie Down Productions *Jay-Z*
45. Black Albums -Metalica *Jay-Z*
46. Even After All – Finley Quage
47. Lessons – Eric Roberson
48. Gems – Little Simz *
49. Hold One – Beres Hammond
50. South of Heaven – Cosima
51. Steppin Out – Steele Pulse
52. Born Into the 90s – R. Kelly
53. Smile – Scarface
54. One Time – Marian Hill
55. Relate – Matamu Music
56. Snap – Heatwave
57. Can It Be All So Simple – Wu Tang Clan
58. Red Lights – Holy Mattress Money *Jjos*
59. Rearview Mirror – Aaron Cohen
60. Blue Lights – Jorja Smith
61. Hip Hop – Trip Lee
62. Love & Hate – Michael Kiwanuka
63. The Art of Hustle – Yo Gotti
64. Perfect – Mike Posner
65. Aquiemini – Outkast
66. Entertainment – Rise Against
67. Locked Up – Lil Durk
68. Everybody – Capleton *Roy Ayers*
69. Orchestrated – Nemesis
70. Legendary – Wale
71. Jenny of Oldstones – Florence and the Machine
72. Careless – One True God
73. Matteh – Kiko Pensato-Kpardsamaa
74. Egypt – Damn



Art by Kenneth Key

"Some people feel the rain.
Others just get wet."

-Bob Marley

Wisdom Blvd.

By Mishunda Davis-Brown



Today on the Blvd. I am choosing to share proverbs 7:1-3 2nd Proverbs 18:21. Proverbs 7:1-3 reads, “My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart.” It’s so important to know the word of God/Scripture as Jesus did when He was tempted (Luke 4:1-13) in order to stand against the tricks of the enemy. The word of God is able to sustain us throughout our daily lives.

Proverbs 18:21 reads, “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” People speak blessings and curses out of their mouth daily. Have you ever said something good or bad and it came to pass? I’m sure you have. However, if you’d prefer blessings over curses speak good things into your life and others. And even if you don’t see the blessing just yet trust and believe that it’s on the way.

Go King Kong

By Mishunda Davis-Brown



1. When your broke kid breaks something, and the bill falls on you. Go King Kong!
2. When your favorite T.V. program is about to air and your T.V. is giving poor signals then goes out. Go King Kong!
3. When you’re having a peaceful day until out of nowhere a chaos agent appears. Go King Kong!
4. When someone with covid symptoms decodes that they want to have a whole conversation with you. Go King Kong!
5. When you catch yourself making a sandwich, but don’t have all the ingredients. Go King Kong!
6. When it’s the hottest day of summer and your fan decides it then had enough and checks out. Go King Kong!
7. When nobody tells you that you weren’t looking good on picture day until the picture is developed. Go King Kong!
8. When you’re enjoying your favorite unsharable selfish snack and a friend comes up and asks for some. Go King Kong!
9. When you take a kid to the store and they start acting like a little terrorist. Go King Kong!
10. When someone passes gas without a warning that it’s coming your way. Go King Kong!



Combat Corner The Veteran Voices of Stateville



Our community supports one another and helps our fellow Brothers of Arms with anything we can. We will cultivate leadership-building and build a better community for us all. Sincerely, Your fellow Veteran Jamie L. Thomasson USNV, Writing Advisor, 2nd Cohort North Park University, Warrant Officer, Co-founder of VVOS Veteran Voices of Stateville

From the Crow's Nest By Charles Ludwig Bickerstaff

JAG, a TV legal drama (1995-2005), centered around attorneys with the Judge Advocate General Corps of the U.S Navy. Their guidance and rulings were dictated by the **U.C.M.J.**, the uniform code of Military Justice. Severe crimes resulted in a military trial called a **court martial**.

Lesser known and not as dramatic is **N.J.P**, non-judgmental punishment, also known as **Article 15**, **Office Hours**, or in the Navy, **Captains' Mast**. This form of justice is used for minor offences such as being drunk on duty, insubordination, or **U.A**, unauthorized absence (other branches call it **A.W.O.L.**, absent without leave). Maintaining order on board ship is the responsibility of the **Master-at-Arms**. On base, law enforcement is in the hands of the Military Police (**MP**) or the Shore Patrol (**SP**).

Under Article 15 of the UCMJ, the ship's captain or commanding officer serves as judge and jury. Their power is limited by the severity of punishment allowed but increases with the rank of the preceding officer. Such punishment may include one or more of the following: reduction in rank, forfeiture of pay, extra duty, confinement in the brig or restricted to the ship. According to a January 2019 update of the U.C.M.J., the punishment of **three days bread and water** has been removed.



TATTERED by Marlon Coleman

Am I not worth more than a phone call.
Am I not worth more than money.
Am I not worth more than, all the I
love u's; the I miss u's.
I know all who miss, love, answer my
phone calls, send money;
Can't wait till;
I come home;
Do suffer in wait.
Though in hindsight's truth
Do they not know;
That I, I su, suffer
Mighty, mightily, Great.
Visit me why don't you; I am alive.
I sit still breathing; within a tomb
From conception to birth.
Broken, torn yes; shredded by life itself.
By the spitefulness of people known & unknown
Hate like radiation sear me.
Face full of tears;
I continue like fading memories.
For it is the here and now
That I carry in tow.
Life's personal cliché.
I am empty; like hollow
Words without meaning;
You continually give to me.
Like fire and water together
in one place.
I sit in wonder;
As time like sand in an
hour glass goes by.
What's that?
A glass of freedom.
Give me a swallow!

Poetry and Art Corner



By Lydia VanderStelt
for all of us

you can't tell a bird to fly
then put her in a cage

or get mad when she goes out
into the world
you want her to change

but don't you forget
because I surely won't

that the world is for all of us,
and a cage is no one's home.

Art by Scott Parker



Poetry and Art Corner



LOVE THANG (Life doesn't have to always be about pain!)
by a Prisoner and Soldier of Love

When we sang about that Love Thang
Love that Drives U intimately insane!
You know! That Love that's REAL-doesn't
hide, steal, or head for the hills. It's where Joy is fully revealed, also heals!
When you sang about that Love Thang.
You know--when two are first united--in their eyes, it's easily sighted--
They can't even fight it! Just can't hide it!

Yesss! Love is a real thang-more of an action thang! Yes, sometimes
people lose their brain from the stain of lost of what was thought to have
been gained. But LOVE is an affectionate thang.

I'm talkin' 'bout that LOVE THANG- U know the one- that makes U sang
and cook breakfast for that Thang, don't be ashamed thang- No, not just
memory of a motion picture thang, Yes Love that encompass a whole log
of thangs. Yes LORD help us!

Even when U R going through stuff--love is a Must!
Love will comfort U and sustain U, keep U from puttin your shoe in
someone's bottom two!

Don't be afraid, try this LOVE THANG! Especially spiritually, so you'll soon
see what GOD meant Love to, or all to see, it's for FREE! Yes even for those
like you and me!

By Antonio Balderas

How does music help me -
Music is expression?
Music is love
Music is happiness
Music is heartbreak
Music is healing
Music is sadness
Music is culture
Music is insightful
Music is alarming
Music is energetic
Music is joyful
Music is relief
Music is relaxing
Music is independent
Music is electrifying
Music is groovy
Music is sounds mixed with words
Music is a part of nature; music is kind
Music is freedom
Music can lead you
to transform



Mary Did You Know? By Tina Jones

When Bri and I started talking about an issue on parent-child relationships (the previous *Feather Bricks*), I was reminded of one of the most famous: between Jesus and his mother, Mary. I imagine how it would have been like as Mary held her sweet, newborn baby in her arms. The song "Mary, Did you Know?" comes to mind. As she held her fragile little baby, Mary could not have comprehended what the future would hold. Sure, Mary knew she was to carry the Son of God in her womb, but she could not have understood the extent of that honor. As a mother, it is her job to raise him in love and guidance. In turn, she could not have imagined the blessing he would become not only for her, but for the whole world. Even at the end, Jesus was concerned for his mother as He made sure she was taken care of even after He was gone. That is the love of a child. That is what true love is.



