

WRITER'S BLOC



Fall 2011, Issue 4

"We must forgive as our sins are forgiven, our great-uncle tells us,
showing the chain and ball in a cage whittled from *one block of wood...*"
-poet, Julia Spicher Kasdorf



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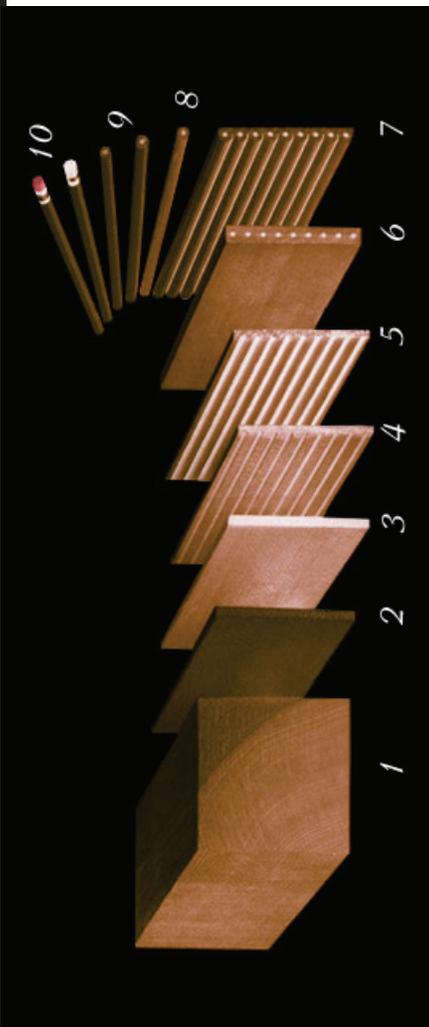
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A Word



From the Staff

Dear Reader,

Since the inception of Writer's Bloc, our mission has been redefined with each semester. The initial spark came from two graduating seniors, both former volunteers of the Cornell Prison Education Program (CPEP), who saw first-hand the need for a creative component to the academic agenda. As the first publication gradually attracted attention from campus, the real goals of Writer's Bloc slowly began to materialize. For contributing writers and CPEP students, the journal served as an outlet through which many were able to divulge complicated emotions and unpack difficult experiences. On campus, word spread about a program in which Cornell students went into classrooms at maximum security prisons and developed learning relationships with incarcerated writers, philosophers, historians, and anthropologists. Writer's Bloc was the window through which very few could peak at an experience seldom seen, heard, or read about—even among Cornell's best and brightest. By the second issue, it was clear that Writer's Bloc was abstract reflection—on both sides—translated into something tangible and accessible.

While in production this past semester, we as a staff meditated upon the ways in which our society views incarceration. We struggle to decipher true portrayals of prison through the artistic medium of film: we think of Vincent Gambini sleeping in the county jail for a night for making hilariously snide remarks in a courtroom, or perhaps older generations may envision Holly Golightly's elegant weekly visits to Sing Sing where she charismatically passes drug ring codes to a paternal mobster. Even in *The Shawshank Redemption*, thought by most to be a particularly accurate depiction of prison life, the audience perceives the incarcerated experience through the eyes of Andy DuFresne—a wrongly convicted man. It is difficult for us on the outside to shake the habit of viewing incarceration as visitors who may enter and leave (or escape). Perhaps it is too difficult for us on the other side of the wall to ever recast ourselves in a role we might be frightened of. Yet, the literature in this issue reminds us that we need not look further than a mirror to understand shared human experiences of pain, love, and loss.

In the search for a metaphorical object to best represent the developing role of Writer's Bloc in our shared Cornell community, we thought of the ironic wordplay evoked in the publication's name. "Bloc" refers to the organized grouping of like-minded individuals, or the housing areas of penitentiaries, or the frustrating deterrence while attempting to express oneself. However, we recently adopted the most literal form of the word in its geometric definition and remember Writer's Bloc as a block upon which we can continuously build. Similar to the way in which pencils are produced from large blocks of cedar wood, we imagine Writer's Bloc as building a tower with these cedar blocks, and becoming stronger with each written word submitted. We hope that this issue inspires you to not only challenge preconceived notions, but to acknowledge the ways in which we can understand one another and grow.

