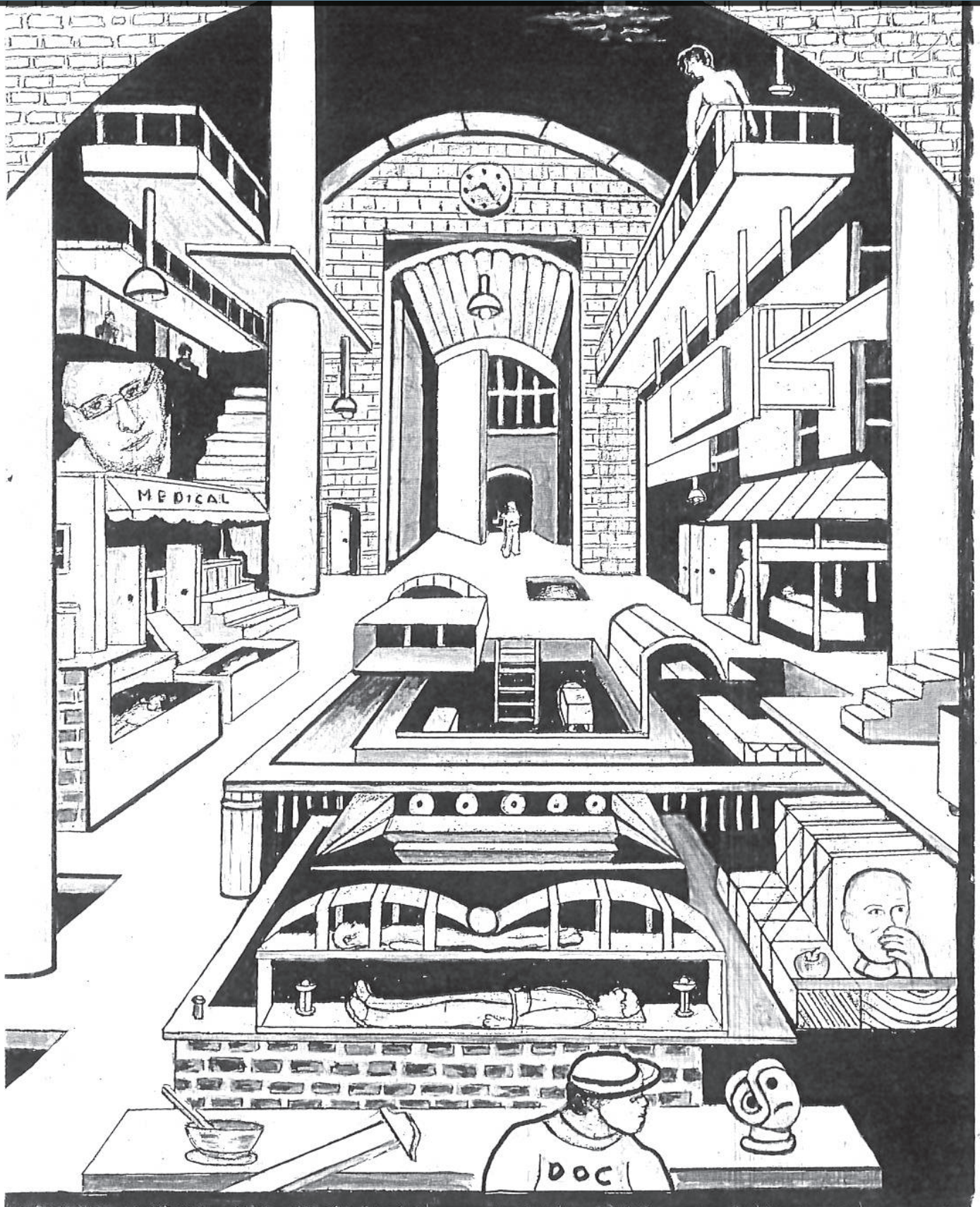


A Publication of The Pennsylvania Prison Society

GRATERFRIENDS

The mission of the Pennsylvania Prison Society is to advocate for humane prisons and a rational approach to criminal justice.



The opinions expressed are of the authors and not necessarily those of Graterfriends.

From the Editor

Dear Graterfriends Readers,

For the Graterfriends team, 2021 began with a last minute change to the cover story after the tragic passing of Bruce Norris as he awaited his commutation order to be signed. In the last letter I received from Mr. Norris, he expressed his joy in coming home and his desire to meet me in person after exchanging letters during my time working at the Prison Society. He excused himself for the messiness of the letter, as he was writing it out of excitement. The news of his passing struck me with a sadness I struggled to express and an anger at the system over the loss of a man I had never met in person.

Two pages after the article covering Mr. Norris's death, there was another story that shed a glimmer of light in that darkness: Daniel Cummings's article informing our readers that he would be coming home after 48 years in prison. Having read Mr. Cummings's story from past issues of Graterfriends, I also cried of happiness at this news. Mr. Norris's death and Mr. Cummings's clemency were a reminder of the level of appreciation I have for our Graterfriends community- for all of you whom I've met only through your writing.

This dichotomy of our January issue has been reflected through much of the writing you see in the pages that follow. While we received a lot of writing about the ongoing racial injustice in our country, we also received a lot of beautiful pieces about hope and redemption. For all of our writers that contributed to this issue: thank you. Thank you for sharing your talent, your vulnerabilities, and your time.

To the editorial team: thank you for your time and compassion for the Graterfriends community.

To our readers: thank you for your continued support and patience with this publication.

It is an honor to lead all members of this team- inside and out.

Noelle Gambale
Editorial Organizer

On Behalf of the Graterfriends Editorial Team

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We reserve the right to edit submissions. Original submissions will not be returned. Allegations of misconduct must be documented and statistics should be supported by sources. All submissions should be no more than 500 words, or two double-spaced pages. Letters more than 200 words, or one double-spaced page, will not be published in their entirety and may be shortened for clarity and space.

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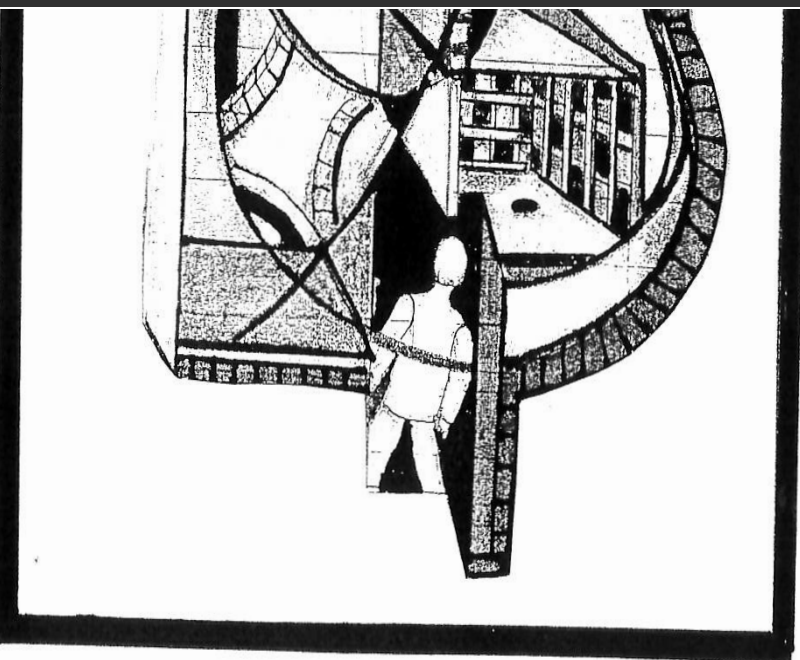


Prison Experience



"It's heart-wrenching to know that so many people are suffering due to the health care accountants who crunch our life like numbers in their budget to determine if we should receive care or just corruption."

Rev Magi. Augustus Enoch, SCI Coal Township, "Hypocritical Hippocratic Oath"



Not a Choice, by Chance
Jay Anderson, SCI Benner Township

I've had plenty of time to vindicate my mind, heart plus soul
from my tribulation.

Incarceration has become a self-inflicted humiliation, in a mirror
I see a clown looking dead back at me, a tear or two falls and so
does my head.

What I cherish in life I've put on pulse for imagine fame behind
these gates and walls.

Trying to get over was the master plan, look at me now Mr. In-
carcerated written on my face and both hands.

Doing Stinky Thought Time
Wayne P. Johnson AKA Lightman X, SCI Benner Township

Wayne P. Johnson AKA Lightman X, #NB2006, SCI Benner
Township

Communication is effective at its best when you really truly
Humbly learn how to express how you feel
And the best way to do that is to just try to keep it real
Because some of us grow up hiding our emotional feelings
So well until our minds have a gas attack
And then those suffocated feelings come out
Like a sudden impact
And then when other people see the outburst
They're always like I didn't even know
That something was wrong
Because to me he always seems to be so calm
And that's because you are the only one
Who truly knows what's on your mind
So are your communication skills doing stinky thought time?
Because an incarcerated mind can get so used to one lane
Until it reaches the point where it doesn't want to explore
And that's how some people become so stuck in their own ways
Until they refuse to open up another door
And try to at least seek a change in the way they think
So instead of seeking a change they would rather let their own
thoughts stink
Because they have become so used to smellin' their own scent
Until they refuse to try to change their thought pattern
Because to them that's irrelevant
And that's why when you try to communicate with some people
They may say that you're full of shit
Because they can pick up on the stinky thought sent
And I'm not trying to put anybody down
Because nobody's thoughts could ever begin to stink worse than
mine
Because I couldn't stop committing shitty crack head crimes
Because stinky thought odor is not okay
So stop going to the corner store and start searchin'
The supermarkets and the Internet
Until you find the right disinfectant for your mind
So that you can begin to refresh your communication lines.

