

Feather Bricks



Cover Art by Victor Bandala-Martinez

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Editors	3
Devotion by <i>Deborah “Dee Dee” Simms</i>	4
Devotion by Karen McCarron.....	5
Dedications, Family, and Mental Health	
André Patrson.....	6
Moses Stamps.....	7
Jamario Neal.....	7
Tremaine Mason.....	8
Victor Bandala-Martinez.....	9
James Moody.....	9
Demetrice D.C. Crite.....	10
Greg Reed.....	10
A Class To Remember: NPU 2024	11
“I am Back” by George Ross.....	12
More on Mental Health	
Phil Gerken.....	13
Damondros Q. James and Raymond Youngblood.....	14
Ron Jackson.....	15
C.D. Everett.....	16
Marshall Stewart.....	17
Jamal Bakr.....	18
Wisdom Blvd & Go King Kong!	
with Mishunda Davis-Brown.....	18
More Dedications	
W. Peeples, Jr.....	19
Thomas Mills.....	19
Here's a Thought	
with DeCedrick Walker & Rayon Sampson.....	20
Poetry and Art Corner	
Victor Bandala-Martinez.....	21
Marlon Coleman.....	22
Eva Morris-Ferrell.....	22
Dameion Thumond.....	23
Sketch Vetor.....	23
John Knight.....	24
Jody Montague.....	24
C.D. Everett.....	25
DePaul Behind the Wall with Alann Vega.....	26
The Amplifier with Alex Negron and Anthony Smith.....	27
Songs (not Sports) with Sarge with Sgt. Brown.....	29
Law Librarian Column with Ms. Elmore.....	30
Shout Outs	31

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Note from the Senior Editor:

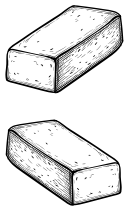
Mental health awareness is what this issue is largely about. Sometimes the best way to address sensitive topics is to come straight out with it. Express the doubt, the feeling, the hurt, the pain, and so forth and so on. Self-honesty is a powerful thing. At the same time, our ideas of family and the people and things we dedicate our time and appreciation are what assists us in developing our mental wellness. Life is full of disappointments. But life is also full of triumphs, fulfilled hopes, and getting the opportunity to remember or see a pleasant smile from a friend or loved one. Be that as it may, *Feather Bricks* hopes this edition touches souls, hearts, and encourages more appreciation for mental health.



DeCedrick Walker

To the Readers, by the Editor:

My name is Greg, better known as JR to my peers, & as a first time co-editor of *Feather Bricks*, we would like to take you on a journey of life. To celebrate life as we know it & life as we once knew for those who are no longer here. We also made space to pay homage to our heritage through family ties, but most importantly we wanted to bring awareness to mental health & show how it affects everyone around us. As you turn each page of this month's edition, understand that a life worth having is a life worth living, so cherish each moment spent on this earth.



Gregory Reed

Dear Readers,

The excitement in putting the contents of this issue together with Greg and DeCedrick hit once I saw how contributors molded the themes dedication, family, and mental health into the flow of their writing and visual art. I encourage you to read cover to cover to experience that flow (and not just turn to a favorite writer...or your own piece). Many, if not all, of the works here speak to D.C.'s comment, "just as events take place to break us, they happen to heal us." Gratitude to the artists who chronicle such events here. Your contributions to this participatory act of what W. People's calls "intellectual immortality" leaves a legacy so multi-faceted, I imagine it could make someone like Dr. Burroughs lace up her skates in the afterlife, and roll off smiling.



Prof. Melissa



Devotion

by Deborah “Dee Dee” Sims

Psalm 68:6 "God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land."

Hello, my North Park family, both inside and outside. I had the privilege of attending an “Intercultural Spirituality” on campus this past J-term with the lovely Dr. Deborah Penny. For those of you who don't know, I am living at the Fox Valley Adult Transition Center in Aurora, IL and finishing my term of incarceration.

This past week has brought me some revelation and clarity. Psalm 68:6 has meant much to me over the years, but recently I have received a deeper revelation from it.

Yes, inside He set me in family- one that I think of often, but I also see today that I have emotionally distanced myself for too many years! I have built walls so high around myself as to not let anyone know the real me.

Recently I have seen glimpses of her trying to break free.

God has also shown me that my walls are the highest and the strongest when it comes to men. I have insulated myself from men to the point of fear. And fear is not of the Father!

I am going to begin to dismantle these walls of bondage by allowing myself to trust, to be bold, to be playful, to be open and to be vulnerable.

If any of this resonates with you, I encourage you to make the decision to dismantle the walls along with me because God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind!

We are emotional beings that need connection and interaction to be fully alive!

My New Mantra:

I will be bold, loud, open, and honest!
I am dismantling walls!!!!





Devotion

by Karen McCarron

On my mirror, I have a small saying, “Not all storms come to disrupt your life, some come to clear your path.” This saying helps remind me that there may be good that comes out of difficulties. One of the most meaningful texts in Philippians for me is 4:8-9. In this passage Paul is telling the church what to focus on in the midst of anxieties and adversity. As a woman who struggles with mental illness and has had years of therapy, I recognize that what Paul was illustrating for the Philippian church is what therapists call reframing.

How does one cope with a negative reality such as prison, poverty, or social injustice? How did Mary cope with the fact that her society allowed her to give birth in a filthy stable? The Gospel of Luke states she pondered (Lk 2:19). Perhaps she utilized 19:14 (reframing within the Hebrew scriptures).

Paul builds on what the Psalms teach that even in the midst of awful situations, we still can think on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. The mental break away from negative events in life allows one time to collect one’s thoughts, remind oneself that one is a child of God, and to just breathe as we think on a specific positive situation or person. Jesus, of course, fits all of the above descriptors. A short mental vacation helps our brain circuitry not get caught in an endless loop of despair. This moment to reframe also takes our focus off of self and negative emotions and places it on God and what God honors.

In some translations, the word “dwell” is used instead of “think,” and this implies deep thought, meditation, pondering. This passage comes at the end of a section in which he is addressing two women leaders (Euodia and Syntyche) within the church who are in conflict. Paul suggests that they resolve their disagreement by agreeing “in the Lord” or to be “of the same mind in the Lord” because it is the Lord’s interests and opinions that are ultimately important, not those who are in conflict. Often when we are in conflict our focus needs to be “reframed” to God. All Christians agree God is good even when what God is doing within a certain situation is not fully understood. Once our focus is on God and what God values, the situation can often be resolved in God’s favor and often favorably for both parties.

Sometimes Christians can agree to disagree, yet both parties can still agree that God is good and Jesus is our savior, preserving our unity in the faith. This also preserves our graciousness.

Lastly, Paul states that those in the church are to “do,” to act, model, and live out intentionally what they have been taught and what Paul has demonstrated to them. This “doing” follows framing and implies that acts of graciousness, Christ-like behavior, and hopefully reconciliation follow a pause to reframe. If both are done, then the peace that only God can bring will come to the Christian(s) and may even enter a difficult situation. In this way, Christian lives can be a blessing through the storms of life, and possibly transform those storms into a path toward a better future for all.



Mental Health

By André Patterson



In 2020 I wrote my suicide letter. Depression, anxiety, environmental injustices, and hopelessness all collided at the intersection of my sanity. Lying in a mangled heap were years of failed attempts at overcoming personal trauma and bold ideas of transforming into a healing agent for the traumas of my world. Spiritual, mental, and physical challenges pushed me closer and closer to the edge of an existential cliff, where I gazed down into an unknown abyss and wondered: if I leap, will I fall or fly?

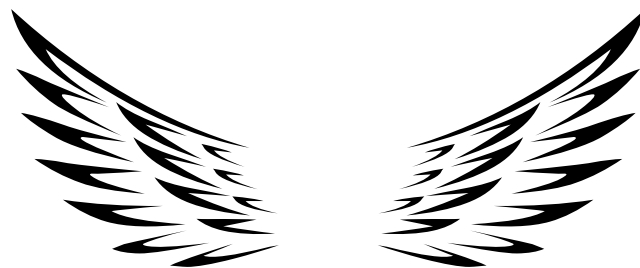
So, I wrote what I intended to be my final narrative, in case I had the courage – or cowardice – to go through with it (this time). Each line, each break in my stream of consciousness, was meant to prick the reader with the jagged edges of a shattering psyche. But even as I was preparing myself to be absorbed into an imagined triple darkness, something in me was desperately clinging to this world. I thought about how a counselor had been telling me for years to talk to someone from mental health, and how my restorative justice teacher, recognizing the same traits of depression and potential for self-harm she'd witnessed with her daughter, urged me to reach out to someone.

I had no reason to be confident in the ability, or desire, of anyone to help me escape the mode of melancholy I had been existing in for decades. But I was desperate. I transitioned from a morbid letter with the inscription “whomever may be concerned,” into an address to mental health, imploring someone – anyone – be concerned. Someone came to see me the next day. That reaction time just might have been the difference in whether I would fall or fly. Being quarantined during the worst of the pandemic brought to light the tenuous nature of psychological stability. Not just for me: I heard it in the voices of the men around me as their collective holler demanded humane treatment; but mostly, I FELT It – the energy of fear was palpable, and mental collapse seemed possible. There was an urgency to live, and it was psychological torture not knowing... That’s when I realized, there not only needs to be an abolition of the concept of incarceration, but what we need right now is an expansion of the quality and quantity of mental health services in Stateville.

In another joint I’ve heard about, an army of MHPs (Mental Health Professionals) converge on the residents daily, holding individual and group sessions: creating plans of recovery based on the trauma of each client, treating all with human dignity and respect, as if their life held an intrinsic value.

In a maximum-security institution where the majority of the population is serving long term sentences that they aren’t really expected to outlive, I would argue that there should be more mental health staff than security. And those who have been conditioned to self-medicate in order to cope or suppress their issues should be able to seek help without the threat of punishment. With more of a mental wellness approach to the carceral environment, one might be able to get the care they need way before finding themselves gazing over that existential cliff, wondering if they have the courage – or cowardice – to jump...

Will they fall, or fly?



Family



Hi Beloved,

I come to give you something to think about – “Family!” When some of us think about family, we think of our dysfunctional and unsavory homes. Knowing the old way has not worked, perhaps we could start to rebuild our family. We must eradicate the street mentality and build positive, productive young men & women in our families! The youth in our family should not see us as diabolical, or even with a debased way of thinking. We must show one another love and forgiveness. Yes there will always be dark nights as well as obstacles; however, we can overcome them, overcome these chains and strongholds that have hindered us for so many years! With love being shown, the youngsters of the family will thrive and be more confident and less inclined to seek out criminal behavior. Our family must begin to pursue education so we can see ourselves as a family full of success: judges, doctors, teachers as well as entrepreneurs. No one in our prodigious and audacious family will be allowed to sell drugs or go without an education. With us using our intellect – the next trip our family will take will be to Africa or other exotic places, not to Stateville or the cemetery. It’s time to rebuild and become the family we long to see. Remember: the more the creator gives you, the more responsible he expects you to be! Become a paragon of behavior and stay blessed.

