

Dreamers,  
Romans  
and  
Prisons:

Meditations on Crime,  
Illness,  
Healing  
and  
Liberation

### Acknowledgements

Jesus the Liberator Seminary of Religious Justice is grateful for the many who have contributed to the life of the organization. We dedicate this book to those in prison.

The Reifler Enablement Fund of the Network of Religious Communities and The Department of Community Ministries of the Western New York Churches in Covenant of the United Church of Christ provided some of the funding for this book.

Conceived and edited by Chris Barbera.

Cover artwork by Kathleen Sambrotto.

Design by Margaret Matteliano.

© 2015 by Jesus the Liberator Seminary of Religious Justice.

Published by Jesus the Liberator Seminary of Religious Justice.

[jesustheliberatorseminary@yahoo.com](mailto:jesustheliberatorseminary@yahoo.com)

ISBN:

Dreamers, Romans and Prisons:  
Meditations on Crime, Illness, Healing and Liberation  
Table of Contents

Preface

by Chris Barbera, p.

Part 1: Dreamers in the Prison House of God

Dreamers in the House of God - Prisons as Ashrams

by Chris Barbera, p.

Romans and Prisons

by Chris Barbera, p.

Part 2: No Diagnosis Only Gnosis; Voices of the Healers

Ethereal Pain Body

by Kathleen Sambrotto, p.

Jailer/Healer

by Linda Abrams, p.

Part 3: Upstate New York Prison History American Studies/Prison Studies

by June Licence, p.

Grhastha: A Householder in a Prison Hospitality House

by Chris Barbera, p.

Vanprastha: A Forest Dwellers Memory of the 2002 New York State Inter-faith Prison Pilgrimage

By Chris Barbera, p.

From Nonviolence to Social Justice: Women Respond to Attica

By June Licence, p.

Part 4: Written on the Inside

Metanoia

by Dean Faiello, p.

They can never get our minds: Performative Writing in Carceral Space

by Nick Lindsey, p.

I Call This Authentic Non-Reality

by Jelani Zulante, p.



## Preface

Chris Barbera

### General Introduction

The United States of America incarcerates and medicates people at a greater rate than any nation on earth. This is the first response to real or perceived crimes and illnesses. Bringing light to this situation is the intention of this book. The authors have survived the prison and mental health systems and/or have worked to bring healing and liberation to people within this system and/or have worked to create a new way of addressing crime and illness. Some of the authors have questioned the foundations of what is considered a crime or illness and/or have worked through crime and illness to create transforming insights and/or have documented nonviolent histories, methodologies and poetic, speculative insights based in the experience of their work. Implicit within this is liberation from personal or social limitations.

The publisher of this book, Jesus the Liberator Seminary of Religious Justice, is a small nonprofit that has worked for many years to bring free education and services to people who are poor and/or in prison. In 2013 we published a book entitled Prison Theology. This book simultaneously represents a building upon that book and an original venture.

Prison Theology was created by people both within and outside of prison. It attempted to create a methodology based in compassionate and devotional service to poor people which synthesized with academic knowledge. The experience of liberation, God, which is found in prison and poverty, informs academic and rational discourse. This is consistent with the example of saints, thinkers and poets throughout history, including two of founders of Western consciousness, both of whom were incarcerated and executed: Jesus and Socrates.

That book was conceived in the basement of a church while corresponding with prison inmates. This present book was conceived in the repose of philosophic and poetic speculation in the “upper room.”

### Dropping Keys

by Hafiz

The small man  
Builds cages for everyone  
He knows.  
While the sage,  
Who has to duck his head  
When the moon is low  
Keeps dropping keys all night long  
For the  
Beautiful  
Rowdy  
Prisoners.

This book is organized into four complimentary sections which are categorized as poetry, experience, history and implementation, respectively. Although segmented or categorized for organizational and practical reasons, there is a thematic organic unity. Individual articles relate to each other and notes or tones from one article bridge to another, like a chord change. A few thoughts about each are as follows:

### **1. Dreamers in the Prison House of God**

Most scripture is written by poets, philosophers, thinkers, humanitarians and justice advocates – the best of humanity.

We are using scripture and historical documents to free the mind from those same documents which were used to perpetuate prisons and oppression.

God's prison house – Prison as ashrams

Mediation of Eastern spiritual traditions fused with social gospel and prophetic traditions of Western spiritual traditions.

Joseph – dreamers – in prison

Levi – priests – in prison

Judah – warriors – outside of prison advancing social justice

Prison – extra sensory – non attachment to sound and light – sensory world – focuses mind on extra sensory perception – spiritual world.

Sending Pantangali into solitary confinement cell on Diwali  
Shanti Shanti Shanti

Pidyon Shevuyim – redeeming those who have been taken into captivity

To create or remember a spirituality of healing which focuses upon communal collectivity rather than the I of individual punishment - since Western culture emphasizes the I, the soul is contained within the individual rather than in everything and everywhere - the prison soul, then, must develop internal redemption since the everything around him/her is concrete, metal, guns, punishment. Christian monastic techniques and the Eastern spiritual paths offer a way out by going within.

We are also rooted in Judeo-Christian ethics through the prism of Western European culture. Christians worship a deity who was a criminal. And so we can ask the question – who would Jesus incarcerate and who would he medicate? According to scripture, he was a criminal and associated with those outside of the law. He also healed, rather than stigmatized, punished or medicated, those considered mentally ill or possessed by demons such as the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:26-39.

5% - 85% diagnosed – medicated

5% - 50 % criminalized – incarcerated

Criminalized, diagnosed and medicated – dominate or conform

Prisons and pharmaceuticals – eliminate pain – exile (in exile)

The numbing of pain and the American Dream (pain remains and goes within)

-

Christian martyr victim and middle class charity and superiority justify the importance of a secular savior, a defender of rights - rights based upon economics and law defends the social order and punishes the poor, constructs prisons and mental health hospitals.

Epistemology, autodidact, self learning, meditation and the power of memory (some of what is offered to inmates) - Evolutionary Christianity.

Brihaspati – the head of the household priests, ruler of sacrifice, god of speech, speech and dreaming in the ashram prison like Paul, Dr. King and Bonhoeffer. The sacrificial laws of the household priests humanize the reptilian brain and lead to evolution of consciousness (evolution).

Eschaton (burning); prison abolition (punishment system)

Incarnation – transcendent and imminent – Upanishad

Brahmacarya – celibate student (prison)

Grhastha – householder (prison)

## **2. No Diagnosis Only Gnosis: Voices of the Healers**

Trauma/shame and the alert system – the violence caused by homelessness, prisons, poverty and racism - help to create and exacerbate mental illness and crime - trauma perpetuates victim/oppressor punishment - external trauma internalizes – like Vedas becoming Upanishads.

Diagnosis – shame – acceptance of disease model leading to helplessness and submission - pharmaceuticals - data and diagnosis – assess and categorize - threat defense system – cortisol and adrenaline - mammalian care giving system – oxycontin and opiates.

No Diagnosis – only gnosis (knowledge) and differing orders of humanity and modalities of existence – ways to be - not disease but different ways of being.

Brain centers – chakra centers -the belly and the brain: sin, crime and illness - praying from the belly – sensate – pain indicator in the gut - ethereal pain body finds healing in the 3rd chakra, the belly of the beast, the prison system and mental health prison system.

Feelings intuited psycho somatic

Emotional body in the belly 3rd chakra belly of the beast incarcerated incarnate 3rd chakra awaken bodhicitta compassion loving kindness

Senses in the belly rise up

Heart healing into brain thought

Speculation into ayin – nothingness

Prison is the base – the brutalized animal of the body – what society hates and punishes - oppressed oppressor.

As artists we create the mental and emotional landscape of resistance and healing with beauty and healing; art, spirituality and communication leading to healthy body and mind.

St. Dympha – saint of mental afflictions and nervousness (a saint for modern times)

Trauma of the natives – the earth imprisoned – the earth under the jailer – the wilderness a fearful thing.

The Western jailer sees God, healing, restoration and justice as a brain centered individuality - individual rights - solitary confinement - punishment as redemption - why the “wilderness” was seen as “exile.” The wilderness in Western consciousness is seen as punishment, exile from the temple center or the City of God/City of Prison. Prison – City of God is archipelago of prisons in the wilderness of America.

Plato – “when the music changes, the walls of the city change”

Shamanic healing of the blessed reptilian brain – the wilderness is healing.

Vanprastha – forest dweller (healer)

Sanyasa – renunciation (healer)

### **3. Upstate New York Prison History**

This section reveals an upstate New York history about nonviolent movements which addressed prisons, liberation and healing: a higher education program implemented into prison, an intentional community focused upon service to families of the incarcerated, a New York State Interfaith Prison Pilgrimage and women who responded to the Attica uprising.

### **4. Written on the Inside**

Metanoia - turning from sin towards personal moral choice - Dante’s dark woods and Viktor Frankl’s power of choice within the barren atmosphere of prison.

“Quixotic chimera” (Faiello) – Dean and Richie, author and artist, creating beauty amidst the pain of prison – lotus petals in a muddy stream - the phoenix – hymns fill the prison like incense and prayers – no state programs so individual initiative (self responsibility; the individuality of Western rights).

Peformative – within the limitations of mind body separation – writing, meditation and speculation becomes a necessity. A performative generates a nonviolent energy of survival. A performative turns the tension in the mind into a play (Liberation Stories).

Tensions of the mind are as unreal or real as maya, the illusion of the world. Psychosis may be painful and feed by judgment, punishment, and abuse but may also be a visionary experience. Moses or Mohamed, men of the mountains, experienced non-ordinary reality and brought the fruits of that struggle for the healing of the community (the world – in and out of prison - from Mid

State to Upstate).

To be acutely sensitive to the pain of existence is to be deeply grateful for the kindness of strangers. This grace is the mercy that helps to “save” the world. This depth of love is the true beauty, the true standard of intelligence, the true aristocracy.

## Part 1: Dreamers in the Prison House of God

### Dreamers in the House of God – Prisons as Ashrams

*by Chris Barbera*

Entering into the Book of Judges, the Christian judge judges not. Seeing inner and outer mercy and discernment - inner mercy and external discernment – the judge comes upon the middle path of the Buddha in exile between Egypt and the Promised Land. This judge in the wilderness sees the poor as a group deprived of needs and stripped of humanity and of the opportunity to participate in the “social contract,” a contract that has largely been denied them. Entering into a deep introspective interior logic created in study and meditation, like rishi Yudhisthira high atop a Himalayan cell, the judge narrates a story of captivity.

Adam was encircled within a prison of paradise by seraphim, exiled from the Kingdom, the world of blissful absolute non-duality, paramartha. In the world of empirical reality, vyavahara, he identifies and names. His prison of obedience to love has now become a prison of separation from love. Now both prisons negate each other and he is free in the freedom of love, in the womb of Eve.

Divine consolation of Rachel weeping for her children unseen; the beautiful son Joseph sold into bondage. Joseph releases bonds of sorrow by yoga, teaches detachment, equanimity and forgives his oppressors – his family, his karma.

Joseph’s seed Ephraim blossomed in the land of captivity like his father’s mind fertilized in Pharaoh’s prison seeing and articulating visions of justice, equity and fruitful administration.

Moses, like his predecessors, is exiled from the Kingdom, the aristocratic empire of Egypt’s mind, for killing that which he loves, his Egyptian roots, to defend that which he loves, the oppressed of the earth.

The judge, Samson, in bondage and David, lost in the wilderness, were both criminals, broken, fully human and divine. A desert witness may have said that theirs was a “natural imprisonment.”

And these three were honored with “prophetic imprisonment”:

Jeremiah took the suffering of his people unto self and was imprisoned in love. Jonah, imprisoned within lonesomeness and self pride in the belly of the beast, condemns injustice and is rewarded with the miracle of the tree. Daniel disobeyed immoral law, was imprisoned and became absorbed in the mysticism of deep study and meditative recitation, svadhiyaya, and gave the world one of the deepest liberating mysteries in parable pronouncement – “Mene Mene Tekel and Parsin...”

Job was innocently imprisoned in suffering and Jesus was innocently imprisoned for the suffering. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount was an expression of restorative/religious justice. He then taught prison theology to Pontius Pilate.

## 1. Discussions of Education

Collective wisdom is fostered through discussion and multiple teachers, who are students; a collaborative education in harmony with individual intellectual virtuosity. This personal attention to each individual, which is united into a collective consciousness, forms the social gospel and collective responsibility.

Education is shared intimacy and experience.

Education should speak to life rather than emphasizing retention and memorization of other people's information.

Education is a process of liberation.

Life is the greatest form of knowledge. Expansion of knowledge, which does not expand life, is delusional. Prison is the cutting off of life, the denial of freedom, which is life and knowledge.

Viktor Frankl, a holocaust prison survivor, suggested that tension implicit in the mind be applied to a life situation in order to find and give meaning. Anne Frank expressed courage, which is meaning within captivity. Dr. Martin Luther King, an inmate in Birmingham and other places, in a similar vein spoke of creative tension. This understanding of how to find meaning in the mind is especially valuable when little or no action or destructive action is available (such as in a prison or a ghetto).

Aristotle, a brilliant aristocrat in slave-owning Greece, spoke of the "golden mean."

Dr. David Elkind wrote about the "Hurried Child" within an educational system, which has been influenced by the assembly line production of thought by testing. Imbalanced in two ways, children coming from the stress of poverty may have less ability or desire to concentrate, leaving them further behind and making crime appear as a viable option.

Existentialism teaches us that life is made of choices and Buddhism teaches how to develop inner awareness. This power within the self frees us from bondage to external punishment and the absence of an estranged god.

Technical mental training through coursework, researched and academic, combined with genuine emotional outbursts creates devotional knowledge. Devotional education is to love and embrace people living under the yoke of oppression as your equal and teachers. This process helps to release a person from emotional bondage. The key to this is compassion and suspension of judgment. Judgment creates doubt which creates inner suffering and more "crime/sin," more social/theological disturbance. Judgment also creates lack of initiative, which creates self-loathing and jealousy. Releasing judgment frees the mind from debilitating, doubt-creating space for thought, emotional stability and eventual self-sacrifice. The positive view of doubt is inquiry. It is healthy and natural to question, to even question God, as Job did. When questions bring clarity, we have discernment, which is judgment. Healthy judgments are life affirming. This life affirmation bears a light which may make it seem that it "has come from on high from the gods."

To listen is an act of love. It validates the "still small voice within" which,

when accessed, is a transformational energy. Devotion is a power of belief, a transformational energy.

Reconciliation and empowerment process engages a person and allows us to “hold” them for a certain span of time. This process upholds a person emotionally and in prayer, stimulates and evaluates intellectual growth. After “holding” we can then “let go.”

“Shining a light” is the healing power of being. We help to let the inner light of each person shine within the darkness of prison. Shining the inner light of knowledge and experience within the darkness of prison is rehabilitative education. Rehabilitative education is an expression of restorative justice. Restorative justice heals the person incarcerated and the society which incarcerates.

The message of the criminal Christ on the cross in Luke 23:39-43 is an explication of Restorative Justice.

Another expression of Restorative Justice is within Exodus 21:19 which states “the offender shall cause the victim to be thoroughly healed.”

Black Nationalism and Christian Fundamentalism are both assertive and social and their strength is a force upon the force of the prison system structure and mentality. The Sadducees insistence upon maintaining Mosaic Law within captivity is similar in ways and intentions of Black Nationalism.

A tendency within Christianity to be masochistic must be checked because of the arbitrary cruelty of prisons.

The masochism of Christ not internalized absorbs the violence and ignorance of the world. Narcissistic Christ masochistically takes on the sins of the world. The prison of pain is nailed to the cross.

Is beauty as sadness and torture the mask of Christian masochism? Transformed torture of beauty – the nail and blood and pain and torture – not quite contemplation, serenely dismissing and detaching from the illusion of suffering beneath the Bo tree Buddha calm and quiet – a god of love or no god or god within or simply peace in existence.

## 2. Doubt Caused by Judgment and Poverty

The majority of people in prison and stigmatized by mental illness are poor.

To be paranoid in mathematical precision is a form of superstition – “step on a crack, break your mother’s back.” Rote prayers and rituals are the realms of the fearful and obedient.

Determining “patterns of discrimination” often leads to the incarceration of “the poor and ignorant.” These patterns often carry a “curse” to the 3rd generation. This reality of historical trauma brings up issues of trust and survival. The biblical injunction that “the sins of the father are not the sins of the child” saves people from fatalism.

Trust is necessary for mental stability, equanimity and vitality. Like Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, mental and spiritual growth is an evolution of consciousness beginning with basic realities of trust and respect. Prison

and poverty work to destroy basic trust while the mechanisms of capitalism manufacture a debilitating narrative. The glamour of the outlaw and ghetto fabulous clothing perpetuate submission. It is a continuation of Indian boarding schools “killing the Indian and saving the man” and the perverse instructions of Willie Lynch.

The estrangements of mystics serene in solitude who have “renounced the world” give moral weight and support to those in captivity. To be “in the world” practicing pranayama, a continuous breath flow, while practicing pratayahara, withdrawal from external senses, is to be “not of it” (the world). The world is the Buddhist monk burning the pain of existence, poverty, judgment, prisons, doubt. The ashes of this sacred democratic act (because any individual can meditate) can be placed upon the forehead symbolically on Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Christian season of repentance (prayers for the world).

There is a distinction between immorality and criminality.

In the book “Lamentations and the Tears of the World,” Kathleen M. O’Conner elegantly shows how lamentations and the book of Lamentations give voice to the unspeakable and thereby begins the healing process. The denial of pain and collective amnesia, she suggests, are a form of violence. (This book was sent into the dungeons of the prison system and never retrieved...)

Suffering is “fear and trembling.”

Article 8 of the Nuremburg trials states that “the true test, which is found in varying degrees in the criminal law of most nations, is not the existence of the order, but whether moral choice was in fact possible.” Poverty and prisons deny moral choice.

Poverty and prison strip away opportunities for meaning and fill them with meaninglessness from the bourgeoisie social consumptive order. Images of pleasure and power perpetuate unhealthy longings and envy and feelings of worthlessness.

Incarceration of the youth creates arrested development.

Prisons are an extension of poverty. When people are ignored, doubt enters the mind. Doubt is judgment cast into suffering restored in mercy.

### 3. The Healing of Addictions

Complaining does not release a person from painful experiences but rather enforces negative feelings. Conversely, bottling up painful emotions causes personal harm. When pain is given no outlet, then self delusion, aggression and a desire to leave a situation permeate. This may lead to altering senses and perception of a painful reality through chemicals, fantasy, wishing and desperate fatalistic prayer. Overemphasis leads to imbalance and/or addiction.

Knowledge of the interconnection between spirituality and medicine would help heal addictions.

Addictions can be seen as chasing after anything or anyone that would

give love and acceptance. This is a form of self-absorption. One solution is finding love within self which brings about tadavanam, “the end of love longing.” This is a form of self-love. Tadavanam releases one from the “incarcerated state of mind.”

Addiction – obsessed – fear of losing control of life, though life is a storm on the ocean, the winds of phenomena swirl;

Celebrity, cult of personality, commodification of the empire society causes pathology of obsession, addiction;

Obsession, addiction – began as an escape from personal and social pain – escape into fantasy, not painful world, escape then becomes a habit, addictive;

Taboo – to cross the line because oppressive forces say no – to embrace like an addiction but both are a loss of authentic self;

Taboo – to cross as rebellion against “what shall be” crossed over.

Challenging “the powers that be,” “the status quo,” which is the consumer capitalistic empire of the military/prison-industrial complex is a “taboo,” a “crime,” a “sin.”

One may also make the wounds of the healer available as a source of healing, which is the honesty that frees us from “falling from the perfect grace of God.” “My sacrifice is a broken spirit.” (Ps. 51:17)

The concept of “Christ is my counselor” may be true but should not be an excuse for other forms of counseling and rehabilitation.

Negative experiences such as anger or sadness can also be felt as energy without a narrative. Anger can be a stimulant for positive action and sadness can sensitize the heart for compassion. Addiction to either is not healthy.

#### 4. Discussions of Sin and Crime

Institutions which “reform” sin and crime are the church and state (the prison system).

“Vagrancy,” sitting on the sidewalk, is a crime that is an example of the war on the poor. The poor fill the prison system. Meanwhile, manipulation, ego and greed are celebrated.

The alienation of the solitary confinement of and within prison is voiced in expressions of emotional longing, like the insights of the psalms. The psalms are very personal and very emotional. A psalm can be separated from an experience or be integrated into experience. What clicks with each experience?

The psalms take emotional turmoil and express longing in a theological language or context towards God. That is, emotional excessiveness, unlike Buddhist or “eastern” detachment, is put upon a face or law or creator; something larger than the individualized identity, the self.

Psalms 88:18 describes a condition in prison; “you have turned my friends and neighbors against me, now darkness is my one companion.” This lamentation within the psalm along with the voice of Job and the voice of Jesus in Gethsemane are literatures that express a hope in solitude and punishment which produces courage and survival. This survival spirit, this human spirit can be focused and fine tuned by meditation practice and awareness. Resur-

rection is liberation from the dark recesses of the mind. The energy of the nervous system which is vigilant and on alert is transformed into the hyper-concentrated energy of samadhi meditation; one pointed mind.

Being on one's last nerve is the eschatology moment, when desperation transforms into devotion and the energy of transcendence. This peace which comes about through transcendence is embraced after the fire of tribulation, the moment of Gethsemane.

Gethsemane, to be in a state of longing and waiting, creates a self consciousness of fate and a sense of powerlessness to escape. The mind turns inward and enters into the first jhana; the Buddha withdrawn in rapture and pleasure not born of the sensory world, having overcome emancipation of desert asceticism and temptation. Now a new temptation, awaiting parole, release, the Roman Centurion guards coming to arrest the American awaiting release.