Concrete Walls
David Meade, SCI Forest

Behind these concrete walls there is so much hidden pain,
This is the place where boys turn into men.
You got young brothers walking around with life that is only
nineteen,
The system done took him away from his family.
You got men sleeping with men walking around real funny,
You can be walking the yard with someone and later on find out
that
he was a pedophile.
There once was a young man who really never talked that much,
His children's mother left him so one day he just hung it up.
I one day sat down and watched, as my fellow inmates was play-
ing hoop.
And the next thing you know, wars viciously stabbed over lousy
soup
A friend of mines was in the law library searching for some case
laws to look u
He then shook his head and shed a tear and told me that he give
up.
You got older guys walking around like they have all the answers,
You have guys that came in here healthy and later on discovers
that
he has cancer,
This place is like a nightmare or an eternal, terrible dream,
Some mornings when I wake up, it just makes me wanna scream.
This is the place where only the strong survive and the weak are
driven insane
And these racist c/o's in here will beat you down like Rodney
King to a
point that you can't remember your own name,
Rats get treated harshly so you best bet is to stand tall,
These are only a few things that occurs behind these concrete
walls.

Free Me!
David Meade, SCI Forest

Free me from this prison or better yet free me from this
Psychological plantation.
Or free me as a bird flies into the shy or better yet free me
From all of this worldly frustration.
The shackles are still on my feet and my arms, but I have re-
moved
Them from my soul and also my mind.
And just because a person is in society doesn't make him free
from
Being dumb, deaf, and blind.
A person can be incarcerated as he or she roams through the city
of Beverly Hills,
So don't be nonchalant about this because ignorance mixed with
Stupidity has the ability to slowly but shortly kill.
Please free Uncle Tom and please free my closet ancestor who
was Mr. Johnson's son.
And we are now being forced into slavery from the consequences
Of our crimes with the gift of paperwork minus the whips or
the gun.
Living as a black adolescent, a black woman, can become a true
Struggle of life being very hectic.

Can you imagine not having a good paying job because of your past criminal record?

Can you imagine being discriminated against based solely from the color of your skin?

That's why we must pay our wages with our birth certificates and elevate our

Minds and then we will eagerly win.

We have been born to fight as we were placed into this worldly life without a paddle or a

Single key, I wish that I had the ability of an eagle so that I can flap

My wings and just set myself free!

Prison of my Mind

Michael McDonald, SCI Huntingdon

As I contemplate the day ahead and await the morning sun,
Staring out through the razor wire which seems to restrict my fun.

These bars that are on my window I know so very well,

My life in living bondage from the depths of eternal hell.

But by opening up my eyes to the amazement of what I see,

This day is what I make of it, it's truly up to me.

By gazing at the vastness of my great big prison yard,

Now I've found my purpose and meaning not too hard.

Perhaps I'm not in prison as bad as it does seem,

There is no bars, there is no fence, nothing a bad dream.

I'm breaking out of prison this prison of my mind,

Now I'm much more grateful and more loving of mankind.

Namaste.

Not One of Them

Shawn Younker, SCI Greene

There are organizations that exist which strive to aid and support an individual who might be struggling in life, giving assistance and meaningful guidance, perhaps even a little compassion and care.

Prison is not one of them.

There are institutions that strive to address individuals suffering under the weight of mental sickness, psych problems, and emotional imbalance; pursuing whatever treatment is imperative for the rehabilitative needs of the individual.

Prison is not one of them.

There are communities that I would be proud to contribute to, be a part of, and would grow into; communities that I could be nothing short of productive and successful in.

Prison is not one of them.

There are environments that promote positive life choices, encourage an individual's personal growth, and deter negative behavior models.

Prison is not one of them.

There are places that change a person for the better.

Prison is, most definitely, not one of them.

The Path

Shane SPerow, SCI Dallas

The world I can see,

Inside my lonely pane of glass.

As I long to feel the sun,

And for a walk in the grass.

Many years have gone by,

With my life not my own.

I can follow all the rules,

And still never go home.

My name thrown away,

Now a number I am given.

Counting down every day,

The time I've been given.

I hold onto my dreams,

Won't let them be taken away.

Keep holding my head high,

This will be over one day.

So I keep saying my prayers,

And let my faith guide me through.

A bright future ahead,

Even for us, the forgotten few.

Prison Eyes

Zechariah "True" Thompson, SCI Coal Township

In a cell I lay again

To burn-out my time

And this time I have spent

In a cell and in my mind

Thoughts always racing, flashbacks I can't contain

My sanity in question

Because I'm too numb to complain

Speaking in metaphors

To avoid talking for too long

Addicted to release

From a poem or a song.

I talk to myself

And I can see and hear them laugh

Unaware of the outcome

If they instigate my mad

I'm so afraid of change

Because mistakes happen fast,

So I try to fight the future

To rectify the past

I think, "This is it,"

This could be God's will,

For a kid who kills a man

Is given time to kill.

Every day is a plea

For myself, not to hurt me.

I watch people come and go,

Wanting no change, always out with their hand

Only slowly doing my kind of time

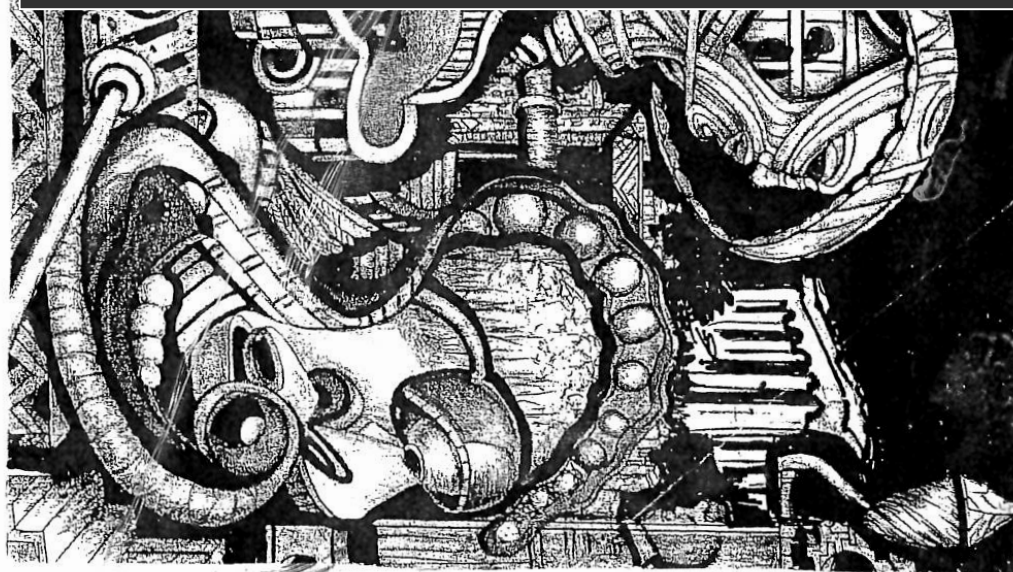


Race



"We have been asking for justice for over 400 years, but our cries keep falling on deaf ears — not because we were not heard, but because Black Lives Do Not Matter. Our ancestors were promised 40 acres and a mule after emancipation, but that was 157 years ago, and that promise was never fulfilled. It was never intended to be."

Darrell Ameen McKelvie, SCI Benner "Is Justice an Old Myth?"



The Gangsters in Blue
David Meade, SCI Forest

Now a days it's scarce to pick up your telephone and dial 911,
cause you could be calling for help and out of nowhere a bunch
of criminal cops themselves come.
You can't even let them enter into your house to make a criminal
complaint
Cause you yourself could end up in handcuffs and call of your
valuable
jewels they will take,
Just cause they have a badge they believe that they can do what-
ever it
is that they want to do,
They are the real gangsters and extortionist and if you say some-
thing
about it, they will kill you.
They always have their sirens on looking for some houses to raid,
The truth is that they are the ones who should be locked inside
of a cage.
They get away with so much murder that's why they are always
raising hell,
look what happened to Trayvon Martin and Modney thing not
to mention Shawn B
You got cops selling drugs, and even pimping women at this day
and age;
Did you guys see the footage of what that captain did to that
innocent
women at the Puerto Rican day parade?
I thought that they were to serve and protect and not act like
Apes,
I had to tell my daughters not to trust them after seeing that cop
convicted
of rape.
If I told you some of the things that I experienced, you wouldn't
believe that it is true.
So please keep your camera's and phones out and watch the
gangsters
in blue!