As ever,

Moses O’ba Stamps

Family Ties by Jamario Neal

My name is Jamario Neal and I wanted to write about family ties because I’ve recently got back to talking to my family after so many years of pushing them away from me. I’m 23 years old and I haven’t been alive for very long, but one thing I’ve learned is that family is one of the most important things on earth. No matter what you go through, you can always count on your family to be there through good or bad. They will always be there to pick you up and keep motivating you to do better.

I’ve been incarcerated for 5 years and my family has never shown me a sign of disappointment. They always tell me how smart I am and how I need to use all of the tools that I’ve learned over the years, so that when I come home I can utilize them in my every day life. I love my family because all they’ve wanted from me is to choose my own path to walk on whatever it is to be the best and never be afraid to disappoint the disappointed. My family has pushed me to wanna change my life not for them but for me, cause it means nothing if you want to change for somebody else. You gotta want it in your heart and in your soul, or, like my Brother Jamus always says, “You will always revert back to old ways.”

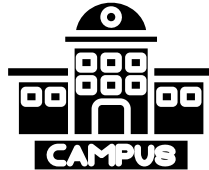
I’ve walked both paths: one with no support from family, and now with the support of family. And from my past experience I highly encourage you to set down and regain the bond and love for your family. Because the love that comes from family is unmatched and you can take this from somebody that left their mom’s house at the age of 14 years old and had to find everything out the hard way, and trust me that’s “NO” fun at all. I know sometimes it feels like family isn’t there for you, but trust me they are. Just use your words because it might just be a miscommunication between both parties. But never turn your back on family like I did because family love and support is the only love and support you need. Why? Because it’s the only love and support that won’t be faked. Always love and support your family as well. You never know when somebody needs it. And it can be the difference between life or death.

Dedications

By Tremaine Mason aka Teezy Dedication- Family Ties - Mental Health



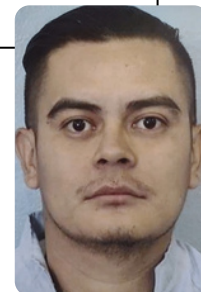
My truest form of dedication is the love I have for my 5 kids. At my sentencing hearing I said that my kids were the foundation of my sanity. I am dedicated to being the best father I can be even in such circumstances. My kids have kept me outta seg for the past 15 years because not being able to talk to them or see them would drive me crazy. So before I make a decision I always ask myself is this worth me not talking to my kids for a few months, and for the last 15 years, the answer has always been no. My children are all by 5 different women, so none of my kids have grown up in the same house together, but because of my mother picking them up on weekends and making sure I see them every month, they have a close brothers and sisters bond, a real family tie. And that's all I wanted for them: to grow up knowing each other and having that bond because I have an older brother and sister through my father and we have never been close. I've only talked to them once in 15 years and that was in 2018 when our father passed away. I wanted a closer bond for my kids, and I am blessed that they have that. They group chat at least once a week and my son who is 22 brings them to see me also. This plays a huge part in my mental health because whenever I fall down, I'll call one of them and try to make them laugh because hearing their laughter always brightens up my day. I am dedicated to being a great father for Cashay, Trevon, Sheniya, Tuarice and Shavell. And now I am going to be an amazing grandfather for my granddaughter Zahara aka Za-Za. She is in a world of trouble with all this panned up spoiling I got in store for her.



Mental Health

“Education as an Element to Success”

By **Victor Bandala-Martinez**



When I got incarcerated in 2008, I didn't have the ability to speak, read, or write any English. That was a big problem for me. The first year of my incarceration was very difficult for me because most of the time I had to rely on other people, (in custody), to speak for me, and to be honest – I hated it! It made me feel like their character was replacing who I was as a person. So I decided to educate myself.

I remember in 2009, a jail nurse secured for me one of the infirmary's English-Spanish dictionaries. Also, some other guys – that were also incarcerated with me – would go to their G.E.D. classes and they would return with stacks of English grammar books by sneaking them from the classrooms for me in hopes of assisting me. It was fun and it felt great. Seeing how strangers came together for me, it made me feel supported.

Sadly, I ended up being sent to segregation and all the books I had were taken to the school department. However, in segregation, I was allowed to keep with me an important set of tools, a small pocket dictionary and a few novels. With my tools, I started reading novels. I remember that if I was able to understand 50 percent of a complete sentence, the other 50 percent I would eventually figure out. That made me feel so happy with myself.

In 2010, I was transferred from my county jail to Menard Correctional Center. By that time, I already learned the basic parts of the language. Now, I was able to have complete conversations with my attorneys, and in 2015, I personally wrote my first legal document. I created a motion in response to my appellate attorney's motion to withdraw from my case. That year, the appellate court denied my attorney's motion and ordered him to raise the issues that I had previously raised on my petition. Thanks to my ability to speak the language, I was able to prevail in my case.

It was not until the year 2016, when I was transferred to Stateville Correctional Center, that I was, (for the first time), allowed to attend the mandatory school program. It was a long process, but finally in 2023, I received my high school diploma. Since then I have continued to educate myself by attending multiple P-NAP classes and other lectures. I now write poems, personal essays, memoirs, legal letters, and other documents. I am also trying to read more so I can continue to extend my vocabulary, and I am currently waiting for applications to allow me to enroll myself in a Master's or Bachelor's degree program.

In closing, education has not only allowed me to understand myself better, but it has also shaped me and pushed me to a better future. This will allow me to use education to tell my story, help others and hopefully one day, to help myself to earn my freedom.

“Fear” by Jimmie Moody

Whether real or imagined I am consumed by the ever-sensed presence of fear. Fear of being Myself, not being Accepted, being vulnerable, taken advantage of, -n- being hurt mentally, emotionally, -n- physically. I fear stepping out of it for fear of what that means because within the constraints of it lies a sense of peace (no matter how false) because I know what's expected of me -n- what to expect. In this I've conditioned my mind to be chained by it -n- become someone I wasn't, out of fear to survive. Growing up I've experienced how cruel some people can be -n- just as the body creates defense mechanisms to protect itself from viruses so does the mind to protect itself from trauma, which is the origin of fear. Fear is the reason I caught my first case at 13, then another at 14 which caused me to spend 3 yrs in I.Y.C. It was the reason I spent another 3 yrs in prison at 18 -n- now 21 yrs -n- counting. By no means am I using this as justification for my actions, but merely stating now I understand why. I think I've always known but I was too afraid to acknowledge it within myself because I was taught to even feel fear meant you were a coward so I suppressed it -n- in so doing suppressed -n- robbed myself of the life I could've had. Fear alters our thoughts, perceptions, -n- actions. It paralyzes our growth, leaving us stuck in past experiences as our lives become reactionary by them in present -n- future situations, which means we've adopted the mentality of fear to live, enjoy life, -n- be. But what if we were so bold to no longer allow this fear to control us, break out of its cycle that encourages itself upon each new layer -n- dare to be our true authentic selves? Maybe then we'd be able to change our narrative, community, -n- environment. In “The Power of Your Subconscious Mind,” Dr. Joseph Murphy wrote, “Fear is a thought in your mind -n- you are afraid of your own thoughts.” Our experiences mold us into who we are -n- as valid as our fears may be, we don't have to be defined by them. It's time to break free of whatever hold it has -n- the only way to do that is by doing the very thing you fear.

Love.

Forget About Me, I Love You (F.A.M.I.L.Y.)

By Demetrice “DC” Crite

I grew up in a FAMILY that USED to be a very close knit one. However, over the years it seems that that closeness has all but unraveled.

There have been many events that have taken place over time that can be blamed for fraying our bond of love, but I believe that the death of my grandmother, Lula B. Palmer, took a toll on us ALL.

Grannie, as I called her, not only loved her children (13) and her grandchildren (52), but also is remembered for being a mother to the motherless in my community; a grandmother to the grandmotherless; a sister, cousin, friend, and a place of refuge to those who needed her. Blood-relation didn't matter. I never understood that my grandmother was being an example of what adoption of a “chosen family” looked like.

As years passed, my frayed relationships and dwindling family, blood family, and support had taken up space within me and I had become a broken vessel.

It had an effect on how I served time, viewed myself and others, and most of all who I shared love with. In my mind, my family consisted of me, myself, and I. But, just as events take place to break us, things happen to heal us.

In 2017, three things happened in my life. I was blessed to find God. I learned how to forgive others and myself, and I learned to give and accept love from sources I never expected.

Allowing God to lead, guide, and show me things, I re-discovered what I learned from my grandmother's example. She showed me that our blood only made us kin, but our love is what makes us family. I realized that if I only accepted it, the world was my family and the support that I needed.

Today, through my church family, education, and in those whose unexpected support I receive, I have been given a hug that is so tight that it has allowed all of my broken pieces to come back together again. Most of all, without uttering a word, they have loudly proclaimed: “Forget About Me, I Love You (F.A.M.I.L.Y.)!” This allows me to grow in a close-knit family, one filled with love.

By: **Gregory (JR) Reed** “It's OK”

I would like to ask the masses a question, “Are you alright?” Now before you answer this simple but relevant question, I want you to take a brief moment & think long & hard about what I just asked. Better yet, I'll ask again, “Are you alright?” Regardless of what your initial response to the question is, I'll be the first to say, if for some reason you're not, It's OK. I speak on behalf of those who struggle with mental health, be it consciously or unconsciously, & I'm here to let you know that you're not alone. For most of my life, childhood & adulthood, despite the traumatic experiences throughout the course of it, I naively believed that mental health issues were a figment of one's imagination.

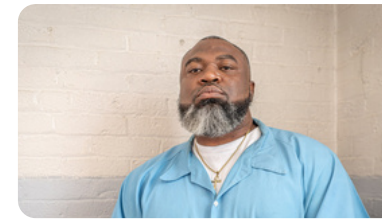
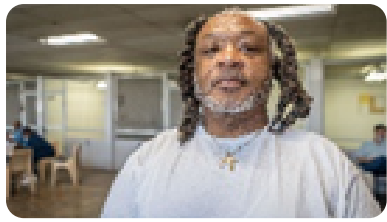
Only now, as a result of personal experience, I've become an advocate for my own ignorance & I say aloud to anyone who's listening: mental health is real. It continues to plague too many of us inside & outside these walls, so it's a must we acknowledge its existence if we're to overcome the grief it causes with no regard. I have no recollection of the pressures living on the outside brings, but I am well acquainted with the mental strain thirteen years of incarceration can place on the mind, body & soul of a man.