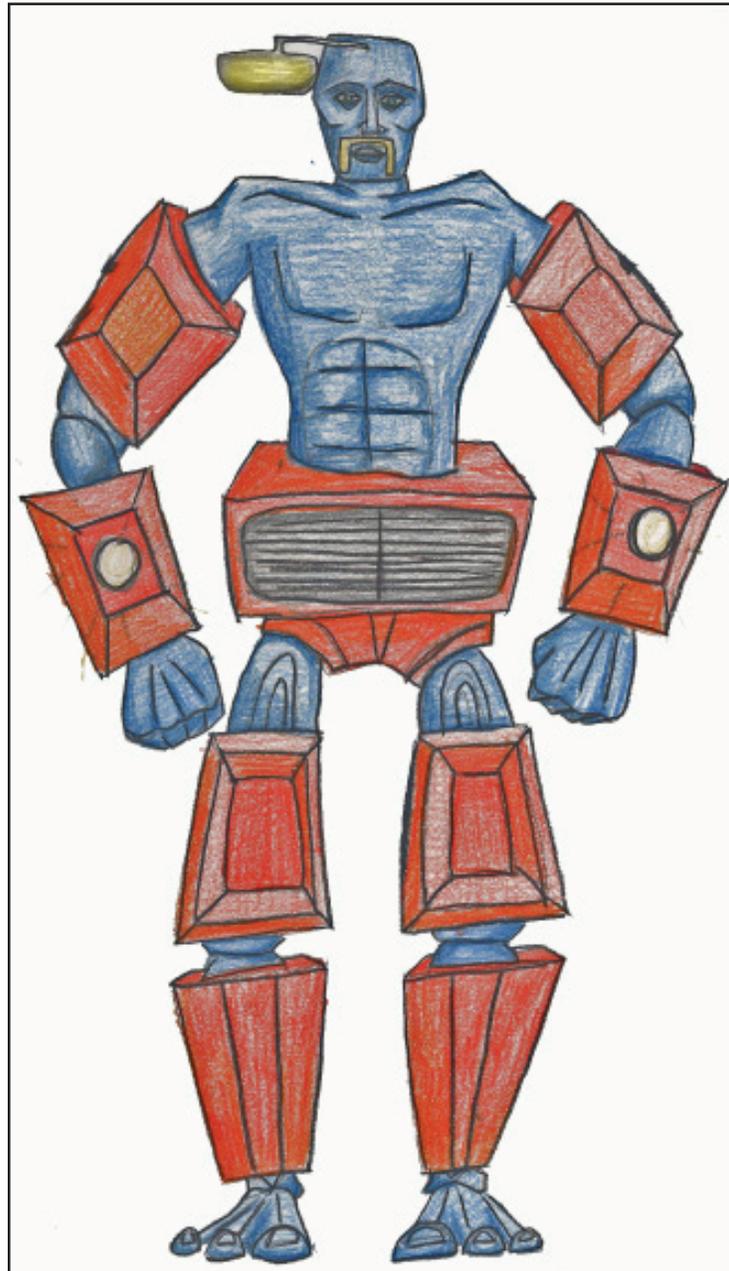
Happy reading!

Writer's Bloc Editorial Staff



“I’m fueling my future and uninhibited mind
with these un-caged ideas/words of great scholarly wisdom
—such as those bridges built by Ralph Ellison’s visions.”

- E. Paris Whitfield



Get involved with Writer’s Bloc
by visiting our website: <http://www.wix.com/cornellcpep/writers-bloc>
or emailing us at writersbloc.cornell@gmail.com

Want to learn more about
the Cornell Prison Education Program?
Visit www.cpep.cornell.edu

If you would like to submit to Writer’s Bloc,
send your work to:
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THE BRIDGES OF CAYUGA COUNTY

MICHAEL RHYNES

Incarcerated people are isolated, lonely and haunted bridges
suspended over the human chasm of indifference
where no local or tourist takes the scenic route

For a buck and 30 cents
we pay a medium to
connect us to family and friends
through the séance of technology

how dreadful it is to
love and be loved through
the proxy of memories long past

Buffeted by chilling and abandoned
winds, we sway back and forth
watching cars drive by with families
on their way to beaches, weddings, sleepovers and
just plain joyful riding

Maybe you've heard us
on sterile and impotent nights
maybe you've heard us
on frigid and sunny days
howling where no howling should be

Rolling up your windows
you curse Steve Jobs for creating a apple
riddled with static
as you cruise by
the bridges of Cayuga County

THE VALKYRIE

LUCAS WHALEY

I am bleeding.
Ghosts, like wounds, sap life's essence.
Blood and darkness mingle as one.