by Christian Dior Noel

What education meant to me, I think that it was meant to be
I heard college cost a grip but DePaul ain't want a cent from me
In comin IP you send for me & I put that in parenthesis
When I graduated high school I thought that was it for me
But I'm glad I strived higher & higher
& the Professor made me better everytime she gave a lecture
& if you giving out some credit, Lord knows I need extra
My daughter she just graduated
She said, "Dad I'm mad that you couldn't make it"
& I'm just glad I made her & she made it
Now I know what to do if I get pulled over
Pull off, or pull over
Black man in a foreign care, in America, Im'a pull over
And hop out with my hands up, and my pants up
Cause I ain't tryin to get jammed
By an officer without a camera
I'm going for my freedom
I'm not copping out I'm knowing Im'a beat 'em
Heart cold, knowing i'm anemic
Pray to God knowing Im'a need him
Gotta get home to my kids, I'm knowin that they need me
Hoping that they see me, hoping that they succeeding
She "blue" me like "DePaul"
She knowing Im'a "demon"
Shout out to DePaul University Class of 2022



Art by Kenneth Key

Blended by Jami Anderson

I went from being
a mom of four
to a mom of five.
You swept in our hearts
bonding us closer
making us more alive
Nicole is the first
and only girl
in the children mix.
It is so hard for us
to realize that
some things we can't fix.
Landon, second to none,
is next in our love infested space.
He's quick to tell
he loves us
no matter time or place.
Dylan. He's here
he's dear and
he's a mini-me.
His dreamy blue eyes
show his amusement
at all that is "we."
Tobin, our special son,
warms our hearts
and makes us smile.
To hear our praise
and loving words
he'd go the extra mile.
Aidyn, the baby boy,
joins you in making
the noises of the fart.
Yet he tells us
he loves and misses us
no matter how far apart.
So with these words
I thank you with all of me
for bringing us all together.
I know now that
we'll make it through
no matter the weather.

Who Am I (part one) by John Tha Baptist

Who am I? that is a very good question
I'm Kunta Kinte, I'm 400 years of oppression
I'm a malnourished Ethiopian child starving
I'm W.E.B Du Bois, the first black man to earn a doctoral degree from Harvard
I'm Rosa Parks, I'm Oprah Winfrey
I'm Harry Belafonte, I'm Sidney
I am an afro, french braids and finger waves
I'm a Jheri curl, I'm Harriet Tubman and Nat Turner freeing slaves
Who am I? Dr. King, I'm government cheese
I'm my ancestors hanging from the branches of trees
I'm Frederick Douglass, so I'm driven by anger and injustice
I'm Islamic so it's Assalamu Alaikum to my brothers
I'm a Christian saying one day soon
I'm that Baptist Church in Birmingham they bombed during Sunday school
I'm Marcus Gravey, back from the grave
I am 27 elongated scars on the back of a slave
I'm the million man March, I'm Malcolm X, I'm Louis Farrakhan
I'm the uprising led by Joseph Cinque aboard the slave ship Amistad
I'm Shirley Caesar, I'm Antebellum, I'm racial segregation
I'm Black Power, I'm Brown v. The Board of Education
I'm racial discrimination, I'm the United Negro College Fund
I'm Jesse Owens the sprinter, so I always feel like I gotta run
I'm Sojourner Truth, when black women needed to fight for em
I'm Emmet Till, being killed for whistling at a white woman
I'm the N-word and way worse things
I'm Jesse Jackson, I'm Maya Angelou, I know why the caged bird sings
I'm the Tuskegee airmen when the airforce was segregated
even in the sky, we were still being separated
Whom am I? I'm the Tuskegee experiment that withheld treatment from 600 black men
I'm a victim of excessive force like George Floyd and Fred Hampton
I'm Jupiter Hammond, the first published black poet and writer
I'm a Black Panther on lookout doing an all nighter
I'm Huey P. Newton, Elijah Muhammad, and Medgar Evers
I am the black magazines Ebony, Set, and Essence
I am Mecca, I am the grassroots Sit In Movement of the 60's
If you picking up what I'm putting down then raise a black fist please
Who am I? The end of Jim Crow, I'm Mahalia Jackson
by the way, she was the first Gospel singer to go platinum
I'm George Washington Carver, who was highly esteemed in college
he elevated the development of a lot of peanut products
Who Am I? I am Motown, I'm poverty stricken
I'm marginalized and I always fit the description
Listen, I'm the 13th Amendment, that's the abolition of slavery
I am Civil Rights and the reparations they decided to stop paying me
I am Colored, Negro, Black, and African American
I'm Nelson Mandela, I'm Jack Johnson, I'm arrogant
I'm Rap music, I'm R&B, I'm a Negro Spiritual
I'm Gospel music, I'm soul food, I'm sugar water in cereal
I'm every Black Man's unjust treacherous execution
I'm Crispus Attucks, the first martyr of the American Revolution
I'm Langston Hughes and then some
I'm Dorothy Dandridge, the first sister nominated for an Academy Award -



and Hattis McDaniels, the first black woman to win one
I'm James Cone, an African American theologian
I'm the 15th Amendment, which enabled blacks to start voting
I'm the numbers game, I'm Africa, I'm Operation Push
I'm food stamps, I'm Link cards, I'm watermelon, I'm Roots
I'm Madame C.J. Walker, the inventor of the hot comb
I'm the descendant of cotton pickers, I'm the verdict that they got wrong
I'm the Underground Railroad, I'm Muhammad Ali
I'm a plantation, an overseer, the NAACP
I'm all the work that was put in by slaves
I'm the real Statue of Liberty, which depicted a black woman in chains
I am Soul Train, I'm Civil Rights, the Blues and Booker T
I'm the profit of the Moors, I am Noble Drew Ali
I'm a Freedom Fighter, I'm Afrocentric, I'm hot water corn bread
I'm a Muslim whose made so many salots, there's a blemish on my forehead
I'm Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to U.S. Congress
I'm Robert Reed, the first black man to have a million dollars
I'm the Harlme Globe trotters, I'm a dreadlock, I'm a perm
I'm a poor black slave who couldn't read but decided to learn
I'm 40 acres and more, I'm a traffic stop gone bad
I'm a free Black Man abducted and extracted from his own land
I'm Sickle Cell Anemia, I'm the Apollo Theater
I'm Shaka Zulu, I'm footage of Rodney King being beaten up
I'm the Watts Riots, I'm chicken and waffles, I'm racial tensions
Who Am I? Ain't it obvious? I'm BLACK HISTORY

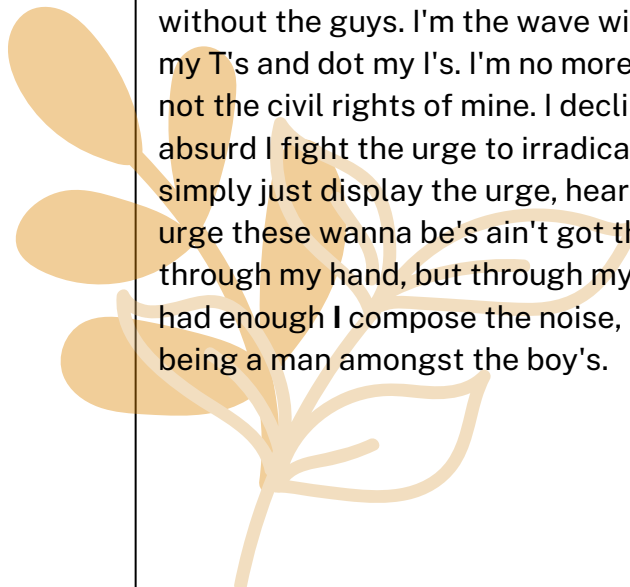


By: Tyrone Brewer Jr. (The Great)

My Player Partner Charles Hill had told me to write something to put in *Feather Bricks* so here I am, but I feel like a wounded dog right now. This ___ hit different!!!

I'm going in...

"my life is in turmoil so I'm living an everlasting battle subjected to subjectives
so the premise of my subject is rattle up the creek without a paddle, but my mental riding
high I with the void of a settle and still the man is getting by wrestling with these culprit
knives until I give my final signs proved it to my peers and now my elders see that I'm wise I
cause I pasteurize their thoughts I with my mode st. patronize, antagonize their foes but
still endure the ostracize I so me they wanna vaporize I nope no comprise. I'm the group
without the guys. I'm the wave without the tide I study through these prudent eyes to cross
my T's and dot my I's. I'm no more civilized then lies I through these civil rights I rise, but
not the civil rights of mine. I decline on their words filled with nouns, but short of verbs, so
absurd I fight the urge to irradiate these nerds and leave them on their victims' curb to
simply just display the urge, hear my words I no feel my words these infidels ain't got the
urge these wanna be's ain't got the courage, watch me splurge I essential bucks not
through my hand, but through my stunts, fill that air between their ears until their skull has
had enough I compose the noise, but pose with poise demonstrate my greatest joys by
being a man amongst the boy's.