Gethsemane is the inertia of poverty and prison. In Eastern thought, dispassion is distinct from inertia. Not attaching to the senses is the adverse of lethargy; it is vigilant and energetic awareness and focus. Goethe's Faust expresses an aspect of Western desire; to never cease. Never ceasing, desiring, and searching for external truth, revelations and conquest lead toward a punishment of longing within the garden of Gethsemane.

Gethsemane is the embrace of suffering, seeing the ignorance of American slave prison and Paul and Silas praying for dissolution of walls and cessation of that lineage. It is the prayer action for the cessation of internal remorse and external punishment, perpetuated unjustly, thereby freeing the inner self from being a victim and not empowering the offender.

Gethsemane is a long psalm, "written in chains" proclaiming "Peace! Be Still!"

Gethsemane became the ashram, the monastic cell, the prison cell, the place of longing. The anxious energy becomes prayers of love within suffering for others, creation and self. The mental afflictions pass away. The trauma and terror which broke down the social intelligence seen but no longer ruminated upon or in bondage to become a source of energetic justification for moral order. The cognitive freedom of the incarnation within incarceration and history is absorbed and absolved into the eschatological moment of the cross, the release of sins, the past and suffering; the mind free from attachment to suffering.

Since many personal contacts within the Gethsemane of prison are violent and obsessive, cognitive movement often becomes abstracted, dynamic and accessible by speculation and parable.

The mind that relives is the mind that punishes. The repetition of thought within Hebrew poetry is a prayer. Remembrance of righteous deeds is a form of restoration. Love holds no memory.

The power of prayer includes intuitive connections and scientific understanding. The invoked negative prayers of Kabala and the Muslim prayer "Bismillah" are disciplined protective forms when confronted with violence.

Mercy forged in suffering gives meaning to justice; the “Wisdom of the Serpent” is an “Original Blessing.”

The *negativa via* (negative way) – the dark night of the soul = existence on earth which is the Western prison of the body. The body is born of original sin and must be conditioned and ritualized into goodness, salvation, liberation from an evil world, a world of *samsara*.

The will to create unity has led some people to insist upon a “fundamental” element of Christian consciousness based on an intense either/or, sin/redemption dichotomous understanding. This leads to some people defining spirituality in Calvinistic “God is good, human is bad” terminology.

Knowledge is liberation born out of experience. Some have thought that knowledge liberates us from experience. Some teachings of divine revelation point to this. Christ has come to save us from our sinful nature. St. Augustine has taught the doctrine of original sin born of human desire. The eschatological moment, the bliss of nirvana, will bring moksha, liberation, when we will be free of the actions of nature and the actions of history, karma.

There is an element of truth in these perspectives. The misunderstanding comes about through disharmony. When these perspectives are viewed as the ultimate truth, then we have imbalance and we discredit experience as a teacher. The element of truth is contained within the instinct of humanity to attain purity beyond visible forms. “Assurance of things unseen” is how the New Testament writer Paul described this instinct of hope, of faith. The striving or desire for truth and beauty expressed in ideal forms cannot and should not be discredited. The key is to direct this instinct into experience or to see how experience already contains these seeds of ideal purity.

The “Pelagian Controversy” questioned the doctrine of original sin and subsequently infant baptism. The original sin, the sin of Adam, was his alone and not all of humanity. Christ, therefore, was not needed for salvation. Of course this view of sin was rejected because it challenged the power of the Church to baptize and opened the possibility that sin was based in freewill. And salvation without Christ for a Church founded upon Christ could never be accepted.

These ideas, however, remain powerful testaments of the human spirit to attain “salvation” and become responsible within freedom. Perhaps a resolution could be that Christ saves but cannot “indoctrinate” or “incarcerate.” Christ saves through human agency or humans save the spirit of Christ.

A difference between sin and suffering – West and East – is that sin in the west implies a crime, something the individual did to harm others, creation or God. Suffering is simply recognition of our condition, not blame. It is something that we can address and even liberate ourselves from.

Christianity is heavy with doctrine, service and sacrificial love. Love and service, therefore, becomes doctrine.

Doctrine, within monotheistic desert religions, takes on immediacy for absolute obedience. This was perhaps seen as necessary for survival and order. This centralizing consciousness is suggested in submission to Allah, the one

son of God in Christianity and passages such as this from Ezra 7:26: “All who will not obey the law of God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on them, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of their goods or for imprisonment.”

The concepts of dichotomy within the monotheistic desert religions make distinctions between good and evil, sin and salvation. Within Islam, the mujrimum (polytheists, disbelievers, sinners, criminals) is distinct from the muhsinun (good doers). Basic ethics shows the value in distinguishing right from wrong and the necessity of such in maintaining harmony within society. However, there is value in point/counterpoint and multiplicity of views which enhance the fullness of humanity’s comprehension of soul. Negatively, clear lines of dichotomous thought tend to lead towards judgment, separation and punishment. These three perpetuate the prison system.

Barabbas, “the son of the father,” was a folk hero released from prison so that Christ could enter and redeem the prison.

#### 5. What did Buddha Desire? (Scripture, meditation, and joy)

Zen meditation, tending to be authoritarian and rigid, may fit well in prison by transplanting prison authority for spiritual authority. One may then be free of authority.

Obsession becomes samadhi, one pointed meditation - the energy focused looses anxiety and gains stillness. When the repressive dominating thought is gone, then much within the inner life becomes free. When one is no longer carrying the heavy burden then the burden energy becomes the silence of mind, a resonance of peace.

Equanimity within the face of terror and trauma is a legacy of Buddhist teaching.

The Udana (Buddhist text) gives us this formula:

Ignorance – conformations – consciousness – mind and material forms – 6 organs of sense – contact – sensations – desire – attachment – being – birth – sorrow.

Ignorance begins with desire to punish and ends in sorrow of prison.

The Patthapada Sutta – the soul theory – reflects ghana, states of consciousness within gunas, states of nature. Prison is the lowest guna, ignorance within the Kali-yuga.

Buddhist monks who are “all in the mind” can see body as the world but not be attached while being aware.

#### 6. Sex, Money, Labor and Ownership

Original sin of the body leads to repression and objectification of sexuality. Physicality (sex and work) being essentially evil is demonized and relegated to “lower classes.” African-Americans are relegated to the body of prison (a source of cheap labor).

The founding of America coincides with the rise of prisons, capitalism and nationalism. The founding of America is tied into the institution of slavery.

Slavery was labor for capital. Slaves were property and the founders of the nation were landowners breaking from the British Empire in order to establish an American Empire. These owners of land and owners of slaves instituted this system with the 1787 constitutional convention. The 13th Amendment to the constitution maintained a provision for slavery within prison. Prisoners are considered the property of the state. People as property was later upheld in the Supreme Court decision *Plessey vs. Ferguson*. Meanwhile, deep within the historical/contemporary memory, William Lynch arrived on the shores of the James River, named after “dear Lord Jesus, King James bible” exclaims in H. Rap Brown innuendo, crescendo latter day saint of pain “Die N... Die!” All pain, prejudice and racism obliterated in the dark matter of the Mayan zero. *Vairogya*, absent desire and without color, is the remembrance of Gandhi’s dictum that “history is a deviation from love.”

Meanwhile, we have the legacy of wise old necromancer Ben Franklin proclaiming “time is money.” Max Weber in his book “*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*” speaks of “economic selection” which is the misunderstood Darwinian implementation of “natural selection.” Calvinism, by proclaiming predestination, advances the illusion that some are predisposed for salvation. Taken in economic terms, some are predisposed for wealth. And so what we find is that time and nature are equated with money and economics. Hard work is done not for humanity but for economic expansion. Economic expansion, being a secular salvation element, looks at the word slavery in the bible and justifies the institution as necessary for “business as usual.” The American flag next to the altar in church promotes the class system which depends upon prisons and war for economic expansion. Wealth created, “by any means necessary,” brings about “divine revelation.”

Hannah Arendt rightly perceived the very worldly nature of the “banality of evil.”

Martin Luther, whose revolutionary instincts helped to democratized faith, defends the secular authority of the nobility in other writings. The secular authority, the state and corporate entities informed by the religious authorities, perpetuated a hierarchy and class division of labor. Quoting such teachings as “who does not work, does not eat” from 2 Thessalonians, the aristocracy convince the masses to accept their authoritative view that any labor that does not produce economic expansion by any means possible is worthless or the lethargic, parasitical degradation of the poor. Forced labor is insinuated and justified by the rich who quote the expulsion from the bliss of Eden – “with sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread.” (GE 3:19)

“Praying for those who persecute you” as Jesus taught as an ideal civic engagement from the Sermon on the Mount does not readily or effectively address the social implications of consumer capitalism, which is dependent upon prison labor. Gandhi, who implemented Christian teaching into social action, offered *swaraj*, self-rule through cottage industry, as an alternative and healthy form of labor. Thoreau and Tolstoy are the Western ancestors of this tradition. Buddhist monks teach mercy by begging, not “working,” for food.

Martin Luther did free the Western Christian tradition of forced labor with his articulation of “justification of faith not works.” Within Galatians chapter 3, Paul writes about the justification of faith not works by giving the example of Abraham, the “father” of faith.

The ownership society – laws of empire – to own, to possess, to enslave, to empower the emperor, the empire; a justification of greed.

What is ethics and spiritual creativity in a world of mass technological oversight used to monitor and control; “custody” in prison language? Inmates are designated as “property of the state.” Property is an extension of sensory deprecation technologies. Inmates become an “invisible man” no longer pondering identity, no longer in bondage to the suffering streams of samsara.

The human need for compensation which leads to value and happiness for the individual is not allowed in an ownership society. Ownership – being owned – creates great anxiety and injustice, which leads the mind to invent fantasies in order to escape. Fantasy then becomes reality, the guiding principle, the mode of organization, how reality and society are organized. Personal enlightenment can free the mind from fantasy and begin to reorganize society but the modes of existence are still in place. Sacrifice, which enhances enlightenment, is to make sacred. Sacrifice does not lead to the loss of the self but gains the sacred allies. Social love may at times imply suspension of individual happiness by means of sacrifice. Happiness and misery released into nothingness leaves only gross matter; food, rest and the essence of being.

## 7. Prayers of the Gnostic Inmates

Gnostic fire abominations burn off in apocalypse of the body – the prison – the senses that stand before the soul – not thinking – perceiving – inmates apprehending reality which is a peace beyond all understanding.

Christ died on the cross to give life Lazarus eschatology of the end time’s fatalism masochism and anything permitted proclaiming “no longer do I ponder thoughts of my identity.” God said it and it is in me. When the search for God is found, what becomes of the inquisitive mind?

Lakes of tears and lamentations shatter bonds of love, the captivity of flesh.

Criminals are the expression of the body addiction of bourgeois society – poor saint Jean Genet burning within “Our Lady of the Flowers” – demonic masochistic saints yearning for punishment as the body of healing.

Sensory deprivation - jack rabbit mind no body movement - black hole solitary – absorbing dark matter – the mind turned inward – liberated from the fires of creation – the secret yogi – linked to nothing/linked to self – heartbeat of love.

The aghori, the “mystic” sadhus of India who live among the dead and perform “terrible austerities” not prescribed by the light of the world, who eat the flesh of Christ resurrected - freed from life (jeevan mukt) – “in it but not of it” – who have attained death in life by living in the “house of the dead” – the “gulag archipelago” – the prison-industrial capitalist complex – have

attained mukti, moksha (liberation).

What is the maintenance of purity codes in prison? It is mainly cognitive – gnosis – mystery religions – individual “Eastern” god - consciousness only school of China – Berkley’s vision of “no matter” – Paul and Silas’s song from prison which transcends matter – mind over matter – no more walls of prison.

This is the mind of detachment, but what of the physical reality of social and individual control, authoritarian bodily punishment? This answer needs to be addressed by institutes outside. Religious praxis and humanitarian/ social justice initiatives can create alternatives to prison and punishment. The Judeo-Christian tradition has a body of prophetic social ethics to draw upon.

The social ethics of the monotheistic prophets articulate an ethos, a spirit of life informing ethics in history. They are specialists, poets and actors on the stage of human evolution.

The berakhah is the prayer of blessing within Judaism. The unifying essence of this prayer creates the inner and social space necessary for growth. It remembers the cohesion of the teaching that “if one sins you all sin.” The sin of the scapegoat is released from the “neutral affliction” of Buddhist teaching and obsessive punishment terminates. The spirit and letter of the law attempts to unify “perfection” within the letter which implies “imperfection” or infringement of the law or criminality and sin. But law is the conditioned thought upon the higher aspirations of the spirit, freeing oneself from the letter and prayer when it is incorporated, incarnated within.

There is a certain detachment necessary to survive in a world of sorrow; for the dreaming body to be inhabited by our authentic self, our highest consciousness. The highest self within higher education is primarily found within ideas. Ideas that are somewhat abstracted from life take us away from the living or the dead. Ideas imbued with and born from life, detaching us from death and integrated into devotion and love can be tools of liberation.

The dreaming, sensate body of Joseph in Pharaoh’s prison inhabits the body of the empire’s dreams interpreted and healed; inhabiting the body of dreams, of healing and sensations centered in reason.

## 8. Prison Anchorites

Ashrams - The Houses of God - one pointed mind – transcend the world of anger, violence and oppression of prison (House of the Dead) – heal the world. The House of the Dead becomes The House of God within the mind of the inmate.

Prison Anchorites - prayers of and for the world while rooted in one spot – departure and the souls alight like the original desert monastics in mother Egypt, escaping mother Babylon (the Romans incorporate Christians).

Theophany and the places of divine revelation in prison are apostolic rather than biological. The ancient orders of society maintain magisterial mystery. The “keepers of the mystery” by their nature need to be obscured from the “common good” while simultaneously advancing the “common

good.”

The passion of Christianity and the unity of Islam produce devotion to one sun, one patriarch, one God, one prison warden as guru instructing devotee to free self with keys of knowledge.

Anthony and Pachomius were Egyptian desert monks; the seeds of Christian monasticism. Basil of Caesaria organized ascetics. The Essenes lived a “pure” life; devout, studious and celibate in their “cells.” The Qumran community in purity desert cells prepared for the apocalypse, the return of Messiah. The Sadducees maintained the Mosaic Law and remain separate from Rome like Black Nationalists. These are attempts at the systemization of liberation.

Plato’s cave describes prisoners in a cave, philosophers in a cave, leaving – Philomen leaving St. Paul’s prison.

Anna, the prophetess, prayed and fasted continuously in the temple (a prison).

The God of Thomas Aquinas is thought essence in stasis – sitting in prison – a form of Buddhist peace - the peace becomes the body, the essences of thought.

Dynamic thought – being the correlative – requires opportunities for expression – a form outside the mind/body. Einstein’s relativity and Darwinian evolution suggest a way for dynamic thought to transcend static matter.

A punishment of prison is to see life, including the dynamic element of inquiry, and not be able to participate or to express. The stasis of meditation is the storing of the energy of the mind which can then heal the body so that an individual becomes an entity of spirit. In such a situation, the punishment and suffering of prison and life dissipates.

The liturgy of the hours within prison creates flowers of the mind’s peace and sensibility ritual. The prison warden becomes the monastic abbot within the mind and perception deeply rooted in the realities of suffering through punishment.

An ashram is a house of God which is Bethlehem, the birthplace of Emmanuel, being “God among us within the House of God.” Captivity within the house of God is the human condition of suffering, the struggle for life. African captives within Babylon, the prison system, are the light of Christ consciousness.

Resistance is a form of survival. Resistance is the focusing of mental tension and anxiety outward into meaning. Meaning within suffering is wisdom.

A monad - a self contained entity, like the energy of thought condensed between the eyes, behind the stone of the tomb, the eyes not dead nor resurrected seeing gulags and archipelagos and concentration camps and prisons - death immaculate.

Prisoners and hermits live in isolation.

Sleeping dreaming prison solitude

Insights from mind in rest Samadhi

Insights active mind in study

Mind on edge sharp now in repose

People on the bottom have the sharpest edge – cut thru reality - to the core to see clearly – the awakers.

Administration and systems analysis – the nerves, the mind, chakras and sources of energy imbued with ethics.

Neuroscience speaks of emotions in the body, the thinking body, thought and emotion from sensation, felt in the muscles, what does a body's science do with pain, incarcerated mind/body?

Screw faced monks sitting zazen because “just living” is enlightenment and the screw face is the crusty bridge to non-reality and ignorance.

Monastic inmates with time memorize and organize the computer like brain mathematically. The book of numbers and the law; each law becoming equal to a kabalistic number and spiritual spiral evolution of consciousness in peace of mind the neurotransmitters rest in Samadhi storing energy all along the spine and mind – no mind – the world of prison suffering dissolves in no mind.

Memory of the monks, reciting entire pockets of thought in scripture by constant vigor, their minds absorbed with the brilliance of insights from souls over time to think and remember insights into the light. Conversely, memory may block present, instant experience and access. Lawyers and monks both have skills of memorization.

“All society is held together by non-violence,  
even as the earth is held in her position by gravitation.” (Gandhi)  
a vast deep sutra  
thick Veda (Jesus spoke, walked, became I am...  
Maya is illusory world, (Jesus overcame in desert)  
when once become (Jesus)  
the vast deep literature (Ife you is to overcome,  
Ife you be, a deep vast  
literature to introduce esoteric knowledge so as to introduce a  
spiritual  
language - a scribe or Pharisee is she who does, does not see the  
living spirit in  
flesh - “the word became flesh”  
a deep vibration so as to ascend the higher layers of conscious  
mind -  
to introduce the mind to vibratory centers of a being - to fill with  
love,  
so as all action is conditioned to and by and of love –  
a democracy of spiritual beings  
so that the line of saints and enlightened beings  
create and maintain the divine and beautiful filled order which  
upholds creation -  
the existence of a dove -  
so that righteousness may be taught and understood;

what is is what was is what will be (even Daniel taught you that)

Dreams and prayers and meditations and dreams and illusions of maya and prison walls dissolving into esoteric bliss, oceans of mercy born of forgiveness and freedom of thought become the reality of liberated souls.

The prayers of poet prisoners Francois Villon, Rimbaud and Jean Genet are the witness of the criminal saintly love of troubadours lost in this wayward western world.

Ezekiel at the River Kebar among the exiles of artistic temperament, inmates, captives, thinkers, mystics, and lovers yearning but withheld, knowing and having no access of agency.

Rimbaud wrote "I came to regard my mental disorder as something sacred" (A Season in Hell). His visionary poetry required a complete "disordering of the senses." The philosopher Krisnamurti queried "of what value is it to be well adjusted in an insane society?" These two visionary luminaries questioned the underpinnings of what is considered sane, moral and rational. Their conceptions of sin, crime and illness may very well differ from the prevailing social ideology.

Allen Ginsberg's Kaddish is a great poem of mental illness and death. It is a lamentation, a dirge, a healing prayer for his mother, America, the world. He showed how the pain of heartbreak and mad visions could be transformed into the visionary poetry of one who was mad for life and experience.

Kerouac's character Dean Moriarty was mad for life. He was the hero of "On the Road." He was a reform school kid in and out of prison. He was an archetypal convict and outlaw of the American West.

We know of inmates leaving solitary confinement to give birth. We know of inmates leaving solitary confinement and entering 42nd street. We know of inmates leaving the world and entering the bliss of the mind.

## Romans and Prisons

*by Chris Barbera*

I went to pray in the church and was filled with streams of words, words given to me to ensure my salvation, that is, the bliss of my freedom. I was not in command of the words coming, nor could I process words without the guilt and fear of loss of innocence, the innocence of my birth and so my birthright was stolen. I was not even given the opportunity to sell my birthright because it was sold in the womb and church.

A prison, a church, an institution of indoctrination,  
the history of thought condensed in a frog.

Womb and church. Safe within a loving embrace. All is conditioned, all doubt is gone. Chains are linked. Umbilical cords. Cells. The guard is walking with leather, brass and nightstick. Lipstick women strung out on drugs, praying to Jesus, miraculous. Jesus transvestite prison cell guards, bodhisattva of mercy. A light appears, dim memory. Quietness, no memory. At this present moment there is only my breath. Some survival instinct instructs me to protect and to preserve. Physical and psychic violence. Get them before they get you. Fight. Food. Breath. Safety. There is no remorse, there is no moral, there is no thought. Sunyata emptiness. Space is free. No judgment. Preservation of breath. Heartbeat. Breath, heart and no mind. This is my reality within the prison cell womb, the church of my beloved, the ancestors...

Babylon the prison and what is prison? Here I see the wealth and words and doors and neurological pathways opened, released fears of solitude, of control, of a mind not one's own and a mind too much of one's own - mind which finds the way, ever steady, always free - Is the freedom of discipline the mind rising sound broken fragment whole - sound image, light, sound, weight, empty - see and be or see -

Does thought produce sound?

Are words sound though static?

Is the active recollection and articulation an abstract prison?

One step away from articulation and movement.

If thought is dynamic then life is movement - sound vibrations shattering walls of prison, walls of encapsulation, of frozen time or movement - like these words -

Platonic Christ messenger

An arena in the mind

Bread for the poor

O Solo Mio,

The binding of social contract,

thieves and inner harmonics

alling outside the prison walls

society

inside;

The harmonics of reintegration and orientation of the body politic and body - neuro-transmitters - the mind sees eye, brain scan by mind's eye, heart-beat by mind's eye, heartbeat by mind's power regenerates down the connectors, what are they called? vibrations, intonations, memories invented or real, electrical shock waves, burst of energy, chemicals in fluid state, hormones altering perception sees and attaches not thought, thought born from what? Experience?