I am fighting.
Dragons, greedy and dangerous, circle
around me.
Dragons of the mind.

I am stumbling.
I feel the tomb taking root inside.
Dark seeds sprouting rust and corruption.

I am falling.
I fight, but I am falling, still bleeding.
Does anyone survive the cold?

I am tired.
My heart is too heavy to carry.
Petrified under the slow grind of scales.

I am dying.
Surrender is such a simple thing.
Death by degrees.

I am surprised.
How does the sun shine in hell?
Why does this fire not burn?

I am awe-struck.
Sigrdrifa! She comes!
Warrior-maiden, angel of the fallen.

I am spell-bound.
Her hair auburn and gold,
like autumn light on harvest wheat.

I am captivated.
Her eyes the color of jutting ice,

Blue-white caps hinting at hidden depths.

I am infatuated.
Her strength and her passion,
The oak within the willow.

I am rising.
Still wounded, still bleeding,
but her smile, her blush, is life.

I am reaching.
My fingers brush her as she rides on,
Searing my soul with her absence.

I am unworthy.
No hero am I, no slayer of dragons.
My heart has too often known fear and regret.

I am lost.
How does a passing star leave such scars?

How does a flame eclipse the fire?
I am bleeding.
I am sorry.
I am falling.
I am crushed.
I am dying.
I am thankful.
Good-bye...

THE FATES LOOM

CYRIL WINEBRENNER

Sparkles of blue, in your tear filled eyes.
Heart still, fairies guide your sight from the skies.
Around to a clearing to a man's forbidden path
Ravens screaming, wolves howling their shared wrath
Into sorrow he screams, wind whipping his wild mane.
Loss and Betrayal has pierced him with everlasting pain.
Your heart surges in your breast, with a sympathetic soul
Never before have you felt love that would make you whole
Now standing there you wonder, could this man be the one?
Wind whispering, lost, your tear filled eyes return to the Sun
In your breast, a beat and a prayer rises to your almighty god
Need, desire, the promise of unconditional love, makes your path clear
Entering the clearing, all sound fades, as your fingers give a feathered touch
Before me you stand, gazing at the Mother's gift...and curse
Resting your head against my chest, my arms slowly cocooning
Eternity before us if you want it, however you have yet to make a sound
Never again, you swore, would you open your heart to pain
Now you rest against me, and fear you could never part again
Evermore will I cherish and honor you, I swear with the brush of my lips
Reality fades with our kiss, the Mother has witnessed and blessed.

A FLOWER FORBIDDEN

LATASIO A. CENDALES

One last time
Our friendship's a crime
Not to be had
Sentiments sad
The feeling concealed
My love revealed
Achingly thru
A poem in lieu

AS I WALK THROUGH LIFE

MICHAEL S. BOYD

I've learned- that you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.

I've learned-that it is taking me a long time to become the person that I want to be.

I've learned- that you can keep going long after you can't.

I've learned- that we are responsible for what we do no matter how we feel.

I've learned-that either you control your attitude or it will control you.

I've learned-that no matter how hot and steamy a relationship is at first, the passion fades, and there had better be something to take it's place.

I've learned- that heroes are people who do what needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.

I've learned-that money is a busy way of keeping score.

I've learned- that my best friend and I can do anything or nothing, and have the best time.

I've learned-that sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you are down will be the ones to help you get up.

I've learned- that sometimes when I'm angry, I might have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.

I've learned- that true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distances. Same goes for true love.

I've learned- that just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to doesn't mean that they don't love you with all they have.

I've learned-that maturity has more to do with what type of experiences you've had and what you've learned from them and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated.

I've learned-that your family won't always be there for you. it may seem funny, but people that aren't related to you can take care of you and love you and teach you to trust people again. Families aren't necessarily biological.

I've learned-that no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while and you must forgive them for that.

I've learned- that it isn't enough to be forgiven by others
Sometimes you have to learn to forgive yourself.

I've learned- that our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

I've learned- that just because two people argue, it doesn't mean that they don't love each other. And just because they don't argue, it doesn't mean that they do love each other.