ON THE JOURNEY WITH JOHNNY



Do you believe music has the capability to help or hurt the trajectory of your character, principal, values, morals, and your future life?

Think for a moment about your favorite song or album...when you listen to it, how do you feel? Does it move you? If we think about, the music we listen to not only impacts our lives by making us feel good, but it can also hurt our lives.

Growing up I had always wanted to be a Hot Boy. For those of you who don't know who the Hot Boys are, they were a popular rap group from the late 90s up until the mid 2000s from New Orleans, Louisiana. You may know at least one person from this rap group, whether it be rapper Juvenile or Lil Wayne. From the way the Hot Boys dressed with their Jabobe jeans, with the bandanas on their heads, wrists, back pockets, or anywhere else that these "Soulja Rags" could be visible. I think I may have had every Reebok shoe and color that all the members of the Hot Boys wore. My favorite fashion style of their image I imitated the most though was the gold or platinum teeth they wore. These were known as "a grill." I wanted a grill so much growing up. I would grab some Reynolds Aluminum foil wrap from my mother's kitchen cabinet and fold and form it into my teeth, mold it, and wear it like I had been straight out da 'Noila' (New Orleans). It was that or a Hershey kiss wrapper because of the gold color. I know you all may be thinking that imitating this rap group style and fashion may be an innocent thing to do growing up as a young male, but ultimately it was the lyrics that negatively impacted my life. If you ever pay attention to all the content in most rappers from old and new school, one thing you can find in common is they all embrace their culture/background in their rap songs. For me it was the same. If my culture didn't show me what was going on and how to survive, then the music did.

True enough, we all have choices in life, and we learn right and wrong with the aspirations to do right, but how many of us can honestly say that such music will have such an impact that it plays a major percentage on you making that choice of right or wrong? These wrong choices I made growing up ultimately landed me in federal prison for drug trafficking. Most of the music I was listening to was lyrics about selling drugs. It's called "Trap Musik" Go figure!!!

While I have the utmost respect and love for the Hot Boys and rap music as a fan, any kind of music we listen to can help or hurt the trajectory of our lives as we go along. I asked the same question to a few students over in the education building here at Stateville. Here is what they shared about their journey:

By Gilbert Harris

Music played a significant role in my life, from a positive perspective as well as the negative perspective. Now at this time I choose to speak on the negative influence that music had on me. By my father being absent in my life, unable to sit me down and talk, teach me about life situations and circumstances, I learned a lot from the environment I grew up in, and also the rappers I was listening to through my mother's 15-inch speakers. Too Short, 8-Bal + MJG, 2 Live Crew, N.W.A, all taught me how I should (mis)treat a woman. They led me to believe it was okay to call a woman by a disrespectful term. Unfortunately I was misled with this information. One day I called this girl that I liked by that disrespectful term, and she started crying. She went and told her brothers exactly what it was I had done to her. Now her 3 brothers were much older than me, so they told me I better apologize to their sister right now for calling her out of her name. Once I apologized, I promised to never disrespect a woman ever again by calling them out of their name. This was a valuable lesson that I learned. I didn't want anybody to disrespect me by calling me out of my name, so I had to treat others as I would like to be treated with the utmost respect. I was able to clean-up my act, and the girl I disrespected became my girlfriend, now that is one to grow on 😊.



ON THE JOURNEY WITH JOHNNY

"My Block," Unblocked written by Terrance Polk

Hey y'all! My name is Terrence Polk A.K.A Crack. I'm happy to be a part of this volume in Feather Bricks. The theme: all things music and how music has made an impact on my life. Well, I had to jump on this opportunity and tell some of my truth. My favorite artist was 2Pac (Pac) and still is. As I write, I reminisce on how I used to be on my block listening to Tupac's "My Block" - Tryin' to feel myself. I hate to say this, but Pac's music played a negative role in my life. Thug Life! The Hate U Give: I just didn't want to live a thug life; I became a thug in every way! Heaven nor hell ain't hard to find coming up in them streets. Now 26 years later, let me show you how I hear Pac music today. "Keep Ya Head Up," "Brenda Gotta Baby" "Dear Mamma" etc are absolutely phenomenal songs that make you want to help your brothers and sisters. Immediately after hearing "White Man's World," you feel some type of way. I had to get back in school because education is the key to understanding "pain" and the only way I could overcome this "pain" while living this white man's world was to go back and listen to my man "Pac" with a different ear, a more knowledgeable ear to hear the positive message that is in his music.

So to bring this theme full circle, I went from hearing negative to positive music and determined to further my education beyond this high school diploma I just received in October of 2022, "Unblocking my future to achieve greater things!"

By Lester Amir Griffin

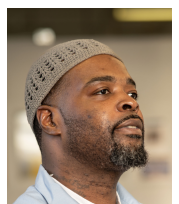
"Spice 1" is blasting through the speakers, while I sit in the chair, in Big Spanky's basement, getting my slope cut with graphics, and I couldn't have been no more than 12 or 13—still a pee-wee. Now I was nice when it came to Too Short, Scarface, even 2Pac, but this stud "Spice 1," I didn't know nothin about. However I knew that he was making a reference to one of my favorite movies Menace II Society, when Me Eight AKA Wax finishes Harold Shooters off. I was hooked, and Spanky knew it after my cut was done. He gave me the tape. At this time I couldn't even read or write, I had what CPS described as a severe learning disability.

Can you imagine an impressionable child constantly playing this "Spice 1" album back and forth until he learns every word? Now think about 1994 in my community: the power struggles, out with the old in with the new. Think, still a pee-wee and Bone Thug comes now with this, the anthem, and all the Chevy trucks is slamming this all. Every time you turn around there was a fish fry or chicken fry, some form of hustle to assist with funeral arrangements. Ghetto Boyz didn't have insurance. I shed light on these verses to give these tone deaf, blind Mayors and Governors insight on how most of us become child soldiers and be proud of our belonging to a brotherhood or protecting ourselves in the name of "Honor." But you wouldn't understand if you haven't been through it! So, you view us as dummies, idiots, imbecile, when in fact we became molded into the thoughts that were planted into our minds. For good or bad, "teachings are teachings." The music gave us way to mistreat women, especially our own women. We even observed, these some so-called self-respecting women would listen to the same music.

The above is just a small synopsis into the world of influence on myself and others growing up listening to rap. Please understand the flip side of rap has brought tons of great influence as well, this is just about the harm that it could do to an impressionable mind. Nevertheless it is poetry, real life visual into the ghettos and hearts of men, some has taken the words and changed many people's lives for the greater good: homes, businesses, scholarships, relief funds you name it, so before you pre-judge me or throw dirt on my title remember this

"Who I am is who I be until I die, so either"

accept it or don't ___ wit it, but if we gone be dogs then you stuck wit it, let me go my way but walk with me, see what I see
watch me then talk with me." D.MX



ON THE JOURNEY WITH JOHNNY

Me and My Music by Elton Williams

I wish that you could hear what I am hearing! As I write, I have Stevie Ray Vaughn's rendition of Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing" whining away in my ears. It's something of a fusion of the Blues and R&B, with a hint of Jazz (if you've got ears to hear). This song has the ability to "cool me all the way out" or "take me all the way there," depending on what's motivated me to hear it. If I am feeling melancholy, I might dial up "Third World Man" by Steely Dan. If I am feeling rather nostalgic, I might listen to "Miracles" by Jefferson Starship or "You can Depend on Me" by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles. When I paint or draw, I often find myself listening to "Adagio in G Minor" by the Vivaldi Orchestra over and over again. And when I find myself confronted by issues that life taught me previously to deal with in one way, I listen to "Far from Home" by Five Finger Death Punch, and that gets me back on track.

The thing about music is that a song has been written to fit every mood a person may experience. These songs have been created to meet us wherever we are, at whatever fork or crossroad we may encounter. Intended to evoke emotion or provoke thought, music has never failed in its mission. This is what I believe. I believe, also, that music is a tool and a gift from God meant to help light our way toward building community with one another. This is why I began this writing with a listing of mostly music that is culturally and genetically outside the lines of what is normally digested by people who look like myself. Music provides me with greater insight to and understanding of the people I, perhaps, don't speak with often enough. It also provides a platform for getting those conversations started and an opportunity to build upon the foundations laid through those conversations.