Black on Black Adolescent Homicide!
David Meade, SCI Forest

A Black Boy kills another Black boy,
2 Black Mother's will vehemently cry.
One Black soul will go to a grave and the other Black
Soul in a cell will slowly eventually die.
One father left behind a very beautiful daughter with a
Very elegant, exuberant smile.
And the other son will follow his dad footsteps because
He left behind a confused and lost fatherless child.
Both lives had so much value and the statistics proved,
To be accurate of the declination of our young black males,
Which proves that 2 out of 10 will be murdered and,
4 out of 10 will go to jail.
One mother will pay for a funeral while the other
Mother will go on a payment plan to retain a lawyer.
Black on Black Crime has become more proficient than the
Klu Klux Klan killing us it's like tine trending of a New World
order.

The power behind the gun can make an adolescent feel like God,
And I am in no predicament to judge but on judgement day
None of us will be able to physically hide.
The goal is to flood the urban communities with opioids and
Cocaine and to shatter all of our precious youths sweet dreams.
And building the wall was all a facade, and an epiphany just
Hit me of why they refuse to ban Assault rifles and AR-15's!

Young Black Male
David Meade, SCI Forest

You can achieve and accomplish anything that you put
your mind to,
And if you could just imagine it, it's something that you
could most certainly do.
If you just believe in yourself, you could make your dreams to-
morrow,
today a reality,
You can even bring a myth into existence and make it a actuality,
Always and never are two words that you should never use,
And if you work hard with a lot of ambition, I promise that you
will not lose.
Never let anyone stop you from the things in life that you may
want to do,
Cause Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, when most people
thought
that touching it was even impossible.
You could be a architect, a doctor, or the best to have have ever
played
a drum,
And life's problems wouldn't be called hurdles, if there wasn't
a way
to get over them.
You are great Young black male and you are the best of God's
Creation,
And if you work hard the results will soon come, just carry on
your
ambition and self motivation.
Never give up and don't ever fall victim to the Young Black male
statistic
And never doubt your abilities and Know that the sky is always
the limit.
I wanna see you come to your full potential so come from out
of that
hidden shell,
And this work right here is dedicated to my intelligent Young
Black Males!

Calling a Spade a Spade
Alvin Cruz, SCI Fayette

What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?

We say Black Lives Matter, but we are killing each other at a
faster rate than the police.
So ask yourself, do Black Lives really matter?
Or does it only matter when police or white people kill us?
Same time in the last quarter of 2020, a two year old was killed
in Pittsburgh due to a bullet going through his house and into his
room while he was asleep.

The end result, a young black life taken before he even got a chance to live it.

Philly has also killed several youths in this same manner.

But we won't Protest this!

Don't get me wrong, I am all for bringing attention to the injustices of Black & Brown People, as I live it everyday behind these Prison walls.

Knees are put on our necks daily here, whether physically or mentally.

The same time & energy we put into these police injustices, we need to also put into our own people & our own communities.

Before we can correct the injustices by the Police, we must first correct ourselves or the injustices by our own kind.

And that's what I call Black Lives Matter.

Still Blessed

Earl Smith. SCI Huntingdon

Thankful for being alive this morning.

Incarcerated but still blessed, how could that be?

A Lot of us dwell on the negative, instead of thinking about what we can be thankful for. Everyday, when I look around, I see someone whose situation is worse than mines, so that keeps me grounded and grateful for what I do have.

Some people don't have family or loved ones to call, some don't go on visit's,

Some don't receive JPays or even pictures from the outside, and a lot of us complain or say

"It wasn't enough".

So even with this Life title sitting on top of my head,

I still try to be grateful for what I do have.

I believe that one day,

Soon these doors will be kicked wide open for us and those of us who are waiting for this day to arrive.

I ask that you prepare yourself to go out there and give it your all.

Focus on the positive,

It makes life so easy.

It takes a lot more energy when you're being negative.

I ask that we try to be an example, to show them we are ready to be part of Society and be an asset to our Community.

Our Country believes in giving people second chances and forgiveness,

We deserve our freedom.

My life's mission is to make sure that I help others, not make the mistakes I made.

When turning on the TV and seeing what's going on in our Country,

I'm hurt seeing what's happening with our youth..

We have to change our views on what's acceptable

Because now I'm starting to see why people are scared to free us.

We have to learn to love ourselves,

I'm not talking about just being Black,

I'm talking about having love for all of us, as One.

We should care about all races.

We need to learn to be Compassionate,

It's not corny to show that you care for each other, and we can't judge a race based on a few bad apples.

The Torch is Lit

Vernon Nelson, High Desert State Prison

I ascend to the surface

From the dark depths of the prison view

Like a king on the mountain top

Gasping out at the masses. And it was there

In my elevated position, I was able to obtain a better view.

I was able to see with clarity

Emerging from my twenty years of prison

And the fountain of wisdom I gained there. I stare in amazement.

We are all here, the sea of beautiful Black people before me

And (every) race, alike

All gathered in solidarity to watch the embers

Of justice and equality turn to flame.

But first I remove the lighter from my pocket,

Flick my thumb over the bic

Igniting the flame. The whiteness in the cherry red,

Burning light glowed like a fire in the midnight sky.

And then I threw the flame into the crowd.

It glides through the air

For what seems like forever

Until settling the people ablaze.

But this fire is not the kind of fire that harms you.

For it is the kind of fire

That illuminates your mind with knowledge

And awakens you from

The unconscious sleep that most of us

Have been suspended in.

From the times of slavery,

The lynching of Black people,

The slaughtering of Jews,

Being a pawn in the human game of chess

And the degradation of minorities to this day.

We've been caught up in the smokescreen

Of deception for so long

By the very things designed to distract people

From the real problems in this world.

All while the real criminals advance

Their political agendas, finessing our human rights

Right out from under us.

It's time to step back and really

Ask ourselves, have we been fooled?

Have we unconsciously been brainwashed

By false belief systems

That were put into place way before we came into this world?

Are we products of such a thing

And are we somehow without knowing promoting

This mentality in our glances, in our social conversations

When we wield authority over others?

This fire I speak of

Illuminates the truth in darkness

And I've just made you a witness. So ask yourself

What are you actively doing

To shed light on the Black Lives Matter movement
And uplifting People of Color
Who've been oppressed in every way
By systems designed to keep them there. Oppressed. Afflicted.
And do Black lives matter to you?

The torch is lit.

Still
Shareef Boston, SCI Dallas

See, this is what it looks like still;
See, this is what it feels like still;
When our need to be freed still hangs
around the neck of a nation colorized still,

Surrounded within a negrophobe
filled society whose ideals were built
amongst a suffering, hopeful, faith
enduring-disparity deprived, ill-racially
injustice still;

Separated and segregated from an
equal quality of liberties and freedoms
stripped and torn away still; from a historicity
of a cultural balance still;

See, the scars that were carried
across the tip of a shearing whip still;
with open wounds that seem to never
heal so soon still;

Running away with blistered heels still;
From a bitter, broken, oppressive soul that cries
out for love still, for change still, for life still;

Still;

Deprivation
Joseph Mander, SCI Somerset

It's like these cats can't think with their own mind.
It's fucked up when a Black person sells the crack
To their own kind.
Let alone their own mother,
Turn around and then rob and shoot they own brother.
Stab they own father.
Wake my people up, why bother?
Just a waste of time makin' my shit hotter.
It's fucked up, but that's just how these cats think!
Fuck righteous, all they think about is that mink,
Them diamonds, that gold.
Most they hearts is black, ugly, and cold.
Then wonder how their soul got sold.
It ain't right.
Out doin' dirt all damn night.
Be right in front the sun, still don't see the damn light
Niggaz blind like bats, out for cheese like rats.
No courage, don't fight cause they got gats.
Niggaz shoot you in a fuckin' heart beat,
And be the ones to tell when they the ones
Who start heat.

Black Faces
David Meade, SCI Forest

When I was locked up in juvenile placement all I ever saw
Was Black faces,
And when I got arrested as an adult all I ever saw was Brown &
Latino people with the exception of 10% of other racists.
When I was placed in holding cells all I saw was people of color
That was doing a gillion years & astronomical time,
And from my point of view and the things which I experienced it
Appears that people from other nationalities don't commit any
crimes.
In all of my classrooms all I saw was Black faces & most of my
Teachers were Caucasian,
And if Black faces were extremely disruptive in class they would
be
Escorted by an officer of a lighter race that would take us to a
nearby
Police station.
When I used to stand in long lines with my older sister to attain
Boxes of dry milk & long blocks of cheese all I ever saw were
Black
Faces,
And whenever I stepped foot in courtrooms it was people who
Looked like me put in handcuffs & everybody else was lighter
with
No other traces.
Every judge that ever sentenced me had on a black robe & a pale
Face to represent his targets and he appeared not to be racist,
And when he sent me to do a decade of time behind walls with-
out
Never getting caught with a gram of drugs all I ever saw was
A majority of all Black faces.