I've learned-probably most importantly, that you should always leave loved ones with loving words, it may be the last time you see them. Tomorrow is promised to no one.

FORGIVE ME

JERMAINE WEST

How do you express love to a child who's used to you not being around, surrounded by a sea of life, abandoned and feeling like she was left to drown? The storm surrounds her, but her comfort and safety—Daddy—is not to be found.

The reality of these thoughts forces pain and regret inside. I'm trapped. How do I tell my precious Ariana I love her now? Would she forgive me and hear my distant cries? Will she forgive or forever despise me for the time missed in her life?

Explanations of life are hard for a child to grasp. She's only eleven and life for her has not yet been had. My separation from my daughter has narrowed my sights. My heart can't see without my Ariana's light. In my mind, I scream "I need you back."

The rays of her smile—the beautiful flow of her hair—the emotionally charged volts I receive when I look into her innocently amused eyes. The visions of a young woman on the rise.

The times I watched you sleep and the walks in the parks are the memories that I savor, which hold me from falling apart. Every word you spoke and thought you've expressed is forever sketched in my mind, which I remember with the taking of every breath.

When the sun shines, I pray that you are out basking in its rays in a joyous state, receiving the benefits of the day. When it rains, I picture you watching the raindrops from the window of your living room... longing... wishing I could share that view with you. When the leaves fall, I vision us playing in them. When the snow falls, we would drink hot cocoa after a cold day's outing. When the moon appears, that's my secret sign to say goodnight to you.

The place where penance was thought to take place is the same place that's restricting me from your much-needed embrace. The emotions of the heart of an eleven-year-old are complex and deep. The emotions of a father are beyond words constructed in the most intelligent form of speech.

My soul is revived with every day that goes by. Four days closer 'til I'll have you in my life. My regrets and your lack of understanding of how things were and still remain are unresolved and burdened.

Ariana, you are the air that allows me to breathe, my twin, my little-big girl. I am thankful for you are who I adore. My precious gift from the creator, always know that I miss you and that your father loves you more.

Dedicated to my joy,
Ariana

REDUNDANT SEASONS

WILLIAM BARNES

The sun, the moon,
Early summer, late afternoons,

Leafs are brown, some red,
Many frozen grounds ahead,

Jack Frost is coming,
"Cold" to delight,
Still air at night,

Aroma of spring,
Flowers bloom,

Redundant seasons,
Another year too soon.

LIKE A BRIDGE...

E. PARIS WHITFIELD

Raging waters of education flow, for those that are untaught
and unawake, or just want to know...

There is a prison's bus that transports
Guilt/innocence/or defendants into a rare underground
Manhattan Court, jail, there, is where many heavy
souls disembark, having shackles on so tight it paralyzes
one's walk.

I remember it so clearly...

Just after receiving a sentence of 25 years to life,
I remember my ears were ringing fro the screams
of disbelief. Those moans, murmurs of my mother's
pure discord.

In a zombie state, I boarded the bus, too stunned to cry
too numb to even realize, that a slamming gavel, words
that took seconds, had transpired, had transformed my
life.

Oh, I remember...so vividly.

The bus drove out of that dark dark basement parking
lot, like a eulogy. Into a blinding sun.
all around, there seemed so much living life, except
in my mind. I felt buried—alive.

The bus crept across the mall. Unsuspecting non-lunchers
enjoying the golden rays.

My mother staring blank-less into the deep gorgeous
Blue heavens, all alone.

Her and I, bridged to the sightless fingers of time.

We were our feet away.

Yet, we remained miles apart.
I touched the gated window, just as she brought
her love over her heart.
She didn't even know it was I—her son—on that bus.
We passed each other, like strangers on the street.
That's when a single tear broke from a place deep inside
of me.
Just one of thousands, that would later be
released.

Today, as I walk Robert Frost's path of least resistance...
I reminisce of a not so distance past.

I'm fueling my future and uninhibited mind
with these un-caged ideas/words of great scholarly wisdom—such
as those bridges built by Ralph Ellison's visions.
I'm building bridges, I'll need tomorrow, instead
of crossing those wretched, rickety ones I once borrowed.
Making education the mortar. Making it the ligament
that matters.
My mind is unshackled, I'm finally free.
Barb wires, high concrete walls, nor the tints
of yesteryear's poor choice, can contain me.
My mind—is free, finally. Floating where the clouds are hung.
Education as my bridge, I'm over the troubled waters...
And now, I'm free...