Hearing?

Words of others, the self and other;  
where do the words originate?

Asleep within precognition, within the preliterate world of sound, I feel, I sense - thought becomes formed and articulated. Articulation within the prison womb;

prison is when I am the other,  
prison is when I am the self,  
freedom is when I am both with distinctions;

The self is essence,  
the mind is image;

The childhood of the mind and the development of the species is the prison of fear and doubt which necessitates a need, a desire for identity in security, identity according to external signifiers, tonal complexion, sounds and colors of the book of the dead, coming into liberation, the world of identity in sound and image, prison of body and mind and senses, prison of ethnicity and ethics, codes of behavior, behavioral modification, enlightenment as process and instant gratification, not the release of karma, the ending of death in life, release of prison - the past, release of captivity of action - the future.

There is a social, electrical field of magnetism of the heart which bears weight upon the loftiness of ideals, experiential reality of gravity, thought is of the past, a prison, sensation is of the essence, the moment, thought and sensation exist and are distinguishable, like goodness and passion,

eastern and western prophets of the  
risen sun  
risen moon  
river sun  
sound vibrations in waves & particles,  
light particles, condensed, shine forth in streams, a stream,  
streams, stream and half a stream,  
emitting,  
ejaculating,  
force of movement,  
karma,  
light of sun on the earth,  
force of creation,  
growth and expansion,  
just pick up and jump on,  
don't fight  
or think,  
thought forms identity which imprisons,  
identity liberation reveals self - is freedom from prison.

I know thyself and was born of desire,  
yet I release from attachment the desire, the sense, thought and perception;  
to feel stream of energy of life,  
which is desire of life for extension of self.

I, the thought I, is the condensation of desire into contained form -

this form can be free of bondages, of prisons of thought which limit the movement of life.

To be free within contained form is to be essence of life in moment.

The contained form is self in present,  
the other is the future past,  
release the form and become the other self.

Christ the abstract other,  
escape the present incarnation,  
mandala forms of other worlds,  
release from sins of this world,  
the self.

The world is my lover, the other,

the self the beloved,

lover, beloved, self, the other.

There is a bondage of the will, a template, a mandala, a law conditioned to behavioral modification of English tenements and testaments and so called sacred geometry, theorems of Egyptian master and slave,

Vagra –

This will be discussed as the voice of the other, the one descending from on high or being summoned up from within - the voice is the self - but is the self free of culture, can the self be free and should freedom be independent? Can the solitude of the self, the will - should, ought to; can law ever be other than no or yes? Is law the abstract other conditioned to certitudes or is law form light color sound movement breath life blood

blood to regions of body

blood life

life in brain

life in heart

life in genitals

life in others

life in other

blood animal essence - a desire, a devotion, a hope, a will, a movement, an intention - for the life blood to continue

in form or no form?

sound, energy

enhanced energy preservation life

to love is to know is to feel

love knowledge freedom

Continuing our discourse, we come upon ethics, law, the world and sex. We come upon the utterance of the unspeakable and speak it or unto it, we externalize what is unknowable and we are laughed at, thru comedic tragedy, in some quarters, or laugh with joy in others and forget the rest - but is the forgetting a process of remembrance and what we choose to remember is not selected by the chosen;

love, power and confidence love, power and confidence

1. The World

This I have learned - detach the mind from the world, place the mind in the heart and be content in peace and joy.

What becomes of the world once freed from sin, if sin is the self, if sin is the world?

Be free within the self and do good in the world. Love and serve.

## 2. Sex

Sex is pleasure but pleasure cannot alleviate suffering. End suffering and you will find love. Find love and sex will come or will no longer matter.

## 3. Law

To address the truth of a matter, to come to understanding and to have peace in knowledge.

## 4. Ethics

To understand takes time. Live a good life and create time.

Silence is the self,  
speech is the other.  
A feeling unformed,  
awareness within.

Prison - middle class comfort & conformity & physical walls - out of boredom of prison, out of desperate loneliness, the mind attaches to those voices external - detach from those voices without - bitterness or tears - detach from anger and confusion or out of fear to be alone and soothe self with the love within which will manifest externally.

Prison - solitude - solitude produces a fanciful mind and anxious desire always doubting, never seeing the fruits of hope.

Thinking & escapism & fantasy & entertainment & sex & money & accumulation of matter.

Freedom is love & peace & knowledge & compassion & focused energy upon the healing arts.

Prison - helplessness no hope, no ambitions, because hope and ambitions in this society lead to death. This society is prison death. To dream outside of this prison, but not fantasy and escapism.

The need to know - knowledge in society is prison, death. Become the oppressor. Compassion is a dream outside of this prison.

I was born into a world of sex by desire. This was not my original sin. Osiris Isis Red Sea tablets. Origins. Seth. Sense. Inner sense harmonic extension objects - matter prison moksa, semen Osiris, birth canal greek philos and lama psyche, logos death, sense objects, pleasures and pains and no value. Construction of thought and institutions, law and ethics, aesthetics and ascetics.

Image allows no dialogue,  
idolatrous other,  
no acoustic plurality.

Image is illusion,  
disillusionment without a mask,  
it hides nothing, reveals nothing,  
is nothing but illusion, disillusion,  
image, illusion, mask.

The mask of thought creates a world of sex and ethics, aesthetics - images and ascetics. Rituals of punishment release Christ from the cross - enters 33rd heaven of voodoo ancestors. Indra.

Prisons - body as image - image is ideal.  
Vulgar, vanity, false - selling an image to gain the mind and body  
(money, resources) of others.  
Faith in delusion – image.  
Faith in transitory matter - body.

Prisons - greek marble idolized time,  
everything stops, becomes static.  
The permanence of man,  
not woman or nature.

The prisons of thought in time construct image in time - ethics, law and aesthetics.

Thought construct and judgment in time.  
Why do we need Christ to forgive our sins,  
if Christ is a construct in time,  
the construct of time?

Thought construct and non-judgment no time,  
we do not need Buddha to transfigure time,  
if release from ignorance forgives our sins,  
a construct of mind.

The need for redemption and explanation,  
self is the saved, bliss the other,  
why does the language form a mind?  
Thought construct in time.

The prison of the body is released in sex and ascetics. This is the story of St. Paul and the Ethiopian Eunuch. St. Paul wrote the book of Romans in which he expounded theories of law and body. St. Paul tortured Christ, burned in the flesh and went to prison. Philemon was a slave in prison. Paul was a slave to Christ, the tortured flesh, the embodied spirit. The Christians separated from the Romans, the body, and became spirit. Many lived in the desert and burned

in the heat, the flesh. The body became the empire, a woman, a source of evil,  
the Virgin Mary.

Sex is a sin when the body is a prison.  
If the body and sex is imprisoned,  
then the other controls the mind.

Mind and body are slaves to reason,  
slaves to the self,  
slaves to freedom.

The world is sex and the other,  
the self is love,  
world within the self is love within and of the other.  
The tantric myriad flames of  
colored others  
is self in other  
world.

The world is the body of the other. We live in the world of the other, the body.  
The self is distinct from the world, the body, and is called spirit. The spirit  
and the self are distinct from the body and the world, the other. The mind  
and spirit create law to free us from the instincts and the body, which are the  
earthly realms of this world. An ethics of good and evil are created. Concep-  
tions of beauty and truth are instituted. There is a split in our waking reality,  
that is, our life.

When the self becomes the other  
there is reconciliation of peace,  
the self no longer sees the other  
but sees the other self.

When self becomes other and loves self,  
then there is confusion which leads  
to anger, depression and frustration,  
lack of focus, loss of self, loss of gift given.

Therefore, love the self and see no other  
and love the self and see self in other  
and love the self and become the other  
and love the other as the self  
and love and see no self or other.  
The world is a prison. Prisons are constructed by the empire of the body.  
Romans and prisons and  
memories of experiences;

doubt and suffering,  
ignorance and cults,  
honor and tradition and cultures,  
cultivation of the mind in reason,  
deadens the spirit.  
the death of the spirit and  
the ascendancy of reason.  
culture.  
the science of war  
terror, manipulation, accumulation of facts,  
enlightenment!  
Immanence of the mind.  
The brain, the vehicle of knowledge other,  
not knowing body the self,  
unite the disconnected self and other.  
Living in the concept, the mind, the other,  
we lose the body reality.  
Losing the body,  
we become the self, joy.

We drank the Babylonian wine of fruitive essence - mystic honeyed rivers.  
Imminence and impermanence, we had no thought for morrow, sorrow. Existential no thought body, we became our mystic joy - unreality.

And the servants were the masters &  
the masters the servants -  
realizing this truth,  
I let go of doubt & anxiety.

The Babylonian lamentation is the other  
within the self  
in bondage to the other;  
commune with the wise,  
do good works,  
speak little -  
free yourself of the Babylonian prison.

We entered the old wooden house, shaking shakers. The smell of musk & oils & dust had a rather simple and refined essence. The old New England scholars maintained their simple and devout, though solitary, faith. There was something incestuous amongst these well bred Puritans, with a scent of witchcraft. There was a large book on the oak table with a single taper candle, burning. The book was approached with fear and trepidation, the trembling of awe produced by an ancient sun god, a Babylonian whore, a desert hallucination, whispering

“The mystery does not need to be penetrated,  
she will be revealed;  
thought need not define life,  
life reveals thought.”

“Witchcraft!” the old man uttered, as the black cat scratched the rail thin  
preacher, quiet as a church mouse, with a Methodist design.

“Self is the chosen  
other is the forsaken,  
release this  
and both will be free.”

“Witchcraft!” exclaimed the elder statesman, land speculator, American  
revolutionary. “Let’s take the land, but first let’s leave the British. When the  
British are gone, then the land is ours, but first let’s kill the Indians. When the  
Indians are killed, we will separate from the church and state and build our  
empire of money, but first let’s build our prisons.”

“Is this the fate of the prisoner,  
to accept divine offerings in solitude and  
persecution?”

“Witchcraft! Witchcraft! Witchcraft!” These orderly Romans, sophists,  
sophisticated intellectuals, domesticated intellectuals, refined instinct almost  
absent, barely felt, traveled to codfish Sunday mass, listening to European  
instrumental music and homespun tales of weavers, speaking -

“Our heads were filled with knowledge  
no stories in the spine,  
a jellyfish,  
master of the world,  
university scholar,  
an intellect with fine taste,  
respectable,  
civil,  
polite,  
without the scent of death,  
a tragedy severe,  
no death, no life,  
only intellect, idea and fine respectability.  
A Quaker silence,  
shaker silence,  
Puritanical civil order,  
Pilgrims,  
city on a hill, a beacon,  
always moral,  
clean,  
teeth clean,  
feet clean,  
pits clean,

ass clean,  
Sunday service fire and brimstone,  
now  
research and development,  
coffee and Italian sandwiches and interesting conversation.”

## Romans and Prisons

the body  
the self and other            1. people  
the body is self                2. body and soul  
the other is soul

Prison is division of two

To judge and be abandoned - the essence of oppressiveness which creates a doubt in the mind.

Doubt leads to fear which makes domination and submission - the prison mentality - a possibility.

To undo is to see, to be aware.

image body prison is the other  
external anxieties;  
not seen and believed

## Prisons and Romans

1. self body other
2. other self
3. no body

Abstraction is the prison that asks this question -

“Why have I chosen to feel  
the pain of isolation  
rather than the emptiness  
of false promise?”

## Romans and Prisons - Law & Instinct

Prison - the body - sex and fear chemical - heathen electric - loneliness & isolation -

heighten the feeling of fear in loneliness - no community, compassion - had to develop within self - find source of compassion thru process of self discovery - uncovering what was hidden by fear.

prison - anxiety  
heightened alert

Paul & Damascus  
enlightenment thru chemical alteration  
compassion

### Prisons and Churches

1. Having no relations, all direction comes from signs and wonders.  
2. Having no relations, the church becomes a prison, God the warden.  
Vedanta, the end of knowing,  
Christ, the end of history,  
Historical knowledge image the other;  
not seen and believed.

Buddhist thought,  
Christian servant,  
non dualistic actor and servant  
without the sense of I,  
without the prison of consciousness,  
Can I be free with loss of self identity?

I lose myself in pleasures, as a release from sufferings, sufferings and joy,  
I escape and understand neither,  
lost in a prison of ignorance,  
I circle in my pleasure and pain until pleasure becomes a pain,  
my prison.

Christ despised the shame of the cross,  
despised it!  
hated the prison, though innocent,  
loved the cross.

Christ destroyed the prison of the cross,  
one pointed Samadhi mind,  
the end of freedom and thought  
is salvation.

No name or form or thought  
primordial, before mentality;  
to be free is to be nonhuman  
is a thought born of prison.

Negation is a path of fulfillment, to be free is to be empty,  
emptying of all intelligence is a form of intelligence,  
to be complete in oneself is to lose one self, is to know oneself,  
knowledge of self is to have identity and to see another identity, the self and  
other.

Just be, life is becoming,  
the beauty of essence  
the truth of life

Dig it!

Religion and the mind create the church. Mind and the church create the law. Law creates prison. I dreamed within the lawless society and found my freedom. Freedom gave me the law and I unlocked the prison.

Hallelujah!

A prison guard walks slowly with nightstick. There are no bars, there is no night. A man in cell without a light. A radiant mind, a radiant heart. Dark night of the mind, quiet essence of the heart. Radiant and dark, like the sky at night, awaiting the light. He has no thought, he has no law, he is free of both, imprisoned at night. Tranquil and mysterious.

Om

The other is the true self  
the other transcends the self, is selfless.  
In order to know thyself,  
fully embrace the other

Om

The other is ideal  
the self is real  
knowing the ideal from the unreal  
the self becomes real

Om

The body is the other  
the unseen is the self

Om

The prison guard walks slowly by. He has no thought, praises be. He stops his mind, the body is free. He lifts the key, to set them free. Praises be.

Inside the cell, within the body, the mind is free.

Thinking...

mind is technique  
spirit is essence  
the life.

spirit directs the mind,  
spirit exists,  
mind revolves around spirit

mind - spirit

thinking about others  
thinking about self  
feeling at peace  
thinking ends  
thought becomes real

Thought conscious water ocean stream midnight darkness prison cell world.  
Awaiting judgment. Awaiting the dawn. Handcuffed, metal. No wood, no  
water. Metal in water darkness, icy cold. Cool wind. Steel judgment. “The  
defendant will arise. You are accused of law thought instinct. How do you  
plead?”

A drip of perspiration in the armpits. Nervousness...

Trauma, the blunting out of emotion, the smashed glass, sense of self and  
security broken, frozen, imprisoned, unable to act, to think, subservient to the  
other.

The other is punishment and judgment, the other brooks no queries, asks no  
penance, creates no dialogue. The other imprisons the self in silence.

In silence the self forgives the other and releases bondages of the self.

The other abstracts, is outside the experience of self. The other knows what  
she thinks, the self knows what she feels. The other transcends what is seen,  
the self experiences what is seen. When the self and other see and understand  
distinctions, then the fractured world becomes whole. When the world is  
whole, then the light manifests within the multitude.

Conformity and escape, freedom within the prison mind, nothing of no mean-  
ing, search for meaning, inner essence...

Within in the inner essence, I feel.

escape is the other,  
fear is the self,  
estranged and real,  
this very moment.

Within the inner essence, I feel.

the essence of the other has no power in the self,  
the self has no love in the other,  
the other self.

I feel...

Sad beauty and joy, love unrequited and unspoken, love feeling. Love  
unknown and never shared, love in mist and never experienced - bitterness.  
Bitterness and tears of love never known, never spoken, solitary confinement.  
Imprisoned in love unknown God's grace and mercy. Mercy love in heart  
and being of love unknown begotten. Begotten not made in love unspoken,  
unfeeling. Unfeeling love becomes unspoken, in mercy. Mercy dwelling  
love unfeeling. Love loved and beloved unfeeling, unknowing. Begot and  
not made unbeing unfeeling.

What is the sorrow of Christ on the cross? The book of Lamentations weep-  
ing mercy and love in the pit of the stomach, on the cold floor of the prison  
cell, locked away from human freedom. What is the sorrow of human his-

tory? The weeping of African Christ genocide and slavery, never more to feel, never more to see the golden sun of tropic paradise. Sorrow and lamentations, even death could not blunt out. Even death is not greater than sorrow. Even the bones and fires of human history, the pain of birth, the endless toil, the night. What is sorrow? Even Buddha could not comprehend depths of human alienation as he sat alone in mind not thinking not feeling yet breathing. Even Christ carried his cross yet no one wept like African Mary, lost and alone. Not even feeling summer heat or wistful breeze, the light kiss of rain. Sitting alone amongst the refugees cold prison cell floor. The guards are laughing and mocking the innocence. I am innocent yet I have no joy. I am innocent yet I am filled with sorrow. I can not even feel pain any longer. I have blotted out the memory of I am. I am no longer in existence. My name is not remembered among the saints of heaven, or even among the ancestors of the African shores. They are singing songs across all of time and human sorrow but I hear them not. We no longer love nor do we hate, our tragedy is that we feel nothing, like the Buddha merciless sorrow weeping. Like the Buddha merciless sorrow weeping, I feel no joy I feel no pain, I only breathe. Prison cell song, weeping merciless night, there is no one to call. Prison cell weeping floor cold night, there is no one to hear. Prison cell cold bar, cold floor, cold stone, cold heart deathless skin spirit gone and rising - come back I never loved you, come back I want I want. The call of human history, sorrow, even death cannot release its hold. Cold merciless night, sorrow songs of lamentations, crying weeping nights of mist and joy, calling nights of longing mercy, cold stone alone without breath. Even death cannot contain you. Weeping tears of sorrow, cold merciless night, cold stone of mercy, weeping tears of joy. Even death cannot hold, even death has no hold. Mercy night tears of joy, release the time of human sorrow. History is filled with human sorrow. Cold stone joy of mercy, release the night and bitter tears of sorrow, weeping tears of joy. Even death cannot hold you. Hearing songs of sorrow and lamentation, songs of joy and blues of memory, hearing the African slave songs, the blues of sorrow meaning. Meaning songs of sorrow joy, lamentations of winsome song. Even death could not contain you. Release the fearless Buddha weeping mercy in the night.

Weeping mercy in the night, sounds of laughter in the night, joyous feeling in the night, awaiting the dawn...

I am a child among the flowers. Everyone is dancing. There are bright colors among the people. Everyone is festive. There is happiness. There is a soft rhythm. People are caressing. Some walk by the river while others sit on the hill, breaking bread and playing drums. No one forces anyone against the will of their own.

I am a child lost in the flowers. I run wildly in the woods. By the thick dark oak I sit and look. I see birds, insects, squirrels. In the distance, I see two naked people playing in the woods. There is a cool breeze.

The flowers are the children. A soft flute is heard. The sound carries through the trees. In the distance, the rhythm of drums is felt, is heard. The creek is bubbling, softly. There is a sweet scent in the air. The flowers and the trees, the children and the dancing, the senses are fulfilled and everyone is happy.

The prison ash of Auschwitz has anointed me, the sacred bones of the Wounded Knee slaughter sacred dance, nipple piercing, screaming in the sun, 666 African bones, AHHHHHH!

666 dead African Jews haunting my dreams  
33 sacred  
blood of the Aztec offering  
the placing of curses upon mount Ebal.

Mary had a little lamb, whose fleece was white as snow.

Prisons, prisons, prisons! Killing, death, murder! Slavery, bondage, murder, Auschwitz African shoreline, American shoreline, Mayan prophecies, Murder, Murder, Murder!

The sadistic pleasure of samsaric world of prison guard Christ, mocking, "I am that which is the other," shrinking within like St. Teresa, blossoming flowers of anxiety and insecurity, saying "speak well or silent Samadhi shakti power of Om void." Sex transforms to knowledge to action. Controlling sex, by mind, subverts action, makes action meaningless and consumerist. Selling the body into mindless money.

Body and mind,  
Sex and money,  
Self and other.

Mandala flowers of the hyper masculine body of American KKK man, secretly gay, fearing the other, afraid. Afraid to be mandala flower.

Fierce Siva guru, fierce. Ascetic. Fires of consumption. Wheels spin out of control. Rationalistic time kept world. Boxes and thoughts.

Mandala shaking lamas dance, like shaman ecstasy.

Hermetic blue fish

"I'm a little tea pot short and stout"

Mandala flowers watered weeping tears of joy, withering. Divine consolation of Rachel weeping.

Rachel weeping for her children,  
Vishnu blue fish Moby Dick,  
Awful terror God Forgive us.

Akeldama,  
Sorrow songs and land for silver,

silver for gold and gold for soul,  
the slaves in the prison house of the empire's blood,  
the land and the blood for silver and gold and magic beans  
and Eurasian cattle of Joseph's Coptic dream, Ethiopic;

mandala visions of untouched cattle

mandala showers of blue iris,  
Virgin de la Milagrosa,  
Milarepa showers of mandala ice

blues Mississippi mandala flowers,  
blues flowers ancestral vibration,  
blues strings drum heart song,  
song earth green, pits of flowing darkness

sorrow songs mandala flowers,  
blues bees nectar sweet,  
sweet chords of God in earth

earth flowers mandala bloom,  
resurrect prison house mandala fades;  
walls fade,  
prison fades,  
bones become mandala flower

“Alif Lam Mim”

“The Romans are vanquished”

Surah XXX

## Part 2: No Diagnosis Only Gnosis; Voices of the Healers

Ethereal Pain Body  
by Kathleen Sambrotto

### *Hello Dr. B.*

Please excuse me 4 bothering U again.

The dispensary only carries it in 12c.

Would it be ok to take 3 of them & make it 36c or what?