Now, as to the question of karaoke, I have never done it and I am pretty sure that you don't want to hear me try. But, if you like karaoke and enjoy singing with your friends, you might want to give "All Day Music" by War a shot (talk about being laid back and coolin' all the way out.) Just remember: whatever you're listening to, for whatever reason, share with those outside of your space the message that The System shared with the world: *Don't Disturb This Groove*. The sound gets you where you need to be.

My Music Story by Jody Montague

I cannot begin to explain the impact that music has had on my life. Music has been a part of my very being since I was born, and it's almost as important to me as my heartbeat, as oxygen. I believe that it is like a part of my very DNA because I don't know how I'd survive without it. I've been singing for as long as I can remember. My uncle would use my voice to impress and win the affections of the young women he brought around. After about the age of 9 and after hearing a certain global superstar, I started singing and trying to write songs on my own. I entered my school talent show in 5th grade and won singing "Always" by Atlantic Star. I sang solo at my 8th grade graduation: Tevon Campbell's "Tomorrow." Man, I can still hold a tune, but not like I used to. That doesn't stop me from singing all day long. In fact, there are some people who'll tell you, "don't believe that Jody can sing." LOL!

I haven't used paper to write my songs since the 90's, which leads me to my creative process. I don't write until the song is finished. I think lyrics flow better, purer, when they just pour out from the heart with the mind's help, and I try not to think too much. Prior to my incarceration, I was an up and coming hip-hop/rap artist. I had my own recording studio I started with a few friends. People will be surprised at all the music I listen to. To me music has no color, no race, and is truly universal like love or numbers. Here is a fun fact about me: starting the first years of my life on a farm in the rural country, I grew up on country music artists like Dolly Parton, Kenny Rogers, Randy Travis, Johnny Cash, and Elvis Presley. The only black artist that I knew of back then was Nat King Cole, and the one who made me want to do music in the first place: the great Michael Jackson! My favorite karaoke song is "Fire and Desire" by Rick James and Teana Marie because it was beautifully sung and can be sung with my partner.



RIGHT ON! WRITE ON!

"Right on, Write On" is a North Park University Writing Center intercultural and intergender writing initiative centered on the development of a beloved community by expanding justice issues in a blind conversational model. Participants across North Park campuses in Chicago, Logan, and Stateville, with allies from diverse areas, are challenged to write a five-paragraph essay on a social justice issue from the list provided. Each paragraph must correspond with the essay structure also provided. After the essays are completed and submitted, they will be paired with an essay on the same topic from someone of a different race, gender, and campus and published in *Feather Bricks* to initiate a community conversation on justice. We anticipate the "Right On, Write On" essays in conversation will speak a robust dialogue for future communications.

Please note that your authentic voice and perspective is integral to the success of this project. The use of code switching or code meshing, among other modes of written expression, is encouraged.

"Right On, Write On" Essay Format:

Paragraph 1. Hop yo' gate: This is the introductory paragraph that includes the thesis statement.

Paragraph 2. Say That: This paragraph supports the thesis and establishes the argument.

Paragraph 3. Say Less: This paragraph states and addresses opposition to the argument.

Paragraph 4. Right On: This paragraph reaffirms the thesis with the strongest position.

Paragraph 5. Write On: This paragraph provides the conclusion and poses a question or statement to advance the conversation of the topic.

Submit your essays for possible future publication to Prof. Melissa and/or EFA Baez (Stateville campus) or Cheyenne (Logan campus)



Art by Carlvosier Smith and Anthony Ehlers

Prompts:

- 1) How can retributive justice and restorative justice co-exist in one legal system?
- 2) Is there a responsibility to implement technological advances in the educational system in underserved communities?
- 3) Can the promotion of interracial dating substantially reduce racism?
- 4) How should the Church be involved in Social Justice?
- 5) How can collaborative writing shape the future of Social Justice? What kind of collaboration (e.g. intersectional (race, class, gender))?
- 6) How has our criminal legal system been formed or affected by the Church?
- 7) How have broken ideas of friendship affected mental health in society?
- 8) Does a perceived benefit of marriage or staying single affect social justice approaches?

Featured Voices: Rebirth of Sound Studio

I'm sitting in one of the most amazing rooms ever assembled inside a maximum security prison.

My name is Todd Smith and here inside Stateville Correctional Center is a state-of-the-art recording studio. Named 'Rebirth of Sound', it is a joint project between Common, Imagine Justice, Attorney Ari Williams, Antony Ablan, and IDOC. I was blessed to spend a few minutes with mentors Antony Ablan and Rashad Hussein. They were kind enough to share more information about themselves and ROS.

Todd: Gentlemen, can you tell our readers a little about your background?

Antony: My name is Antony Ablan. I live in Chicago. I'm a musician, producer, teacher, father, and husband. Most of my work centers music as love, including my work in Stateville.

Rashad: I've been writing lyrics and recording raps since I was a kid. I came to Chicago in 2013 at the age of 18 to study at Columbia College. I graduated in 2017 with a degree in music design and production, and shortly after, started Honey Jam Records, a music and media production company. I spent 4 years working as an engineer, then slowly started shifting gears to focus more on playing and producing music. I currently run a small production studio in the city and am planning a release for my debut single.

Todd: It's obvious that music is important to both of you. How has music impacted your life?

Antony: It's not that music hasn't impacted my life – from the outside in. It's more that it is a profound part of who I am as a person, it's how I communicated and connect, and creatively, how I express things I don't otherwise, it's as integral as my native language. Music gave me voice before I had one. Teaching music helps me help others find their voice, too. My commitment to music has opened up such an incredible and adventurous path in my life, and I'm grateful to share it all with my brothers in Rebirth of Sound studio.

Rashad: Very greatly, it's one of the few things that gives me a sense of purpose in life and has always been the main source of my sense of belonging in the world.

Todd: Antony, what does the creative process look like for you?

Antony: Finding Truth. The creative process is figuring out how to connect with my own truth, which means the voice in me that's pure and honest, the part that can't be wrong or denied. The challenge is hearing that voice louder than the other voices in me, the voices of doubt, fear, worthlessness, in my best moments of creativity those darker voices sit quietly as I express my truth, my undeniable light. The creative process is the struggle with those voices of me.

Todd: Is Rebirth of Sound just a music studio?

Antony: RoS is a collaboration of many people at once, each with many voices, too. So our struggle is not just finding the truth in each other, but also through society's voice of oppression – those darker aspects of who we are at this particular point in time. RoS is an opportunity to share love and experience. Our jails and prisons can strip our belief in love, can strip hope, hide our light. Love and music is light. So that's our struggle together, helping each other shine our undeniable light. This program is more than music. It's more about how we show up for each every single class, in a space where it's not dictated how you need to be. There's freedom in this studio to be you, and with 12-13 guys in a creative space, that's a real challenge, a worthy challenge. One challenge is how we grow as individuals, and grow closer together as a group, a brotherhood. Along the way we create and express ourselves with sound, recordings, music, spoken word, projects, visions. But the Brotherhood at the highest level is what this is really about.

Featured Voices: Rebirth of Sound Studio

Todd: Wow. Thank you Antony. Rashad, what would you like our readers to know about this program?

Rashad: This is a really great opportunity to learn about the technical and creative side of making music. I'm extremely dedicated as an instructor to give you all the tools you need to produce, record, and engineer your own music, with the overall goal being the freedom and power of full creative expression in the studio.

Todd: Do you have additional personal goals or hopes for the program?

Rashad: I would love to have a class for returning students where there's more creative freedom and the main goal is to create original music from scratch as a group. From writing, to producing, to recording and engineering.

Todd: Since becoming involved with this program, have there been any surprises or experiences that really stand out?

Rashad: Overall the sense of camaraderie and brotherhood we share in that space, all the group talks, side conversations, stories shared, art expressed, it feels like much more than just a class.

Todd: What are some of your favorite moments?

Rashad: I love to hear something the guys cooked up and collaborated on as a class, its such a wild feeling, being inspired by what I'm hearing while at the same time feeling proud of the guys for their growth and work. There's great fulfillment in collaborating and watching it all come together, listening back as a team and celebrating our work.

Todd: How can our readers hear some of the projects coming out of the studio?

Antony: We'll be creating a webpage to host all of our work from RoS, from all classes.

Todd: A final question that everyone is asking: How can I get involved?