The days are long & the nights are even longer. I suffer from deprivation of life, in all of its fullness & all I'm left with is hope. The balance of a man is wrapped up in the love he has for his children, the love he has for his mother, the love of being close to a woman which makes him just as much of a man as the day he was identified at birth, & without those essential pieces of life he is every bit of less than.

Go ahead & say it, what the heck is he talking about, is he losing his mind? The answer is no but the constant thought of one day regaining what was so inhumanely taken is driving me insane. I'm angry, mad, happy & sad all at the same time. Depressed & lonely are their neighbors so I work overtime to try and find the proper balance to help maintain my mental sanity.

With all that being said, the point I'm trying to make is this: those who suffer from or struggle with mental health issues, don't be afraid to ask for help. Seek it in the form of spirituality if you're religious, prayer in particular. Do not hesitate to lean on friends, family & loved ones for mental support if you have them, but under no circumstance do you try to fight it on your own. You don't have to, nor should you have to & always remember, you're not alone but either way, “It's OK.”





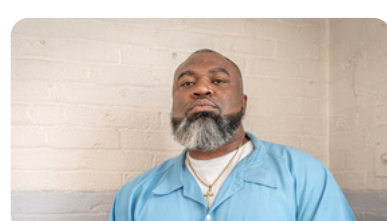
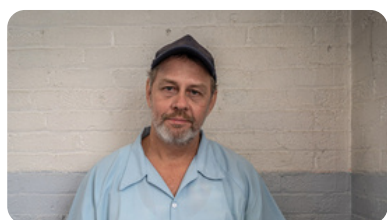
No Photo Available:
Eddie Mentgen
George Ross



A Class To Remember: North Park Students 2024



Art by Carlvosier Smith and Anthony Ehlers





Praise Jehovah God, a full year back into my North Park curriculum.

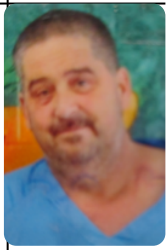
Are you wondering why I find it praiseworthy to be back at North Park for a whole year? Well, my journey began three years ago (in January) with a junior year start of spring semester 2021.

I thought after my first two years, with the help in study hall and class-mates, I had my academics somewhat under control as I surfed the tsunami waves of reading and writing assignments. My first sign that there was something wrong with my health came during the last week of October of the fall semester. I was experiencing discomfort in my stomach; bowels had not moved in several days. All I could think was I cannot afford to be sick too close to fall semester final exams. I tried to convince myself that I could surf through the growing waves of discomfort and hope I could make it through fall semester final exams; then, I would check with health care about the pain in my stomach. The first week of November I submitted a sick-call slip, in the middle of the week Wednesday. The med-tech, thinking I was merely constipated gave me liquid laxative. However, there was nothing else health care could do for me until after the weekend, when I would be able to see a doctor or nurse practitioner. That Wednesday night I drank the laxative. A few minutes after drinking the laxative, it came back-up like a volcano erupted in my stomach, causing a wave of pain to rumble throughout my stomach. I threw up to the point of dry heaving. That led me to the point of becoming dehydrated and being put in a position of having to drink water from the sink in my cell. (The water in the big bag the worker passed out was gone.) I had no choice; I needed water because my throat was dry, and I had become feverish. Coming out of the first weekend of November was filled with nightmares and delusions. The second week, 7th of November, I went to health care for an x-ray taken, I cannot remember when? What I did know was the pain caused in my left arm and hand from the nurses trying to find a vein, which had collapsed due to my extreme thirst over the weekend. My left arm had so many needle holes, you would have thought I was a dope addict. Relief came only when one of the many nurses managed to insert a needle and start an IV to pump fluids into my body.

Friday the 11th of November, I will never forget my journey to St. Joseph Hospital because it was there that I received the most shocking news and experienced extreme pain. After arriving at St. Joseph, I was placed in a room where I had to remove my clothing and put on a hospital gown. It was then two nurses came to prepare me for surgery- What!? One of the most extremely painful parts of the preparation that caused tears to roll from my eyes was when the nurse ran a plastic tube up through my right nostril while the other nurse told me to drink the water from the cup to help the tube go down my throat into my stomach. After going through that extreme pain, I remember the doctor came into the room to explain the shocking news. The 12th of November, Saturday morning I would be in surgery to remove a tumor that was blocking my small intestine. My fall semester was Tumor-nami washed up for the year 2021.

In the new year 2022, I went to the University of Illinois (U of I) for twelve rounds of chemo, three days every other week that lasted from February 9th until August 11th, 2022. During the three-day stay, the food at first was too good. Then chemo treatment started to take effect so my sense of taste was gone, I could not taste anything, plus cold water tasted strange, everything was warm water and juices. Weeks later, I could not stand the smell of my evening meals. I would save some of my breakfast and lunch to carry me until I went back to STATEVILLE. I could not believe I craved STATEVILLE foods, WOW!! I stayed in a private room with a TV and radio, nice. After a short time my crave faded for STATEVILLE foods; now I was craving for commissary foods like red beans & rice, I wanted it hot to eat, feel good going down into my stomach. I noticed the hot & spicy foods items tasted extra spicy and hot; maybe it was the chemo side effects that intensified the hotness. I decided to buy mild foods items because hot summer sausage & hot chili was too hot for me to eat. The chemo had side effects on my hands and feet: my hands had no feeling in my fingertips, my feet were numb and the toes felt frostbit off and on that made it hard for me to walk. But it was a slow progress with me trying to write and walk.

Earlier I stated above in my paper, "I AM BACK!!" The 10th of December of 2022, the doctor gave me good news: CANCER FREE!! YES!! I wrote Prof. Ken and asked who do I write to begin my curriculum. During that time I was sent my information for my 2023 spring semester. Here I go again, starting my junior year. Once again I was ready to try to surf the tsunami waves of reading and writing assignments. However, in the fall semester of 2023 the last week of September 28th, Thursday, felt like Deja Vu, this time there was no health problem, but I could have been washed-up for that 2023 fall semester exam. What's more, that's another story to be told...



As I sat in my cell reading the Dec/Jan edition of *Feather Bricks*, I came to the realization that I've been overlooking a great, well put-together newsletter. Every article was very well-written by some talented authors (two of which stood out): Mr. Elton Williams and Willie Spates. Elton's article hit me pretty hard, not only the words in his article, but the daily conversations we have about life, legacy, and God's plan. He has a lot of useful knowledge in his head, and he will share it! Elton has awakened me to a lot of topics, and I look forward to future conversations that we will have. His talks have given me hope in some very hopeless times. It was Elton who encouraged me to write this article. Lacking a better term, he is "brutally honest," and that trait reminds me of an expression my Grandpa used to say a lot, "If you always worry that you might offend someone, then you will never be able to be completely honest;" would you rather be offensive or dishonest? Elton Williams will always tell the truth to be very honest no matter who he is speaking to!

As to Willie Spates, I would love to have the opportunity to meet and converse with this individual. It was the comment he shared, made by his classmate Rayon, "They don't consider us fully human." Rayon is Jamaican Don't ya know, or at least that's what Elton says. That comment got me thinking because it hit a nerve and from the morning I woke up in the county jail, I felt the same way, though the difference is I'm white and in my 50s, and in here I have learned that I am the minority so many times over: ethnicity, age, perspective, etc. Then an old saying of my mother's popped into my head, "If you're not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem."

I set out to write about leaving one's mark, one's life legacy: moral and ethical verses material. I was on course to leave both, or so I thought! I had the business, the bank accounts, a fleet of vehicles, and all the material items. Shortly after arriving here, during a phone conversation with my son on how I was disappointed that I was not going to have anything left to leave to him and sister, as I had planned, he stopped me mid-sentences and said something that totally blew my mind, "Dad, you already left me something more valuable than all that material sh*t you lost. You left me the integrity and the morals to become a real man, father, and husband." I must admit what he said shut me down for a moment; it made me realize I had been seeing things all wrong when it came to leaving one's mark. I was way too focused on the material.

I was raised by my mother; absent was my dad. I did have a couple uncles and my grandpa as positive role models, but no one in the home to show me or lead by example how to be a real man. Mom did date a couple guys who showed me what not to do (i.e. beating on family members, drug and alcohol abuse...) Then I had my grandpa's Cowboy Code that he lived by: "If you owe it, pay it; if you say it, mean it; and if it isn't yours, don't take it." This is that which I adopted, but eventually fell short of.

Yes, my family had a lot of sayings, but that one says a lot. It speaks to integrity, honesty, and commitment. As I got older and began to start my own family, I quickly discovered that I still had a lot to learn while I was already attempting to teach life lessons to my children. The success I had raising my own kids, I credit to my mother, who stood in the breach, in place of their mothers who were absent for a time...like my own dad was. In case I'm not making myself understood here, I struggled to be a good father, husband, and man. So mom's help was very much appreciated, and I guess this might be considered her legacy: commitment, integrity, love for family and I guess she got this from my grandpa.

It took me coming to prison to find out that I was not alone in thinking that I had to be this perfect person. For too many others share that same struggle, and all of us have failed to archive that goal, but we all maintain the capacity to be better...so, there is still hope.

These young dads in prison can still learn to be good fathers by working as a team with the mothers of the kids that they left behind. They can turn their negatives into positives by doing what other inmates have done when raising their kids from within the prison walls and acting as a team with the mothers, as well as not falling victim to the power of suggestion that history will repeat itself. I recall a story shared to me by a fellow inmate about his success in keeping his kids from following his path, by always being involved and there for them as much as the situation would allow, and this was a moving story also, and quite possibly the outlier. I don't know.

That being said, I would like to encourage and implore each and every man out there who reads this article to think before you speak or do something that could affect your integrity, freedom, or your life.

We all need to learn to forgive and to have the ability to show compassion as well as believing that “This too shall pass.” Every male out there should practice as well as teach one another ways to become better men. Then we might all come to feel human despite how others see us. We need to learn how to turn over our problems to God and always think WWJD; no matter how we get treated, we should endeavor to stand on higher ground. What I also believe is it’s going to take all of us working together to produce an effective change in the mindset of our future men, and with the young women they choose to start a family with.