I tried calling Dianne so as not to bother u again, but only got ans. machine. Nicole from the dispensary said they might carry 30c. Going 2 call now but if 36c would be ok, the grocery store is much closer.

May I ask is the colocynthis for the abdominal pain or the emotional stuff or something else?

Felt perfect when awoke. Pains are recurring now but nowhere near what yesterday was like...

I almost died three times since I've been back...

The first time was the last time I came back from Key West afraid to abandon Ken, my husband, and leave everything I'd dreamed of starting over with, but afraid to stay. It had seemed to turn into a nightmare after not being able to pick up the pieces after hurricane Wilma in 2005, the 5th hurricane in one year, the worst tropical storm ever documented in the Atlantic Basin, with a 4ft tidal surge that destroyed thousands of dollars worth of irreplaceable creative and personal materials besides priceless equipment and evidence of our talents and experience. No matter how many different construction/deconstruction jobs we took on, no matter how many different ways we attempted to regroup, even standing in line for weeks filling out forms with FEMA only to find out that because we hadn't yet made a claim to being a legitimate business with all the standard legal documentation, we weren't eligible for one iota of "relief!" Not being able to afford living on our boat in the marina any more because the company we worked for left town and the workshop we had been renting for our custom glass carving had gotten taken out by a tidal surge, we had to live like refugees. Because there were no legal places to moor our boat HOMELAND SECURITY and/or the Coast Guard were constantly affixing warning stickers on our portholes informing us to move along, we finally gave the boat to someone who promised to pay us for it someday which we knew he never could. Finally, we were homeless and occasionally living in the back of a dilapidated trailer where the guy who owned it, who was an old friend, a kind and benevolent soul who besides allowing us to live with him, also allowed some of the most down and out drug addicts, thieves and murderers on the island to crash there. Some of these people, I must add, were more trustworthy and kindhearted than many so called upstanding middle class socialites who purported themselves to be "good Christians." It still was pretty scary, yes, hmm a bit of a learning curve. I guess the point is...I was afraid to leave Key West and Ken, but I was afraid to stay. And I was afraid to come back to Buffalo because I knew there was nothing I wanted to do there and I disliked

the climate ever since childhood and had no means to start over even if I imagined there was. But I didn't know where else to go and I had nothing to show for anything I had ever done and there was "family" and a few friends I hadn't lost complete contact with.

I eventually bailed out and returned to Buffalo with nothing but the clothes on my back, which were barely presentable enough to really go anywhere and without any credentials to prove my experiences to be marketable for employment. I had no car or bus fare. I began living in my parent's basement where upstairs was going on the most hideous melodrama of a manically emotionally abusive woman and a passively co-dependent meek though unconditionally loving but powerless man, in the middle of suburbia, with nowhere to turn. Not having slept in 6 weeks and the law being that anyone having been treated for chronic depression cannot be prescribed sleep medication, they gave me other antipsychotic drugs with drowsiness as a side effect to try. None of these drugs worked under such extreme conditions - none of these school bred 'experts' had any clue regarding the gravity of what I'd been and was going through! In addition, they wouldn't give me any more of my regular antidepressant from my Key West counselling agency. I was on a waiting list to see a psychiatrist from a New York State agency because I'd set up the transition from the Key West agency (those of whom I must say were always most understanding and compassionate and helpful). So... the outpatient crises unit of Erie County Medical Center (ECMC) convinced me to admit myself 'voluntarily' for 'observation' to 'reevaluate my meds' but what I didn't realize was that once you're in there, without your shoes or street clothes, it's all up to them when and if you get out; even though you sign yourself in under sane mind and sound body. If you want to get out before they say they're finished observing you, you have to request a hearing and prove in a COURT OF LAW that you're sane according to their standards! And that was really the beginning of months of nightmares to end all nightmares; which made the play and movie 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' look like "Sesame Street." Eventually, I got out.

Yet anything I tried to explain to anyone who seemed conventional, sounded insane to them. So I'd come back to Buffalo for a few months to try to start over receiving only obligatory help from my family who had absolutely no understanding or empathy. I realized there was nothing left for me to work with here and returned to Ken and Key West because it was once homelike and familiar. However, every time I'd returned things had gotten worse and then I'd realize I wasn't equipped to cope with the circumstances. So with much trepidation, guilt and anxiety, I would choose again against my will but out of some sense of desperation for survival to come back to Buffalo like some demented salmon trying to swim back up the dam because of ...well whatever...and this went on for almost 3 years flip-flopping back & forth. Each flip-flop eroded more and more of what little investment anyone wanted to make in helping me fulfill my intentions; making efforts to reestablish myself as a permanent resident less credible.

In this frenzied loop of loyalty and escape and heightened fear and exaggerated attachment, I remained like some character half out of Kafka and half in the Twilight Zone. After naively listening and accepting the uninformed, albeit well intentioned advice of others, I checked first into ECMC and then Buffalo General Hospital. When I was released, some friends in Alden, NY took me in before I retreated back to Key West.

Everything was so far out this last time I went back. The last thing that happened was this derelict guy trying to break in to the trailer we were staying at. I witnessed Ken, my pacifist conscientious objector husband, honorable discharge winning, self defending in the army's court, one of only 3 people in the history of the U.S. army at the time of the Vietnam War able to get honorable discharge on the basis of religious and ethical rights

AFTER having been drafted and gone through boot camp and officer's training school...witnessing him, of all people, almost kill this dude with his bare hands by repeatedly smashing this guy's hand in the sliding glass door while the guy kept trying to squeeze himself in, blood everywhere, me pleading:

“Ken what are you doing stop, you'll never forgive yourself”...seeing the frightening irony of his shift in behavior merged with a sheer determination of him to not let this guy intrude on us, he opened up the door picking this guy up by the throat and just flinging him down the stairs and into the wall of the shed across the sidewalk. I thought this guy's neck was broken. Thank God it wasn't!

Right there and then I finally realized this was way, way bigger than anything I ever wanted to be dealing with. The next 3 days and nights were spent in the Miami airport switching flights about 10 times not being able to make up my mind whether to continue on to Buffalo or go back to Key West. Finally, after being accosted and surrounded by 3 Miami Cops, 2 airport security personnel and the desk clerk, they told me I had to make up my mind and choose a destination or they were going to either take me in to the FBI for questioning or admit me to a Miami psyche ward... so I decided to call my cousin and ask if he'd pick me up at the Buffalo airport. He said he would. Three days later, I was back in Buffalo. I barely remember getting home. I sort of remember attempting to call Ken to let him know I'd gotten home safely.

Shortly into living on my own I became COMPLETELY DEPRESSED because life as I'd come to think it ought to be WAS OVER and once again I thought I can't go on like this, the only thing there is for me to do is in Key West, at least there I can be myself and be in contact with people I can relate to...so I risked losing my apartment and everything and gave “conditional” notice to my landlord and got another ticket to Key West where Ken & I were either going to figure out a way to make a go of it there or move to Nicaragua and live somehow on what little of his V.A. benefits he had and somehow keep dual citizenship so I could still receive my SSD.

The next thing I remember was waking up in a hospital bed with tubes in

every orifice. Apparently I'd collapsed from fear and anxiety and my neighbor discovered me 3 days later lying in my hallway between my bedroom & my bathroom, with everything from my bowels and bladder evacuated in a pool of excrement surrounding my body (the cleanup of which I had to reimburse my landlord for upon my return from the hospital!) and my eyeballs protruding from my eye sockets; they thought I was dead...That was the first time I almost died...

After I recuperated from that, I spent another year not caring about anything any more. I would only go to the grocery store at 3:00 am so I wouldn't be embarrassed by having other people see me or have to think of anything to say to people. I wasn't able to make a decision on what to buy to eat without hours of contemplation standing staring at the shelves. Only wanting to purchase the barest essential nutrient with the least carbon footprint, equitably grown yet affordable; and only because I knew I had to eat something regularly to keep my body functioning, not because I had any desire for any particular flavor or substance, I made my way to the store. Also, I would wait till after dark to get my mail, because I didn't want to have to be seen, evaluated or judged by anyone. When my caseworker or my visiting nurse would come by I would get dressed so as to appear as if I cared and open the blinds and put on an air as though I was fine. Once they were gone I'd resume my acquired "exercise" of pacing from window to window, not because I cared to look out, only because I knew I had to move my body to keep it in working order. The windows were like destination points; like corners at which a spider angles back and forth from in order to spin her web.

I did that for another year or so, diligently compliant with my meds and conventional counselling and occasionally attending family gatherings to prove I was fine. Until one day I'd just had enough of it. I made up my mind that there was absolutely no point whatsoever taking up any more space or even exchanging carbon dioxide; wasting precious oxygen, wasting anybody's time imagining that there was any reason to waste any more energy - contributing to my meaningless and fruitless presence! I went out and got a bottle of vodka and drank as much as I needed to feel a nice little buzz and took all of my meds that had side effects of drowsiness and all the sleep inducing meds...

Three days later I woke up in my bed a little delirious and wondering why I was awake. And thinking "OH CRAP! Now what am I supposed to do?" That was the second time I almost died.

Slowly after that, it became apparent to me that there's got to be something I can do. Even if it's wrong. After all (God forbid!) I could live another 20 or thirty years. I got to do something...

That's when I got involved with Quaker meetings. Not because I was looking for a church but because I remembered from being involved with AVP in the prisons years and years before that they were anti-war people and I might find some people I had something in common with. Well little by

little I got to be friends with them. And one gentleman in particular used to take me hiking and introduced me to some political activists and eventually I started canvassing for Food and Water Watch. Not only did I go door to door but I went to town board meetings, spoke to bank executives, spoke at public rallies and organized informational gatherings. I also got involved with Food Not Bombs and other humanitarian focused groups.

An old friend who understood everything I was going through, much better than I, got me going with Pema Chodrin's "Start Where You Are," Vipassana meditation techniques for compassionate living and other Shamanic oriented aboriginal and native wisdom teachings.

These all served to give me the incentive to crawl out of my shell and begin this spectacular journey of discovering the joyous, heartrending, sometimes scary yet compelling and always rewarding responsibilities & pleasures of experiencing life & death & everything in between; from the perspective of a human being connected to all that is.

In concert with that I began the free course in Nonviolent Communication, inspired by Marshall Rosenberg, about creating your life, relationships and world in harmony with your values, having been introduced to it by a young man living in a co-op housing situation. I also took a course in Re-Evaluation Counseling which I was able to afford by bartering domestic service for time offered by a gentleman who's the father of a prominent local social justice and human rights activist and a bookstore owner. I also enrolled in a facilitator training workshop of Alternatives to Violence, thanks to a grant offered.

It was about that time that music and art began to come back into my life in all sorts of unexpected and delightful ways.

I soon began my tending to a family member who suffered with a terminal illness. Meanwhile, I cleaned house for my alternatively focused old friend for extra cash.

Having renewed my interests in wholesome nutrition and herbal remedies, I met one of Dr. B's Homeopathy students working part time in a local health food store. In conversation, I mentioned that I wanted to be more proactive about my mental & physical & spiritual health and wellness but was feeling powerless, because Medicaid & Social Services only covered conventional modalities and I didn't think I'd ever be able to afford such 'luxuries' as 'alternative practitioner's' services. He prompted me to approach his teacher regarding becoming a case study for his class as 'barter'. With the acceptance of that contract and the beneficent encouragement of my case worker the Light began to shine and Word became Flesh...

It all served well to get my juices flowing to get back into life. If I can do it, REALLY ANYBODY CAN!

***Wow Dr. B. Thank You!***

Really didn't expect you'd have time to respond so soon. I'm thrilled & relieved.

I started taking the colocynthis the moment the clerk handed it to me, before even ringing it up.

The pain had already begun resurgence in my belly and mid to lower back. It was becoming painful to stand up straight and all sorts of upcoming duties and best intentions to fulfill self directed obligations and externally requested agreed upon duties were weighing on my mind, let alone all my unfinished personal business I haven't been able to find the time to manage the way I try to imagine I should. The store was practically empty and the clerks who were on duty share a familiarity with me so I felt at liberty to wander to an aisle where I could just squat and stare at the shelves aimlessly without anyone taking notice.

I just focused on my breathing and relaxing and contemplated on things & beings & circumstances for which I am grateful, including my body being sensuous enough to register this pain and otherwise be strong and fit and healthy and my mind's ability to be cognizant of it.

I commenced practicing Natural Awareness/Non Meditation, almost involuntarily, without even realizing I was doing it. A pleasant goose-bumpily sensation became noticeable around my occipital ridge at the sight of the beauty around me like the chiming of a gong at the beginning of a formal meditation session. Then a body scan like the sensation of scrubbing bubbles occurred as I noticed my inner self, from outside of myself, noticing the scents of different aromas, some pleasant and some offensive.

Suddenly I realized I could be grateful for everything just as it is in this moment, inside me and outside me - even the pain I was experiencing, even my awareness of the fear of not knowing what it was indicative of and whether or not it might be fatal like it almost was the previous time I'd experienced similar sensations. I am grateful for everything and everyone in the store and outside the store. All the workers, farm hands, scientists, business planners, consultants, laborers and yes probably even corporate executives etc. who contributed to make all this wonderful stuff available to everyone and wow, imagine that, after everything I've been through - even to me! Grateful for everything just as it is throughout the town in which I live and the surrounding areas whether I agree with everything or not - in our country and throughout the world whether pleasant or unpleasant. I even became aware of the perceived messes in my life and with my interpersonal relationships as being tolerable, if not acceptable, however perfectly understandable and eventually manageable, just as they are!

"Could this be" I heard myself ask myself, "the beginning of true Compassion?" I noticed myself feeling more forgiving and merciful towards all the oppressors in existence, in other's personal lives and (OMG) my own!

Then the sound of a certain familiar person's voice in the distance interrupted me. Just like the sound of the chiming of the gong in the formal meditation sessions... It was the first time I recognized the ability to really do this "in the moment" "out in the world" since I've been practicing it in private regularly for several months now, every morning and evening without

fail as you suggested.

I suddenly noticed the pain had dissipated. I told my clerk friend “Wow this colocynthis that Dr. B. suggested seems to be working already!”

**Hi Dr. B,**

Just thought I'd share something with you that I've chosen to try working with, in conjunction with my adherence to your treatment plan, Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication. It seemed to be a perfect adjunct to the Pema Chodron's natural awareness recordings I've been practicing with at your recommendation.

I have for quite a while seen many connections between your advice and my own intuitive realizations within my approach to yoga as it unfolds and Pema's “Guide to Compassionate Living and Nonviolent Communication.”

And the woman who was my visiting nurse 4 years ago for a year and remained friends with me after I didn't need a visiting nurse any more wanted to start getting back into taking yoga classes and asked me to do it with her. When I told her my “disposable income” is only used for things of necessity and an occasional treat and that I have my own yoga practice after studying for years with people in exchange of service work, she asked me that if she gives me gas \$\$ every week would I want to show up and teach her! Wow, I told her I'm not qualified to be a TEACHER, however I'll share with her what I think I've learned as long as she promises not to try to force anything that feels uncomfortable and that we go really slow and she ask a lot of questions and give me feedback on what she's noticing. So now I'm doing that just about every Sunday and sometimes her little 8yr. old granddaughter comes too! Plus my former yoga teacher just graduated from nursing school and when I told her about this she GAVE me her healing Goddess Meditation statue for my altar and her first instructing Hatha yoga manual and The Sivananda Companion to Yoga!

I also got some roller blades from Good Will and have been managing to do that almost every morning and sometimes evenings before meditation. You weren't fibbing, I AM GETTING YOUNGER!

I went to bed last night, after spending a very friendly & cheerful evening with a new sailing friend, feeling genuinely grateful for everything. Acknowledging even my residual anxiety over certain other circumstances in my personal life and in the world around me and also my tendency to impute meaning on stuff that doesn't apply; I resolved to be ok with things as they are and let them work themselves out.

**Dr. B.,**

My afternoon progressed effortlessly Thursday and I finally managed to accomplish some long overdue errands. I even was able to go to sailing school without repercussions that evening. I took the second dose of colocynthis before I left for the boat yard. I was very optimistic. I was feeling normal again and very hungry so I stopped & had 2 veggie/bean tacos on the way

home oh and also a small glass of vodka & Kahlua. I don't usually care for sweet liquors but I had a craving for it and thought it would be harmless since I rarely eat anything with sugar in it if I can help it. It never used to bother me before. Although I don't usually do store bought dairy, not sure why I decided to have the sour cream with the tacos... oh and then I had a small dish of ice cream which I haven't had in months, which I try to avoid also...

So I woke up around 3:00 am Friday with severe cramps again & somehow managed to utilize modified yoga asana, deep breathing and natural awareness, which gave me even more cathartic realizations about different perspectives and shifts in consciousness! I was able to get myself around to where I felt comfortable enough to compose what I sent you yesterday.

I felt fine, ate some red quinoa w/red Swiss chard, fresh red onion, fresh sautéed garlic, amino acids & nutritional yeast and a bit later, watermelon. But by early evening a couple of friends called trying to lure me out for "festivities" and before I could catch myself I was ranting about all the ethical and political reasons I wouldn't celebrate "Independence Day" or "Columbus Day" to save my life. All the stuff I'd thought I'd relinquished the day before & BAM! I'm not sure if it was the melon or the ranting (seems obvious, doesn't it)? The pain gave me my next wakeup call.

I took the next dose of colocynthis, practiced asana, more...fear, more letting go...more immobilization...is there an easier way to "Go Deeper?" Couldn't I just get an electric shock collar that signals me 10 min. before I'm about to get upset or maybe a lobotomy? HA! HA!

Anyway last night I had so much debilitating pain, nothing seemed to be working, so I called an old friend around 1:00 am for comfort and to express my gratitude for everything we ever shared and to make sure there were no hard feelings about anything that I might need to apologize about. He assured me I had nothing to be concerned about & suggested I try a hot water bottle on my tummy and some soothing music. At that point I was all buckled over and desperate for anything to relieve the pain. (For a moment I remembered I still have an old bottle of Naproxen 375 from last fall. But NO - I didn't want to chance what it might do to my stomach, besides I want to stick to homeopathy for as much as is relevant to my condition for the rest of my life. Only have electric heating pads (my Chiropractor advises against electronic devices and I agree with his reasoning however that's all I've got to work with at the moment). I remembered I was using it with a cloth napkin soaked in castor oil to heal my fascia after the transverse colon resection 2 1/2 yrs. ago. So I did that and eventually I fell asleep, maybe around 3-3:30am. Woke up around 7:00am (I normally turn in around 10:30-11:00pm and wake up with the birds, so no matter how little sleep I get I always wake up early)!

I took colocynthis.

By the way I've had to stop 4xs while typing this to do postures & breathing to subdue the pains. It's 12:27pm and all I've ingested for breakfast was water, kombucha and a banana.

I was interrupted by two phone calls during which I laid on my back with

knees over back of the sofa alternating knees to chest and arching back like inverted cow posture + controlled breathing then relaxed. Now its 2:46 pm.

Felt much better during first conversation with sister. But next conversation with old friend got tense and challenging. I just happened to be eating baked potato with amino acids and nutritional yeast and feeling like maybe I'd get some housework caught up. Don't know if it was the baked potato or the anxiety producing conversation - the blessed pain is back. Guess I got to spend the rest of the day not answering the phone, fasting and researching yoga postures for internal abdominal pain. Meditate and explore info on 3rd chakra, maybe listen to Eckhart Tolle on Ego Transformation.

I've got to be ok to go do yoga with my girlfriend and her daughter tomorrow morning and be fit enough to show up at the boat yard on Tuesday morning. Besides, there should be at least some sign of progress in organizing this apartment by Friday @10:00 when my caseworker returns! I can't afford to be incapacitated or worse have to go to the hospital!

The worst thing the paramedics warned me of was an Abdominal Aortic Aneurism. I looked up the symptoms and I don't think it could be that do you?

Is there anything else you can imagine I might benefit from paying attention to or avoiding?

Diet and digestive matters have never really been much of an issue for me. I'm not vomiting (well I did vomit once on Friday the 27th but I don't think that relates to now - went out to lunch with friends - had Cajun grilled salmon which never disagreed with me before, but a side of French fried potatoes in some kind of pancake wheat based batter may have. Haven't had deep fried foods in years - big mistake.)

My bowel movements are perfect.

I'm not dizzy or lightheaded.

I'm not passing any blood anywhere.

I seem to be ok for the moment. Still managing to view it as a gift...

Looking forward to your reply...

**Dr. B.,**

Today was supposed to be my boatyard work/sailing lesson day, however after I finished meditating and just as I was about to "suit up" to go rollerblading, I started to notice intolerable cramps in my abdominal/solar plexus/diaphragm/kidneys area and became incredibly light headed and had to double over to feel any relief. This came on so suddenly with no diarrhea or vomiting or eating. All I had had was room temperature spring water with fresh lemon in it and my multivitamin. I tried to breathe into it and tolerate it and contemplate what the source was. When I began to have recollections of the symptoms leading up to my transverse volvulus 2 years ago, (the third time I almost died) I tried to reassure myself with what my surgeon had assured me - it could never reoccur. I tried my best to relax and wait for it to pass. After about 15 min of it I decided to call 911. By the time they arrived

it was subsiding. They took my vitals and advised me that I should go to the emergency room anyway and the risks involved if I didn't. I chose not to go. I have spent the entire day resting off & on, practicing deep breathing noticing my thoughts and typing this to you.

All I have ingested has been a banana, a modest portion of whole grain organic oatmeal laced with amino acids & nutritional yeast, a handful of blueberries and several small glasses of home made kombucha.