AN EXCERPT FROM *HOT WATER*

MICHAEL SHANE HALE

Jesus notices movement in his peripheral vision. Moses is easing himself up on the wall near Jesus' cage. Moses' demeanor was not a peaceful one. Moses hikes one sneaker up on the wall behind him and Jesus' heart drops.

"Moses," Jesus steps out onto the company to make sure Moses hasn't sneaked up for revenge.

"Yeah I see you, cocksucker," Mohammed was making his way down the company in brown boots, which had flaming red sweat pants thrust inside them. He walks with pronounced arms fanning out and shooting back to his sides.

Moses starts off the wall. Jesus blocks his path, "Think about what you are doing, Moses. Parole, the programs—you know the administration would love nothing more than to throw you in the box and stop you from progressing."

Jesus feels Mohammed approaching, "Moses, you are too big and too strong to hit that old white man. You know they'll use it against you—make you the aggressor!" Jesus speaks quickly and plainly. Jesus backs into Mohammed as his arms swing out at Moses. Jesus takes a smack to the back of his head, "Jesus, get the fuck out of my way."

"Mohammed, I can't let you do that," Jesus says as he turns around and dodges a second smack. Moses walks away down the company. Other cons are silently drinking the scene through parched eyes.

"Nothing to see, brothers," Jesus announces.

"The hell if they ain't. Get back here you coward!" Mohammed yells out.

"What are you trying to do? Call the hacks over here, huh? Because that is what you're doing," Jesus points down to the front of the company.

When Mohammed looks behind him, he sees the hack looking curiously down the company from the front gate. He twirls a large heavy key ring laden with heavy brass keys around in his hand. Each rotation lets loose a metallic shower of jingles that end with a clunk on the bars in front of the pondering hack.

"What are you tryin' to say, Jesus?"

"Nothing, Mohammed. Just putting you on point, that's all."

"Jesus, you can't stop this. You're only putting this off."

"Fine," Jesus weakly nods his head. He looks down at his thong sandals. His feet openly ride the rubber material. Jesus knows he's not to mart. He is completely vulnerable with his sandals on. With no traction, his feet could be stepped on—a million things could happen after that...none of them good.

Mohammed turns around like a red lobster, dangling two arms with broad pinchers working open and closed. Moses is at a table busying himself with a friendly game of cut throat.

Jesus hems and haws over whether to return to his studies or to go listen to Mohammed's piss and vinegar until he calms down.

Jesus looks up the company and sees the hack's black uniform cross in front of the gates. Jesus did not need them running onto the company making any martyrs.

"Fine," Jesus mutters to himself. He'll just pull an all-nighter to not get behind. "Be-

sides," he tells himself, "it's only a couple more hours before we're locked in anyway."

Jesus looks for Mohammed in his cage when he walks out of the slop sing at the front of the company, carrying a thin metal pot. Water is sloshing over its sides onto the concrete floor. The corners of Mohammed lips are drawn up in a smug pinch. He makes his way to a wooden table with a burner on it. He collapses the pot, which is probably half full now. The other half forms a watery trail back to the slop sink.

"Watch this will ya?" Mohammed goes to get a mop.

Jesus looks into the pot. The water simultaneously reveals the metallic bottom and reflects the perpetual fluorescent lighting. Ever so often, somebody gets lucky and causes at least one of the bulbs to blow out with a smack.

"Maybe that's the problem," Jesus considers, "No sleep, no patience." He laughs but sees the bags underneath his eyes, his reflection is a youthful haggardness.

"Jesus, you wan an apple?" Mohammed, in his cage, holds the apple up to Jesus.

"Aww, why not?" Jesus enters Mohammed's cage and sits on a small stool by the gate.

"Won't be long now," Mohammed croons aloud.

"What won't be long?" Before Mohammed can answer Jesus, Peter stops by.

"Mohammed, that wasn't right. It wasn't right at all. I know, you know, and anyone else that has seen it knows that it wasn't right...at all!" The last two words are added for emphasis by Peter, whose oversized sweatshirt engulfs his upper body—leaving visible only his face and hands. His blotchy skin leaves an impression on his face, particularly dark circles around the sockets of his eyes, of an old raccoon with a graying afro.