What I realize after writing all that I have written is that all the tools representing the most important concepts surrounding legacy had been provided to me throughout my life. I lost sight of them. I grew overly focused on the material and neglected those things that would not only have made me that better person but also made the world a better place. This present struggle has helped me to understand that the most important challenge facing every male is not gaining material wealth, but leaving moral riches: a foundation of ethics upon which the whole of humanity may stand and grow!

Mental Health by Damondros Q. James
Co-writer, Raymond Youngblood

As I sit back and truly contemplate on a formula that I could apply to proceed through this life while dealing with mental health crises, a thought crossed my mind. Many years ago, before ever speaking on something so sensitive as mental health issues, it would have been perceived as taboo; sorta like being diagnosed as crazy. Now we’re living in that time where that diagnosis was simply misinformed. Times are evolving, and mental health awareness is becoming popular and a part of our social fabric.

By me recognizing this along with the many characters with few opportunities to speak about it under the circumstances, I had to take advantage of it. The humility and consideration I developed from being mentally healthy encourages me to share my experience and perspectives on this topic, hoping that my voice and insight could give an understanding avenue to prevail, despite the personal values and topics we have to confront when engaging and discussing mental health issues.

Mental health is a topic that I am very passionate about discussing because I know how significant it is to one’s being. Your mental health is everything, especially under certain circumstances like being incarcerated, whether that being physical incarceration or mental incarceration, or both. We all understand what it means to be physically incarcerated, so let me explain what it means to be mentally incarcerated: when one is in such state that their mind is so disorganized that all thoughts create stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, and a lot of negative thoughts, allowing their circumstances to dictate their thoughts, emotions, and actions. We all have the ability to control our thoughts, moods, and behaviors, no matter the circumstances, but when the focus on the mental health is neglected, the control that you possess is lost to the circumstances, making you mentally incarcerated.

There are ways that one can regain and keep control of their choices by prioritizing mental health. This might be easier for an individual with an introverted personality, which I am, and more challenging for the extroverted personality. Either way it goes, it’s going to be a journey, a journey to focus on the pains, regrets, stressors, depression, etc...all the low energy thoughts and emotion with intention of confronting them with intention to convert them into peace, joy, love, etc...all the high energy positive thoughts and emotions. Once you become aware of the negative thoughts and emotions only then will you be able to identify the root causes of them, which is critical. Next, you could begin to put work in towards finding solutions to help you change your way of thinking. Once you do that, then you’ll be able to understand how powerful you are and how you are in control of your thoughts, choices, and behavior.

By locking in on your mental health, you can control the circumstances of your life, and others. As we all know, life is full of choices. So, when you’re making a series of healthy, high energy, positive choices, you get good results. You will become mentally strong enough to overcome the obstacles that have been laid before you. When you focus on the thoughts that trouble you with the intention of trying to identify a counter for them, that’s when you’ll begin to be enlightened. The solutions will come to you, but the hardest thing will be for you to follow through and act on them.

The solutions will come when you put the work in for them, and they will come in ways that will



challenge you. It would dare you to engage in the solution because when you do you will have to go against what you are comfortable with. Your perspective will change. Habits will have to change. As a result of that, you'll get changed.

When I first realized I was having a mental health issue, I was in a maximum security prison, surrounded by strangers, away from my family and friends, leaving me with no one to talk about what I was going through. The prison did not provide a therapist/mental health counselor or classes to help me learn how to cope with my mental health situation. So, what I resorted to was journaling. It became my therapy sessions.

I used journaling as one of my solutions. It allowed me to get everything that I was thinking about and feeling out of me. The good and the bad. It became my avenue to release the chaos that was going on inside my head so I could see them and confront them. By seeing them, I was able to identify the cause and effect, then solutions to prevent them from happening to me, and how to deal with them when I can't prevent. Going through that process caused me so much pain. But going through that process truly made me stronger and helped me identify myself.

I used journaling to write down my goals and how I wanted my life to be. I used it to write down who I am and who I want to be, affirmations and so much more. Journaling helped me organize my thoughts which became the most significant contribution to my mental health issues. Once I was able to do that I gained a good peace of mind/good mental health.

Only then was I able to align my mind, body, and spirit. When I became aware of that, I started to feel better, act better, and overall function better. By continuing to focus on my mental health I have been able to produce and stay within high energy, positive levels the majority of the time. Being on those levels, I feel free and feel I have the ability to deal with the rare negative things that attempt to come my way. I have been attracting more positives into my life because I have been disciplined enough to do the work and align the mind, body, and spirit together.

In closing, I want you to be aware that the solutions to mental health issues are many and vary according to the individual. By me speaking on this topic and the experience, I wanted to show those who are dealing with mental health issues that I understand. I also hope to inspire individuals to prioritize their mental health, embrace the challenges, and put the work in to become better. I'm not an expert, but I have experience. And so long that there is a platform of such, I will make sure I go out of my way to bring awareness to mental health.

By Ron Jackson

While thinking about the amount of time I was facing, my mind started racing. I never imagined being in this kind of situation, but it seemed as if my back was against the wall. I couldn't believe that I was actually charged with such a crime that carries a hefty sentence. Who would ever know that I would be lied on to this extent. As I tried to take responsibility for putting myself in a situation not to be lied on, my mind was ubiquitous. I thought to myself that there's no way I could get found guilty of this. As the years went by fighting for my life, I learned that my accuser was being vindictive. Holding a grudge against my lifestyle, something that was a small problem to me had a big impact on my victim's heart.

Nothing was going my way and I wondered about the outcome. I finally roused when it was too late. I had already vowed that I'd rather not be present in life rather than to spend the rest of my life in jail. 35-95 years was too much. Wondering about the circumstances that brought me to this situation changed my mindframe, along with others speaking knowledge into my ears. They brought me zest and I then promised success. The thoughts of being violent went out of my mind; my daughter and my family took over my mental. I decided to keep fighting for truth and make the best of this situation. I fell in love with the quote, "Everything happens for a reason"...I've been striving ever since. No more thoughts of suicide by combat.

I started this transition by reading about mental health and coping mechanisms. I read about anger management, grief and loss, and interpersonal relationships. Ultimately, the coping mechanisms were very helpful, and I succeeded in overcoming these mental health struggles.

This is what led me to enter programs with an elevated intellectual ability. During these times I learned more about myself, not only by learning myself but by others learning about me and sharing their thoughts with me. Now I'm working hard to obtain my freedom and my bachelor's degree. Mental health is all; I say you don't need to be afraid to face yourself. You are your enemy. Study your mental health and find a coping mechanism that fits you. Working to be liberated helps me cope, along with gaining the knowledge and wisdom that I need to be successful in society. Find yours and you will create your own zest...





(Mental Health) By The **Minister CD. Everett**

Like a tapestry of woven colors, my emotions and moods are affixed to one another in a design far more complex than I am able to comprehend. As a youth I thought Mental Health was a joke. In my adolescence I laughed and scoffed at the idea of such struggle. Nevertheless, I was hot and cold. Luke warm couldn't describe my coffee. I guess this is why some attributed the twin personalities to those of the Gemini zodiac? However, I know for sure that I am either feeling a thing, or I'm not. I am rarely, if ever, somewhere in-between.

I am convinced that on a spiritual level that this is one of God's gifts to me over these past 24 years of incarceration. I just had to make up my mind, and that left me (often times) doing things according to my own understanding. I was torn to pieces. Every decision it seems had me feeling like I was missing out on something else. The very thing that I chose not to do was now weighing heavy on my mind, trying to get me to say, "yes" to it. Just as I swore to never speak to the woman who abandoned me to die in prison, this decision poked at me every day, and I felt like it was driving me crazy. It had even invaded other areas of my life. How is this possible? But even when I'd warmed up to the idea to forgive and move on, that bone-chilling cold was pressing against me, saying, "No!" "She broke her marital vows, leave her alone." By then I'd grown tired and decided to let my "yes" be "yes," and my "no" be "no," without any attachment of anger or displeasure. Only then did I begin to suffer less the mental consternation of letting go the people who are toxic to my daily experience of God's joy.

In crossing paths with people of differing personalities (neighbors, staff, coworkers, cell house help, and cellies), my mind must be stayed on the Lord, who will reveal one's true nature and purpose (if any) in my life. Allowing others to be their true authentic selves is one way of avoiding any unnecessary stress. But it is hard, especially living in such close proximity, and those who are bound to anger and mad at the world. Unknowingly, by the end of one of these encounters, I'm bearing a burden God did not intend, as a way just laid into my lap. Now, if I will keep my sanity intact, I must shut myself off from such energy, unless called to minister, in which case I am led by prayer and acceptance, of my calling. Therefore, if there is anything praiseworthy or of good report, meditate on these. Amen.

I have also discovered that I am unable to keep my mind from roaming and running, but I can stop people and things from roaming and running about in my mind. So, caretakers be aware. Don't be ashamed if you need a little help or a much needed break; don't even fret if prayer alone seems not to be working. Bear down! Because only you can determine the building blocks for the day ahead, and your mental health will always supply those blocks accordingly.





Adverse Incarceral Events (AIEs) by Marshall Stewart

Biblically, the Pauline corpus calls me to “...take captive every thought and make...[them]” (II Cor. 10:5). The “them” are my chronic daily battles with cerebral Post-It notes in an isolated environment that occasionally appears to be never ending. Nineteen incarceral years have gone by, and I now process continually Adverse Incarceral (isolated) Events (AIE) in my defacto death sentence. Stateville prison generates needs for outcomes to the automatic compartmentalization process for the negative stressors I’ve experienced while isolated. Most individuals within the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) are acutely, NOPE!, are chronically aware of stressors... even if we cannot quantify them. While alone we experience:

The death of a parent — child — spouse — sibling, etc...

The huge legal losses that scream: “no end is in sight”.

The threats to safety while incarcerated, real or imagined.

The sounds, sights, and experiences of violence and suicide.

The absence or loss of family networks... social ones too!

The loss of support systems that ameliorate prison needs.

The newly experienced chronic disease; sub-par treatment modalities and outcomes
AND MORE...

In the PIC, some individuals may have one or more of these AIE’s continually occurring. This begs the question: What can those in the PIC do with the AIE’s? Historically, treatment modalities are launched from the Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) lists which begin with a diagnosis from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), but what if a diagnosis is not listed like AIE’s, then a prescriptive plan cannot be formulated?

For AIE’s, we have no CPT codes because we have no premise to build on for isolated incarceral issues—we have no ICD codes, not yet. The goal would be to explore, expose, & elucidate these issues through North Park Theological Seminary’s degree and its application. In the PIC, we (the isolated imprisoned) try to exhibit normalized responses to AIE’s, because who desires to show a perceived weakness which may define us as weak or prey, and may lead to predatory action(s)?