The pain was completely subsided by this afternoon until a friend called and the pain worsened as the conversation went in the direction of mutual observations of situations that evoke feelings of anger, frustration and helplessness when being present in the midst of passive aggressive people who rarely accept responsibility for their part in the incident and then blame the person they're hurting for hurting them and then accuse the one they're hurting of always blaming them for their hurt feelings when the hurt one is only seeming to find a common ground for better understanding!

And none of the compassionately centered people I know were available to give any advice as how to tactfully and clearly communicate loving intention for acknowledging each others unmet needs and the desire to meet or somehow approach meeting the needs of all included.

I guess this is sort of what's been going on for me the past few weeks and even though I've made progress in not exploding in the heats of the moment and having what seems to have been compassion and forgiveness in the moments; I've possibly been carrying my understanding of what I intuit to be their anger around inside me and an unrequited urge for restitution.

It has finally occurred to me that maybe some people are just so wounded or empty and angry that they don't want to connect and no matter how much love one has in one's heart for them even the kindest most disarmingly intended loving overtures come across as an assault.

OMG, that's how I used to feel when I was at my worst and people wanted to help me! But no matter how depressed or fearful I ever was, I never had the inkling to be outwardly cruel or emotionally or physically abusive or oppressive to others and use my feelings about my circumstances as an excuse for caustic behavior the way these people do. Although now that I think about it I may have behaved that very way, unconsciously! I just turned it inward and became the victim of victims. How sick is that?

Could that be partly why I've become so vocal & demonstrative and vigilant against abuse & oppressive tendencies when faced with them, since I've finally developed a sense of confidence and shamelessness? Could that be why people who used to like me when I was shy and prone to speechlessness respond resentfully upon hearing my occasional unasked for opinions and probing questions? Uh oh! Hmm, the pain seems to have subsided almost completely for the moment.

Is this stuff still coming from my ego or have I progressed to something even more insidious?

What do you have to say about all this, please? Is there another remedy

I should consider now for a while? Or another dose of something I already have?

Do you think it might do me well to meditate on the 3rd Chakra or in some particular Asana or a particular aromatherapy?

**Dr. B.,**

I am constantly reassured that for someone who was once so almost catatonically depressed for so long and having grown up (well having grown up is debatable, ha ha!) in such an overly regimented and repressed childhood AND after surviving the sort of devastation I did in Key West & the insanity I witnessed with my mother and father when I returned and ended up spending 3 months in the psych ward just so I didn't have to go out and live on the streets in Buffalo so I waited...

THE RESTORATION OF MY OWN creative organic process AS A BLESSED RESULT OF HAVING FOUND A HOMEOPATHIC DOCTOR, DR. BHATTACHARYA, WILLING TO WORK WITH ME AS A CASE STUDY TO LIBERATE ME FROM THE PRISON OF ANTIDEPRESSANTS AND THE DEBILITATING EFFECTS OF THE DISEASE MODEL OF WESTERN MEDICINE INTO THE REJUVENATING EFFECTS OF HOMEOPATHY, MEDITATION AND MINDFUL ATTENTION.

The pain, I'm not exaggerating is excruciating when it resurges. But instead of trying to find another way to escape it I make friends with it and recognize it as a signal to look more closely at how I'm living and what I need to do to take better care of my true nature.

This is how I heal.

#### Endnotes

In Gratitude for the remarkable results of his guidance & service; anyone interested in contacting "Dr. B" please note the following:

Homeopathic Healer, Arup Bhattacharya PhD, DHM  
156 Ramsdell Av. Buffalo, NY 14216, USA  
PO Box 251, Fort Erie, ONL2A5M9, Canada  
416-848-4346 or 647-201-0934 (cell)  
716-566-7758 or 716-310-3789 (cell)  
Fax: 1-866-365-7832  
E-mail: arup.2000@yahoo.com  
WWW.Homeopathichealers.com

**Jailer/Healer**  
*by Linda Abrams*

To heal the mind, you must heal the spirit

To heal the spirit, you must heal relationship ~ Chloe Madanes

When we think about the changes worth dedicating ourselves to in the pursuit of liberation (being free!) and healing (being whole!), we are wise to consider the effects of our relationships with each other, and by extension, our relationships with our social institutions. In this essay, we'll briefly explore and compare two fundamental relationship types: the "Jailer" relationship - a relationship of oppression using power and control to influence behavior; and the "Healer" relationship - a relationship of solidarity through loving connection and cooperation fostering. The question I am offering for consideration is this: in a culture dominated by "Jailers" who use power to control and dominate others, under what conditions might we begin to transform ourselves - personally and as a society - so that we might be "freed" and "healed" to contribute the best of who we are to life, to others, to this increasingly degraded world or to God? How do we expand the space in which justice, liberation and love flourish so as to nurture the vision of a world that works for all people and the planet?

To begin, let's describe and compare the Jailer and Healer relationships.

A "Jailer" relationship is one in which power is exerted by one person over another, and through power and privilege is the one with "authority" in terms of the relationship contract. A "Jailer" can be rigid and controlling, using power to enforce demands or can be more open and flexible in accepting input from those with less power. Nevertheless, it is the "Jailer" who holds the keys to power and decision-making in the relationship. "Jailers" shape behavior and elicit compliance through strategies of punishment and rewards and in so doing subjugate others through the manipulation of fear. A "Jailer" boss might foster a very competitive workplace environment that overtly or subtly preys upon the fears of employees that they are constantly being re-evaluated for their position, similar to a coach that motivates players through threats of benching them or replacing them altogether. "Jailers" establish hierarchy, with power being concentrated at the top and uncertainty and insecurity being concentrated at the bottom. The relationship contract best serves the one who holds the power; the one who is less powerful does not typically do well in the bargain. Given the power inequities and the use of controlling tactics, the psychological nature of the "Jailer" relationship is one of domination/subjugation, characteristic of oppressive relationships.

A "Healer" relationship is a collaborative relationship where power is shared and the relationship contract is mutually determined. In a healing relationship, shared responsibility and decision-making are an extension of a democratic and dialogic process and motivation towards collective goals stems from hav-

ing a stake in both the process and the outcome of efforts. The values at play in a “Healer” relationship include cooperation, honoring the worth and contribution of each person, transparency and solidarity. Healing relationships are loving relationships created to serve the interests of all. A wonderful example of someone who models a “Healer” relationship approach is Patch Adams, the doctor who started a “love revolution” in healthcare by insisting that healing should be a loving, human exchange and not a business transaction! In Patch’s vision of health-care delivery, the surgeon and the cleaning person are paid the same salary in order to remove the profit incentive. The relationship is based on providing care, literally. Where fear-based relationships often exploit and control others through the inequity of power – love based relationships tend to inspire others through shared power, co-creation and strengthening interpersonal connection through respect and mutual consideration. Where the “Jailer” relationship establishes a hierarchy of power and control, the “Healer” relationship is vertical and one of solidarity. The mutuality and “pro-social” cooperative nature of a “Healer” relationship fosters the capacity for people to grow in freedom, in solidarity, in healing and in justice.

Now let’s consider the brain’s role in shaping Jailer/Healer relationships. First, for a brief overview of the whole brain and its functions, consider MacLean’s Triune Brain Model, which identifies 3 specific brains that have evolved progressively over the course of human evolution. The first and oldest of our brains is the Reptilian Brain, considered to be the most animalistic and primitive in its concern with survival, mating, feeding and self-maintenance. The Reptilian Brain is wired to react to certain external “triggers” with a set of behavioral responses that are fixed, automatic and relatively unaffected by new learning. Traits associated with the Reptilian Brain include dominance, aggression, seeking a mate, rigidity, compulsivity, worship, greed and FEAR - traits that are largely expressed in the context of “Jailer” relationships. The second brain to evolve is the limbic system, or the emotional brain, which regulates emotions. Associating an emotion with an event makes it more memorable so that we are more likely to repeat behaviors that result in pleasure and avoid behaviors that result in pain. The feedback of pleasure-pain supports learning and adapting to circumstances. Not surprisingly, much “decision-making” is motivated by feeling more than thinking, effecting behavior to a larger degree than we might realize. The empathic nature of “Healer Relationship” is built upon the ability to sense and respond to the needs and feelings of self and others and is the brain most engaged in healer traits: cooperation, mutuality, fairness, love of others, etc. The youngest of our brains is the neo-cortex or “thinking brain,” which controls logic, reasoning, creative and abstract thinking, language and sensory integration. Although the capacity for critical thinking and problem solving are the strengths of the neo-cortex, it is often our older brains that overpower the “thinking brain” when it comes to our behavior and choices.

So let us consider - if in our relationships and environments that “trigger”

fear, pleasure, pain, anger, etc., it is the Reptilian Brain and the Limbic system that are exercised over the thinking brain, how does that effect individuals and systems?

With this understanding of how the brain works, it becomes clear that in an environment that bombards us with triggers stimulating the Reptilian brain, our reactions to events tend to be defensive or offensive as we respond to persistent threats, manipulations and domination. Our prison system, school system, economic system, health care system, justice system, etc. are all built to perpetuate standardization, conformity and submission to those with power: the “Jailers”. And “Jailers,” with their use of power to dominate and their exploitation of fear to manipulate, control relationships in such a way that there is little room to cultivate the awareness’s and gifts of the newer brain. So essentially, we have a “hostage crises” in our culture, where the highest capacities for problem solving, creativity, transformation and sanity are over-ridden by knee-jerk primal, survival instincts. What hope of liberation exists for a person kept in a physical and mental cage? And what hope for a child full of dreams and imagination who “fails” to meet school standards that insist on constricting creativity and original thinking? And for those who are deemed “mentally ill” and are chemically subdued as a form of “treatment” because they are diagnosed with a “disorder” that could just as easily be considered a “dif-order” (differently-ordered)?

So here is the question for all who seek a more just, humane, loving world: how do we move toward a culture that liberates the human spirit (and the human brain!) to serve our highest calling to co-create a world that works for everyone; a world that celebrates life and creation; a world that all children deserve? I believe that the answer, in part, lies in transforming our relationship model from “Jailer” to “Healer”.

To illustrate what that might look like, I will next offer you an example of “Healer” relationships as witnessed in certain shamanic cultures of the Amazon jungle region of Peru.

The Shamans tell us that there are two worlds - two worlds that have little to do with each other. The first world is the World of Predator and Prey. In this world, people compete for power, for status, for privilege, for material possessions. It is a world of competition: “winners and losers,” dominance and submission and “survival of the fittest.” This world, say the shamans, is the world we in the north are born into. The other world is the World of the Creators and the shamans say that this is the world they belong to. They tell us the task of those in their world, the World of the Creators, is to “dream the world into being.”

The shamans, in their role as creators and healers, navigate between the human and spirit realm in treating the afflictions of their patients and their tribal community. They engage in cooperative, inter-dependent relationships with all beings - and for shamans in the Amazon region, it is their relationship to the

spirit of the plants that is instrumental in healing work. Establishing a sacred relationship to the plants, to the spirits, to the people - a relationship grounded in love and respect - is fundamental to healing and serving. In such a relationship, the self-serving motivations of greed and acquisition of power do not interfere with the process of healing, which eliminates the tendency to “create customers” for the “business” of healing, as we see in our culture. Furthermore, if healing is done from a devotion to and love of others, the means and medicines used in treatment will be quite different than in a culture that places profit over people. As a student of the plant medicine traditions of the indigenous tribes of the Amazon basin, I can tell you that people from all over the world travel here in search of healing and spiritual growth. Approximately one third of pharmaceutical medicines are synthetic imitations of natural plant-based medicines from the Amazon rainforest. These synthetic imitations are likely to have more side effects than the natural plant medicines, but this allows the pharmaceutical industry to patent and profit from their distribution. Furthermore, healing with traditional sacred plant medicines, such as ayahuasca, is a long-standing custom (written documentation of use by the Spanish began in the 1600’s, though ayahuasca use amongst the tribes likely goes back centuries!). Ayahuasca is a brew containing DMT that is commonly used ceremonially to assist a person to discover their true purpose on earth, to learn about the workings of the universe and to aid in personal healing on physical, psychological, spiritual and energetic levels. The shamans report that the “plant teachers” are the ones who taught them, through visions, how to make ayahuasca and other plant medicines. This sacred medicine that has the potential to liberate consciousness from the limitations of social conditioning and domestication is viewed as a wonderful resource in a culture where healing relationships are primary. In 2008, the Peruvian National Institute of Culture resolved that these traditional ayahuasca ceremonies were a protected cultural legacy - a “fundamental pillar” of Amazonian identity. Compare that esteemed status to the classification of ayahuasca in the United States as a Schedule I drug - considered to be amongst the most dangerous substances of abuse! I would suggest that the danger of ayahuasca and other sacred plant medicines has more to do with its liberating effect on people - who often change their lives in ways that are more spiritual, less material and decidedly counter to supporting economic interests of the dominant culture. I have had many conversations with indigenous people about how different our approach to healing is here in the north and they often find it funny and quite irrational that we outlaw healing plants and legalize harmful chemicals to heal people!

There are other marked differences in social systems that are characteristic of “healer” cultures. In systems of justice, for example, we are likely to see less punishment (especially for non-violent offenses) and more of an effort to correct behavior. In tribal communities, every person is valued and relied upon to sustain the tribe. If someone has engaged in wrong-doing, the shaman and other influential members of the tribe will typically attempt to restore the person to good standing through remediation and reintegrating them into the

community through a process of ritual and dialogue.

Education is also approached very differently in a healer culture. Whereas youth in our “Jailer” society are pressured to conform and perform well - within the framework of a standardized curriculum to prepare them for “success” (“stupidification for domestication” as one educator describes it) - in healer societies, the goal of education is to help a young person discover their own authentic purpose. There is often an emphasis on experiential learning, as part of the tribe a young person is active in many tasks of daily living. Children and adults alike are encouraged to seek visions, attend to dreams and cultivate their intuition so as to receive guidance from spirits and animal beings. There are ceremonies and initiations to facilitate life transitions and to guide young people in their life’s journey. In this encouragement, people are supported to cultivate both the mammalian/emotional brain and the neo-cortex, allowing for a full-range of input in grappling with decisions and significant life choices.

The economic system of many tribal cultures is a gift economy, where people are likely to share resources and barter for goods. Whenever I visit my indigenous friends outside of the cities and jungle towns, I bring items that are valued in trade - things like tee shirts, fishing hooks and battery-operated devices. Unlike transactions in a competitive, “what’s in it for me” business-oriented economy, transactions in a gift economy are comparatively relaxed and fun, encouraging a “win-win” outcome. Naturally, in larger towns and cities, there is most definitely a shift toward capitalist business values resulting in high-pressure sales pitches from artisans and locals selling goods on the street.

Of course, we don’t have to go to the Amazon jungle to observe healer relationships. In our culture, we are likely to find healer relationships in co-ops, community-operated services, holistic health practices, restorative justice programs, alternative education, intentional communities, etc. - and the trend is growing. There is increasing interest in transforming our society from a “Jailer” culture where power, resource and privilege are concentrated and controlled by the wealthiest individuals and corporations, toward a “Healer” society that is more cooperative, just and dedicated to co-creating a world that works for everybody. For that change to occur, we need to foster healer relationships in a jailer culture - replacing an ethos of greed and self-interest with a passion and devotion to love and justice for all people.

### Healing Self and Society in the Land of Jailers

If we are to liberate ourselves and each other from psychological and social systems of oppression, we begin by raising consciousness of the ways in which we have been conditioned by our jailers to submit our freedom for the illusion of security and safety. Jailers gain much of their power by exploiting our fears, so we must have the courage to take on the project of freedom. To

be free is to have and to exercise choice. One of the first challenges, going back to the triune brain, is to get beyond our reptilian brain in responding to life. Once we are aware that much of our behavior is reactive to threats and manipulations, we can work to bring consciousness and choice to our actions. Taking time for reflection, pausing before we act off of impulse, becoming mindful of our patterns of behavior all serve to raise awareness and empower us to respond, rather than react, to circumstances. It does take time to break long standing habits that have been shaped by Jailer influences, so even if we do fall back into these patterns, it can be useful to review our reactions and then challenge ourselves to think about how we might have handled things differently if we were able to respond with love instead of fear or aggression. Practice is necessary if we are to consistently engage our higher brains in decision making. We can ask ourselves - "how might I choose or behave differently if I did not feel threatened, if I could come from love instead of fear?" This is how we start to become free of the psychological control of "Jailers." Viktor Frankl, a man who survived the Nazi concentration camps, reminds us that sometimes the only freedom we may have in a situation is the freedom to choose our attitude. Exercise your freedom!

As for creating healing relationships with others, consider this: every relationship that you have, personally or socially, is a co-creation - and you can choose how you play your own part in it regardless of how others play their part. The "predator and prey" relationships that thrive in our society are fueled by greed and the desire for control. You may be rewarded with acquisition, but is that truly of significance? The shaman's invitation to join "The World of the Creators" is to consider your deepest calling to life. Beyond domestication, beyond conditioning, beyond whatever story you carry from the past; you can be the creator of a life of significance and limitless possibilities to serve the world. Find others who are willing to be on your "Dream Team" - those who will encourage and challenge you to embrace the freedom you deserve to create your highest vision of a good life. A Lakota storyteller once told me this - "People suffer because they get trapped in a story. The job of a healer is to remind people that they are the storytellers of their life and not the story."

May the stories we tell serve to heal and bless this world.

### Part 3: Upstate New York Prison History

#### American Studies/Prison Studies

by June Licence

The American Studies Department at the State University of New York at Buffalo (UB) offered its M.A. Degree Program to men imprisoned in the Auburn and Wende New York State Correctional Facilities from 1980-1988. At the time, American Studies at U.B. was comprised of Native American Studies, Puerto Rican Studies, Women's Studies and U.S. Studies.

Barry White was one of the founders of UB's Native American Studies and American Studies Programs in the late 1960's. He died in January of 2011. In a memorial service celebrating his life, I reflected on his involvement with our graduate program at Auburn.

One evening Barry went to Auburn prison with me to speak about Native American history. He began with this story: "It was Sunday, September 12th, 1971. I was standing on a road, defending Native American sovereignty with the Onondaga Nation of Indians. That morning we decided that it would be important to gather together all of the people from around the Six Nations to defend this road (Highway 81) - The State of New York wanted to take a little bit of land from the Onondaga Nation and the Onondaga Nation wasn't about to allow it. They called on Six Nations people, so yours truly went over there and spent six weeks on that road.

We were toward the end of that six-week period on that fateful Sunday in 1971. We gathered, we burned tobacco, we asked the Creator to provide guidance and strength to all the people on that road because we were being confronted with state troopers and county sheriffs and we were about ready to lay our lives on the line on Highway 81. No one was afraid. In fact, there was so much spiritual unity on that road, there was a force...that was moving us... and we knew the State wasn't going to take the road from us.

The next morning we went up on the road and waited - Well, come on, let's have at it! We were ready; they weren't there. There wasn't a single state trooper in sight. There was not one officer of the law near us. The day passed. Then we found out what had happened. They had all been called to Attica and we thought about the prison "riot" - so many people, gone so fast.

A few weeks later the State of New York withdrew its need to expand its road; The Onondaga Nation basically made its point. A short time later, when I was sitting with Oren Lyons, Onondaga diplomat and faith keeper, we talked about the significance of the highway and the uprising/massacre at Attica. He said something that stuck in my mind - those men who went to the spirit world, those men went in our place.

I agreed with Oren Lyons, those people indeed did do something for me and in turn I wanted to give back to their spirit and to my people.

And that is why I'm here tonight - to acknowledge your cause and great loss and in some small way to repay your sacrifice that allowed us and our struggle to survive."

In the absolute silence that followed, we all understood more profoundly what education can mean: keeping alive histories (personal and communal) often buried, a respectful recognition of the struggles of others, a comprehension of the complex connections entwining us all and a belief that knowledge can help us contribute to a better world with humility (based on how much we have yet to learn and how much we may never know).

The American Studies graduate program was sometimes described as "go somewhere else, do something useful." In other words, get some different perspective on the world and provide whatever helpful service your talents allow. Share your work with those people who have shared their lives, knowledge and histories with you.

When Bill Sims, a "long-termer" at Auburn prison, contacted our department in 1979 to see if we were aware of any educational programs available to men in prison who had completed a baccalaureate degree but still had long, if not lifetime, sentences ahead of them, our Director of Graduate Studies and I explored whether we might offer an introductory graduate class, even if only for one person (Sims). Thus began an eight-year saga: moving from a once-a-month several-hour class to weekly evening classes at Auburn; from one to four to eight and more students simultaneously; and from Auburn Correctional Facility (near Syracuse) to Wende Correctional Facility (near Buffalo).

The graduation ceremony at Auburn (always known as "the education/programs prison") honored 25-30 graduates in the presence of their families along with Auburn and UB staffers. Robert Creeley from UB English Department and an influential American poet of the 20th century gave the keynote address. The granting of degrees was presided over by UB's Dean of Graduate Studies to the cap-and-gowned graduates, with a reception for families.

In time, the 2-3 hour each way drive from Buffalo to Auburn led to our transferring the program to Wende. Wende, which was in transition status from a county facility to a maximum-security state facility, was housing men even as construction was being completed. It was an institution with no history, culture of education, programs or much else. We were granted an office inside the facility where we housed a library of donated books and a computer (no online capability). It was staffed by two of our Auburn graduates who served as mentors for new students.

As conflicts between Wende and U.B. increased, we tried to keep students from bearing the brunt of it all. Remembering a local pre-release program developed by DeWitt Lee decades before called BRIDGE, we reached out to the communities, often faith communities, for volunteer liaisons for each student. They were to provide whatever resources they could to help smooth the way and generally to be supportive. We connected with Western New York United

Churches of Christ (UCC), which had developed a program called Good Investments for Tomorrow (GIFT). This program offered ways of welcoming those who had been isolated in institutions, primarily mental institutions and prisons, back into their/our communities.