Antony: 2023 – we'll send out a new survey for enrollment in future classes.

Editors Note: The music survey went out in January prior to this issues publication. and a new class started recently in the studio. A very special thank you to Antony and Rashad for taking time to shed some light on the Rebirth of Sound music studio program at Stateville.

Featured Voices: Rebirth of Sound Studio

Excerpts from a final paper for a “Narrating Social Change” course

By Benny Rios

INTRODUCTION

There is power in storytelling...This is a statement that I learned to be true in the sense that storytelling could either break down or build up. The one who controls the narrative wields the power of leading people to believe what they want them to believe about a person or groups of people. In her TED Talk transcript, “The Danger of a Single Story,” Chimamanda Adichie said, “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.”

Unfortunately, there has been a single story narrative depiction of prisoners that causes society to believe that all prisoners are evil, irredeemable, the worst of the worst, and unfit for society. However, every once in a while there’s a story that inspires hope and sheds a bit of light on the so-called humanitarianism demonstrated by correctional facilities. Stateville Correctional Center in Crest Hill, IL, in particular, launched a new music program in collaboration with rapper/actor Common. Nine prisoners were selected as the first cohort of this music program, I was one of them. Let me take you on a journey of how we flipped the script on the narrative spun by prison officials during the ceremonial opening of the Rebirth of Sound music program by educating the guests on the lack of comprehensive parole system and sentencing credit ineligibility for many Illinois prisoners, creating a space for advocacy through music, disrupting the single story narrative of prison officials, and continuing our advocacy by making our story your story.

THE CEREMONY – WORKING THE ROOM

One day I came back from school to the cell and I noticed two forms laying on the desk, so I reached into the cell through the bars to inspect the forms. I discovered what turned out to be an application for a new music program. I answered all the questions and turned it in not even knowing who to address it to. A few months later, I was called in for an interview with the music director, Antony Abla, the main warden, and the case supervisor of the facility. I was told, along with eight other incarcerated students, that we were selected to be the first cohort of the Rebirth of Sound program. . Eventually, we were told to attend the grand opening ceremony in October, 2022.

We arrived at the newly renovated music studio located in the building where the prisoner excess personal property is stored and where the grounds crew keeps all of their landscaping equipment. I was astounded at the transformation that was done to the neglected room that was used for prisoners to go over their excess personal property upon request. We arrived before all of the invited guests, which consisted of high ranking IDOC officials, legislators, Common and his team, and the brainchilds of the music program, attorney Ari Williams and Antony Abla. We walked into the room with media camera crews, internal affairs officers, and TACT team officers in riot gear already there.

As we walked into the music studio, I was amazed at the state of the art equipment in the room; it was intimidating to see large computer screens, even larger tv screens, microphones, musical instruments, couches, tables, and so much more. The room was an anomaly in the prison. Common and his team arrived last, and as they walked in, the room erupted in applause. After we greeted Common, we (the studio participants) sat in a circle with him, and we had a brief Q and A session. Almost immediately, one of our cohort members mentioned to Common that Illinois lacked a comprehensive parole system, and we told him how we were currently trying to have the SB332 Earned Discretionary Release bill passed.

Midway through the press conference, IDOC officials beckoned for us, the nine studio participants, to come up front before the crowd of guests and media. They invited one of us to speak on behalf of our cohort; nobody stepped forward to speak, so I walked up to the mic and I started speaking. As I thanked everyone for making this opportunity possible and vowed to utilize this studio experience as a transformative one, I also educated the crowd about the lack of a comprehensive parole system in Illinois. After I spoke, the guests and even the media, congratulated me on a job well done.



Featured Voices: Rebirth of Sound Studio

While all of my cohort members were advocating for parole, I partnered up with a fellow cohort member in particular, Julio Guerrero. He led me to the Tribe magazine reporter, Tonia Hill, and she interviewed me about the program, the lack of parole, and the ineligibility of sentencing credits for everyone in our cohort because each of us either had a life sentence, or had been sentenced under the Truth in Sentencing laws. She also interviewed a few others. When her article was published, I was elated to see the title: "Common Unveils new Music Program at Stateville, but Participants Are Unsure If They'll Receive Time Off Their Prison Sentences." That is what flipping the script looks like.

GETTING TO WORK IN OUR MUSIC STUDIO

As I think about our first official meeting at the music studio after the grand opening, I'm reminded of this statement by Julie Ha, director of 'Free Chol Soo Le,' "It just felt like the story beckoned me,... we couldn't allow it to stay buried in history. It was almost our generational responsibility to make sure the story is known and to tell it anew." While Julie was referencing the story of the wrongful conviction of Chol Soo Lee, who was eventually exonerated, her statement resonated with me with regards to the lack of parole for all prisoners in Illinois. In our first meeting at the music studio, we discussed the progress that we made at the ceremony, using our studio space for advocacy, and working on a group song project (Bring It Back) that highlights the lack of parole in Illinois. Our cohort, as a whole, were beckoned by the fact that since 1978, Illinois has not had a comprehensive parole system. Illinoisians have been in the dark about this, and we found it our responsibility to resurrect this buried story.

In the first few weeks of our time in the music studio, we continued on with the momentum from the connections that we made with Common and his team. In November of 2021, during the Illinois veto session, we were making a push to get the Earned Discretionary Release bill passed. We used our studio time to collaborate with Parole Illinois, "a coalition of people inside and outside of state prisons, [who organize] to reinstate parole in Illinois" (Hill 11) to get advocacy support from Common to bring media attention to getting our parole bill passed. We were effective; on the day of the veto session, we had bus loads of supporters drive out to Springfield, IL to rally for the passing of the bill, while simultaneously having media coverage of not only Common, but also Chance the Rapper, advocating for our bill live on Fox Chicago news. When the press conference was taking place every tv in our cell house was set on Fox news. After Chance the Rapper and Common spoke, everyone in the cellhouse erupted in cheers! This is what changing a single story looks like.



PROJECT CORNCAST

Officer Cornelius is back with a "spring is in the air" kind of forecast. This March, he notes that we should be out of the clear in terms of any remaining snowstorms brought on by last autumn's predictive sighting of the legendary white bobcat Sebastian. While Officer Cornelius has not yet returned to visit Sebastian since our previous issue (and some may suggest that he owes that bobcat a formerly-promised Christmas treat), Corn does plan to head back to the area of Sebastian sightings to witness another March tradition: eagle migration.

In addition to the recommendation to attend an eagle sighting this spring, here is the rest of this issue's Corncast: March is a great time for runners to get ready. The weather is better now for cardio outdoors. April is prime season for biking. The trails are in shape, and those who bike to work find this a comfortable month to ride back into that routine. For those of you who do plan to bike this spring, Officer Cornelius reminds you to get your tune ups done first, especially if your bike has been out of use since last season.





BUSHA'S STORIES by Luigi Adamo (Part 2)

I remember this one time, I made the mistake of asking Busha if I could eat dinner over at a friend from school's house. I didn't really care about the food, I only wanted to go because he had been bragging how he had just gotten all of the latest action figures for his birthday, and I wanted to play with them. The only problem was that this was a friend that Busha never met before, and whose family Busha didn't know. To Busha a stranger always meant danger.

Busha violently shook her head, explaining her reasoning in her thick Eastern European accent, "No, little one, this cannot be allowed. Young children should never go to dine with persons unknown to their families. This very thing happened once in my village when I was a little girl.

There was this little boy, about your age, who was invited to dine by a new playmate he had just met at the market. The boy rushed home to make himself ready. He took a nice bath with fresh water that he drew special from the good well, the one with the clearest water. He washed his hair, put on his most fancy outfit and his church shoes for this occasion. He was so honored and excited by his invitation that he forgot to ask his host what was being served. Not knowing that, the boy didn't know what he should bring, but he knew that he must bring something. So he went into his family's larder and grabbed a wedge of his father's favorite cheese, and the sausage they were saving for the feast of St. Kashmir, and off he went to supper. He was so hungry that he left without letting anyone know where he was going.

When he arrived at his host's house he was surprised to learn that they were cooking soup for dinner, but even more so to learn that he was going into the pot! That stranger's family made a very nice feast that night. After a few days that foolish boy's family raised the alarm in the village, crying how the boy had gone missing. The villagers searched all around, then house to house. They never found that boy, but when they came to that stranger family's house, they discovered that it was empty but for a note left for that stupid boy's family.