To those behind 30’ walls, we are aware of how predator and prey classification affects us, and are aware of the reality when events occur, or when our social currency is affected due to AIE’s. Once AIE’s are seasoned with social covert mores of prison, (honor and shame behavior), any misalignment of your social life can be detrimental to your overall well being. This is where the rubber hits the road for graduate degree holders... post-graduate research solutions, and pastoral care counselors. As AIE’s are real, today I will stretch out my hand and my heart to assist someone other than me; will you join me? It’s “take captive” time!!!

MORE BY MARSHALL: Response to Genogram Prompt:

In the book, *Healing Racial Trauma-the Road to Resilience,* author Sheila Wise Rowe posits [t]he genogram may help...[us] identify racial trauma passed down to... [us] from...[our] ancestors,” which for me not only yielded a linear line but also exposed cyclical generations of attained family traits (2020, 159). Through my Christcentric lens I have learned to track the special traits my family tree exhibits so that I do not paint a picture with a crooked brush, reinforcing the truth that all of us are highly favored.

Mental Health by Jamal Bakr

One of the ways that we order the world is by creating barriers and boundaries. We create barriers – think walls and fences – and boundaries – think yellow and white lane dividers – to help protect and direct us. We erect these structures in relationship with other people, too. We build barriers to keep us safe from harm. We build boundaries to guide us. We use these constructs to insulate us in, and help us navigate through, the social world.

The experience of trauma can cause us to create and maintain additional barriers and boundaries. When we experience acute trauma, proper treatment can assist in reestablishing normalcy and a sense of safety. In the instant of effective treatment, any unnecessary social barriers and boundaries tend to erode. Chronic trauma, however, makes our brains construct social buffers in order to survive beyond a single traumatic event. Dependent on the circumstances, our brains respond this way because the trauma itself is the norm and so is feeling unsafe. The longer the duration of the trauma, the wider the boundaries. The deeper the trauma, the higher the walls.

If we don't seek proper treatment, what was meant for navigation can begin to trap us, and what was meant to insulate can begin to isolate us. The irony of it is that we build these walls and dividers to keep us from being harmed, but we only end up becoming entrenched in our trauma; it's like being on an island and our only company is the hurt and pain. We cannot begin to cultivate healthy, sustainable, and loving relationships unless we seek treatment. Treatment only works, and we can only grow lasting relationships, if we are willing to do the inventory and ask ourselves where our boundaries and barriers came from to start with.

For those of us who have begun the healing journey and discovered the origins and reasons behind the walls, fences, guardrails, and land dividers, I implore that at every milestone of progress, you do a systems check, ask yourself if you have additional barriers and boundaries from your past that you may no longer need. For the road to healing may be long and arduous, there may be many blockades, built by ourselves and others. Yet, on the other side of those constructs exists a life not without its impediments, but a life filled with the kind of relationships that make it an easier journey.



.....

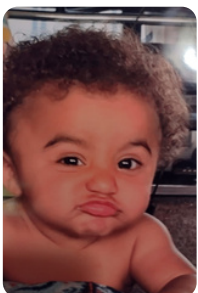
Wisdom Blvd.

By Mishunda Davis-Brown



I recall finding money various times as a kid growing up. I was so happy. Their loss was my gain, and I didn't feel guilty about it. Then one day, I recall losing some money. I was devastated, mainly sad, until a wise thought came to my mind: "What about all the money of others that I found? Can I really be upset?" That's when I cheered up and accepted my loss and from that point on when I'd lost money, I didn't feel bad about it. You win some and you lose some. Gaining and losing is a part of life's ups and downs. Be content through it all because it's a lesson to be learned and it will all work out.

Go King Kong!



1. When you fill out your commissary list for groceries but the promised money to cover it never comes, Go King Kong!
2. While someone scratches your parked car when you are in the store, Go King Kong!
3. When you go to get your eyebrows "arched" but leave looking surprised, Go King Kong!
4. When commercial break seems to be taking 5-10 minutes, Go King Kong!
5. When the forecast says there will be a 5-10 percent chance of rain, and it ends up pouring. Go King Kong!
6. When you check your receipt to find you were actually charged twice for an item. Go King Kong!

Dedications

Praise For One of God’s Handmaidens

By: W. Peeples Jr.



In an anti-social environment like prison, one is hard-pressed to find folks who are universally loved and respected by all! Mrs. Melissa Pavlik is one such person.

The agape love and “Christ-like” empathy that she holds for the captives here at Stateville Prison is palpable, authentic, and not conditioned upon religious affiliation, nor academic association. While Melissa is “ten-toes-down” for her North Park brethren, I, as a Northwestern Alum, have witnessed first-hand her support, encouragement, and promotion of my pursuits, accomplishments, and talents.

It was shortly after NPEP held a performance of several plays written by students in our “Playwrights” class, that Melissa came to my personal notice. One of her North Park brethren said to me, “William, someone wants to meet you! She saw a scene from your play, and loved it.” About a week later I got to meet Melissa face to face. “I am one of your biggest fans, William,” she gushed, as she vigorously shook my hand. I searched her pleasant countenance for duplicity or pretense, and found only genuine, godly admiration and love.

I am not an anomaly; I’ve come to learn that this is simply who Melissa Pavlik is at her core. My good friend, and North Park alum, Scott Moore related two separate incidents where Melissa Pavlik stepped in, and stepped up on his behalf. In one case Scott wrote what she perceived to be an exceptional paper that, in Melissa’s view, just had to be published. That paper went on to be published by the University of Texas in their Praxis magazine, sans any additional editing - something that rarely happens in the publishing process! Then, there was the time Scott wrote a powerful exegesis that, once again Melissa felt must be published, but the editors of the place it was shopped to were adamant about changing some of the content. Scott, due to “journalistic integrity,” refused, and so the place declined. That was when Melissa inquired if Scott would object to his piece being published in North Park’s *Feather Bricks* magazine, insisting that it was important that people read Scott’s work.

She loves good writing and endeavors to center “good” writers, irrespective of who they are, how they worship, or which educational program at Stateville they attend. She has gone out of her way to bring notice to my writing, making one of my essays “required reading” for her class at North Park.

Literature is a path towards intellectual immortality, allowing the writer to leave a legacy and make an indelible mark on the minds and hearts of readers not yet born. To this end, Melissa is a god-send, and a conduit between incarcerated writers and the outside world. She is a blessing to all who know, love, and respect her; and I am ever to proud, and grateful to Allah to call her my friend!

“Love is not:

I will give this to you

If you do this for me

Love is:

I will give this to you

So that you may shine.” -Yung Pueblo

Melissa Pavlik’s love allows everyone she touches to shine like super-novas!



by Thomas Mills

Is anyone familiar with the movie “Freedom Writers” where Hillary Swank played an inspirational teacher named Ms. G that encouraged her students to think beyond the mental and physical boundaries of their lives through writing? It’s funny the simple act of stringing different letters together to express a thought has been a skill students practice early on pre-school. However, without the necessary intentional cultivation alongside opportunities, the skill remains undeveloped. I would like to honor someone who uses her voice and skills to cultivate the skills of others, so much so that they become teachers and advisors as well.

I would like to acknowledge the Stateville’s Writing Center version of the character Ms. G.: Mrs. Melissa “Write-On” Pavlik. That’s right, if you know the woman then you know the phrase “Write-On.” Now, I can’t honor her with some big screen movie; yet! Nevertheless, I can show her honor with my words. Let me tell you a little about someone I consider a “FRIEND.” She is a lover of a good story, whether verbal, handwritten, or typed, she is a “GIANT” that stands about 5’4” with the most giving heart, a heart that I have witnessed being pulled in many directions from simply trying to help any and all. She is a “ROCKSTAR” with a viola and can hold her own dropping bars in a cypher. She is on my short-list of people I look forward to sharing my written thoughts with just to hear what she thinks. Through her insightful feedback I always get the right combination of encouragement and correction that motivates me to dig deeper in my rewrite than I thought possible.

Mrs. Write-On, thank you for fostering my voice and confidence. I hope much like the students in the movie I made you proud with the tools you’ve given me to become a better writer. Again, thank you for always pushing me to explore the possibilities.

Professor Melissa Pavlik is one of the best humans I know; she's certainly in the top ten of my all time favorite personalities. I make this dedication having realized how difficult it is for imprisoned individuals to express fondness toward prison program faculty without such sentiments being interpreted beyond its core intention. Prof. Melissa is a phenom. She has broken the restraints and breached the limits of the psychologically self-imposed, often dehumanized outcome that inherently comes with being in prison. In other words, she accepts our person as is, not as the system describes us as. I fail to find a better quality required or looked for in someone you hope to receive support from. Prof. Melissa, thank you for your support and presence. Thank you for your belief and hope. Equally important, thank you for being consistent.