All of our faculty and staff at the university worked on a volunteer and above-load basis, although at some point we were granted teaching and research assistant positions for our on-campus graduate students to work in the program. Our grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to provide some foundational support for the program received the highest score by a peer review panel but funding was denied at the “higher,” more political level.

The proposal to offer a Ph.D. degree in American Studies to University at Buffalo Students (that our department had been pursuing for 14 years), worked its way through the long, labyrinthine paths of the State University (SUNY) as well as the State Education (SED) Systems. Meanwhile, The Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) sought state help with their increasingly rasy relationship with UB. Meetings at SED on both matters were scheduled simultaneously. This left our Department Chair able to attend only one meeting, the Ph.D. proposal meeting. American Studies did get approval to offer the Ph.D. degree thereafter. DOCS, however, denied access to our prison program.

Thinking again of Barry White’s words about the connections between all of us in our work for a more fair, just, caring and compassionate world - I thank those, inside and out, then and now, who help expand educational opportunities, along with the broader struggles for justice, regardless of the immediate cost to themselves.

## **Grhastha: A Householder in a Prison Hospitality House**

*By Chris Barbera*

The following is a story of living in an intentional community which provided hospitality to families of prison inmates...

2003: This pyramid of ego Imani and prophet libidinal emptiness of sunyata body opens the New Year. I was within the house and now I had a house to live in. Solomon's temple. Now I am a householder, Grhastha; the house of the city of nine gates, the house of the city of my birth, the temple erected within thyself and now thy city and now the physical structure of San Damiano. The 4 stages of life I was passing thru, not necessarily in order, had passed thru, in greater or lesser degrees, I now am passing thru; Grhastha, the householder. "Who am I, Oh Lord God, and what is my house, that thou has taken me this far?"

My Brahmacharya ecclesiastical time, season, time of youth and study had given way to Grhastha, the householder. I am now set, not wandering, a man, not a mystic. This household would be framed by Catholics (in name, Catholic Workers) and funded by Catholics, but in substance would be African-American. In time, this communal vibe and enlightened self respect and responsibility - this enlightened anarchy - would, like a Guernica Bull, come into "conflict" with a Catholic hierarchical ministry insistent upon a paradigm of worldly splendor and empire and "charity."

Whereas 2002 transferred from the year of the Snake to the Horse; from single minded movement within a visionary community shedding into a monastic community of polis, mind and fasting, the church and state; the Year of the Horse ran with a law of love and non-violent blessing into a paradigm of Grhastha pyramid of communal householder - God's prison house.

I am moving from a freedom of movement to the responsibility of a house, from mind and prayer and movement to body and being and care taking of thy brother's keeper, predominantly African-American women. I am moving from "the remains of sacrifice" as an institutional movement, from a place of solitude where confession becomes God and God becomes publicly shared in the forum, from a place of the discipline of religion and jails to community and a life of service.

What had begun during Christmas week 2002 - the complete reordering of the house - continued now. The spirit of the rigid Catholic nun, cold, was transformed by Hip-Hop & R&B, communal cooking pots and sharing of responsibility of work - no dishwasher, manual labor. Segregation of staff and guest was overturned, became family, unconditional love, acceptance. The kitchen became used for eating and cooking and a place for "guests" to hang out. The house became a home. Respect for home replaced rules and regulations. Unconditional acceptance became neighbor as self, became love of house and home. Organization of resources began: papers in the office, food in the kitchen. With the knowledge that environment and habits of good behavior

do not perfect a person but help to foster beginnings of a search toward higher self; the house was recast into community.

And so initially, I awaited the angels and strangers.

These first few weeks were a time of radical adjustment: adjustment from illusion to reality; adjustment from two very different vocations and adjustment to a combination of strict time schedules and solitude. Living in this very big house, alone and knowing that I could not leave because I had promised to stay for times, time and half a time; knowing that I had to adjust to a new surrounding in order to understand it; knowing that work and advocacy required this experience; knowing that this fire by baptism required the patience not to run, not to squeak but to stay and endure - these.

Every morning I wake early and prepare coffee, burn incense, print schedules for the daily drives to the prisons and pickups at the airport, train and bus stations - who to pick up and who to drop off. I am responsible for an exact schedule and also the well being of people visiting loved ones in prison. I need to schedule drivers and volunteers and what chores need be done. I am living there, so Catholic hierarchy is irrelevant. Decisions need to be made by me, since I am living and working and enduring in spirit with the prisoners. Decisions by chairpersons and administrators are irrelevant since they do not see and therefore cannot believe. This will become a struggle between people and powers that be.

Sister K, the chairperson of the "house," had given me her blessing to do as I saw fit in order to fully utilize the house in its Christ potential.

On Friday January 3rd, I fast for the day. In the late afternoon, love enters the door in the form of two strangers, angels, two Ethiopians in search of Vive La Casa, the refugee home next door. They set their bags in the house. I offer them food and we break bread together, Helen and Gitnet. Prayers are offered in Amharic. We walk next door. There is no room for them, they stay with us. That night, the first Friday of the month, the Catholic Workers have their mass. A Franciscan friar spoke of a retreat for the homeless. A vision arises. I offer a prayer for "the daughters of Ethiopia."

Helen leaves for asylum in Canada on January 8th. For 5 days, I felt divine love and love for a woman. I kissed her hand, her cheek. Within 5 days I experienced "on earth as it is in heaven" in the context of this "black and comely" Rose of Sharon.

I am sad but I continue work. There are women to pick up at prison. I listen to their pain of separation, the abuse, the oppression. I listen to these lamentations of the Babylonian captivity.

I take long lonesome rides out to Attica State Correctional Facility.

There is a feeling of tightness deep in my gut as I approach the castle, the prison.

There are looks of pain in the eyes of the guards.

The looks of joy in the women visiting, the pain, the struggle, the strength, the patient endurance of women held captive, abused but with a faith beyond measure. These women are the strongest people within the prison-industrial complex.

Everyday I awake before dawn. The ritual of schedules – drivers and pick-ups - is becoming easier. A liturgy of hours according to prisons and airport arrivals, family reunion visits of inmates and spouses, slavery days revisited in the plantation system prison industrial-complex.

Most women visiting prison inmates in upstate New York come from about a 5 zip code area of the poorest sections of New York City – mostly Harlem and the Bronx; loved ones sold up the river to the upstate facilities.

This entire time I am truly learning humility and patience from women who endure separation with such quiet strength and the dignity of turning the other cheek to the oppressions done beneath the sun within God's prison house and the Babylonian captivity of America.

This entire time, the house is becoming in reality a home. When people, "guests" within the House of David, stay with us, we see them as if they were angels. We eat together and we eat well. Rita and I become one. We are co-workers. She is an African-American woman with a big heart and a hospitable spirit. As I am organizing, driving and administrating on behalf of the house and the people, she is cooking down home meals and speaking words of comfort to the people. She takes care of the hearth, the food, the laughter. She cooks and cleans. She cares for the family as a mother hen her children; the seeds of organic unity, of family. Volunteers radiate out from us as one.

On January 16th, I attend 3 meetings; one for the House with the Chairperson and Catholic Workers and two for activities I had set to the side in light of my present vocation. I still maintain a faint presence in the communities I helped to edify. When I begin something, I give the entirety of my being unto it.

...Soul of a convict.

January 18th witnesses a large anti-war rally in which the word "revolution" is used.

On January 19th, Gitnet returns with an Ethiopian family from Dallas, Texas; establishment of the Ethiopian Underground Railroad – the giving of strength of mind to refugees who fear and are fleeing - give in exchange for their fear, drive them to the bus station, set them free.

To love completely and then to let go, to willingly let thy heart be split like the breaking of bread; to feel no remorse, no fear, no regret, no loss, no sadness only love and the strength to endure.

Everyday, women are going out to the prisons to visit the ones they love. Everyday, a part of me goes with them, picks them up, drops them off.

On January 23rd, I go to Potiphar's house to collect grain. At night I go to a Catholic Jesuit College to pose a riddle to a leader within Pax Christi.

Liturgy of the hours of convict soul - New York City women and African women - prayers and peace - long rides across the land to be met by guards and barbed wire - to not be constricted, to undue the heavy burden.

Organic unity is forming; tasks are beginning to be filled: drivers, cooks, cleaners, office workers, maintenance workers - the vision becoming reality, vision of the body of Christ where some are the eye, the foot, the heart. Some begin to pray on certain days, some begin to drive on certain days, some to cook on certain days, some clean on certain days. At the core, Rita and I do a little of each, at the core, organic anarchic unity in Christ, service.

Daily, sheets are washed, food is cooked, people are driven - compassion is given. Each chore is an act of love, service.

Prayers for the imprisoned...

January 28th explodes with the force up pent up karma, busting thru the solitude, busting thru the quietness, the prayers for peace, the prayers for a God of love like fire split the sky and omniscience itself, raw energy

Cold

Fire

Howls screech

Coyote

Mind force passion, direct vision

Drums, howls, screams

We protest outside the doors of the military recruiters. 3 brave souls commit civil disobedience. Outside we circle like vultures, circling our prey, the United States military.

We howl like Lakota warriors, war whoop.

We circle Custer.

We beat our drums, we are crowded outside the doors of the plantation master - our faces are blood red voodoo - the U.S military whelps like the cut balls of a lame and dying dog!

Peace

Prayers of non-violence

On January 29th, I speak to African-American police forum. I make peace.

Sometime between January 29th and February 1st, the Horse transforms. On the 1st, I ask Rita if the New Year will bring the sheep or the goat. She says, "The Ram of Abraham."

February is African-American month.

On the first, the space shuttle explodes, I shall “walk humbly before the Lord.”

On the first, Bill flies to Iraq as part of a Pax Christi delegation - spirit money given, prayers are offered.

On the first, the breaking...

On the morning of February 2nd, Rita and I speak of “loaves and fishes.” Later that day, we get a call from Vive, the refugee home, can we accept two boys from El Salvador, we do not want to put them in a shelter, there is no room here. “Yes” I say. Can we accept a man from Turkey, there is no room here today, “yes.” A man and a husband and wife come also, from Russia. Can we accept a family from Pakistan, “yes,” several people from Pakistan come... The floodgates have opened, the house is filled to capacity, Rita is scrambling to prepare enough food, I tear, “do we have enough food?” She and I are the last to eat, after serving the house. I clear the room of Catholic idols, leave it open so that the Muslims can pray to the east. This is my Christian service. This begins the open dialogue and working relationship between the House of Hospitality and Vive, the refugee home.

This also begins the schism between the house and the powers that be.

What had lain dormant broke through, a whiff of freedom, not one or a few people to put up, but a household. I had acted out of line with the system but in line with Christ compassion. I had sacrificed the “ministry” in order to enlarge vision to all peoples - the spirit of hospitality. Love became the abiding principle and the force which now ruled this house, dominated the actions of the people of the house, those who were in the house.

The spark of this change began with the Ethiopian blessing followed by the breaking of bread - now we were family, a world community of refugees and prisoners.

Joshua had taken up Gerizim and Ebal.

The Arc of the Covenant was now established in the house in the form of service. For the next four weeks, I existed on pure ether; I encompass and bless a multitude.

I had “prearranged” a meeting with my mother early morning February 3rd.

Sometime within the next few days, two African men come, Ali and Benjamin. Ali is from Somalia and Benny from Ethiopia or Eritrea or Africa. They sleep on the floor of the emptied room of idols.

Immediately we break bread. The nightly blessing and prayer and breaking of bread become ritual, as does cooking together as a family, cleaning together. One chops onions as another grinds garlic. A common pot is stirred; we all partake of one body. Peace is attained as all personalities assume one another

- each unique, one body of many parts. We begin to vibe together; feel for one another's pain and joy. The African brothers ride out to Attica with me to pick up a friend visiting prison - they feel the oppressive spirit as guards leave the prison gates with the look of pain; tortured souls in their eyes.

The two boys from El Salvador go back to Vive, the refugee home next door. The responsibility for them belongs to Vive yet their family had entrusted them with us. We give them back with much resistance from Rita; she believes in personal responsibility. When the mother of the boys calls, Maria and I walk next door to find them, we cannot. We demand they be found. After much searching and help from Francisco and other staff members, we discover that a well-respected man of Vive had taken them under his care. The need for precise communication, especially when it involves the well being of children, is recognized. This incident reaffirms a need for a marriage of personal responsibility for people within an organizational structure. The working relationship between Vive and the Hospitality House, just baptized within the week, endures. The boys return to their family in Canada within 3 days. Communication is strengthened between the two houses after this incident. I go daily and speak with various administrators and volunteers. The mission of Vive, the laws of customs and international laws are clarified for me. I offer to be at one with the people; as one with refugees, the chain of command, he who is least is greatest.

The schism between the House and the powers that be (the board and the Catholic Workers) is deepened as meetings are held about the House without knowledge of the people of the House. The powers that be (the board and the Catholic Workers) also have meetings with representatives from Vive without our knowledge. Colonialism is decision making about a person or people from the outside, without asking the people themselves what is needed, excluding a person from decisions concerning his or her own destiny.

Francisco asks to spend a night at the House with his wife to be. He says he will "not be with her, because it is that time of the month for her."

On the first Friday, a Hare Krishna Catholic cult sips wine in the house but not of thy blessing, rather, according to the wandering of thy own mind - one half of Rita and I partake - Gerizim and Ebal - perfect love casts out all fear and encompasses a multitude. The refugees went next door to the refugee home, protected by His Majesty.

The next night, the refugees are again asked to leave for a few hours. My heart is split in two. I am Nehemiah... "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we built the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews." (Ne. 3:33) I am fighting off attacks in the psychic mind of thine oppressors while building up thine kingdom come in truth - power of the living God.

In the afternoon, "we three" travel to the church of the priest of the Catholic Workers, an African-American congregation. We bless entire congregations.

We direct in thine mind empires of spirit; that needs blessing, that needs direction, that needs to be a parcel of a direction of a movement... "Line upon line and precept upon precept," we bless in multitudes of laws, judges are established.

At night, we break bread with "the lost boys of Sudan." These men had crossed the deserts of Sudan in search of asylum, traveling to the borders of Ethiopia, coming to America after passing thru Egypt.

They speak -

Deep within the mind, the reality of God,

The concept of community, dialogue, truth, reality - the confirmation of the covenant...

As we break bread, we are all born at that moment, all are that old - We have reached divine equilibrium.

The next morning, Rita goes forth with "the chairmen of the board" to heal the Hare Krishna Catholic Church. I stay with the refugees. "Tyger Tyger burning bright."

We advocate and delegate authority; Joshua begat Moses.

During the week, we provide food for the family, gel close together. We travel to Potiphar's house to retrieve caskets full of corn. The first fruits are given to Vive, the refugee home. During Eidul-Adha, the Islamic feast of sacrifice, young strong boys bring a casket of corn and a bushel of apples. We are upon the plane of gift and sacrifice. We say our Islamic prayers.

Time and teaching within the African community, family of humanity. Encompass whole dimensions of reality, consider and negotiate with ancestors and the spirit within the present moment, the Lord of Hosts considers the living and the dead, gives life as a blessing. The God of thy Father's Father's Father. Love truth is the binding force of creation, created in thy image. We are the family of God first and the family of humanity; God is the community and family.

We witness one another's sacrifice. Each shares the food of another. There are tears of joy each night and I sleep well rested each night. Each morning I awake early. I am picking people up in the bus station in the pre-dawn hours and bringing them within the house. At the bus station, I walk with a sign that reads "Hope Hospitality House." Some see me wearing socks on my hands as gloves, walking as a poor man. I am taking direct responsibility for each person that walks within the doors, nay, each person I meet and speak with. A bond of love is extended unconditionally at once. "The kingdom of God is at Hand."

The Catholic Workers are having meetings about the direction of the House. They own the paper to the deed, they are preparing for the crucifixion.

Constantly I am in prayer, balancing the psychic struggle of the people and the powers that be. Constantly I am working, accepting people into the house, caretaking of the soul, making schedules, doing the necessary managerial administration of a house, providing food, listening to the pains, allowing the family to celebrate though I am always working. Struggle and the family becomes my joy.

The oppression of the powers that be continues; control of situations, peoples, domination of thought, ideology, opiate of the masses; making others work to build up kingdom of self interest rather than selfless Kingdom of God; making others serve rather than serving others - this was the fundamental struggle between the House and the powers that be. If it was for me only, I would have walked away, but David fought on behalf those who sought refuge in him, the widow and orphan.

St. Valentine ministered to prisoners.

On February 15th, I attend a Peace rally in the park. I bring one of the caskets of corn we retrieved from Potiphar's house, which was blessed by the Sheik. I present it as a living sacrifice to the people. I shout out to them that "There are still a few ears of corn left, there are still a few ears of corn left, this corn has been blessed by Leonard Peltier and by the daughters of Ethiopia!" This is the last word of the rally.

Women from New York City, Missouri, Connecticut and a myriad of places have and are passing thru. Each woman is provided for, prayed for and blessed, a prayer for prisoners daily.

Two Argentinean women from the refugee home come to me with a request, can I drive them out to Batavia to visit the town prison and the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) Prison. I drive them out there. I escort the first family through the gates and am asked to leave by the government forces. I sit outside the gates with the other family that has come with us to visit the city jail. A deep sinking feeling hits my gut, "have I just delivered this refugee unknowingly to the post 9/11 government, have I just betrayed Christ?" A fear I never felt before. When we are allowed back onto the federal prison grounds, she walks out with her son, joy, a lightness returns to my heart and I quickly get them in the car and drive away. This incident confirms my solidarity with prisoners and marries the suffering of the prisoner with the refugee; those locked away and those without a home.

On February 22nd, a homeless family comes to the house to stay with us for a week. Rita and I, the House, drive a van full of African-American women to the prisons. The vibe is deep. We deliver the soul. On the ride home, the spirit of division, the Catholic monopoly, deceives us with its Babylonian wizardry - we forget to pick up people on the way back. We return and make peace, drive them back to the bus station, speaking of city and country, New York City and milk cows, northern and southern, Malcolm X and Dr. King. That same night, a great feast with a myriad of hands cooking, cleaning, eat-

ing and working together. This day, the families of prisoners, refugees and homeless all break bread together.

I awake at 4:30a.m. as a young boy to be man goes to sleep. I realize that the House never sleeps. I remember that Pharaoh made 6 years into 12 by combining night and day.

I have learned to make peace with the tortured souls in the prison, the guards. I have not been given the chance to make peace with the Catholics because I am constantly working upon the spiritual plane and on behalf of the emotional and physical well-being of my people. As I build up the edifice, the House, which is the people, I resist not evil yet resist I do. We are establishing principles of unconditional love and acceptance, judging wisdom from this foundation and extending merciful compassion with the strength of salt. Each night is a blessing and breaking of bread, a feast of sacrifice. The house is well ordered and proportioned. Each room is accounted for, provided for. Each person has a private room but the house remains public. Upstairs, the prayer room includes Bibles, Vedas, Korans - spiritual literature - as well as icons (remnants of the Catholics).

On Sunday February 23rd, the Catholic bishop attends a blessing ceremony at the financial sponsor of the hospitality house where I stay -money, name and Catholics. At the same time, Farrakhan addresses the nation concerning the impending war. I bless the bishop.

I am reading Martin Luther's essay on the Babylonian church.

On Monday, February 24th, I speak on a college radio show about the House.

During this entire week, each morning, the refugees who have been staying with us since the beginning of the month, as others came and went, begin to depart for Canada. Each morning we tear a part of ourselves away, set them free.

The house empties itself out. We are beginning to take a deep breath and prepare for a new way. We have been baptized in fire and inundated into a life of service. Now as things begin to slow themselves, we will have an opportunity to assess and codify.

On February 27th, I attend a forum on public schools. I implant within them the seed of liberation; to advocate against the establishment of a permanently poor and uneducated underclass.

On March 1st, I attend a local peace community annual meeting at an urban farm community. I relate the genesis of the July fast in front of the military recruiters which spiritually emboldened a December 10th peace vigil and a January 28th rally. I also speak about the April Prison Pilgrimage.

On March 2nd, after arriving home with Sonia, a Jamaican woman whose husband is in prison, I am asked to come downstairs for "a meeting." The board is there. Like a premeditated military operation, I am asked to leave. I say

only, “I tried to bring love and hospitality to this house.”

I scramble and quickly collect my few possessions, mostly notebooks, give a Lion of Judah shirt to Sonia, that she may give to the right person at the right time, leave a white cloth given to me by a black Alabama boy and a bottle of red wine given to me by Catholic nuns and out the door I go.

**Vanprastha: A Forest Dwellers Memory  
of the 2002 New York State Interfaith Prison Pilgrimage**

*By Chris Barbera*

During this pilgrimage, we attempted to witness at every prison in upstate New York: from the shores of Lake Erie to the capital in Albany, south of the Adirondacks and north of New York City and the Hudson River. And so we drove to within a mile of each facility and walked the rest of the way.

Some thoughts within and about the prison system...

“All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born, the other the mass of people... The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class, the rich and the well born, a distinct permanent share in the government.”

Alexander Hamilton

Hamilton set up the banking of the nation, the capitalistic impulse to profit. That this nation became rich off of slave labor is rarely discussed and has never been redeemed. A nation birthed upon bloodshed washed in bloodshed in an eye for an eye bloody civil war was fought not quite freeing the nation of its burdened past, even the bloodshed of the martyrs, rich soaked as ordained in scripture, has yet to free the nation. Still we have Kings and Queens proclaiming “mountaintop” speeches and promised lands. Milk and honey are natural substances owing nothing to greed or conquest.