Rebellious Slave
David Meade, SCI Forest

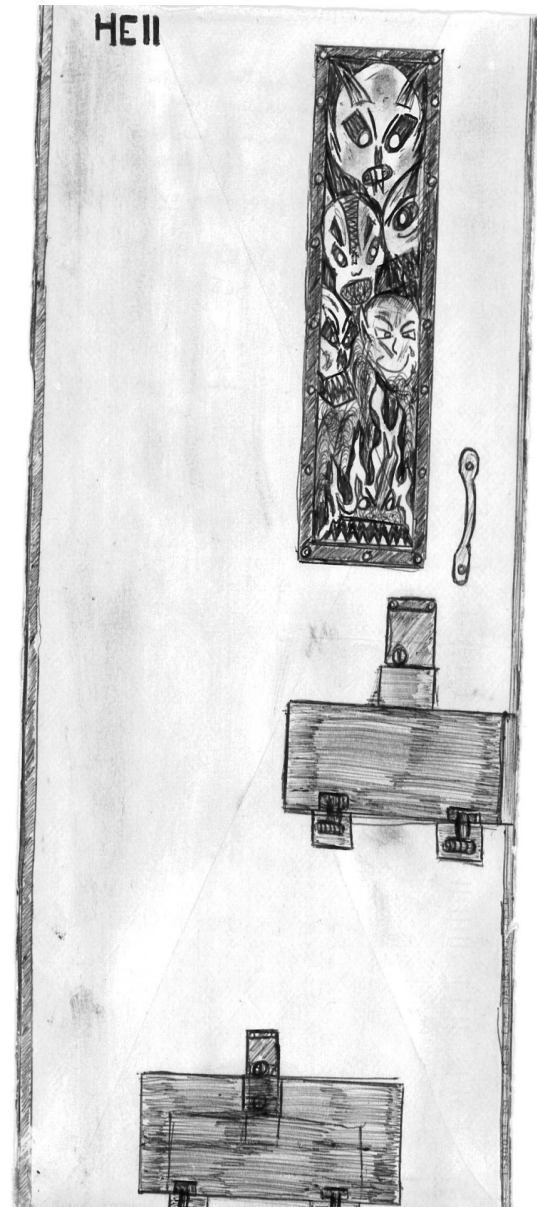
For 400 years my parents & ancestors have suffered mental an-
guish
From the wrath of your spider web,
We endured emasculation, mutilation, rape, and over 100 years
Of lynching as we were hung by trees with your noose as you hid
Behind a white mask,
Today is a new regime & I fear you not because you are not my
boss
Nor my master,
And if you ever try some of your old tactics such as breaking
down
The horse it would be atrocious and end in disaster.
I would not have sat down at the back of your bus and I would
Have drunk from any water fountain of which I pleased,
Because I prefer to go out with dignity and to die as a man than
to
Die bowing down or bowing out or on my knees.
I am defiant and rebellious and was born with a strong mind
including
With a sturdy, firm heart,
I have the soul of Huey Newton, George Jackson, and the tough-
ness
& spirit of Rosa Parks.
You may enslave my body but never my mind so get to used to

the
Prosperity of my race & the millennial of equal days,
And you may read this with discernment saying, “Whoa who
does he
Think that he is? Well it’s truth & reality so I’ll end with Sincerely
Yours ‘Rebellious Slave’”!

I Cry, I Cry
David Meade, SCI Forest

Born into the United Snakes of America with bronze skin di-
lapidated
with melanin you could actually detect the pain in my eyes,
Because being hated by the majestic people in power even though
all our blood is the same color, I must admit that I cry, I cry.
I cry tears of the rain to see my son grow up in such a very cold
and cruel racist world,
There has been assault on democracy in the Capitol Building
due to the color of Kamala Harris as Vice President so I cry,
I cry for the miscarriage of my girls.
I cry for my comrades serving life sentences just because of the
color
of their skin & that they were guilty without a chance to even
prove
their innocence.
And I cry, I cry for all of the inmates that didn’t get an oppor-
tunity
for outside reform that died from the complications of
COVID-19.
I cry for us that has to lie on job applications & not being able
to vote
then have to listen to all of the lies that the government tells us,
I cried 20 years ago for the pain of Rodney King & now 20 years
later,
I cry for my sisters such as Lashanda Anderson, Deborah Dan-
ner, & Breonna Taylor.
Some days I just shake my head and on other days I repeat the
same question of why, why, why?
And when I see my people hopeless and living in poverty these
are
the methods to my madness of why I cry, I cry!

Artwork
Dale Wakefield, SCI Greene



Tributes to Those Lost During COVID-19

The Graterfriends team was greatly moved by Andrew O-Lock’s piece *Lifers Lost* found in the July/August 2020 Edition (Vol. 48, Issue 7) as well as Stan Rosenthal’s tribute to Bruce Norris found in the January/February issue.

The large-scale impact of this pandemic has led to many deaths becoming part of a statistic, especially for those lost inside our prisons and jails. We would like to offer up the opportunity for others to write a tribute to someone on the inside that they have lost. We will feature these tributes in the next issue of Graterfriends.

Please write us a tribute with the following information:

Individual’s name
Facility they were incarcerated
A few sentences about their life and impact.



Redemption



"Never would I have imagined that I would be by myself in church, or that I would find myself holding the hands of mothers who lost kids to violence. I took someone's life. I caused that same kind of harm to my community. And that helped me heal and process what I did."

Mr. Roach, Q&A: Advice from the Outside



You

Juicy Queen Bee, SCI Houtzdale

You have me life
You gave me love
held me tight
Change me clothes
Stood by me
Through all my pain

You gave me strength
You gave me
The comfort needed
To make it through.

You was my mother
The only woman
I would love til I die
Spread my wings
to help you fly

Mother you have me love
When no one care
believe in me
Through all my struggles
mother you gave me
All I Could
ever Ask, Son

Evolving to A New Element of life!

David Meade, SCI Forest

I entered into a world that was designated to be formulated into a new platinum like creation,
There is no one that was dominated over another and everyone was
treated equally and there existed no racism,
Men respected woman and there was no such thing as black on black crime,
And the woman treated the men like Kings and there were no plantation's
where men of color were predominately serving decades of time.
Money was transferred through gold but everyone had Bitcoins, investments, and Black cards,
And police we're only as cab drivers, Architects, and also assisted with growing harvest in huge land and extraordinary yards.
Everyone was healthy and Covid 19, Eboli, cancer and H. I. V never existed,
And society greeted each other with fresh fruit, A sincere smile, or either
a charismatic kiss.
Different ethical classes of people studied together, prayed together
and even had beautiful brown, black and white children together,
And there were different languages but everyone used effective communication and never emasculated one another.
We can think a reality into extreme existence by bringing our most
intimate thoughts into full fledge creation,
And Malcom X made things happen by all means, while Dr. King had

a dream so I'm just utilizing my inner being imagination.

Music to the Soul

Joseph Mander, SCI Somerset

Imagination is the key to being all that you can be.
And once you unlock all the chains,
Then you can finally be free.
It takes a very open mind
To leave your ego self behind
And step away from all the shadows
That at one time had you blind.
The clouds have been removed,
And since your attitude's improved
And all because the dark that you were in
Has prompted you to move.
Now your eyes are open wide
To see the picture as a whole;
And the light that you are seeing now
Is music to the soul.

I Am the Sky

David Meade, SCI Forest

I am the sky and I have no barriers nor any limitations,
And I have been here before Adam & Eve and Sodom & Gomorrah
And many other rebellious nations.
I am opulent blue & gray and I am amongst the shining
Sun and the radiant apex of stars,
I bring happiness and greatness to the world by my existence
Of aesthetics and I'm similar to a substance called elixir.
Airplanes & helicopters are just travelers that glide through
The tunnels of my clouds,
And having high-octane ambitions are ways to get to my
Destination for every man, woman & child.
I am waiting on your arrival as you continue to strive
And climb,
You might fall a few times but if you keep getting back up
You will be within my dwellings in no time.
Never give up & learn from the past with perseverance and
Never ever settle for less.
And be punctual & productive and reach for me with
Both hands with extreme ambition because my destination
Is success.

Birthstone

Karina Rosdao (JuJu), FDC Miami

ABANDONED at BIRTH on February 27th, 1983,
A DULL AMETHYST was CHIPPED.
Her light completely taken and shattered from ages 5 through 11
An AMETHYST BROKEN into many pieces,
People stepped on her for many years to come.
She found someone to finally pick her up and slowly scoop her up,
Slowly put her back together.
Took some FIGHT and PATIENCE to make her whole again...
A WORTHY, BEAUTIFUL, and LOVED AMETHYST
SPARKLED with such a BRIGHT SHINING LIGHT.
SHE is NOW HER TRUE BIRTHSTONE,
SHE is SUCH A PURPLE BEAUTY and PRICELESS!

Ladders

Edward N. Wright, SCI Mahanoy

Am I devoid of Redemption? Does my Station in Life erase the existential potential in me as a Human Being? Having been Incarcerated for a Quarter Century, in this Environ of Misery and Despair, I've fought valiantly to maintain my Sanity and stay Soulfully Vibrant. To resist the momentous gravitation to abandon the pursuit of substantive Growth. I've resigned Myself to become the most sublime Version of Me. To spite my Circumstance, rail against Regression into some byproduct of this Unequitable System.