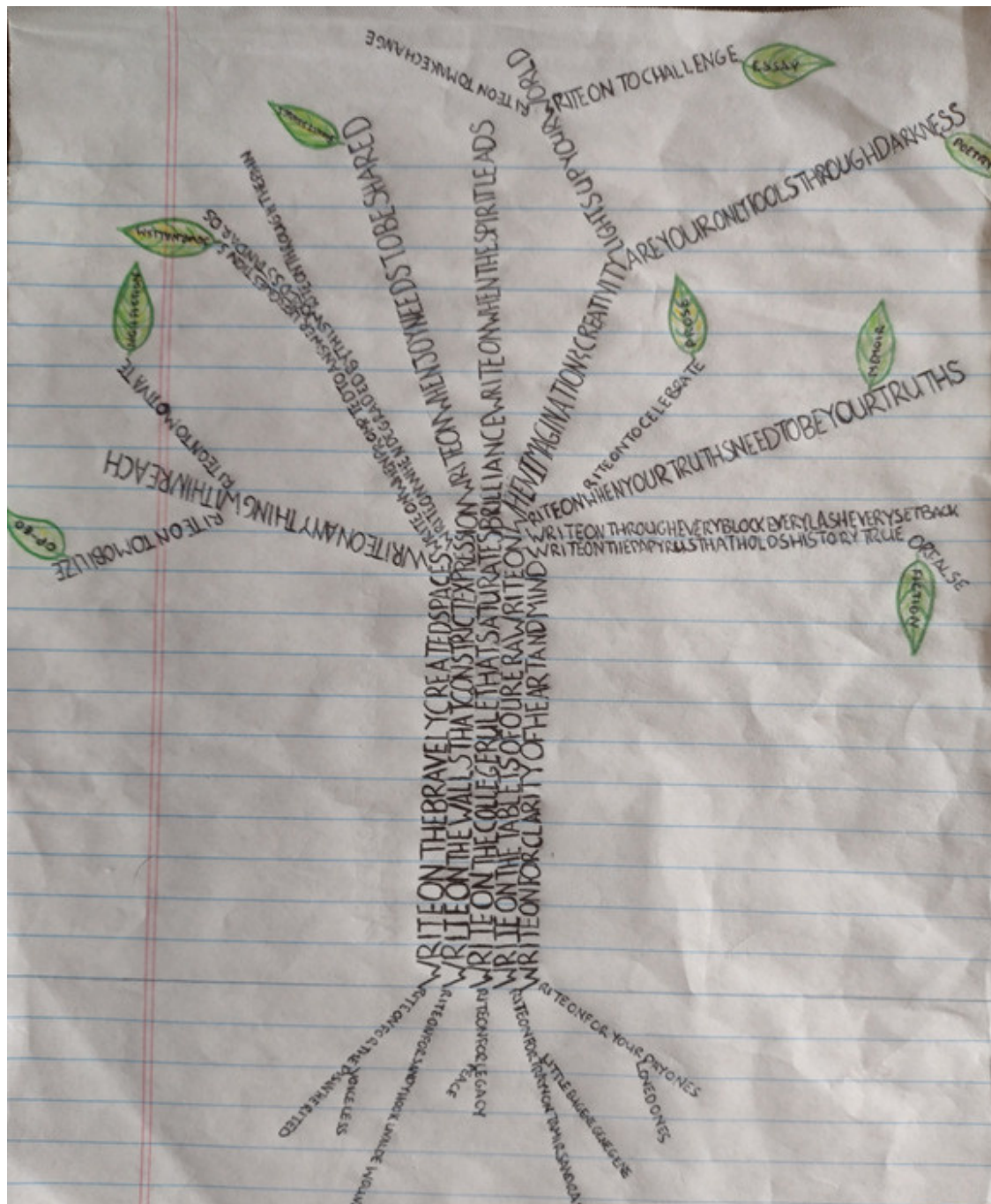


with DeCedrick Walker

Here's A Thought



with Rayon Sampson



Art by Rayon Sampson

Throughout our lives we are shaped by those we encounter. I have often heard that every single snowflake has its own distinct and unique shape. That fact helps me to appreciate the wonderment and awesome power of God. Every once in a while we encounter someone who is so distinct and unique, that we cannot help but to have that same appreciation of God's awesome power.

North Park University Writing Center Director and founder of *Feather Bricks*, Melissa Pavlik, is one such person. She constantly shapes the spaces that she encounters in positive ways, and impacts us in an immeasurable way. We are inspired by, and forever grateful for, her unwavering commitment.

By Victor Bandala-Martinez

"I am from there, not from here" is a poem that was born in one of my P-NAP classes, "Wading in Poetic Waters," with instructor Chastidy Gunn. It is a poetic origin story. It was written to show homage to the small town of Misantla, Veracruz, Mexico. The place where I am from. In fact "Misantla, Veracruz" was the original title of the poem. Yet I decided to get rid of that title and instead let the poem speak for itself. "I am from there, not from here" is a poem that is focused on the living nature of my hometown. It's a poem that has been revised, edited (multiple times), and taken through the rigid process of elimination. One of my favorite stanzas of the poem is;

[Coffee beans

where its aroma would kiss me *Good Morning!*

before my mama did.]

(By me using italics), I wanted to lend a sense of dialogue, and put words to the very special aroma that in some way, made me feel warmth, love and at home, just like the many kisses my mother used to give me.

One of my final revisions of the poem was with the stanzas and line breaks. The line breaks were inspired by Ada Limon in one of her poem titled "Ancestors," where the litanies of the poem have a stanza of their own, with the last word of the litany being the word opener to the next stanza. Last, but not least, "I am from there, not from here" was actually the last stanza of the poem. I decided to remove it from the bottom and move it all the way up to the top, to the title of the poem. That way the title could also be part of the poem. Enjoy!

"I am from there, not from here"

i am from sweet water rivers &

lagoons, I am from hot days with no shoes.

i am from the vegetation –

cilantro, hojas de patata, chiltepin, chile seco, aguacates &
elotes

That my abuelita traded for gallinas

or guajolotes, I am from the roots & the trees –

cedro, nanche, mango, chalahuite, naranjas, vainilla &

café

matas that would grow taller than me

when I was a kid.

i am from the Madre Cierra, the mountains.

where you might had found me by the

banana leaves, snacking on –

cachichines, cacaó, pipian tostado, cacahuates &

Coffee beans

Where its aroma would kiss me *Good morning!*

before my mama did.

i am from the barro. where the pigs,

The gallinas & the guajolotes used to eat.

right by the waterfall – next to the molino – where

my aunt used to live.

but, wait. hold on. Stay with me. also

i am from the east. where – later – you might

have found me by the sea. Where

The Gulf of Mexico & the sweet water river meets.

Wearing a black baseball hat, a white t-shirt with

No sleeves & a black bandana on the wrist



that was me

eating camarones, mojarras, acamayaz, oysters, octopus &
enjoying the breeze

that was me.

Truth within a Looking Glass
by **Marlon Coleman**

Vines like silk spun spider webs.
Dreams like shattered glass.
Heart cracked, broken by an unwanted
love.
Kiss don't kiss
Tell don't tell
Hide but see.
See the hate that dwells within.
Touch the fire.
The blaze burns bright.
Feel the heat of its rage.
Run don't run.
Fight don't fight.
But burn you will
From within.
Seared shut is your lips.
Mumbling but still you speak.
Kiss don't tell.
Hide but see.
Don't run.
Fight, seeing the hate that burns
bright
Touching the fire.
Feeling the heat of it.
The rage that dwells and burns which
should be you.
Silk spider webs spun like vines.
Glass shattered like dreams of mine.
A love thought to be wanted
Left a broken heart, cracked
from within.
Frozen over but
Burning with fury, born
Of betrayal.
To
Love don't love.
Trust don't trust.
Forgive but never
Forget the blaze
That burns bright
From within shouts
Vines made of silk.
Dreams made of glass.
Learn to forgive, trust, love, and forget
The past
So, that we can heal.
The past

Poetry and Art Corner

Author's Note: I wrote this in
distress when I was first
locked up. It captures the
essence of unknowing and
endless waiting that often
occurs to those first locked
up. I have since developed
coping skills and ways to
distract myself from the pain
and trauma. No matter how
far down I have gone, no
matter how dark and
despairing it seems, and wen
I'm told there is no hope – I
remember my children's
faces. They inspire me to get
up and try again one more
day. I hope this poem will
touch someone's heart –
nothing lasts forever, even
though it seems that way.
Even though God feels
absent, he is there and he
sends me his angels
disguised as inmates.
-Eva Morris-Ferrell

The Waiting Room by **Eva Morris-Ferrell**

The waiting room
It is no fun
It's where you go
When you are all done

The waiting room
Is where I sit
Everyday
I want to quit

The waiting room
This is no joke
I stare at walls
At least I can smoke

The waiting room
It is pure hell
Going in circles
In this jail cell

The waiting room
Where no one cares
They leave you here
Sometimes it's more than I can bear
It seems to go on for years and years.

The waiting room
Where there is no sun
The walls are gray
I want to run

I get so angry in this room
I want to scream
Like this is one bad dream
And no one would hear

Yet I wake up and here I am
Back in this room once again
This was not part of my plan
There's no one here to call my friend

The waiting room is where you go
when God puts you on hold
I want to scream and shout
And act all bold

But I am scared here in this room
I can make no plans
The end does loom

There is no hope
There's no telling when this punishment will end
It feel like God is not my friend.



Photo Credit: Karl Soderstrom

“Let Us Not”
A Letter to My Family
by Dameion Thumond, Lewis University

Poetry and Art Corner

To my family,

Let us not forget that we are all relative
Let us not forget that the One that created all things,
Loved Moses, Jesus, and prophet Muhammad.

To my uncles in the synagogue,
To my cousins in the church,
To my brothers in the mosque,

Let us not fail to remember the people that suffer
Let us not be deaf to those who cry for help
Let us not only be generous to the ones who act
like us
Let us remember that even Satan is a bestower of
gifts, to the ones that he likes.

Let us not be filled with selfish greed
Let us not fail to help those that are marginalized
Let us not fail to cross over to their side
To learn how oppression has affected where they reside

Let us not do nothing because others will
Let us not wait for another day to start
Do something good for the oppressed people today
Something with love that you did not do yesterday



Let us not be consumed by acts of grandeur
Small actions can be a large show of human dignity
A kind word, a warm meal, or a nice hug
can change the status of how a person feels

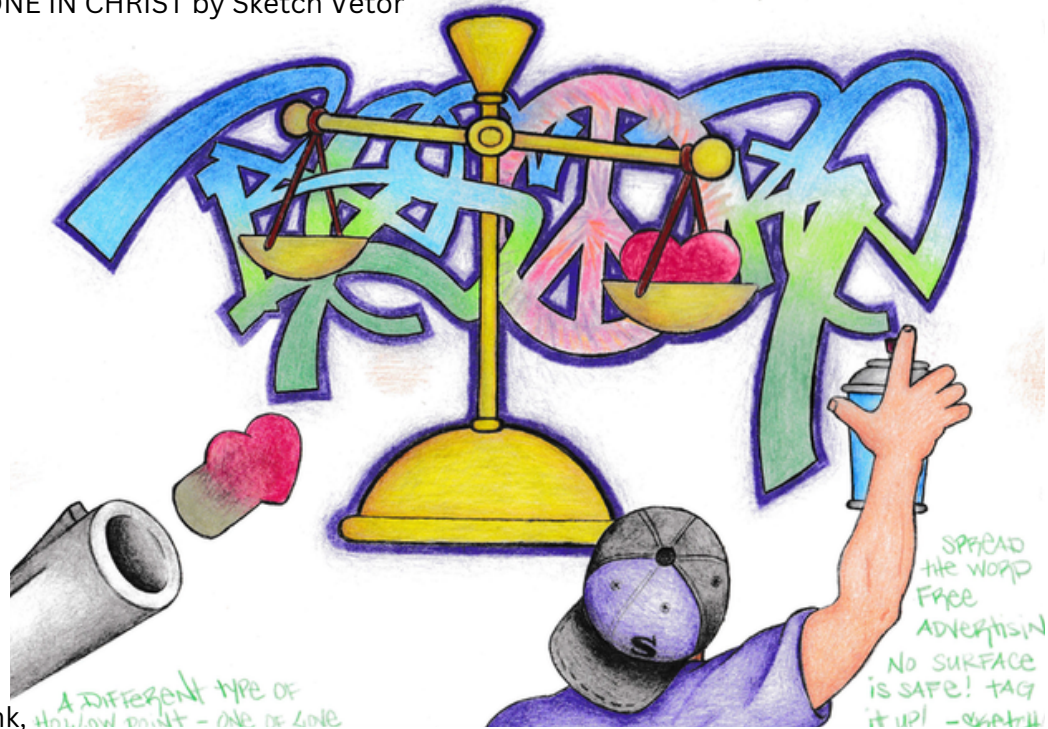
Let us not only do as Satan does
But let us help anyone who is truly in need
Let us not fail to remember
That we are all members of the same human family
Let us not

We claim we want peace,
violence don't cease
Prejudice deep roots,
need to bear the fruits,
to restore the mind,
so people will find,
we are one in Christ,

It's justice we seek,
Love is what we speak,
Sweet words full of hope,
Match the actions? nope,
Words with no movement,
Where's the commitment,
We are one in Christ.