“In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this; you must first enable the government to control the governed.”

James Madison

And thus, the Pharaoh line deep seeded in the masonry maintains a deceptive hold over the populace by means of snake charmers and economic Babel. The master and slave mentality which Christ liberates in Luke 4:18, proclaiming release of the captives, just as Gandhi claimed release to the bondage of oppressor mentality by means of the purification of caste, becomes a divine equality of “each according to his needs.”

The nature of needs need be established as primary importance - “Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Life, the right of each in possession of destiny, a government “of, for and by the people” - Liberty is freedom - Freedom is necessity. Happiness is united as life, a right to liberty.

We walked the rest of the way...

Peace walk - legs are the prayer...

April 7 – We begin the Prison Pilgrimage in the nighttime at St. Hyacinth. Hyacinth flower David Kazynski speaks - family, love, loyalty, justice.

April 8 – In the gray warm spring morning, we walk to Lakeview Correctional Facility along a wooded road.

We arrive in Buffalo, 4 walkers walk past the county jail into the circle by the square, greeted by many - speech by the stone, speech by the lions – prayer, breaking bread – and then a walk to St. Mark and St. Paul before moving on to Alden and then to Wende Correctional Facility. Free the mind of the oppressor. Prison guards are men. Need for new jobs.

Nighttime - Sister R spoke of Night Hawk, an Indian in a prison pickup truck.

Now restorative justice

Not adversarial

Accountability

Listen, heal both the victim and the offender - restore both sides of fence

Responsibility

Restorative justice restores people and society to completeness.

Punishment extracts a person, estranged, who then falls, falls further by punishment, for now they bear the burden.

Those who operate the system - poverty and waste.

April 9 - We wake in a church, robins sing, spring. We walk to Orleans and then Albion across the tracks, lonely drummer on the tracks, at the crossroads. In Batavia, we walk to the Immigration and Naturalization Services Detention Center, bow in prayer, pray a bow, put prayers to the guards and prisoners, silence, drum and rattle in rhythm, mind in prayer walk rhythm of prison, prison walkers. To the Zen center, lake and woods, vegetables, Bodhidharma, wisdom and law, meditation is sitting or walking, we sit and eat, walk and pray, meditation to “clean conditions and junk in the mind” empty mind and body one with walking, praying, sitting, sleeping.

The winds blow strong, we walk to Attica. The name itself brings oppression, violence, murder. The prison is a medieval castle. We pray and bow, beat the hand drum, rain is gentle, horses are wild. We bless, we walk to Wyoming, past the pine trees and cornfields.

Last night, Dennis Witman and Doug Call spoke of how restorative justice gives victims the opportunity for redemption and connection to community and thus, Genesee County has fewer prisoners because of the success of restorative justice.

Tonight, the voices of forgotten victims of Attica speak - the prison guards taken hostage. There is the pain of suppressed betrayal and a need for honest communication without judgment, with understanding. America, the state, never wants to admit wrongdoing, becomes impervious and therefore unnatural and arrogant and endowed with worldly wealth and power like Satan in the desert.

April 10 - 36 and Dutch Street Road, we hurry to bless the prison guards - I forgot the bag, a crack in the van, core group divided, we enter Rochester.

I travel back south to pick up bag by the side of the road, glory to God; I see an eagle - now on the road to the Quaker house - last night at the Central Presbyterian, central organization.

Karthic, Hindu sun god, Buddhist drum - we walk from AME Zion after lunch at Quakers meeting house, the friends, Cephes prison ministry and personal testimonials.

Sun warm. Walk Gandhi but not solemn, bird sing, across the river, banging Buddhist Zen drums and an Indian rattle, rhythm of justice.

Now we wait for our ride to Syracuse.

Chuck says, "Let's see if we can hit 100." We go by speed and instinct. We see the marchers, I jump out of the car, join the march with rattle. Into St. Lucy's. A night of testimonial, reintegration services, unite the community. After a day separated - Roz and Mike away, I running south to see eagle, Chuck with cracked van - the core walkers are all here, together, at the fire in a Franciscan retreat center, the stars, woods, peace.

Some of the walkers over time, the people: Doug from the children's counseling center and sleeping Jack in the beginning; the bearded woodsman: Jackie in Niagara Square and Jackie and I praying at Groveland after and Fred who drove us all around: the immigration expert at the INS and the seminary student from the Zen center.

April 11 - Morning, Mount Alverna, night of rest and fire, a pot of oatmeal. Slow morning ride along the Finger Lakes. Walk into Auburn to Calvary Church. Rattle and drum and fire and peace - prison and Harriet Tubman Park - lunch with Celtic salt and spring water. Death penalty speech, old black woman singing "Ain't no dog gonna hold me down." Now we go on to Five Points Solitary Confinement Facility. Long road toxic wastes Seneca army dump now Five Points Prison; toxic site also poisons low income housing on the road. Open space, long barbed wire, toxic waste prison, we have three drummers. Three women join us at three bears courthouses in Ovid? Romulus? Finger Lakes? We walk long pine tree road to Willard, pilgrims on one side, I on other side of street, standing in front of guard, I drop to knee and pray, a moment, then I join the group. At night, we are listening to an academic analysis of Rockefeller drug laws and solitary confinement. Had dinner at the Quaker House - Franciscan prayer - "preach the gospel always and if necessary use words," church bells ring, pine needles on hemp post.

April 12 - Elmira - We walk and form a circle around a tree across from a city prison - hang a butterfly kite - prayers of peace. Dravidian dreadlock woman - Mrs. Morales and Chuck beat drums - church leaders accompany. We walk to South Port. "Every valley shall be exalted." First blockade accepts our peace, we walk thru. Second blockade rejects peace. I empty my shoe of dirt. Now

we ride the hills south of Finger Lakes unto Ithaca. Ithaca beans and news conference with 4 walkers I, Mrs. Morales, Chuck, Mary - Mike and Roz are gone. Solidify vision. Walkers have come and gone - many streams of walkers. We go to Cayuga. Long walk up the hill...

Now back in Ithaca, dinner and discussion. We did not go to Pharsalia, the empty ghost.

There is peace in the world.

Nighttime in Ithaca, the waterfalls near the Quaker house - everything is organic - statewide organizing by local communities. We, the walkers, plan yet fit into the plans of local communities. Walkers themselves enlarge the spirit by diffusion of personal power, unity, we move as one body, one mind.

Kristin,

I can't begin to explain the wonder and power of God or the love I have for you. I think so often of you.

At the moment, I am in Ithaca. We are receiving hospitality at the friends meeting house, the Quakers. There are 6 core members of the prison pilgrimage, 6 members who have been committed to completing, in and out, the 10 day journey. At the moment, it is Friday, day 6. The men have been separated from the women.

Divine wisdom, peace in action, we are creating, sowing seeds of understanding. Prisons are constrictive of the human spirit, like the plantation system of the deep long forgotten south.

I love you. I see you, I feel you. I am becoming stronger, more sure of the power of God, more loving, more convicted of and by the truth. I wish we could be together.

April 13 - Early gray sunrise morning, waterfalls of Ithaca - breakfast at the U.C.C. Church, round table discussion. Slow start, long ride to Oneida, Mohawk, we pass the Onondaga Territories Central State fire, keep the faith, the wind, "meeting at the council" we arrive into Rome, families of prisoners, panel discussions, beautiful teen group performs - "fine country gal."

Rain all day and we go to Oneida and Mohawk and Walsh was "inside." Graveyard greets us. Five of us walk first time without banner. We walk like 5 nations Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk scream, chant and drum rattle "free the people." "We sanctified this place." We go on to Midstate and Marcy, first time without a rattle, without banner - I beating the drum, 7 rhythm beats - first night without a panel discussion. Time for rest, washing cloths, showers, here at Felician sisters somewhat middle class convent. The women and men religious are even playing dice games. Rainy wet night.

April 14 - Morning. Arrive at St. Francis de Sales - world church - large Vietnamese community - Franciscans - Sudanese, a Haitian baby, a baptism.

I spoke of the prison walk - "My feet is tired but my soul is free." Sangha, Satyagraha, Jerusalem. Now we ride to Cocksackie - a calm, cool, brown green spring valley. Mrs. Morales, mamma love, is gone home. Roz is gone. Dana is here with us.

Turtle walk with the elders to Cocksackie, pebble drop rattle. Circle and pray. Meet oppression with love. Walk down God's green earth. Witness at Greene Correctional Facility; a patch of green earth by the side of the road. We nailed an Indian wail deep slow Negro spiritual blues Zen chant.

On the road to the Bruderhof community of Woodcrest - Bruderhof, place of brothers, German based Anabaptist Protestant reformation Eberhard Arnold Christian Community. Work and Pray. A church of brothers, brothers.

April 15 - We descend down the hill, along the river, into Albany - Church and State - "Bring the revolution!" - debriefing meeting, assignments and meeting times - circle the capital - Father Young - now to dinner and families.

Chuck hit it big \$3000 in an Irish bar - last sign - family testimonials at night - now in a hotel administered by the formerly incarcerated.

April 16 - At the capital - legislative visits.

**From Nonviolence to Social Justice:  
Women Respond to Attica**

*By June License*

This is a Northeastern, New York State, Niagara Frontier story, because Attica State Prison has dominated the village and region since it began until now. It has come to symbolize punishment and state vengeance in the United States. “Attikkka Is All Of Us!” is more than a slogan of the Brothers who led the 1971 rebellion and suffered the subsequent massacre; it is a truth about the intertwined lives we lead, about war and justice and about class and race connections only now perhaps becoming visible.

26 years after a lawsuit was brought on behalf of the Attica Brothers, a settlement was negotiated. Tom Wicker, the New York Times reporter who was an observer during the rebellion, said that without the intervention of Judge Telesca, the state would probably have held out forever trying to avoid paying the victims. I would argue that, in addition to the judge, the women I will speak about here (and the organizations they founded) helped to keep an ongoing public awareness about the uprising and prisons in general and thus helped to counter the powerful forces of the status quo (state and employee unions). I believe they helped keep history from being narrowed as well as justice from being totally subverted.

This is a small piece of a larger work about the dedication of primarily middle-class European-American women in a struggle initially fought by poor African-American men. It is a history of legacies of the civil rights movement and the anti-war/peace movements; it portrays people with a sense of oppression broadened by class and gender as well as race. The women who responded to the Attica cry began their struggle and persisted despite the corrosive influence of racial and gender stereotypes and the mammoth engine that is the prison industry today. Who these women are, why and how they began and persisted and how they connected with each other provide a glimpse of intersecting paths on one road to justice. I share the history of these women to keep our voices alive in our one struggle for justice.

I will introduce you briefly to three women in upstate New York whose dedication, organizational savvy and apparently endless energy have roots in peace and justice groups. I can only hint here about the foundations of their anti-racism and pacifism and of the history of the New York State Coalition for Criminal Justice; one organization they helped to create to carry the struggle forward. I will outline how they wound their ways to each other and to the Coalition and how they persevered.

Faye Honey Knopp

In her quest for alternatives to violence and vengeance both personal and institutional, Faye Honey Knopp, a Quaker feminist pacifist-activist, articulated the vision that inspired Margaret Stinson, Clare Regan, and Charlotte Frantz,

the women you will meet here. Honey framed the challenges in 1993:

I do not need to recount to those sitting in this room that the U.S. is the world's most violent industrialized nation. We know that. That our murder rate far exceeds those of comparable countries. We know that. That we have the highest rates for sexual and other forms of personal assault. That minorities are at greatest risk for victimization by violence - both directly and by unjust institutions. That minorities are shockingly over-represented in jails and prisons. That thousands upon thousands of men and women are raped each day in prisons and jails. We know all of these things. We know about the guns and drugs and gangs, the killing of children on our street, often by other children. We know that in addition to the astronomical fiscal costs of our nation's futile and reckless response to crime, the psychic toll of racism and oppression of the underclass on our quality of life and our attitudes is immeasurable.

The struggle for most of us has never been whether to continue or give up, but rather; how to lead a life of integrity with the fewest of contradictions in a culture that often devalues, inhibits, negates, or co-opts the principles we support; how to stay rooted in the spiritual while actively pursuing justice, while being oppositional and confrontational, while being outraged, while all the time trying to reduce the pain in pain-filled people and a pain-filled society. Oftentimes I tell myself that may be my only mission - to reduce pain and not increase it.

The struggle has been to lead a life of integrity while all the time challenging our systems and also trying to get those systems to lessen or relieve the pain of its victims; trying to be both revolutionary and relief provider; trying to reconcile liberty with social control, especially where threats to human safety in the violence of the here and now are concerned. How much social control? How much safety? For whom? Who decides?

How do we live with integrity in the now, before or while institutions are changing; in the now, before racism and economic violence are rooted out; in the now, before we have an inclusive society; in the now, where justice is more a state of mind than a reality, more a promise than a fact?

Margaret Stinson

Margaret Stinson had been a member of the Presbyterian Church in Albany, New York during the time that church was involved in civil rights and minority issues, initially welfare issues. Then, Margaret recalled,

We had just moved from Albany, New York, to the Syracuse area in 1971, and Attica happened about a month after our arrival. . . . I said to the pastor as we were leaving [church], "If the church isn't going to do anything about Attica, it ought to close its doors." And that week there appeared at our door the minister saying they we're going to have a committee meeting on Attica. So I went. . . .

There Margaret met Shirley DeHority and her husband George, the Presbyterian Synod Executive, who was then also President of the New York State Council of Churches. Within a year, the NYS Council of Churches selected an Executive Director who had a tremendous interest in criminal justice matters. (Margaret, not coincidentally, chaired the Search Committee). Then Margaret met Honey:

The State Council [of Churches] criminal justice task force started to take a look at what it decided was its responsibility. . . . Janet Lugo, who served on that task force . . . talk[ed] about a woman she knew by the name of Faye Honey Knopp. It seemed that this woman was a prison abolitionist, and I thought, “What a crazy idea!” We invited Honey, who at that time was living in Connecticut, to come to one of our meetings, and from then on, she became a full-time member. Not only did she have me convinced within 20 minutes of the importance of prison abolition but I think she had convinced everyone in that room. . . .

One of the things that Honey taught to us was this recognition that you can’t reform prisons; of themselves, they are evil. Not necessarily that the people who work for them are evil, but that when you put a group of people in complete charge of another group of people, something very bad happens to the dynamics of the situation. And Honey raised that and made it very clear to us. . . . Honey always distinguished between the offense and the offender: she didn’t call them “violent offenders;” she called them “persons who had committed violent offenses.” And there’s a difference . . . .

Seeking to understand more about the justice system, Margaret participated in a court-watching project.

It was probably Church Women United who instigated it. . . . I felt our big success was that we got a judge removed from the bench by the Commission on Judicial Conduct. He was a racist. . . .

Margaret had worked for the USO during the war, with the YWCA, the PTA, Church Women United, as well as with her church. She met the Rev. Virginia (“Ginny”) Mackey in Rochester, New York through the Presbyterian Synod Executive. Margaret and Ginny recruited Irene Jackson from the First Presbyterian Church in Albany, set up an office in that church and established a rapid communication network. The networking project evolved into the “executive arm” of the NYS Council of Churches criminal justice task force. Soon the New York State Coalition for Criminal Justice (known as “The Coalition”) and its Center for Justice Education were born.

Honey Knopp and others issued the kind of “systemic challenges” to criminal justice policy and practice that became the Coalition’s hallmark with the book “Instead of Prisons.” Margaret edited that book, describing it as a “kind of Bible in terms of where we needed to go.” Then Honey developed Prison Research Education Action Project (PREAP) workshops, which were offered throughout the state by church and concerned community organizations.

## Clare Regan

I found Clare Regan in Rochester, New York, in the offices of the Judicial Process Commission (JPC), which was formed in 1972, also as a response to the Attica uprising and massacre. The JPC still serves as the criminal justice arm of the religious community there. Clare's path to the JPC wound from Pittsburgh to Boston to West Chester, Pennsylvania; through graduate school in chemistry at Duquesne and MIT to mothering six children and caring for a variety of indisposed relatives; from the PTA to political campaigning for a friend; from anti-war activities to prison work; from Presbyterianism to Catholicism. She outlined her beliefs:

I do believe there is a God, and I believe that we're put here for a purpose, and I believe that we have an obligation to leave the world a little better than we found it. So that's sort of where we come from, but I would do exactly what I was doing even if I believed there was no God. It's strictly a question of justice. So I don't know that I do it for religious purposes; I do it for justice purposes.

Her prison work began with the Prisoner Assistance Project (PAP) - trying to find jobs for people preparing to be released from prison. A combination of what Clare called "culture shock" of African Americans from New York City ending up in Rochester and a downturn in the economy of the region ended that project by 1977. She then began working at the Judicial Process Commission, which, because its representatives did not go into the prisons and jails directly, could challenge the system, publicly.

Clare participated in the first training group for Honey Knopp's PREAP workshops. She described Honey:

[Honey] was from Connecticut and grew up in New York City. . . . I remember in one of Dan Berrigan's books that he mentioned Honey Knopp had visited him on Christmas day when he was in prison in Connecticut and I thought, boy, that's strange . . . leaving her family on Christmas day. I didn't realize until her memorial service that she was really Jewish. She had been Jewish and became a Quaker after doing a lot of the peace work. She had started visiting prisons during World War II, conscientious objectors, and then started a prisoner visiting support group. She worked in the South with blacks and whites together; she went to Hungary during their revolution; she was at the peace talks in Paris for Vietnam.

While her initial focus was on anti-death penalty work (which still continues), Clare came to focus more on drug policy issues. The same year she agreed to edit the JPC Newsletter *Justicia*, her mother died of lung cancer after 50 years of smoking. Her personal life convinced her to research drug addiction and policy.

I saw the folly of it. I mean, I come from a whole family of alcoholics; my father was, his brother was, my mother's father was, his brother was, my

husband's mother was; his brother died of alcoholism, his father wasn't but his father's brothers were. And people smoked, they all smoked . . . and my husband died from emphysema and my mother from lung cancer, and my Dad dropped dead of a heart attack, and he was a heavy drinker and smoker. The last thing they needed was to be made criminal on top of everything else.

Clare's research led her to "Licit and Illicit Drugs", a book she described as "absolutely wonderful" and "really well researched" and to an analysis of the mandatory and infamous New York Rockefeller Drug Laws, enacted in 1973. Yet Clare attributes the main motivation for her prison work to her son's being a draft counselor - she wanted to "clean up the jails" before he got there! Clare was also a draft counselor and witnessed at the Seneca Army Depot against war and the "things of war" every Tuesday for years; simultaneously with her criminal justice work and while her husband was suffering from lung cancer.

Clare connected with the Coalition in the late '80's, when she became the Judicial Process Commission's representative to their Board.

#### Charlotte Frantz

Charlotte Frantz has been involved with so many social peace and justice projects and people over the years so as to make younger women weep. Her enduring social activism is founded on a theology and an ideology of the basic oneness and connectedness of all people, while reveling in their cultural differences; a love of creativity, music, fun in the offerings of compassionate service; an inspiration born of ("propelled by," Charlotte would say) people working together, joyfully and in small groups and neighborhoods; an absolute opposition to war and violence and an equally, passionate adoption of nonviolent resistance and activism when required.

Charlotte described her childhood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, interweaving personal history with that of her "home" Church of the Brethren:

I had come out of this religious and social background where the assumption was, if a law was unjust, it should be protested and resisted . . . that religious Church of the Brethren teaching which had come out of the old 15th, 16th century European resistance to organized religion and to the military. . . .

I suppose since I've grown up with this antipathy towards the militaristic system; I rather quickly developed an antipathy toward the correctional system, which is highly militarily run. It's built just like the army, for the same reasons. It gets that way and stays that way, because of individuals' needs to control other people, rightly or wrongly.

Charlotte worked in Brethren and Quaker and International YWCA service projects and work camps and with the Heifer Project. She pursued graduate work in anthropology and married an anthropologist; they adopted three children. The practical demands of peace and justice work as well as family interrupted her formal study. She was engaged in "respectful anthropology"

in West Africa when Attica erupted; she heard about it there. After her return to Western New York, she became a part of a weekly Quaker worship gathering at Attica.

That made me more conscious of the long history that Quakers had had of doing prison ministry and advocating on behalf of prisoners, which goes back more than 300 years to the very earliest of Quakers in England who were conscious of the conditions in the prisons because many of their members spent a lot of time there because they were resisting what they saw as unjust laws. So this was intrinsic to Quakerism, which I more and more identified with in my adulthood.

Charlotte looked for other organizations that were “doing something about these things.” She had learned about Honey and, in the 1980’s, she found “The Coalition” (NYSCCJ).

Think Globally/Act Locally/Keep Going

I will close with these women’s words about their unflinching dedication.

Charlotte explained what she thinks motivates or enables activists generally:

[T]hey probably have a personal experience of being fulfilled and they probably have had very affirmative lives. . . . I suspect they also had models who were social activists, whether this was in a religious setting or in a school setting. . . . I don’t know what makes some people more empathetic than others or some people more self-confident than others. But the collegiality that arises in social action propels a lot of people. The simple collective genius, modeling for each other and stimulating each other, rising to the occasion with new ideas and solutions creates a synergy, keeps people going. . . .

Clare spoke of her own dogged spirit and faith:

What keeps me going? The arrogance that I know I’m right! As the PREAP people used to say with Honey Knopp, it took a hundred years to abolish slavery and if somebody hadn’t started it, it wouldn’t have happened. . . . As the Bible says, those who planted were never promised to be around for the harvest. I just have to accept the fact that I can’t see what’s happening. I just know that somebody has to do it.