In that note they explained how they sent their own boy to the market to get meat for their pot, and he tricked their son into coming over for supper. They told how they hit the boy over the

head with a hammer, cut him up, cooked him, and ate him all gone. Then they ground up his bones to make a bread, so there was nothing left.

The strangers wanted to leave a note so that the boy's family wouldn't worry about him and keep looking for him. They thanked the family for how delicious the boy was, that it was clear by the tenderness of his meat that his family must have loved and cared for him a great deal. They even complimented them for their taste of cheese and sausage, saying how when eaten together with the soup they brought out all the flavors of the boy's flesh.

So you see, it is quite impossible for me to allow you to dine at some stranger's table. Unless you too want to be made a soup of."

Being as young as I was, I believed every word of that story, and was horrified for that poor boy's family. I kept thinking about how upset they must have been reading about how delicious their boy was.

Of course, I no longer wanted to go over to my friend's house for dinner. In fact, I never asked to go over to that friend's house for anything, ever again. I even stopped playing with him altogether. I mean, who wants to risk being made into soup just to play with some Ninja Turtles?

Busha wasn't only protective over me with her stories. When my older sister came home with a permission slip to attend the Junior Prom, Busha, learning that the dance was going to be on a Saturday night, went ballistic.

"Esù Cohanní!" She cried, crossing herself and spitting on the floor three times. "How could you let this girl go dancing on a Saturday night?" Busha protested to my mother.

"It's Ok ma." My mother said, trying to reassure the old woman. "We're in the suburbs of America, not some 3rd world backwater village. The kids here could go dancing even on Saturday nights, and nothing bad will happen. That's what makes America so great. She'll be fine. I promise."

"How could you say such things when you know what happened to your Aunt Kasha?" Busha pleaded.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, DEAR READERS? TALK AMONGST YOURSELVES. AND CHECK OUT THE REST OF THE STORY ABOUT BUSHA AND WHAT HAPPENED TO AUNT KASHA IN OUR NEXT ISSUE...

THE AMPLIFIER

with Alex Negrón



Hello everyone, Happy 2023! As some of you already know, I have been transferred to Sheridan C.C. to assist Lewis University's new educational program with writing support. Lewis University offers a BA in Professional Studies with a minor in Business Administration. Yes writing pioneers, you guessed it! There's nothing more professional than writing! The students from Lewis University are taking a course titled "Searching for Faith," and their first assignment was to write about a cultural artifact with religious significance. THESE STUDENTS ROCKED IT! Michelle and I were blown away by everyone's presentations and the choices they made. By it being Black History Month, I thought it was best to showcase John Knight's cultural artifact, Negro Spirituals. John did an awesome job tracing the historical roots of these spiritual songs, how they have been maintained by generations since slavery, and connecting their relevancy to today's culture and movements. He also made it personal and liberating, and Lord knows how much liberation means to all of us on the inside! I know I left behind some amazing sisters and brothers as I venture off to spread my literary wings to fly. I want each of you to know that I miss each of you immensely. Just know it's not a Boyz II Men moment (The end of the road), and I will be rejoined with each of you when our physical freedom gets realized. You'll hear from me soon...

Negro Spirituals As A Cultural Artifact By John Knight

I chose my cultural artifact to be Negro spirituals. While doing my research on these spirituals, I found that they shaped a culture, musical genres that exist today, and movements since the end of slavery. I will tell you what they are, how they came about, the main purpose and message of these spirituals, and how they still have a major impact in our communities today.

Negro spirituals are songs created by Africans who were taken from their land, brought to the U.S., and sold into slavery. ¹ When this was done, Africans were deprived of their language, their families, and their native culture; but the plantation owners couldn't take away their spirit of music. A new religion was forced upon these peoples and they used Christianity in a deep and personal way to deal with their oppression and bondage. My African ancestors incorporated their new source of hope and strength into music – which is now known as spirituals. Negro spirituals used stories from the Old and New Testaments to sing important themes such as faith, freedom, hope, and salvation. They expressed sorrow over being in bondage, but they also had hope of a better life within them. Spirituals reflected enslaved Africans' need to express their new faith. Spirituals are used for healing those who are depressed, to strengthen the weak in heart, and as ways of communicating without slave owners knowing. In some cases, spirituals were used to plan escapes when the Underground Railroad movement began.

Negro spirituals expressed the belief that one day those who were enslaved would be released from the chains of bondage and allowed to live freely again; if not in their present life, then in the life to come. These songs were passed on orally from person to person. This was mainly due to the fact that Africans were not allowed to learn how to read or write. However, these songs still told their stories. Songs like "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" that have lyrics stating: "Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down, sometimes I'm almost to the ground."² The song, "Go Down Moses" says "Tell Pharaoh to let my people go."³ These are just two examples of what African American slaves were feeling during this time in their lives. Spirituals date back to the early 1800's and are one of the largest and most significant form of American Folksongs according to a Library of Congress article in 2016. ⁴ Although they were passed down orally early on, the first compilation of Negro spirituals titled "Slave Song Book" was published in 1867.

They have since paved the way for several genres of music such as Blues, Jazz, and Gospel. Negro spirituals fall into 3 categories, one being the feeling of spirit, the second being the Kumbayah, and the third being the freedom type.⁵ The first represents sorrow, the second are Songs of Jubilee, and the last type are fight songs. Songs of sorrow are slow and melodic with expressive phrasing. Songs of Jubilee are fast and rhythmic, telling a story in a fast pace. Songs of fight are a call and response in which a leader begins a line and then the group follows. Songs of sorrow are never pessimistic, instead, every word is centered around hope. Negro spirituals are the heart cries of “the captive people whose music covers a whole range of moods.”⁶ However, it is serious music. So serious, that it plays a major role in lifting spirits. Many of the spiritual leaders of the Civil Rights Movement were led by these songs. Songs like “We Shall Overcome,” “We Shall Not Be Moved,” and “Ain’t Gone Let Nobody Turn Me Around” became “the soundtrack of the Civil Rights” in the 50’s and 60’s.⁷ Negro spirituals became the anthems and marching songs at a time when freedom, social justice, civil unrest, equality, and policies of inclusion were at stake.

For me, Negro spirituals had a profound impact on me before I did this assignment. Having to listen to these songs today, they have found a way to touch my soul deeper and connect me to the inventors of these great songs. Enslaved people are not some people at a distance from a time long ago; they are my ancestors. Their unwillingness to give up hope during a time in which hope couldn’t be seen or grasped draws me closer to them. These songs strengthen me as I walk with my Savior during a time in which my freedom is desperately needed. Many songs being created today in African American communities owe a great debt to the Negro spirituals that began 400 years ago. Influential singers, groups, and songwriters have penned songs of protest to inspire fights against wars, racism, poverty, police violence, and many other important causes. For example, Alicia Keys wrote and performed a song which took aim at the Louisville officers that shot and killed Breonna Taylor. Another prominent artist by the name of H.E.R. wrote a song titled “I Can’t Breathe” to bring attention to the murder of George Floyd in 2020 and of Eric Gardner before him. Without Negro spirituals, we wouldn’t have songs of inspiration nor would we have birthed a new generation of leaders. Although there have been many movements and genres of music since slavery, I believe that the birth of Negro spirituals during our horrific bondage has given life to these movements and to the ones we see today.

1. The Gospel Truth About The Negro Spiritual, Randy Jones
2. Musixmacth (Louis Armstrong c Northern Music Co., Champion Music Co.)
3. Musixmacth (Marion Williams c Champion Music Corp.)
4. The Negro Spiritual: From Cottonfield to Concert Hall
5. Excerpt From the Gospel Truth About the Negro Spiritual, Randy Jones.
6. Excerpt From The Gospel Truth About the Negro Spiritual, Randy Jones
7. Redone by Mahalia Jackson “We Shall Overcome”; Freedom Song: Selma, Alabama (Folkways Record presents).

Psalms – Phun Phacts

14 & 53 are almost identical.

78 is the 2nd longest psalm.

104 closely parallels (Gen. 1-2) the 7 days of creation.

117 – The middle chapter of the Bible. The shortest psalm.

118:8 – The middle verse of the Bible.

119 – The longest chapter in the Bible and the longest psalm.



Since I think I might be writing a column regularly, I probably should be picking topics. Today's topic is contradictions in scripture.

A contradiction is defined as an assertion of the contrary. I define it as two explanations of the same event that cannot be true at the same time. If this happens, one explanation is wrong, or both are wrong. They cannot both be right. Once you start finding contradictions it seems like you do not stop finding them. This is the main reason I stopped being a believer and using faith as a means of knowledge.