To Trial and Tribulation I am a Student, mentored by the Sorrows and Pains I've encountered. Unrelenting is my Resolve. With a surplus of dexterity, I've Adapted, irrespective of what Hardships await me.

My Dogma, regarding what becomes of a Positivist, centers on Righteousness, how it can foster the (Will) needed to reach the opposing side of any Adversity.

I cannot Mold Reality or magically alter the perpetuum of Time's passage. That fact doesn't dictate the license I hold as an Individual to exercise steadfastness in my daily Life, via my Conduct.

I submit this to any who chooses to stand in Audience to these words, I am a World removed from the Individual who entered Prison. The Substance of my [Being] is immeasurably altered to allow for Empathy and institution of the Virtues that should manifest in any Person worthy to hold a Station in a Society of Rules and Norms.

To err is Human... failure to reconcile such a universal Truth, to arbitrarily mete [out] Punishment, opprobriously, is Inhumane and Cruel. Inviolable is this fact, every seedling will not emerge as a mighty Redwood. Synchronous to said Processes, in loco parentis, boys will become Men. Be it by Self-Governance or guidance of a Higher Power, some will succeed, others will Fail. As a Society, a Collective, we cannot abdicate from a Course of Benevolence. In lieu of discounting the Sum, why not opt to Nurture the latency of the Human Spirit? I am Proof Positive, some Seeds do follow the Path of the Redwood.

"The distance is nothing, it is only the First Step that is difficult"
- Mme. Du Deffand

Remorseful Prisoner

Larry Stromberg, SCI Phoenix

I'm called by many names:

*Murderer
Guilty
Insane
Inmate*

I hate all those terms.
What I am is a remorseful prisoner:
A redemption dreamer,

Fantasizer of family restoration,
Past traveler,
Loser of time.

Time Affection

John McDonald, SCI Frackville

Time is the most important thing in Life. It's two things you never want to do with it, waste it or give it to someone you truly don't care about. Because once it's done you cannot get it back!!! Now it's two things Time does for people and why we should love it and understand how important time is, also how promising time can be as well.

Time is made to bring one person closer to another person, for you to grow feelings for them and learn to appreciate that relationship for its own many different reasons. That relationship between the two became so beautiful in its own imperfect way it goes unspoken and understood. But once his or her clock stops ticking, you learn that you took that person's love for granted then you're left by yourself wishing that you had a strange sixty seconds to let that one person know how much his or her relationship really meant to you.

Time is a freak of nature within itself. Once you understand time and why that person is placed in your life, you learn to love and appreciate that relationship more and more everyday. Always remember time will always win because it ends here and begins there, it always renews itself.

With that being said, time is a classic song that we wish it will play for a lifetime and more to it all day long. Now that I'm understanding time, love and hurt all at once, I learn what relationships really mean to me and if given a second chance, it will never be taken for granted again. Love you Freedom...

#TimeAffection #Freedom!!! #BLM

If I Never Make it Hom

Reginald Lewis, SCI Phoenix

AND on past the swarthy swamp of tortured, pain-wracked souls-on through this winding, twisting Labyrinth of implacable, resolute despair - we gaze, longingly, at "Freedom Road."

I'm not saying "Wait for me. Wait...for...ME!"

Like Bob Marley, man, I don't wanna wait in vain, wait in vain-for them to call my number.

Perhaps they'll get around to me, one day. Maybe.

How many comrades have gone on before us?

Slipped through the door, like ghosts.

The others left their poor brothas to die behind enemy lines.

George Jackson's blood in my eye.

Yet I'm still an old fighter.

Tell them I've never run from a fight.

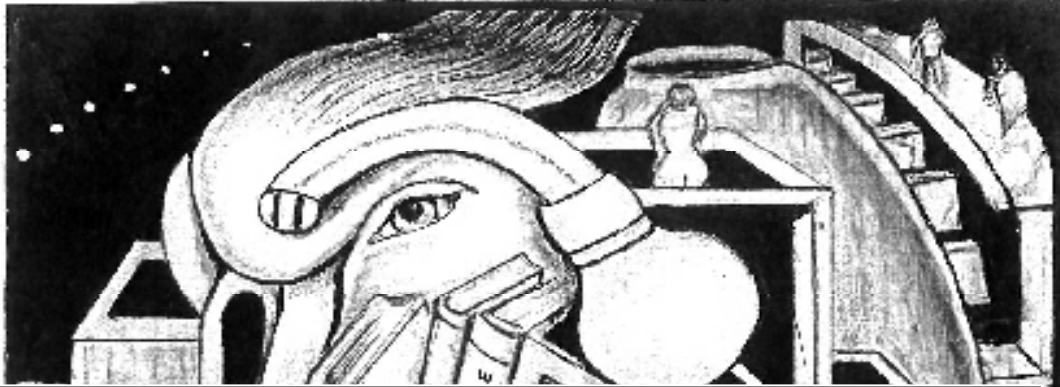
I stayed in the struggle to the end.

Wrestled with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.

And if I never see you again...

If I should die behind these high stone walls-

They did not break me.

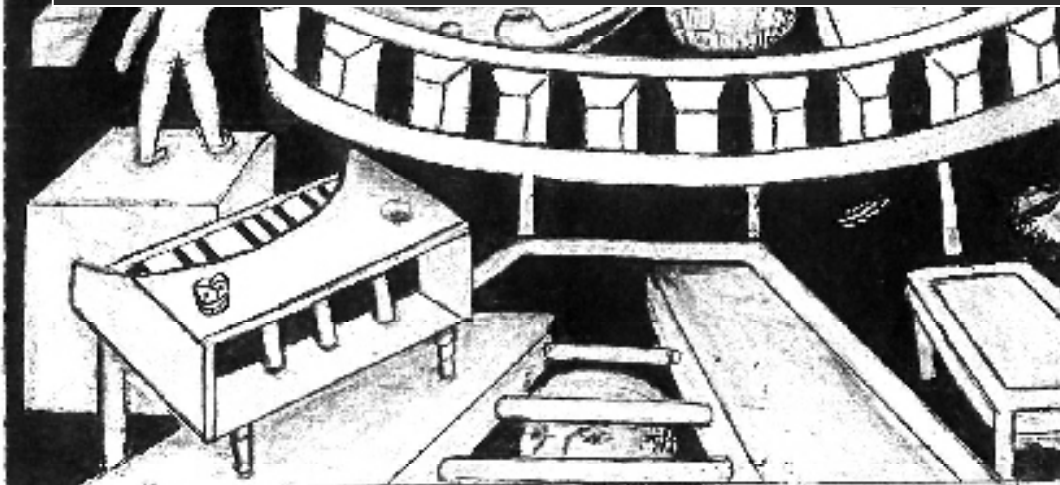


Mental Health



"This is my first time in prison. There have been days when I've found myself deep in crisis, where I wanted to die. Each person that has shared his time and loving energy became the light I needed during those dark days. They became my advocates, connecting me to the world as they reminded me that I still have purpose in it."

K. Kabasha Griffin-El, SCI Somerset, "I am in Recovery"



Tuesday
Richard Sean Gross, SCI Phoenix

Used to know Tuesday from Sunday,
Knew Tuesday by things scheduled,
Work to be done, appointments,
Now there's nothing there.
Looks a lot like Sunday,
As a matter of fact,
Every day does.

An Emotional Racing Car Crash
Wayne P. Johnson, SCI Benner Township

Do your negative thoughts ever run real fast like you're driving
a racing car?
If so that's properly because you're driving your negative emo-
tions too far.
Like say for instance you jump inside of a depression car and
when you press on the gas she can take you real far.
So you may ride through confusion and chaos neighborhood
too,
Because all of them live close together inside of you.
And sometimes we all have the tendency to run through some of
the warning signs,
So we may run some red lights and stop signs in our minds,
And whenever someone loses control of their steering wheel
They can end up in an emotional car crash for real.
Because when our emotions start speeding sometimes they can
be very hard to stop,
And that's why some people may call the doctors or the cops,
To try to help us pull our emotional racing car over to the side,
Because depression and her crew stay doing drive bys.
And if you don't believe me then go ask my nephew Joy,
And he will tell you that all depression and her in-laws do is
destroy,
Because depression and her crew specialize in crashin' emotion-
al racing cars
So please try not to drive these negative emotions too far.

Doubts
Entertain
Pains
Reputation
Easily
Sending
Suicidal
Influence
On
Notice

Like a Harmony
Juicy Queen Bee, SCI Houtzdale

Like a harmony
Soul pouring out
Another song sound
Like a melody

Like a harmony
A song from within
Got me caught up

Caged up like a bird
Needing wings to fly

Like a harmony
Need a beat
To play my song
A melody from
Within my soul

Cannot complain
For you wouldn't
Begin to understand
What I've been through

Don't know how
Much more I can take
Getting too old
To begin to sing
This song a melody
Pouring out my heart
Eyes all cried out

Drowned in Absolute Madness
Tommie Lee Johnson, Broward County Main Jail

The principle of madness.
There are only two kinds of madness in this world
And everybody somewhere spinning on this
Worn out planet earth deep down in
Himself or herself imperfed has
Teased one of the two forms of madness.