Mohammed holds his hand up and palms out, "Petey, don't worry about it. I'm gonna make it right. In fact, I'm cookin' up somethin' right now." The palm sharpened into a finger pointing to the pot.

Peter backs out in front of the metal bars and looks towards the burner. He brings his head closer to his body, like a turtle's head trying to fit itself into a shell. Peter looks really hard and waits for something to kick in. His eyes dart back and forth before he turns back around.

"Mohammed, what are you talkin' about? Are you feelin' alright? You took a pretty serious fall, did you ask to go over to the sick call and check for a concussion or somethin'?"

"Petey, don't worry, when that water heats up, that son of a bitch is going to need a lot more than a sick call."

Peter's eyes widened, bringing out the dark uneven splotches on his face.

"Now, Peter, am I understandin' you right? You gonna hit him with the... water?" Mohammed pauses before adding water, not sue he wants to hear anymore.

"Petey, not a whole lot gets by you. You're absolutely correct."

"Boy! I'm glad I'm not Moses!" Peter lets out a snort of a laugh.

EXILED TO WITHIN

JOSHUA J. KEPPEM

Bitter seeds—within a sweet fruit. How temporal juices dry. The flesh withers... ruts.
Seeds are held in a stasis, they cannot nourish themselves.
They can only wait to grow.

Time's wasting. When will things become just right enough for you?

Such potential... waits... hopes... yearns... remains the same.

No desire, they must be moved by outside forces. Self contained, yet still lacking.
Unfulfilled.

When will they discover the sustenance needed to flourish? How long can they
hold on to hope—spitefully hiding the inner beauty of what they can become to the
barren world?
Selfish... jaded... forlorn.

Isn't it better to unfurl a leaf, sprout a root? Stretching, straining... striving for the
chance—probing the unknown with tender desperation...

When will the bitter seeds produce the gentle, delicate flower? Offering its sweet
ambrosia to feed diverse life.

When we take the chance, our victories are sweeter.

When we share our gifts to the world around us, the world gives back. Come and
be my soil, share with me your light... I'll breathe for you.

Alone we never grow...

Together we make life!

DEAR GHETTO

DAVID BENDEZU

Dear Ghetto,

I have never been good at math, but it's been 5 years, 65 months, 1,957 days, and like forever hours—yet I still remember the good times we had, during the summer the fire hydrant kept everyone soaked.

Benny's corner store was always open and females were always roaming. When winter came, Tims and Northfaces kept us bundled up. Some had no money to pay for electricity, so the ovens kept families warm. 40 degrees below, no work, dudes had to hustle. I still wonder how single mothers gathered strength to tell their kids, "I love you."

When spring hit, everyone had to get fresh. I can still smell the "hot boxes" and hear the reggeaton music blasting throughout the neighborhoods. Moreños were like, "turn that mira, mira stuff off!" Rap groups like The LOX were in, X was fine, but Mary J was it.

Bush taught me how to drive "the hootie." Danny B was the first to graduate and everyone hung out on Waverly. Zuly, remember working in Micky O's drive through? We were always saying, "welcome to Burger King."

Kamisha always had Ronell by her grasp (sorry Nellz), and Bradley kept using a fake bus pass. Andy was grumpy, JJ loved Myspace, and Sharron was going crazy. The twins were everybody's favorite Dominicans. Nelly had the hottest family, yes, even abuela.

Cindy was cool, Yaidy had SpongeBob toes (my bad Yaidy), and Christina at times was rude. James came to Roosevelt High School and discovered we stayed fly, so he joined the Air Force. Nutcrackers had us thinking we were grown, and staying up late got us all in trouble. "Yonkers," we screamed, was always home.

Don't worry about me, I've been holding up my head. I'm just sorry I messed up. Hopefully one day I'll get to hug all of you at the same time. But before I say goodbye, I'll leave all of you with a saying I learned over the years: "Life is shaped by the choices we make."

Sincerely,

David Bendezu

P.S. Never forget where we came from.

MAN IN THE MIRROR

MARLON DAVID BLACK

Dearest Prince David,

You won't have to do the things I did to survive,
Because you are a better man than me.
Life is full of uncertainties,
But on the other side of the coin are certainties.
Don't be afraid to flip, it's a 50/50 chance.