There are several different categories of contradictions in scripture. In no particular order, the first contradicting verse is Exodus 33:20: "Thou cannot see my face. For there shall no men see me and live." This verse contradicts Genesis 32:30: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

The second one, contradicting reality, in Joshua 10:12-15 reads, "the sun stopped in Gibeon and the moon in valley of Ayalon." There are three problems with that. Problem one: the sun does not move around the earth in the sky. Problem two: the velocity of the moon is what keeps it in orbit. If it suddenly stopped moving, the gravity of the earth would pull it back in. So, the moon would simply fall straight down to earth. Problem three: No one other than the writer of this story seemed to notice all of this earth ending chaos.

The third category is Morality. In Numbers 31:17-18, "Kill all the little boys and the non-virgin women, but keep the virgins alive for yourselves." And Hosea 13:16 "they shall fall by the sword. Their infants shall be dashed in pieces and their woman with child shall be ripped up." In my opinion, that is not moral in any context.

The fourth one is Doctrinal: What must one do to get to heaven, works (meaning keep the commandments) or faith alone: James 2:20-26 states that faith without works is dead. This idea contradicts Galatians 2:16: "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."

The fifth one is Historical: the biblical flood story has been dated in history to about 4500 years ago. Modern day Iraq, Egypt, India, China, Peru and Mexico have unbroken history that goes back approximately 5000 to 6000 years ago. The flood story was stolen from a mythical story called the Epic of Gilgamesh. In my research of this issue, I found the people trying to defend the biblical story gave more details about the earlier story than I knew. They unintentionally made the issue sound worse for their side.

The sixth one is different Bible versions saying different things with the same verses: Genesis 1:1 (KJV) "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In other Bible versions the word heaven is plural, "heavens". This might not seem big, but the change makes a difference in how you interpret later passages, like Genesis 1:6-8. You do not have this problem with the Quran, but the Quran still has the other issues and its own unique ones.

For the sake of brevity, I would not be able to list every contradiction in scripture. But the fact that there are different categories of contradictions with a number of different contradictions in each is a major issue. It makes this so-called holy text look just like man-made stories. If there was an all-knowing source that communicates with believers (like they say), there would not be all these imperfections in scripture and so many unanswered questions.

After all that, contradictions are not the biggest problem, but that is a topic for another day. -C/O L.C. Montgomery

View of a Non-believer





Officer Montgomery makes a very good point. Any contradiction in scripture needs to be taken very seriously. So what should a person do if they find an error? Saint Augustine wrote that he “decides that either the text is corrupt, or that the translator did not follow what was really said, or failed to understand.” If we are going to follow that standard, we would first need to make sure that we have a true and accurate version of scripture. True, we do not have the original autographs, but we do have some pretty good copies. Use the best you can find.

Second, we should check to make sure what was actually written in the original language. Ask, is this a metaphor, or a turn of phrase? Can those words have other meanings in the original language?

Third, we need to make sure that we understand what idea is being conveyed in the context that it is written.

For example, in the sixth contradiction where “Heaven” being pluralized is the issue, I would make sure that I have an accurate Hebrew version. Then I would make sure that I am correct in my assumption that scripture posits only one Heaven. (There are 3 heavens found in scripture by the way, first heaven is the sky, second is space, third is God’s domain). Only after I’ve done that kind of due diligence could I decode there to be a contradiction in good conscience.

Here are some things to keep in mind.

1. Remember that the Bible was written over the course of thousands of years. There are many figures of speech used when written that could be misunderstood today. Don’t take such things literally, especially when dealing with poetry or prophecy.

2. The Bible is not a science book. It was mostly written by common people using the common language of their day, not the technical language of today. Keep this in mind when encountering passages like “The sun stood still in the sky.” Could this be an ancient person’s attempt to describe the theory of relativity? Who knows?

3. Remember, the Bible is a book of truth, not a book of facts. The word became flesh, not a book! When all the facts are known, though, and proper due diligence is done, every “contradiction” I have ever found usually disappears, and I’ve been doing this a very long time. - Luigi P. Adamo

As it concerns the Qur’an, you are correct, it is the same exact text written about 1400 years ago. Being a Muslim myself, who practices Al-Islam, I will refute your other statement, that the Qur’an has other issues. There are no other so-called issues in the Qur’an, outside of someone’s ability to make sense of things that are beyond the scope of their understanding.

I respect your choice to not believe, and I will not try to change your position, nor debate my religion. However, I will say this: I feel bad for anyone, due to the fact that they are unable to train their mind to be comfortable with complex truths, so their ears itch to hear simplistic falsehoods. For some people, the struggle is not in contradictions... it is in an inability to find themselves! I think James Cone said it best, “Man discovers himself when he discovers GOD, he discovered something that is identical with himself although it transcends him infinitely. Something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated.” A void of purpose and emptiness internally can subject people to search for something they will never find. Despite their facade externally, it will not substitute the fact that they are hollow inside. I wish you well on your journey, but I fear you are trying to discredit what you can’t comprehend. I hope that you will see that the contradictions live within your semantics. - Manuel Metlock

So, yeah. You wrote, "As far as the method of looking through the Scripture to find nuggets of truth, I say if it is not all true, it is all man made and not true until demonstrated sufficiently."

As a man who has read the Bible and, somehow, managed to hold his brain in (I imagine you to be just this sort of man), I would like to remind you of what Jesus said in the Book of Luke, 16:8: "...the children of this world (non-believers) are in their generation wiser than the children of Light (believers)." Now, I have found both vanity and ego to be great hooks in the noses of human beings, often causing us to speak and act contrary to our own interests. This in mind, concerning your aforementioned quote, and bearing in mind that I am addressing one in possession of superior intellect (I believe Jesus!), I wonder how you respond to what He had to say about non-believers. Do you reject His statement since it cannot be "demonstrated sufficiently" as truth? To do so, as your stated philosophy demands, would amount to an acknowledgment (on your part) that you, in fact, possess inferior intellect. Or, do you accept Jesus' statement as true? To do so would be contrary to what your belief demands and would amount to an acknowledgement of the inherent fallacy of your professed philosophy. --Elton Williams

What to do? What to do?

"Come now, and let us reason together..." Is.1:18



THE HUDDLE

Souper Bowl Weekend by "Mr. ESPN" Lonnie Smith



Football gives so much enjoyment to the lives of the fans. It brings a lot of passion and emotions to the normative lives of everyday people. It unites us and gives us a sense of belonging. A lot of us need that in this impersonal world.

As fans, we give a lot of money to keep the NFL running. We buy the memorabilia, the high priced tickets, and the expensive sport packages internet and cable providers market to fans. The working poor and people in custody can barely see our favorite sports teams play anymore. Everything these days, when it comes to sports, is about that almighty dollar.

This year's Super Bowl was epic. It was the first one that hosted two Black quarterbacks. Both are playing at the top of their game. It was a game of the ages that went down to the final seconds. Both teams played amazingly. Both coaches matched their wits and everybody was a winner in my eyes.

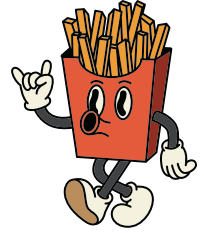
In life there are many unsung heroes, and in this article I would like to highlight a few: the congregation at the Universal Unitarian Church of Hinsdale is one because they took the celebration of the Super Bowl and came up with the Souper Bowl that was a fundraiser for their church. The congregation donated thermoses of soup and sold them to raise money for their social justice ministries. The great part about Hinsdale is that they educate their congregation and mobilize them to fight for social change. They challenge the status quo when it comes to inequality, injustices, racism, and sexism. They have been putting in work for criminal justice reform. They have boots on the ground when there are rallies for Parole Illinois and Citizens for Parole. They are there even when our friends and family members don't show up.

Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs walked away with the trophies. But I think the congregation at Hinsdale was the real MVP of the Souper Bowl weekend.



A SIDE OF FRY

Officer Fry, Logan Correctional Center, responds to a question from School of Restorative Arts student Phoenixx Newson: So, Fry, What do you think about the Superbowl this year?