The powerful force of brilliant
Madness, or the searing force of
Destructive madness.
Perfected within their own consciousness.
And I can tell
You first hand about the exuberant
Pellucid devouring beauty of pure
Destructive madness. And if I sound like
I'm crazy it's because I am.

It feels like emerging from a lava pool
The lava bubbled and spat congealing
In thick syrupy floods a crust
Of dark rock cracking and splitting
On the surface before being consumed.
Stepping out of the lava pool as easily
As a man might emerge from a pool
Of cold pristine crystal water.
I'm renewed despite the intense heat
Neither scar nor burn marred my
Body. Eyes ablaze forbidding as enemy
Under devil.

Drowned in absolute madness.
I'm out there totally submerged in the
Totality of society on an urban stage
Morphing into Doctor Jekyll.
Totally engulfed in a whirlwind
Of rage on sidewalks crammed with

Chuckling pedestrian men in business
Suits talking loudly into their cell
Phones to some invisible other.
And young mothers pushing strollers
With wailing infants and young
Children inside. Zooming back and
Forth on the sidewalk like cockroaches
Running from light.

I'm a Terrible force, a god of raging
Madness. With my bare hands I
Tear people apart like a roaring
Maned lion dismembers a young graceful
Doe, leaving adults, infants, and small
Children battered dismembered in pools
Of blood on the sidewalk lined with
Young oak trees. Once you go beyond
Mad you become a slave to madness
An unpredictable master.

The end.

Untitled Poem

Tommy Luna, Lake County Jail, Oregon

Don't let anyone tell you
That you're sick or not mentally well.
Sometimes it's our atmosphere, and
What we take in that's bad
For our health.
Emotions tend to stay in motion,
And feelings are meant to be
Felt.

OUT of PLACE

Karina Rosado, FDC Miami

A lost soul in a dark place...
I am my old self,
A dark misfit.
I want everyone to hurt like I do,
I don't belong.
I can't run away,
I'm locked in a cage.
I want to break free from my chains
So I can move to a better place.
Just maybe one day,
I can be my NEW SELF—
But first I have to find her?

WHERE and WHEN?

Karina Rosado, FDC Miami

I'm a NATURAL BORN LOSER
Never fit in anywhere
I'm always the outsider,
An outcast in this reality.
Which realm do I fit in?
I'm a NATURAL BORN PSYCHO
Always the emotional one,
I'm the crazy one.
When is it okay to UNLEASH CHAOS?

EMPTY

Karina Rosado, FDC Miami

I'M EMPTY,
I'm a runaway soul
I'M EMPTY,
I'm an outcast in this place
I'M EMPTY... I'M DONE.

CARNAGE OF PAIN

Karina Rosado, FDC Miami

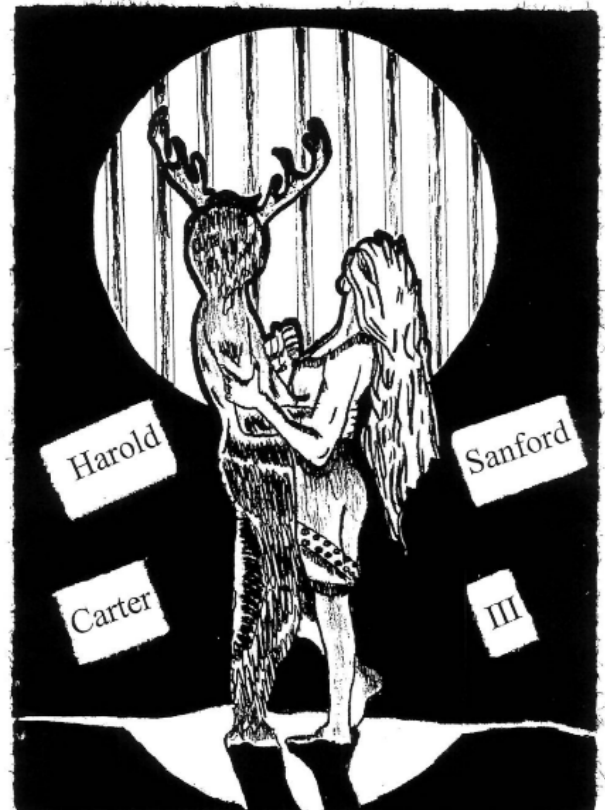
Stabbed in the heart and back
multiple times,
A dark hole gets bigger and deeper
with each drop
spilling memories of every heartache
and disappointment.

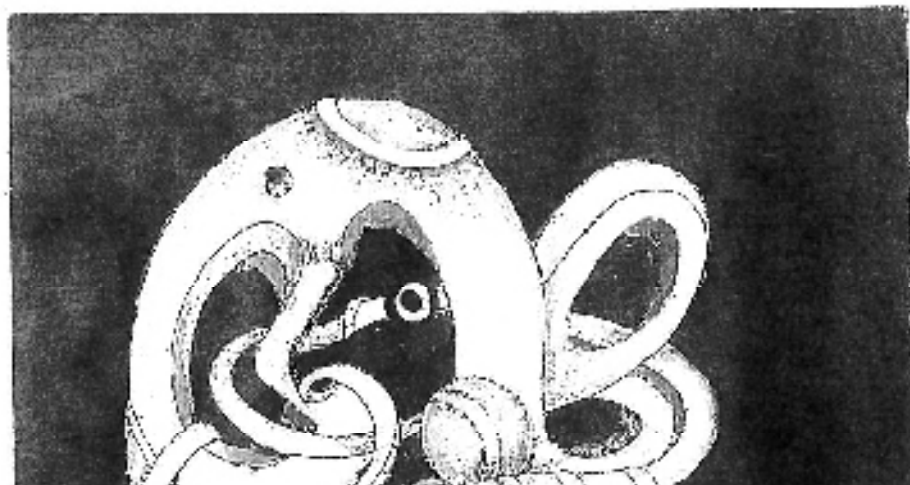
When will the carnage stop?
How is it that I get it wrong?
So much blood being spilled,
I'll need a blood transfusion.
Who will donate their blood to SAVE ME?
Or will my life be SACRIFICED?

Pagan Artwork

Harold Carter Stanford III, Released

The Pennsylvania Department of
Corrections inability to accommodate
the Pagan and Wiccan faith





Loss



"As we live and breathe, the struggle for our freedom continues. The imprisonment of the souls of our brothers and sisters continues. Although they no longer live and breathe on the Earth, I do believe that the imprisoned souls deserve a chance for eternal freedom."

Bradford Gamble, SCI Coal Township, "Free the Lost Souls of Prison Lifers"



OLYMPIC STRUGGLE

Heart Broken

Juicy Queen Bee, SCI Houtzdale

So many nights,
I couldn't sleep
Hurt from all
The tears I cry
Over missing you,
The one I love the most.

Heart broken into pieces,
Turn around,
Pierce with a bow and arrow.
Can't escape the pain,
Caused by you.

Days I felt I couldn't breathe,
You came and gave
My oxygen needed to survive.

Heart been broken,
Needing a touch
From you up above.

Like the Wind

Juicy Queen Bee, SCI Houtzdale

Gone like the wind
Up flew on by
Left all alone
Hurting deep within
Missing your touch
Wishing you were here
Again by my side

Like an eagle's wing
Like a dove
A bird you left
Without saying goodbye
Got me hurting
Needing your love
To feel your touch
Taste your love

Your touch feels
Like a gentle touch
You spread your
Love all over

To spend a lifetime I will
Just to be by you
Once again
Singing a song
Like an angel
Can't wait to see you once again

A Favor for a Family Friend

Richard Sean Gross, SCI Phoenix

He's not looking well, I says to the Mrs.
never seen a man quite that color before.
"His family say he's fine," my wife retorts.
His heirs have not called a Doctor, I says,
they just keep a quiet vigil at his bedside.
"Do you suppose he's mentioned us?" she asks.
What, you mean in his will? I says, I doubt it.
"Perhaps we should summon the Doctor," she says.
That would be a kind gesture for our old friend,
"Inheritance or not," we say in one breath.