What I am trying to say is don't fear,
Cause life is full of coins that we must flip.
Life is beautiful so enjoy it in full.
When you reach that fork in the road, it's a 50/50 chance.

Follow your gut, it will lead you home.
A hungry belly knows his hut.
When you find a lady, worship the ground under her feet.
Cause she'll love you, win, draw, or defeat.
Remember to always look a man in his eyes
And allow a woman's flirting eyes, cause she'll accept your lies.

These are my words to my son.
May you shine as bright as the sun.
You're my mirror image,
So since I can't see you face to face,
I talk to the Man in the Mirror.

Sincerely yours,
Your Daddy,

King David

THE KEY TO MEANING BREATHING

SHANE KALB

For my friends and all those who say there are no friends in prison

There's strange worlds in all the lonely
places
All the empty spaces
All the blank pages
Where there isn't any air.
But you know I'd never leave you there,
In an alien atmosphere—
You and I—we inhale meaning,
Monsters not belonging here:

It happened-- we, with gasps, awoke
And saw that there were natives near—
Born of hate and without air.
They, each of them, would have us choke.
So our hearts, they prod and poke
While marveling, we inhale meaning
(and their eyes have all the seeming
Of a demon's that is dreaming)
And to our surprise, one stood and spoke:

"As we know, you both breathe meaning
In this land where there's no air.
But would you mind explaining
How you breathe when it's not here?
These men and I, our lungs are stone
And surely it's not fair—
That we endure our plight alone,
While you're a happy pair."

You looked at me, familiar eyes
That often make my dark clouds leave
With dual sunrises, brief reprieves;
And in that moment we decided,
We would choke if we confided.
That the key to meaning breathing
Has to do with all your being
Given freely to your friends.

Don't living truths among just two
Have more meaning because
they're true?
Than lies among the millions
And the false portrayals they do?

So the natives, in their scheming,
And their wheezy, painful breathing,
Eyed us silently 'til deeming
Us both liars before we spoke.

So used to deprivation
And collective suffocation,
All the natives went on facing
All their meaningless despair...
We'd tell them but we're sure they'd fail
To comprehend that, with a friend,
You share each other's meaning
Back and forth with each exhale.

WHAT AM I?

JAMES M. SQUIRES "MAC"

I'm Korean, I'm Caucasian
I am everything and nothing
I'm a lover, I'm a hater
I tell the truth while I'm bluffing
I'm a pacifist, I'm a masochist
I'm a war-mongering peaceful activist
I'm a liberator, I'm a prisoner
I'm a blinded visioner
I create, I destroy
I play with lives like their toys
I am happy, I am mad
I am laughing while I'm sad
I am smart, I am stupid
What am I: only human

SENTENCED TO LIFE AT 15

MICHAEL LEGGETT

Young at heart and mind
Locked up for life.
Is it wrong or is it right?
Don't give up your fight.
At night we pray
for your guiding light.
One day the sun
Will shine bright.
When you walk out of jail
As a charming knight.
This is your chance
To take a stand
To show the world that you're a man
Who has a valid plan.

Now you're free as a bird
With a freedom song
To show the world
You're ready to move on
To live a righteous life
And commit no wrong

So I pray young man
That you'll remain strong
As your vision remains clear
You will always have God's ear
So remain righteous
Because help is near
One, two, three, God has placed these angels
To get you out of there.

FREEDOM?

CHRISTOPHER ROUPP

Before I can attain freedom, I must first realize that I am a prisoner. A prisoner both in body and of the mind. My body is a prisoner because I committed a crime. Because I violated someone else's sovereignty and right to exist. Because I victimized and tried to control those people and things around me without regard to how they thought or felt. I am a prisoner in my mind because of my thinking. I think that I have a right, an entitlement to things or privileges, again without regard to others. I am a prisoner in my spirit because of my emotions. I allowed my emotions to dictate how I perceived the world. I also allowed my emotions to dictate to me my desires and thoughts, which led to my victimizing others. Thus I am a prisoner.

So now that I know that I am a prisoner, how can I break free? I must rise above the things that are possessing me, the things that are making me a prisoner. A person is a slave to anything less than himself that he cannot part with. This is the problem that I have with myself. I am a slave to the state. I must become the master and not the slave. I must exert my will to control those things I can control and forget about the things I cannot. My emotions and thoughts are the first things that must be controlled. Once under control, I can change them to a moral way of thinking and feel better about myself. This will set me free spiritually and mentally. With hard work and persistence I can attain freedom of the physical body too. I must be prepared mentally and spiritually first though, or else I am doomed to repeating my actions of the past.