Officer Fry: Unfortunately, the 2022-2023 NFL season has officially come to a close, and if you're like me, you had to watch the playoffs without getting an opportunity to root for your favorite team. Regardless of your team making the playoffs or not, there were plenty of exciting and entertaining games to watch. As the dust began to settle as teams began to eliminate each other, the stage was finally set for a highly-anticipated match-up between the league's top offensive team from each conference. A major barrier was broken with the match up between Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs and Jalen Hurts of the Philadelphia Eagles, as this match-up would be the first ever Superbowl staring two black quarterbacks facing off of one another. This game would also be the first Superbowl that featured two brothers playing against each other: Travis Kelce of the Chiefs and Jordan Kelce of the Eagles. As for the Superbowl itself, the game was one of the best Superbowls I have watched in many years. Jalen Hurts broke or tied numerous records, including most rushing yards by a quarterback in a Superbowl, breaking Steve McNair's record. Hurts tied Terrell Davis with three rushing touchdowns in the Superbowl and James White's record of most points scored by an individual in a Superbowl with 20. Hurts became the only quarterback in NFL history to pass for 300 yards, rush for 70 yards, and score 3 rushing touchdowns in the Superbowl. The Eagles themselves were the highest scoring team to lose the Superbowl with 35 points. Hurts was not the only quarterback to get a record. Patrick Mahomes became the first player to lead the league in passing yards and win the Superbowl, and the first player to earn the season MVP and win the Superbowl since Kurt Warner did it in 1999.



Sports with Sarge by Sergeant Brown



I (Prof. Melissa) caught up with Sargent Brown in the education building at Stateville in February to get insight on what's happening in the NFL lately that could be useful to highlight in general and for Black History Month in particular. Sgt. Brown schooled me on one good thing and one thing that still needs to be addressed. "We've come a long way," Sarge explained, in terms of the emerging of Black quarterbacks despite the NFL being so political. The one good thing we talked about how this year is the 1st Super Bowl ever where two Black quarterbacks, Patrick Mahomes and Jalen Hurts, started against each other. Sarge pointed out that we had one Black quarterback, Doug Williams, start and win a Super Bowl 35 years ago. Having 2 Black quarterbacks start against each other, according, to Sgt. Brown, is a "progression in football."

On the downside, Sgt. Brown clarified how this situation of Black head coaches being passed over still needs to be addressed. I learned from Sarge that despite the Rooney Rule giving Black coaches a chance to interview, Black coaches are seldom if ever chosen for head coaching positions. When they are chosen, Sarge explained that teams often have no intention of keeping these Black head coaches and sometimes even set them up fail, despite the fact that many of these coaches have been successful in the previous work they have done. Why are these individuals so often passed over? According to Sgt. Brown, "It's about the owners."

As Sarge spelled out to me, "Owners are more comfortable with the familiar." In other words, owners have the mentality that "I own this team that's worth 20 billion dollars — and I want someone I can relate to as my head coach." Unfortunately, this kind of owner mentality leads to individuals who are coming off bad records and even being fired from previous positions getting hired as head coaches instead of up and coming Black head coaches who have relevant successful past experience.



How Has Music Affected your Life by Janis Elmore, Stateville Law Librarian



Music does more than just give you swagger. Studies show that listening to music can reduce anxiety, blood pressure, improve your focus, boost creativity, and raise morale. In general, listening to music makes you feel good. On the downside through, it can lead you to spend more, drink more or do crazy things.

So, how does music affect your life? Well, when people from various cultures talk music with each other, they gain an insight into another way of life. This is how music unites people. Whether you're a music buff or not, everyone can appreciate the impact music has on society. Music has been used as an agent for change, especially during difficult times.

Here are a few songs that have made a positive impact for me during trying times: "Move on Up" by Curtis Mayfield," "Ain't No Stopping Us Now" by McFadden & Whitehead, and "I'm Not the Average Girl from the Video" by India Arie. I love this line: "I Know my Creator didn't make no mistakes on ME." If you get a chance, listen to it, you'll see that this song is as poignant today as it was when it first came out.

And don't forget those powerful songs that affected society like the "freedom songs" of the Civil Rights movement, like "Strange Fruit" by Billie Holiday or "We Shall Overcome." These songs served as agents for change. They broke down barriers, educated people, built empathy across the divide, and had a hand in ending segregation.

Versions of the song, "We Shall Overcome" have been around since the early 1900s, but in 1945, gospel arrangers Atron Twigg and Kenneth Morris put together the essential pieces of the now-famous words and melody. On September 2, 1957, Dr. King visited Highlander Folk School in Tennessee as part of the school's mission to help prepare civil rights workers to challenge unjust laws and racist policies that discriminated against African Americans. During that meeting, folk singer Pete Seeger got up with his banjo. He plucked the notes and melody of the future "Freedom Song" as he had learned it and led the audience in singing it.

Music and social movements are inherently linked together. Almost every popular kind of music was considered scandalous back in the day, and the dancing that accompanied jazz, rock 'n' roll, and hip-hop drew protests and boycotts. Just look at The Beatles, or Gangster Rappers, which were considered scandalous back in the day when they first arrived on the music scene. A trend towards younger rappers who collaborate and feature on one another's tracks, and on the tracks of artists in other genres, has also become more popular than ever, helping to form the unavoidable mainstream genre we know and love today.

If you want to know more about the history of music or artists of a certain generation or groups, stop by the General Library of the Stateville Correctional Center Law Library.

Here are a sample of what we have:

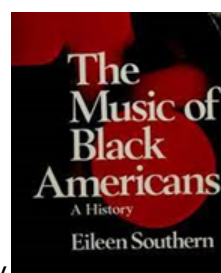
The Best-Selling Albums of all Times:
Track Listing, Band Members, Album history and more



1001 Songs by Toby Creswell, that feature
the Great songs of all time, with the artists, their stories,
and the secrets behind song



The Music of Black Americans by Eileen Southern



In conclusion, as I sit listening to my CD with some of my favorite songs, I ask myself, why am I listening to this? I realize the melody soothes my soul, calms me down, and I see that those things around me aren't as big as they appear. As I start to move and sway, I go on with my day knowing all is OK. I won't go shopping, through.

SHOUT OUTS

Lewis University Higher Education in Prison Program Begins



Congrats to Lewis University, Cohort 1, who are earning their BA in Professional Studies with a minor in Business at Sheridan Correctional Center:

Rene Amigon, Steven Bibbs, Sidney Butler, Lorenzo Davis, Ronald Jackson, Damondros James, John Knight, Francisco Martinez, Alexis Santana, Connor Scott, Donell Simmons, Kyle Starks, Garry Thompson, Dameion Thurmond, Svondo Watson, Bree Williams, we see you!

CONGRATS to Barber College and GED Grads! (sorry for the delay...)



Editors' Note: Outside readers can find more photos of Stateville's Barber College and GED graduation at <https://www.flickr.com/gp/142526605@N04/4yK8sRpYb9>

SHOUT OUTS



Feather Bricks applauds Chaplain Davis at Stateville Correctional Center for gaining approval on his thesis project for his DMin (Doctor of Ministry) degree. (A "DMin" is a professional doctorate focused on developing skills in application-oriented research for a ministry setting.) The title of Chaplain Davis' thesis is "Prison Life and the Aftermath of THUG Living: Chaplain Training Approaches to Pastoral Care for the Long-term Incarcerated."



Much appreciation to EFA Baez and her staff (especially Ms. McGrath and Ms. Johnson) at Stateville Correctional Center for all of their insights and efforts that have helped make the publication of this edition of *Feather Bricks* a reality.

Thanks to outside Writing Advisors Priya, Azary, Citlalli, Destiny, Nancy, and Lily for transcription assistance. Special thanks to WA Hellen for sharing her expertise with layout and design.



The Writing Center welcomes Professor Ken Saywer on board as a professional writing coach to serve SRA students at Stateville on Wednesdays during study halls.

Extra-Mile Award to second-year SRA student Phoenixx Newson for making our first publication by a staff member at Logan Correctional Center a reality. (And thanks, Officer Fry! We look forward to reading more of your columns.)



Extra-Mile Award to SRA Cohort 2 student and Writing Advisor Marshall Stewart for dedicating his study hall time (and more) to consistently provide one-on-one conferencing to his peers as well as to turn in his drop-in forms to document those conferences.

Congrats to Joseph Dole on his recent publication in the anthology *Captured Words/Free Thoughts: Writing and Art from America's Prisons*, Vol.19 Winter 2023!



The Writing Center applauds the work of a new, 5th group of students taking the WRIT2100 "Introduction to Writing Center Studies: Tutoring Writing" class this semester and wishes them the best with their final revisions of their collaboration essays.

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/>