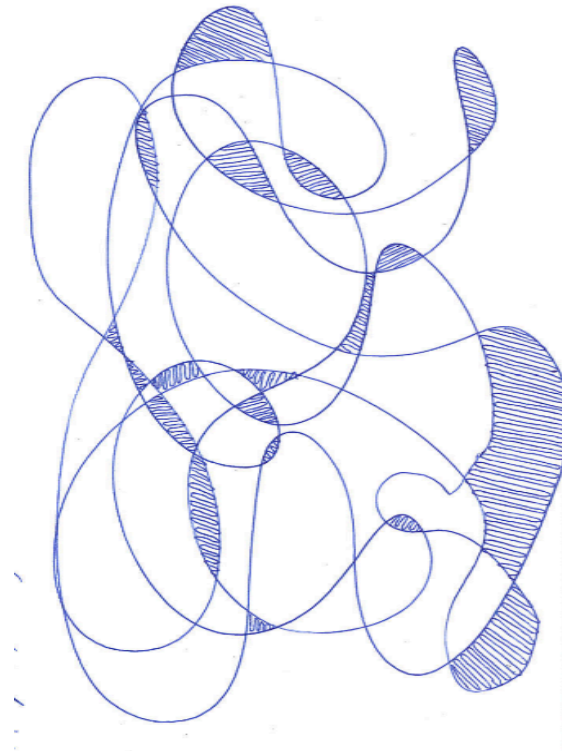
Mr. Box

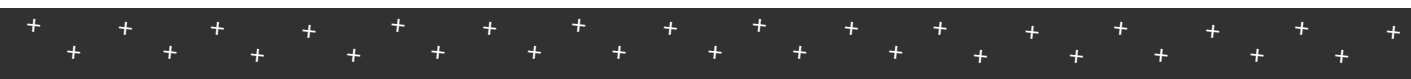
Larry N. Stromberg, SCI Phoenix

A cool cat gliding with soul,
Immense wisdom his demeanor,
Loved grooving to a tune,
Cherished every family member, never forgetting a name,
Incarcerated severely by condemning system,
Never gave up the fight for freedom,
Redemption always in his sight,
Even with no light in the horizon,
Faith and education his only escape,
Diagnosed terminal with the cankerworm,
Hospice in an infirmary prison cell,
Praying for compassionate release,
47 years in, denied on his deathbed,
No mercy for a lifer with remorse in his heart,
Death flying Mr. Box away,
He finally made it home.

Filling Space

Vaughn Wright, SCI Huntingdon





The Winter Storm of Death

Bernie Ryan

The warm Summer Sun of life has disappeared below the horizon in the West; with the passing away of my beautiful Spouse.

There is now only a lingering gloom and memories to be resurrected that have been permanently tattooed on my thoughts and dreams.

Ironically, the customary phrase used by well intentioned people that she is in a better place because her suffering is over is merely spoken out of sympathetic ignorance that causes my grief-stricken self to cringe!

There are no comforting words to diminish the Storm of bereavement that rages like a Nor-Easter into Eternity.

This Wintry Storm of Death has caused an Avalanche of loneliness that has buried me in my solitude with a suffocating silence and desolation that grips me like Bear Claws in an unyielding blizzard of forlornness that rips and tears at my mind and heart!

Reminiscing about happier times are shattered by images of suffering and death that bring countless hours of sorrowful tears to my eyes, that glisten in icy pools of despair... knowing that I will never again behold the living presence of my Wife because her Soul has been carried beyond Earthly Gates of Mortality by the Pallbearers of the Eternal Rest.

The Angels in Heaven weep as they witness my daily battle against the diabolical forces of grief.

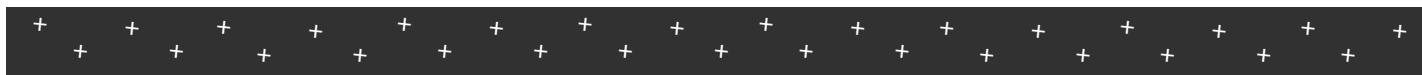
The Celestial Winged Spirits understand that my sense of hopelessness is like trying to open the closed cover of a Coffin, with bare hands, that is buried deep under the mound of the frozen ground.

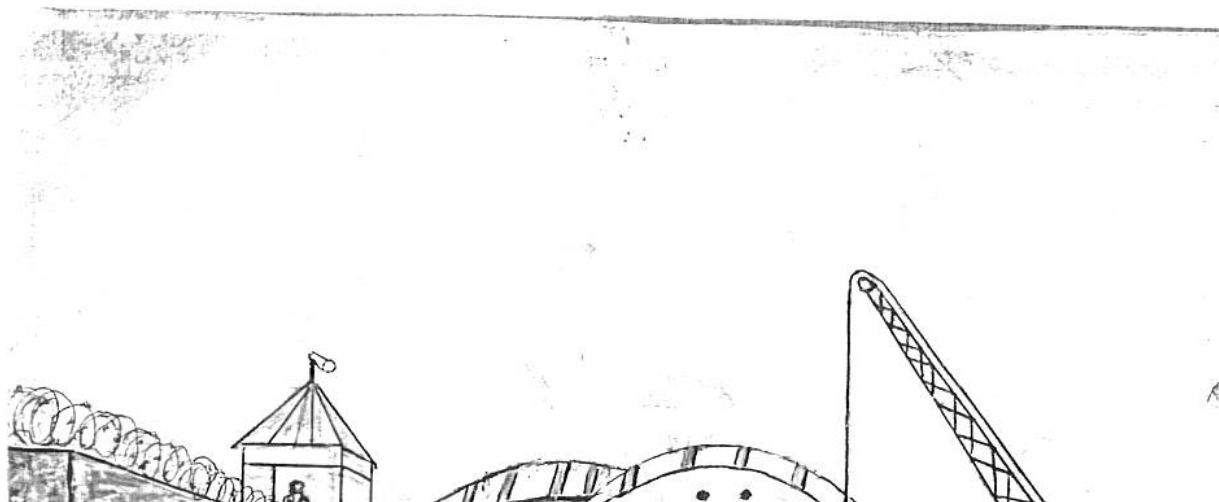
Only God and Heaven's Angels know the true depths of human agony for the One left behind when the Sacred bond of Marriage has been severed by death do us part.

Dedicated to the Memory of:

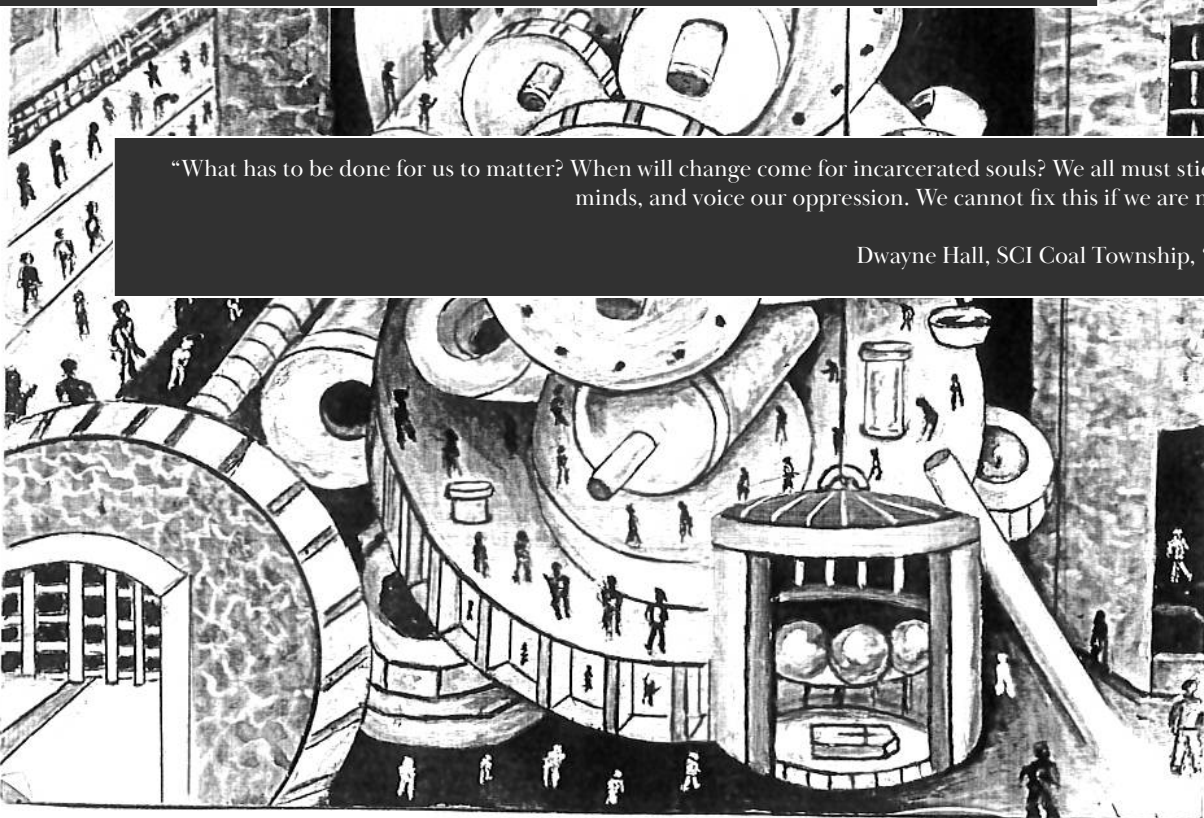
Ruby Anne Ryan, Nee Bowman

1947 to 2020





Injustice



“What has to be done for us to matter? When will change come for incarcerated souls? We all must stick together, speak our minds, and voice our oppression. We cannot fix this if we are never properly heard.”