I will no longer be enslaved to my thoughts or emotions. I am learning and re-learning new moralities and values to guide my life in a new direction. I am free.

BONDAGE

KALVIN HARMON

From the plantation to the penitentiary, for centuries my people have been subjected to savagery. Trapped in caves, inside of ships, others bowed down to save face/a few were liberated, some emancipated, but none never free from this enslavement/physically let go but mentally we stayed trapped/after shedding blood for their wars—killing our own for their cause/many tried, many died in the 60s with the gun in our hand,

we still died/no change/ *Nat* had one of the strongest in the centuries/his way put the fear of the unknown into the hearts of our enemies/comrades gave their lives to try and change this/mothers killed their babies so they wouldn't have to go through this/I'm tired of seeing my people subjected to this devilishment/ being poisoned and tricked some minds still don't get it/unity and strength, strength and unity.

In numbers we are our power— fire with fire is the only way we'll be free/it's a long battle but the war is never over/ it will never be over 'til wrong is right/'til the shackles around our minds are broken free—
 'til our seeds are able to grow
 and learn their true history/**Bondage**/Shackled from our hands, feet, and waist/Men ship from penitentiary on modern day slave-ships/Cries of freedom but all we receive is incarcerated freedom/ in a land governed by laws not our own/
Bondage/Cry for freedom, die for freedom/captured, trapped, thrilled/our will to be free is our will to survive/*George and Jonathan* gave their lives for the struggle of our people, Assata was exiled because of her love for her people/*Malcom, Martin, Lil' Bobby Hutton, Mark Clark, Fred Hampton* all gave their lives for the struggle of our people to be free from this bondage/their freedom came in the death of a liberated soul/ but our freedom can come now with the fire in our souls/my fire burn deep in my heart and will not put out 'til I'm free—
 from this **bondage**...

CLAUSTROPHOBIC

RICHARD JONES

Bars, walls, walls, bars, closing in on me.
My mind is suffering because of these bars and walls closing in on me.
Why can't I get out of here?
What is holding me back?
It's because these bars and walls don't want to let me go and that's a fact but,
Don't these bars and walls know that I can't breathe and that,
I am suffering and trying to keep my mind intact?
My soul is burning, my mind is yearning because I want peace in my life,
Again, back.

Bars, walls, walls, bars, closing in on me.
I can't breathe because of these bars and walls closing in on me.
The military ways behind these bars and walls are tiring.
You can't even fathom how much I am trying to keep my mind from breaking away
from my mind like,
Men that make women say, "Stop, don't take what's mine!" and,
Those others, who become the children's lovers, are without mind and,
I am trying to keep my mind FREE.
FREE, but it's hard to keep it FREE behind these bars, walls, walls, bars closing in
on me.

I'm sweating because of these bars and walls closing in on me.
I can't stand this tension! Take it up off of me!
Please tell me, why does it really have to be like this?
When it really wasn't supposed to be me in jail.
This was NEVER my destiny,
But these white men are getting the best of me...
But somehow I realize that they weren't even my enemies...
It was me...Damn, I beat myself mentally.

MIRROR

GREGORY J. ROBINSON

I fought it for years, probably all of my life.
It scorns everything and is full of strife.
We've been together since this very birth,
and yet, through it all, it hated me first.
I've yearned for love, and it wanted lust.
I wanted to soar like an eagle,
while it wanted to see my guts.
I wanted to let it go, but no matter where I went,
it was there...vengefully content.
It grew insid me, my emotions would lament.
Love, hope, faith was my goal - misery, tyranny,
opression its quest.
I was losing but still had to try.
It was easy for it with rage on its side.
I never saw it before, not an inch from head to toe.
It had become the evil one, and it wanted me to know.
I closed by eyes, and prepared to see...
When I opened bmy eyes, I saw the reality of
What the world is doing to me.

“I’m a lover
I’m a hater

I tell the truth while I’m bluffing

I’m a pacifist
I’m a masochist

I’m a war-mongering peaceful activist



MICHAEL JOHNSON

I’m a liberator,
I’m a prisoner

I’m a blinded visioner.”

- JAMES M. SQUIRES “MAC”