Restoration needed,
From oppression seeded,
Change the way people think,
But not quick like a wink,
It takes time to change choice,
Work to do raise your voice,
Because we're one in Christ.

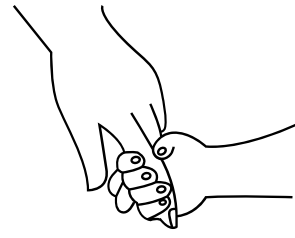
ONE IN CHRIST by Sketch Vektor



Art by Sketch Vektor

“I Found My Everything” by John Knight

I found my everything in you...
Somehow, you always know exactly what to do.
You lift me up when I’m not feeling right...
You’re so perfect for me, just my type.
Nobody compares to you, no other could ever be...
With you in my life, I want to be a better me.
Can’t you see...the smile on my face is because of you...
You are my everything...and I put all my trust in you.
Every time I see you, my stomach gets butterflies...
I’m so in love with you, can’t you see it in my eyes.
It’s like a big hole appears in my heart...
but it fills when I’m with you, and empties when we’re apart.
All I do, is for the love of you...
Your happiness, your well-being, and your feelings drive everything I do.
How did we get here?...We’re not supposed to be here...
You know this to be true...
But it is, what it is...I found my everything in you!



“Don’t Cry For Me” by Jody Montague

Please don’t cry for me today,
God just decided to take my pain away.
So don’t cry, you should be happy I’m free, and remember
Wherever you are, there I’ll be.
Believe me, I lived a very wonderful life.
I was a daughter, a sister, a mother, a wife.
I had grand kids, and I consider them blessings.
I’ve loved and I’ve lost, but I consider those lessons.
Lessons I’ve learned, and learned to respect.
And this is a part of life that we must accept.
So don’t cry for me, wipe your tears, I’m just going home.
To live among angels, and to bow at God’s throne.
Don’t cry I’m not dead, I just had to change.
That body could no longer hold this spirit I became.
To all my daughters, and my only son.
I’m only leaving cause my work here on Earth is now done.
Don’t cry, I’m family, I’m mama, it’s true.
Instead let my life be an inspiration for you.
So come on, wipe those eye’s, and don’t cry for me please.
Cause that will make me want to comfort you and not leave.
So I’ll go and prepare a place for the next time we meet.
Until then I love you, smile, and don’t cry for me!
Dedicated to my mother, Iris Elone Nichols who died September 12, 2009.
I love you mama, rest in peace.



“Miss you” by “The Minister” CD Everett

The early morning rustlin, running water and toilet flushing
The closing of doors, moving boxes and empty bottles hitting the floor
I miss you.

The “whoody-who...” in a late night’s call, passin’ the phone and hittin’ the wall
The call to the bars for a shot of coffee, some rice or noodles and a sight to see,
I miss you.

Hittin’ the pile and talkin’ politics, the books we’ve read and financial tricks
Walkin’ to chow to catch a breeze, checkin’ out Twitter and what’s on TV?
I miss you.

Hollering to see if I’m goin’ out to service, checking out MTV.
Gettin’ nervous over the green and white or cheese, for a pizza joint or that Super Bowl feast.
I miss you.

Homies, through thick and thin. A loss in the family and that court house trend
Reminiscing ‘bout back in the day, then old school joint and gettin’ paid.
Talkin’ ‘bout plans of goin’ home, layin’ back real nice,
Like people do when they’re grown.
No more time for gettin’ mad over the simple things in life. The people who did us wrong and the one
that we hurt so. It’s just time to let it go.
Gone, but never forgotten (if you know someone, say their name)
I miss you, Homie
Rest in Peace!



Art by C.D. Everett

DePaul from Behind the Wall with Alann Vega



On February 15, 2024 I came to a deeper understanding of what it means to view my day to day life as historical as members of our academic communities were able to welcome and meet with Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx, Michele Mbekeani, and multiple assistant state's attorneys (ASA) in the educational building.

Given there were multiple visitors and a lack of ample space within the educational building - members of our academic communities and visitors were broken off into two groups. The group I was a part of consisted of Rob, Charles, Joe, Lynn, Manny, Eric, and Ced. Unfortunately, everyone was not able to be there. Yet, beyond a shadow of a doubt, everyone not there can be assured that you were represented well and to the best of our abilities.

Some of the topics discussed were Truth In Sentencing, policy changes and the myth of deterrence. Thus, Joe Dole began the conversation by pointing out the flaws in the use of deterrence when seeking out certain sentences and within Truth in Sentencing. He also did not miss the opportunity to express how ridiculous it is for a State's Attorney Office who prides itself in criminal justice reform has only resentenced three individuals, which is in contrast with other State's Attorney offices in red counties. However, we must be reminded, to be resentenced is, ultimately, up to the judge's discretion. Should we not then focus on holding judges accountable if they weaponize their discretion?

Another topic discussed was brought up by Lynn, as he encouraged our visitors to lend their support for the IDOC to begin documenting the rehabilitation and the positive things incarcerated individuals achieve, not just the disciplinary infractions. One question from our group was, "Do you (ASA) believe you are making a transformative impact when you are seeking a sentence?" On ASA answered, "Yes, because in essence we are asking the judge to give you time to reflect." Yet, I know through my lived experience that time to reflect isn't always possible because most of us are again placed in an environment where our primary concern is to survive the circumstances. Or have things really changed within all IDOC facilities?

Another ASA made note that they were not in the Cook County State's Attorney office when we were prosecuted and sentenced. Perhaps, this was said in an attempt to deflect or maybe it's an acknowledgment that they would have done things differently? No matter the intention or our own emphasis, their acknowledgment was that things must be done differently moving forward.

My overall take from this experience? Everyone's situation is different, and we must hold those systems that have caused us harm accountable. Yet, as Restorative Justice Practitioners, we must also remember that there can be no restoration without the acknowledging of harm. Then we can begin to acknowledge everything we have accomplished. We cannot and should not overlook the harm we caused; otherwise, we will not be as effective as we can be and our accomplishments will be overshadowed by our lack of taking accountability for the harm we caused. Last but not least, thank you Dr. Rivers for such an historical opportunity. -Alann Vega, DePaul Think Tank



THE AMPLIFIER

with Alex Negrón



Hello everyone! Happy New Year! I pray that all your foreseeable goals and aspirations get accomplished in 2024! I, myself, have things up my sleeve and expect big things to arise from it— stay tuned.

Wow! In the previous issue of “The Amplifier,” Alexis Santana really nailed that academic paper! It’s been over a year now and I have come to know Alexis really well. His spirit animal is the cunning and wise Fox and that’s what we know him as. What stuck out to me was how he excellently made connections with multiple sources in his paper and sealed it with his experience with education in an incarcerated context. Oftentimes, students believe not bringing your whole self – just your intellectual currency– is the only way to experience higher education. But our beloved Fox makes the case that we should bring it all– including the messy parts. That’s what makes us better students and better humans with one another.

Twelve years ago, we didn’t have this in IDOC. In fact, those pursuing educational opportunities were often mocked and laughed at. What Santana is referring to is building a culture not only at Sheridan, Kewanee, and Stateville, but throughout the entire IDOC. How are you contributing to this culture and wealth of knowledge springing forth from different places? How are you bringing abundant life to your peers and the spaces you inhabit? How are you changing the narrative about system-impacted students? How are you carving out safe zones for learning, rhetorical agency, and artistic expression? I can answer these questions simply by being available. I might not have much, but I have tons of availability to pass out in these safe zones.

Maybe that should be our goal in 2024– expanding our safe zones so they can reach the governor’s mansion, the legislative body, and the Illinois courts. Everyone is trying to get home on their own; how about we try doing it together?

This edition’s essay by Anthony Smith was written as his final paper in last fall’s “Search for Faith Course” taught by Devon Terrell and Dr. Clifton. This final paper is an assignment that focuses on one’s identity in their faith. Anthony has a powerful story that is bursting at the seams when it comes to being told. I love this assignment for students beginning their educational pursuits because who we are and what we believe matters. That’s what we hold onto when the most severe crises arise. Identity is also the first thing empires take away from the groups they target to remain dominant and push their agenda.

Anthony and the Squad 2 from Lewis University, pursuing their Bachelor’s degree in Professional Studies, are on a journey that validates their importance and their agency. Knowing who we are and what we believe allows us to stand tall when empire is on the prowl. Being able to stand firm allows us to tell our stories and carefully hold each other’s stories. So as we move forward, continue to shape and mold who you are and what you believe in, and ask: how does it make us better people?

Identity Paper by **Mr. Anthony Smith**

Since my young teenage years, I’ve had multiple moments that were defining to my formation. But there was one moment that occurred earlier that I could never overlook.

I had an older brother. He was killed in the hallway of a building on the north side of Chicago. He was six years older than me. He and his friends were shooting dice when someone came in to rob them. They say the gunman had everyone on the wall and was patting them down. My brother’s friend went for his gun and was shot. My brother tried to catch him before he fell, and he was shot too. He was shot behind the ear. The bullet was small caliber, and it moved while he was being transported to the hospital.



THE AMPLIFIER

His being shot and in the hospital on a life support machine tore a rift in my family that lasted for decades. My mother was at work and refused to allow my grandmother, uncles or aunts to give permission to the doctors to operate. And, they blamed her for his death because they believed the doctors could have operated on him and saved him if they did not have to wait on her.