Dwayne Hall, SCI Coal Township, “Inmate Lives Matter”

Injustice
Sharif Jordan El-Bey, PICC

I can hear my soul cry...for cracks only the dark can hide.
What is left of me?
Hearing vibrations from where the light has no home
Their hands around my neck, sneaking from the dark
Whispers of,
“We don’t have to hide.”

For they hold the Land, Air, and Water, (LAW), in both hands.
As I stand in front of a tombstone that reads,
R.I.P. Truth lies here 1865 to 1869.

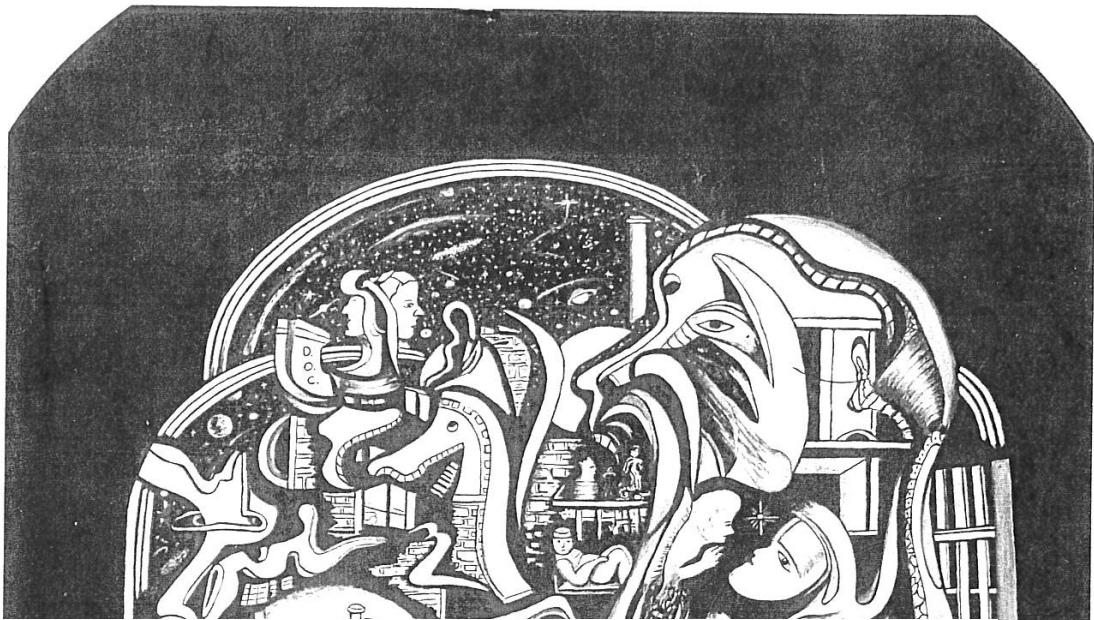
Chained down, brainwashed, psychological trauma and involuntary treatment.
Who can protect me from this infringement,
While I peek in their suitcase,
All I see is words,
Most of ones I never seen, spoke, or ever heard.
When the suitcase was closed it read “for he who defines rules.”

Dear Breonna
David Meade, SCI Forest

Staring at your memorial makes me reflect upon how an Innocent person of color’s life could be so swiftly stolen,
The opposition says that all lives matter out of racism or just Plainly being complacent but not only was your life precious
But it was also voluminous & golden.
Since the departure of your soul, America will never ever be The same,
Protesters have been marching the US globally & outside chanting
“Black Lives Matter” and shouting out “Say Her Name” Say Your Name.
You had a radiant smile that could light up a cave during a Blackout surrounded by sturdy bleak mountains,
And I know that we never met each other but the fatality of Your departure made me cry out tears of a fountain.
Your life was stolen like the virginity of our foremothers or like a Magically unjust heist,
I write this poem today cause you reflect the pigmentation of my Sister, niece, cousin, or wife.
Watching your documentary on CNN has left a stain on my heart that
Will remain so delineate & vigorously vivid,
If it wasn’t for the oppressors serving an illegal search warrant & trying
To overkill I could visualize you dedicating your life to helping patients
With COVID-19.
The voiceless such as myself & the righteous will continue to fight
Systemic racism as the wicked will continue to plot & sigh,
But however we will fight vigorously on your behalf & we promise
To keep your name alive.

Excessively Forceful Prosecution
Kermit B. Gosnell, SCI Huntingdon

Excessive Force	killed	GEORGE FLOYD ...
Excessive Force	killed	Breonna Taylor ...
Excessive Force	awakened	“Black Lives Matter” ...
Excessive Force	killed	Emmett Till ...
Excessive Force	killed	members of “Move” ...
Excessive Force	killed	four girls in the Birmingham Church ...
Excessive Force	killed	Martin Luther King, Jr. ...
Excessive Force	killed	President Kennedy ...
Excessive Force	killed	his brother Robert ...
Excessive Force	killed	many “Black Panthers” ...
Excessive Force	killed	the masses sentenced to Death by Incarceration ...
Excessive Force	killed	“Freedom Riders” Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner in 1964 ...
Excessive Force	killed	25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery—jogging in Georgia suburbs—2020 ...
Excessive Force	killed	multiple masses in religious WARS over cons ...
Excessive Force	killed	all too many “Strange Fruit”—after the Civil War ...
Excessive Force	killed	at Stonewall and against the LGBTQ ...
Excessive Force	killed	countless Indigenous Native Americans by the European Invasion ...
Excessive Force	killed	Mexicans in the Mexican-American War—territory was “won” by USA ...
Excessively Forceful Prosecution		strengthens the high Guilty Verdict Rate of the criminal justice system ...
Excessively Forceful Prosecution		disproportionately affects minorities ...
Excessively Forceful Prosecution		causes mass incarceration ...
Excessively Forceful Prosecution		must be corrected by President Biden when change of mass incarceration becomes the priority ...
Excessively Forceful Prosecution		may be the reason few inmates admit their guilt—realities and subsistences are ignored ...
Excessively Forceful Prosecution		may be the reason many inmates honestly profess their innocence ...
Excessively Forceful Prosecution		simply a significant SHADOW OF SYSTEMIC RACISM ...



Addiction



"It is time to broach the topic of education in the DOC. Is there any question that this department is woefully lacking? When a branch of government boasts the word "corrections" in their title, one naturally presumes there are rehabilitative measures available, as well as courses geared towards academia."

Shawn Younker, SCI Greene, "Education in the DOC"



I RENEGED ON MY SOUL AND GAVE UP MY FREEDOM.
SUCH A WASTE IN THE EYES OF GOD AND MAN.
THERE CAN BE NO FORGIVENESS FOR SUCH SQUANDERING.

NOW A VAGABOND IN THIS WASTELAND OF PRISON,
I WAIT THE CEMETERY GARDENER.
ONE WHO WILL BE KINDER TO ME IN DEATH
THAN I WAS TO MYSELF IN LIFE.



Drugs and Sin

Wayne P. Johnson, SCI Benner

"I quit" is so easy to say,
When you're locked in a rehab.
So don't forget to pray,
Because the weed, alcohol, coke, heroin, twokey, wet
And pills,
Are all waiting at door to ask you one question:
"Do you want some more?"
Because that thought has already been planted in your head.
So do you want to be a part of the living?
Or the dead?
"The dead" being the ones who are slaves
To that narcotic voice that calls from the grave
And to interact with that voice,
Could lead you straight to hell,
Where your tombstone and coffin has been prepared
As well.
Those who graduate can testify to that thought.
That's why they must lean on a higher power
For major support.
Support to help them stay sober
And clean
Because messing with drugs is a nightmare
Where you will forfeit all your dreams.
That's why it's best to say no to drugs and mean
It from the heart.
Then have your people at your funeral,
Saying dearly depart,
We are gathered here today to bury another
Love one and friend,
and it's all due to the facts of
Drugs and a Sin

Stuck in Shit

Wayne P. Johnson, SCI Benner

Don't entertain thoughts that you know stink,
Like tellin' yourself, "I'm only gonna have one drink,"
Or "I'm only gonna take one mother fuckin' hit,"
Cause the next thing you know, you stuck in shit.
So you may start to commit all kinds of foolish crimes,
Because of the stinkin' thinkin' that be on your mind,
Like robbin' your mom or tellin' all kinds of lies,
Because you will do just about anything to get that next bag,
When you want to get high.
So you might sell your food stamps or even your car,
Or you might ask for change outside of a bar.
And when you get enough you go chasin' after that girl,
You know the one who you be wantin' to rock your world
That girl who be trickin'; you know her,
Because she be in every 'hood.
And she say, "if you give me a hit, I'll make you feel so good,"
And before you know it,
All your money is gone.
So you start to feel bad because you know you was wrong,
But you're still not ready to go home yet.
So you stay in the streets,
Probably sittin' in a crack house with nothing to eat,
Or waitin' for somebody to give you another hit.
Because these the kind of things that go on,
When you're stuck in shit.
And all addicts know how they began to stink,
So don't go home and take that first hit or a drink,
Because you already know that it's a high,
That you ain't never gonna get,
So don't let no stinkin' thinkin',
Get you stuck in shit!

Freedom, Keith Lambing, SCI Greene



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