I was going on twelve years old, then. All I remember was how thick the tension was between my mother and her siblings. All through the years I witnessed the arguments and sometimes physical fights. I would spend summers and holidays at my grandmother's house. All I would hear was people bad-mouthing my mom. And, I could not do or say anything about it because I was not sure that I disagreed with them.

You see, I don't remember ever living with my mother for a whole year. For as long as I can remember, I lived with different aunts, family friends, and my grandmother. Between grades 1st through 8th, I went to 6 different schools. I didn't graduate from 8th grade because I was at the juvenile detention center. I aged out and then went to a Career Academy, where I was kicked out after my freshman year. But, during that time I was living house to house. So I had my aunt enroll me in another Career Academy. I eventually dropped out of high school all together in 11th grade.

At an early age I attended a Baptist church. I was baptized as well. I remember all the different events that were traditions of black churches: the choirs, the feasts, the banquets and picnics. I witnessed the goodness and rejoicing of God and His goodness. To this day, those teachings are still engraved in me. It wasn't until I got older that I paid attention to some of the manipulations and disingenuous deeds being done by the pastors. And that brought about my first questions about religion.

Between the ages of 12-13, I joined a gang. And the religious foundation of this gang was Islam. Being a part of that, I had to embrace some of the fundamentals of the Islamic faith. You could be of another faith, but these fundamentals came first. The prayer, attending services, and no eating pork are some of the main ones. Compared to my Baptist upbringing, all of this was new to me. So, I engaged enough to get me by for over 35 years.

Growing up the way I did, I had a view on the inside of a couple of religions. During different periods of incarceration, I thought of settling on one because it seemed to be disrespectful to be in between both. So, I eventually decided to just believe in God solely. I respect and honor all the disciples and prophets. But, I am just a believer of God as the Creator and Energizer of the Universe. He is who I pray to. He is who I seek my blessing from. Nothing can be done, created, achieved, rose up or torn down without the infusion of energy from God.

Even with this pronouncement and the age I am at, I don't know and I can't say if or how to celebrate my identity. Any acknowledgements of who I am came from my government name, past affiliations, or my prison ID number. I'm not even sure if my social security number is any good because I still haven't received any of the stimulus money. And when I contact the IRS they respond with poof of identification letters. So, celebrating someone the government doesn't know, and, to be honest, I don't either, is bewildering to me. But, it does sound interesting enough that I would like to know who I actually am. Maybe then I'll finally get my stimulus money.

Even before I read Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, I had my own way of dealing with pain and suffering. Not having a place to call home. Having blood relatives, but not family. Absolving all the adults from my childhood by accepting all the mishaps in my life as my choice. Not having a relationship with my mother until I became an adult. Not being able to have a real relationship with my daughters. Being charged with crimes I did not commit. Fighting the death penalty for it. Being sentenced to natural life plus 90 years for something I did not do or have anything to do with. So, I have plenty of areas of pain. And yes, I am in need of healing. But I've dealt with, and I'm dealing with it all, the best that I can. Regaining my freedom will lead to an ultimate cure for me.

Not having the proper terminology for it, I believe I have coped and dealt with a lot of the events, losses, and abandonment issues I have in my life. Exuding extra amounts of faith in God,



THE AMPLIFIER

inner strength and peace and self-discipline has helped me to not wither under the weight of it all. Working out to keep the stress from it all slumping my shoulders takes a lot of energy, energy that only God could have given me. That’s what keeps me motivated and believing that a lot of better, freeing and loving days are coming.

From here, I’ve encountered different generations of men who are lost and misdirected. So they give me a glimpse of what and who’s out there in the free world. The lack of structure, integrity, and standards are astounding. But something in my spirit encourages me to speak with them, all with the intent of helping them help themselves. The God energy that flows through us all inspires a sense of understanding from them to me and vice versa. If that’s my contribution to make, so be it.

Being able to reignite the fires of learning, consistent writing and reading has been challenging but pleasant. Maintaining that drive, though, has been easier. The seeds of doubt still linger. But my drive to succeed is still stronger. Plus, the pedagogies of my Professors help. I doubt I would still be in this if it weren’t for their approach and their engagement in the classes. I thank God for them.

There was a moment during a class where nervousness really gripped me. We were presenting Artistic Projects. And, I wanted to go first to get the embarrassment out of the way. But after sitting there, seeing the calmness and camaraderie, my nervousness subsided. And by the time I got up to show my art, I wasn’t so antsy.

That day and moment reminded me of Carter G. Woodson and his harsh constructive criticism of Black People when he mentions us “not being afraid to fail, because we were never taught to try.” I see both cohorts of our classes as the “Brothers of Lasallian Spirituality.” I’m learning from all of them so I can be a productive member of every community I enter. Absorbing tidbits from all the discussions and readings in class, I’m confident my faith and belief in God will remain intact. And my mind and views will surely be open.

SONGS (NOT SPORTS) WITH SARGE



.....
Would the Jackson Five still have been a famous group if Michael Jackson wasn’t in the band?”

Sgt. Brown entertained responses to this question (originally posed by Officer Montgomery?) in the school building at Stateville, and the discussion that unfolded was warm enough to get us through the winter. Sarge went with a strong, “NO!” and followed up with the rationale: “Talent is talent, Bro.”

Lt. Z agreed and added on the claim that “even Latoya said they were all beholden to Michael.” While Sgt. Brown was out one week, Sgt. Stroud went another way with the topic and added, “I don’t think any of them would have existed if the Jackson Five had not gotten together.” Officer Lucas emphasized, “Janet would not have gotten into all those movies otherwise.”

This early spring weather in the Stateville school building has inspired a few song dedications from staff, based on their favorite Michael Jackson numbers. To Sgt. Stroud, Sgt. Brown dedicates, “Beat It!” Lt. Z reminds readers it is never a bad idea to put on “Billie Jean.” Officer Lucas and Officer Cornelius got me (Prof. Melissa) to listen to a song I’d completely missed out on when it first came out: “Smooth Criminal.” Officer Montgomery and Officer Miller highlighted their preference for the song, “The Man in the Mirror.” I like that one, too.

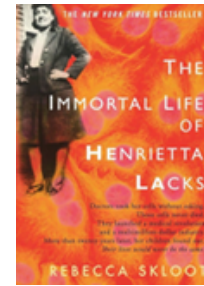
Which Michael Jackson songs would you dedicate to one another, Dear Readers? Talk (and sing) amongst yourselves...just don’t hurt yourself trying to moonwalk if you haven’t properly warmed up with some stretches first.



How Libraries Support Mental Health
By: Janis Elmore, Stateville Law Librarian

Public libraries exist in urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods, and typically have a long history of just providing books. In recent years, many librarians have gradually taken on other functions besides lending out books. More and more people are turning to libraries in times of crisis, and mental health concerns are no exception. Since the pandemic, many libraries have reinvented ways to deliver services to their community members as they strive to manage and maintain their mental health. They have started creating spaces for workshops and seminars hosted by professional social workers to help increase public awareness and access to mental health information and support. They have also become a gathering place where local social workers can come to help those members looking for resources to help figure out the complexities of life and assist with navigating the health system as well as providing brochures about the city’s crisis helpline. Some other topics includes suicide prevention, social-emotional learning, as well as the relationship between social media and mental health. Libraries have dedicated several shelves to autobiographical, nonfiction books as well as online resources on mental illness and related subjects. Libraries are not just for books anymore. The library has become a social hub: a quiet, calm environments that can help to reduce stress and create a sense of peace.

Drop in and check out a these new titles.



Pictures of the Winter Reading Participants



Dion Coleman



Derek Sweet



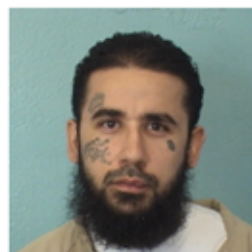
Michael Johnson



Samiel Karim



Ellean Nance

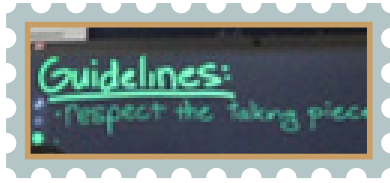


Matthew Rosario



Alejandre Sotelo

Shout Outs



Special Kudos for all the cool cuts happening at Stateville Barber College! Feather Bricks looks forward to including a regular Barber College column in future editions and welcomes submissions from Barber College staff and students state-wide. As a teaser, please enjoy this dedication to Stateville’s own Mr. Beene, written by Barber College grad Sherron “Sosa” Dillon:



“Mr. Beene loves having the opportunity to teach about a profession he holds close to his heart. He’s been cutting hair since the age of 12, and has not only been employed in Barber shops, but has been an owner as well. His first job teaching incarcerated individuals began at Sheridan Correctional Center in 1996. Mr. Beene has taught in Stateville for close to six years.

‘Pushing the guys to get their licenses, knowing upon release they’re able to immediately provide for themselves is an incredible responsibility.’”

Mr. Beene would like to congratulate **Randy Royer** for recently passing the state board barber exam, and he hopes for greater things in the future. He would also like to mention and thank **Sherron “Sosa” Dillon, Antonio “TK” Kendrick,** and **Gregory “Stan/ Grumpy Old Man” Johnson** for helping with day to day operations.



Shout Outs

Huge Congrats to all who have participated in circle training with Precious Blood Ministries and Restore Justice! Keep an eye out for up and coming articles by participants in *Kewanee Horizons*, on a tablet near you.



Special Shout out to Sgt. E. Brown from Lt. Z at Stateville CC for his level-headed seniority. Lt. Z says “We’ve been part of a lot of situations, and Sgt. Brown sees me at my worst and best.” Kudos to 5 years of safety, security, and learning in the school building, Sarge!

A **Writing Center Extra-Mile Award** goes to **Dwight Thomas** for getting caught up in his North Park classes. Peers have witnessed him tuning in “5-6 assignments at a time” and attending regular study halls to stay focused.

Much appreciation for all writers who submitted work to this issue of *Feather Bricks!* Those interested in submitting to our April/May edition, the deadline is **May 8**. Surprise us with a submission that is creative, encouraging, and instructive for our 4-year anniversary issue (Theme TBA).

Kewanee *Horizons* and *Two Roads* editors and contributors: We see you, we read your work, and we continue to be inspired by your dedication to the craft. Our horoscopes continue to be right on point, so keep those coming, please.

Gallons of Gratitude to GED Educator Julie McGrath for speedy and spectacular copyediting.

Many thanks to EFA Costabile, Sgt. Brown, Educators Ms. Baez, Ms. Johnson, Ms. McGrath, all staff in the Stateville Education Building, and Public Information Officer Naomi Puzzello; we couldn't make and distribute *Feather Bricks* without your support.

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/>