And Margaret:

What keeps me going? I guess hope, “the greatest of these is hope.” . . . Pretty soon there’ll be more and more people who will see the injustice of it all and want a change.

The Christian faith is all about possibilities for the future, for redemption... As the Quakers would say, there’s that of God in every person and that is what we have to be working for. . . . I think the God that some of us have come to know thinks no one is hopeless.

And then people like Honey were such a tremendous inspiration, not just to

me but to so many people. Honey did the unusual, the most unusual, because all her life she kept going into those prisons, but at the same time, she kept working for systemic change. I've tended to take the "Ginny Mackey" route, which in the beginning was to go into prisons, but then to put the effort into the systemic change piece. I don't think everyone is cut out to do both. I think it was what kept . . . [Honey] real and kept her going, because she sensed the injustice of what was happening to people behind those bars.

I'm sometimes encouraged by the historians who claim there are cycles. I figure we're in the bad cycle now, and it will get better. I hope so.

## Notes

This Paper was first presented, unpublished, at a Peace History Conference in Bellingham, Washington - April 28-30, 2000

1. Charlotte gave me Carolyn Heilbrun's "Writing A Woman's Life" to read, with this passage underscored: ". . . with highly gifted women, as with men, the failure to lead the conventional life, to find the conventional way early, may signify more than having been dealt a poor hand of cards. It may well be the forming of a life in the service of a talent felt, but unrecognized and unnamed. This condition is marked by a profound sense of vocation, with no idea what the vocation is, and by a strong sense of inadequacy and deprivation." (Pg. 52-53.)

## **Metanoia**

*By Dean Faiello*

I watched Richie, sitting just outside his cell, create a lush, stately oak tree using watercolors and a small inexpensive brush. I could see the details of each leaf. Yet Richie has been nowhere near a tree for fifty years. The closest tree is far beyond Attica's massive concrete wall, in a world inaccessible to him. The last time he enjoyed freedom, the Beatles were on tour in the U.S. and mankind had yet to set foot on the moon.

I struggled to assimilate the artistic, sensitive Richie with the deranged killer portrayed in New York City newspapers during the sixties. While he sat at a brown Formica table, Richie's belly hung over his green sweatpants, his swollen ankles mottled by blue and purple veins. At seventy years of age, his health was frail. Brown plastic bags of medication littered his prison cell.

For about a year, Richie and I were neighbors, our cells separated by just six feet. We shared our frustrations over Attica's inanity. The parole board wants prisoners to take drug abuse and anti-violence programs before granting them freedom. Yet Attica's waiting lists for those programs hold over two thousand names. Some men have been incarcerated for more than twenty years before getting the opportunity to take state mandated programs. In a world that communicates at the speed of light using email, texting and Skype, I toil at a typewriter, buy stamps at commissary and embark on a two hour trip to the school building to mail a letter. When I arrive at the school, many of the classrooms are dark; the desks are vacant.

At night, I strive for self-improvement. I've worked toward a two year degree in the college program for nearly four years. I attend Alternatives to Violence Project workshops and meditation sessions. I sit cross-legged on moldy black mats in an antiquated classroom where the ceiling tiles dangle precariously and the chalkboard is speckled from years of use and disuse. I visit the prison library in a futile search for recent works. The paperbacks are dog-eared. The newspapers are weeks old. The Dewey Decimal card catalogue collects dust.

Achieving an education in prison can be a lengthy, frustrating process. The waiting lists for vocational and GED programs hold many names. New York State no longer funds higher education for prisoners. The college programs are privately funded by compassionate philanthropists. As a result, there exist only a handful of such programs. A very small percentage of New York's prisoners are enrolled. At Attica, less than 2% of the population is working toward a college degree. Self-improvement in prison is a challenge.

Yet prisoners are not unique in their struggle for change. Human nature resists that which is new or different. Change is uncomfortable, stressful and difficult to achieve. A genuine transformation – a change in behavior, attitude and thinking – is hard won and can require many years of hard work and dedication. The slightest change in my daily routine can throw me off balance. I

may logically know how to handle a sudden complication, but emotionally, I resist. Change causes me anxiety.

As I watched Richie patiently create a sylvan scene with watercolors, I had no doubt that he had undergone a transformation. Bald, overweight and infirm, he was no longer the out of control heroin junkie who murdered two women during a drug crazed binge. After fifty years in prison, he was a college graduate who worked in Attica's vocational shop making memorial plaques for corrections officers who died. After a religious epiphany, Richie converted to Quakerism and attended prison Quaker meetings every Friday night. He mentored young men who had just arrived at Attica and taught others artistic skills. When I was taking a college art class, he helped me with a charcoal and pencil portrait, patiently demonstrating the technique of chiaroscuro.

When I had nothing to read because the prison library was inaccessible (closed nights and weekends), Richie lent me books. I read about meditation, Buddhism, the Quakers and Victor Frankl's theory of logotherapy – finding meaning in life. Richie's books inspired me to write an essay about prison rehabilitation and transformation: "The Phoenix." I entered the piece in a writing contest. Although I lost, the contest sponsors liked my essay and printed it in a collection of prison writing called "The Hard Journey Home."

Writing is my *raison d'être*. In "Man's Search for Meaning," Viktor Frankl wrote that prisoners need a reason to get up in the morning, that such purpose provides the motivation and the will to survive prison and to overcome the daily suffering and humiliation. For some prisoners, a religious awakening, perhaps an epiphany, is the beginning of their transformation and serves as motivation to overcome faults, failures and foibles.

Every Sunday, Attica's cavernous chapel teems with men attending Protestant services, trying to overcome their vices, to do better. Long lines of men form, waiting silently in pairs like Franciscan monks in the sepulchral corridor outside the chapel. Choir voices, backed by guitars and keyboards, infuse the prison with hymns and praises. Attica's charismatic Reverend Tomlinson, gifted with amazing memory, welcomes each man by name. Many are drawn by the Reverend's energetic, powerful sermon. Some seek compassionate camaraderie. All leave motivated, and elevated, by his religious teaching.

Protestants, Catholics, Muslims and Buddhist – all are enlightened and inspired by the hero's journey, by those who endured, overcame and were transformed. Jesus suffered, was crucified and then ascended. Muhammad received Allah's words at Mount Hira and with the help of scribes, set them down in the Koran, transforming Muhammad into a prophet. Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, gave up his worldly possessions the day he left his father's palace. Travelling barefoot, he experienced hunger, exhaustion and emaciation. Yet his suffering brought him enlightenment. His transformation serves to educate and inspire millions. In prisons all across the United States, men attend meditation classes and aspire to rise above suffering and learn empathy

and compassion.

As I get ready to take a shower on a hot day, a loud clanging bell sounds to indicate a fight has erupted. In the recreation yard outside my window, officers shout over the loudspeakers “Get on the ground, face down! Everybody, get on the ground, now!” My gate slams shut. Realizing that I will not get a shower, my empathy, my compassion, falters. Two men, unable to resolve their differences except by punching each other in the face, have impacted the entire prison. All programs, all classes, all movement stops; except for officers running through the corridors in response to the fight. Most of the prison is now mad.

While men pride themselves on their intellect, their ability to think reasonably; the reality is that we are governed by our emotions. When provoked, irritated or angry, clear logical thinking subsides. Reactions rule. And often, mistakes are made. Many crimes are the result of hot tempers, jealousy or intoxication – chemicals creating temporary moods and emotions. Violent crimes are often committed by people who by nature are not violent. For a moment, emotions induce behavior that is out of the norm. Yet that change in behavior can have consequences that last years, perhaps forever. Assaults, rapes, homicides – most are committed by those who are not in their normal state of mind but by those who are angry, drunk, high or all three.

Yet a single act often serves to define a person for years, perhaps the rest of one’s life. An argument that turns violent and results in a fight or a homicide spawns a murderer. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to ever leave behind that judgment, that label. Parole boards refuse to release prisoners due to “the nature of the crime.” Society turns its back on a convicted murderer, determining him or her to be unfit to return to a community – incapable of change, a permanent pariah.

It is easy, convenient, to give up in despair and permanently separate from society those who have committed heinous crimes. But how do we rationalize Christian ideals of compassion, empathy and forgiveness, with retribution? It takes courage to look into the eyes of a criminal, of a murderer. It takes bravery to offer them a helping hand. Jesus addressed that dilemma by stressing the importance of not forgetting those in prison, by showing them love. In Matthew 25, he says, “When I was in prison, you visited me.”

Prisoners are human beings who have made mistakes – failures in judgments, moral lapses, bad decisions. Prisoners are capable of change – rehabilitation, education and enlightenment. However, such opportunities are sadly lacking in most prisons. Confusing punishment with vengeance, society refuses to offer higher education to those who are incarcerated. Billions of dollars go toward maintaining security, which is important and critical. But little money is provided for rehabilitation programs. Attica employs 585 corrections officers, but only 1 counselor for the alcohol and substance abuse program. In view of the fact that 80% of crimes involve the use of alcohol or drugs, such a

lack of drug treatment programs is myopic. Fights take place at Attica nearly every day. Yet as I write this essay, just one classroom, with seats for nearly 50 men, is the only anti-violence program at Attica. Over 900 prisoners languish on the waiting list for the Department of Corrections Services (DOCS) Aggression Replacement Training Program. How can rehabilitation take place when those yearning for change, for education, have few if no opportunities to participate in programs, to find seats in classrooms?

Fortunately, compassionate volunteers from neighboring communities come to Attica on a regular basis to help prisoners embrace transformation and adapt to change. At night, Attica's chapel often resounds with music as Protestant volunteers lead men in hymns and praises. Catholic priests teach bible classes where men read Holy Scripture and reflect upon passages and verses. Quakers hold Friends Meetings where men share frustrations, hopes and goals.

Although I remain a Catholic, I attend lectures on Buddhist philosophy, Protestant services and Quaker meetings as a guest – a traveler seeking alms and enlightenment. I learned the history of Sufism and the derivation of the expression “whirling dervish.” I listened as a Zen Buddhist priest explored acceptance and suffering. I counted breaths as I meditated, letting anguish and hostility escape through the steel casement windows and be absorbed by fat clouds reflecting a tangerine sunset. Mesmerized, I listened as a Quaker hospice nurse explained her work, comforting the dying, holding their hands as they left this world. I wondered if I could exhibit such compassion, such courage.

I witnessed another form of compassion as Richie patiently explained watercolor techniques to a fellow inmate struggling with paper and brush. He demonstrated how to hold the brush, mix the paint and the importance of blending before the watercolors dry. As he did so, the coarse white paper before him was transformed into a vibrant autumn scene. Red maple tree leaves illuminated a hillside. The azure water of a tranquil lake beckoned. Richie's hands, mottled with age spots, exuded talent and confidence. Were those wrinkled, aging hands still capable of violence? I struggled to square Richie's pacific demeanor with the details of a heinous murder. Who is Richie today?

Such a question – about one's identity and immanent nature – was addressed by an English teacher during one of Attica's college classes. Professor Goselin explored existentialism, asking the question, “Is one defined by one's actions and attitude today or by the shocking details of a violent crime committed twenty years ago?” Humans are capable of change but how does one prove a moral transformation? Is it a change in attitude and belief? Or does it require a rewiring of axons, dendrites and synapses as described by brain plasticity?

Parole boards seek to determine change by assessing a criminal's societal attitudes, level of empathy and propensity to recidivate. They also place a great importance on taking responsibility for actions, one's crime and choos-

ing the right path. Even within maximum security prisons, inmates enjoy certain freedom and choice. Viktor Frankl wrote about the freedom to choose one's attitude, regardless of circumstance or situation. Although prisons grant inmates few rights, there exists the right to worship one's religion of choice, as long as one does not annoy the administration or the guards. Practicing religion in prison is not easy, often requiring much time, patience, paperwork and hoop jumping. Parole boards look closely at one's participation in religious and volunteer programs. But do a man's presence in a chapel, his attention to scripture and his participation in religious rite constitute proof of transformation; his submission to a higher authority, as Judaism, Christianity and Islam dictate?

Even within religious tenets, there is freedom of choice. The Bible's one thousand pages contain many events, parable and admonitions. Yet its teachings are not inscribed in granite. Translations and interpretations offer perspectives and views that vary among religious scholars, leaders and laity. Jesus offered advice and held views that, up until his existence, were contrary to commonly held interpretations of the Old Testament. Jesus, Cain and Barabbas all enjoyed freedom of choice. Yet their decisions, their paths, resulted in consequences and suffering. The freedom to choose one's goals and destiny gives meaning to life and fulfills an essential goal: self-achievement. Such success can be higher education, enlightenment or simply surviving incarceration and ultimately winning freedom.

I realized that I had much freedom in prison – the freedom to choose my attitude, my direction and my goals. I pursued higher education, translation skills and program facilitation. I also felt that I had to do something about the ubiquitous violence at Attica, so I attended Alternatives to Violence Project workshops and after five years of participation became an AVP facilitator. While I retain the freedom to choose my attitude daily, realizing that ability has been a struggle involving many years and frustrations.

My enlightenment came about simply by practicing mindfulness – being open to other's ideas, perspectives and opinions. I learned about Quaker's values and beliefs. I explored Buddhist philosophy, the way of life promoted by the Buddha. I discovered the power of my mind to govern my thoughts. Before coming to prison, I had believed that I commanded my mind and determined my thoughts. But I was wrong. I wasn't driving the bus. I was merely a passenger who had boarded with no idea where the route would take me, unable to stop the bus and disembark.

Frustrated by my lack of direction, I shut off the banal babble that emanated from my rickety black and white television. Instead, every night I read – works by the Dalai Lama, Deepak Chopra and St. Augustine. I came to realize that I had far greater power over my life, my destiny and my state of mind that I had ever conceived. By taking control of my situation and embracing change from within, I saw a glimmer of peace. I forgave myself for being me

– a flawed, struggling man who had made many mistakes. Yet I confronted change daily.

We are all on the same path to enlightenment. Some have taken a wrong turn, a detour or a longer route. The road is arduous. Dante Alighieri reflected that in the middle of his life’s journey, he found himself within “a dark wood where the straight way was lost.” At some point, that happens to most, if not all of us. For some, that dark wood is prison.

I wonder if Richie will emerge from that dark wood, whether he will ever leave prison. He certainly has undergone a change through rehabilitation. He discovered his artistic abilities in prison and produces serene, realistic watercolors. He has amassed college and vocational certificates, attesting to his education. Despite the dearth of computers and software at Attica, he became proficient in Photoshop through a vocational program print shop. Having overcome his addiction, he now enjoys fifty years of sobriety. Even with his bags of medications, his heart problems, gout and difficulty walking, he regularly goes to Cephias and Quaker meetings where he shares his story and enlightens other prisoners.

Yet many prisoners, despite their efforts at rehabilitation and change, have no idea when or even if they will ever leave prison. Parole boards deny men their release due to the nature of their crimes, something no amount of time in prison will ever change. Richie has been denied parole fifteen times. I was convicted of a heinous crime that caused the death of a beautiful young woman. When I see a parole board in 2022, despite achieving sobriety, a college degree, facilitating volunteer programs and lecturing Catholic mass for many years, it is unlikely that a parole board will look favorably on my release. With over two million men and women in prisons and jails, the distinction of the United States as the world’s leader in mass incarceration and national recidivism rates of 60%, our carceral system is an abject failure. If 25 or 50 years of incarceration cannot result in a man’s rehabilitation – his transformation – then our prison philosophy is a quixotic chimera, badly in need of revisions and reform. It too needs transformation, a change in thinking.

## Notes

Dean A. Faiello’s work has appeared in *The Minnesota Review*, *Decant*, *Confrontation* and *Fourth City: Essays From The Prison in America*

## **They Can Never Get Our Minds: Performative Writing in Carceral Space**

*By Nick Lindsey*

“These orange clothes are holding our bodies, but they can never get our minds,” he explained to the group. It was the second meeting of the writing workshop and he had just finished reading his response to a writing prompt. His short composition catalyzed a much larger group conversation about what it means to be imprisoned and what it means to write while imprisoned. Soon, another man shared his piece of writing, which contained a similar insight. In it, he explained that writing is the channel through which his mind becomes free to run, move and explore. Even though his body was stuck in a single place, he wrote, through writing his mind could go elsewhere and experience otherwise. “While they’re keeping me here,” he said, “I can still be free when I let my mind go and I just write.”

\* \* \*

Prisons, jails, holding centers, detention centers and all other sites of incarceration are inherently violent spaces - this is one of the primary reasons why abolition, and not reform, is the only permanent solution to the multi-faceted problem of mass incarceration. One of the most basic and underlying acts of violence characterizing carceral space is the attempt to access, alter and discipline the mind by enforcing extreme restrictions on the body. The insights above have been articulated by prisoners in the context of prison and jail writing workshops and they are remarkable in the way they simultaneously identify this fundamental violence and register these prisoners’ sustained efforts and abilities to resist and survive the pressures of this violation.

Attempts to alter and discipline the mind by placing various restrictions on the body is a defining component of incarceration and is one that has been consciously built into the modern-day concept and structure of the prison system. In her important book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Angela Y. Davis provides a telling historical overview of the evolution of prisons in the United States. Describing the process through which imprisonment was transformed from a state of temporary holding prior to the dispensing of punishment into the punishment itself, she points out that one of the main ways imprisonment was conceptualized during this transitional phase was as a site where “the body was placed in conditions of segregation and solitude in order to allow the soul to flourish.”(48) Interestingly, the move toward utilizing imprisonment as a form of punishment was largely the outcome of efforts made by progressive minded religious thinkers and activists, who “saw the architecture and regimes of the penitentiary as emulating the architecture and regimes of monastic life.” (48) By imprisoning the body in a state of forced segregation, isolation and relative immobility, it was believed, the prisoner’s mind would be better able to focus on the penance that imprisonment was presumably facilitating and that would ultimately bring about “moral renewal and thus mold convicts into

better citizens.” (49) This theory is interesting in the way it implicitly views the mind as separate from the body - as that which is in control of all else and which is the ultimate source of identity, knowledge and behavior - while at the same time explicitly recognizing the inseparability of the mind from the body, working to access and make some sort of impact on the mind through acting on the body.

The claim that this approach to punishment would facilitate healing and the creation of “better citizens” was almost immediately called into question by early observations of prisoners placed in solitary confinement - arguably the most extreme method of inflicting punishment and discipline on the mind by confining and restricting the body. One important critique emerging out of these observations, cited by Davis, hints at the connections and interplays between the mind and the body by arguing that “this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain [is] immeasurably worse than any torture of the body.” (48) The important point here for Davis is that “this early critique of the penitentiary and its regime of solitary confinement troubles the notion that imprisonment is the most suitable form of punishment for a democratic society.” (49) While I agree with Davis on the obvious point that this critique very clearly works to highlight the violent, rather than reparative, nature of imprisonment; I would also like to point out that in some ways it also fails to register precisely what this violence is or where and how exactly it operates. The violence of carceral spaces cannot adequately be considered in any terms that attempt to think about the mind as separate from the body, as this particular critique does, because one of imprisonment’s fundamental goals is to access and make a forcible impact on the mind precisely by acting on the body. Rather than attempt to make distinctions between whether it’s worse to “[tamper] with the mysteries of the brain” or to “torture . . . the body,” it may be more accurate and more productive to think about these as, in fact, one and the same. To tamper with the mind is to tamper with the body in the same way that to torture the body is to torture the mind, and this is one of the things that carceral spaces are fundamentally designed to accomplish.

The ultimate conclusion of the critique cited by Davis, that “those who have undergone this punishment MUST pass into society again morally unhealthy and diseased,” seems to have been proven generally accurate, since “today, aside from death, solitary confinement - next to torture or as a form of torture - is considered the worst form of punishment imaginable.” (47-48) While it’s important to understand the true severity of solitary confinement, we should also resist the idea that Davis’s point here applies only to solitary confinement but not to incarceration more generally. Solitary confinement is, after all, a prison within a prison, a method of imprisonment operating within imprisonment, the carceral space carried to its furthest extreme. Instead of trying to differentiate between solitary confinement and more general incarceration, it’s critical to recognize that solitary confinement makes starkly visible the true nature of any form of incarceration. With this in mind, then, it is clear that acts

of imprisonment -undergirded by a fundamental focus on disciplining and punishing the mind by enforcing restrictions on the body - can rightly be thought of as a form of torture, as inherently violent.

\* \* \*

He is reading the poem he'd written earlier that week. In it, he describes looking out of a window of the jail. While his body remains anchored to the floor of the jail's dormitory, his mind becomes a bird, flying through the window, over the grounds and out into the distance.

\* \* \*

This essay grows out of my experiences facilitating men's writing workshops in the Erie County Correctional Facility (ECCF) in Alden, New York. As I write this, I recognize that the ways I process, interpret and make sense of what goes on in our workshop - as well as all my thoughts regarding incarceration in general - are colored and limited by my position as a "free world" ally. I also recognize that while there are many similarities between the situations of folks incarcerated at ECCF and folks incarcerated elsewhere, there are also many important differences that cannot be ignored or leveled out. This means that what works or goes on in Erie County may or may not work or occur elsewhere, and vice-versa. Finally, I recognize that while incarceration is always an inherently violent act, the lived experiences of imprisonment and its violence vary greatly according to a prisoner's gender, sexual identification, race and other factors of one's identity. The realities and experiences shared by the men in the workshops I've facilitated are therefore reflective of a very particular group of individuals and are in no way representative of the larger incarcerated population. Keeping all this in mind, I'd like to offer a general sketch outlining what my experiences, observations and studies have highlighted as some of the more promising ways in which writing programs and other programs focused on expressive production and communication can help counteract the carceral violence described above. As much as possible, this essay tries to clear out space for prisoners to speak for themselves, to articulate their own ideas and to describe their own experiences.

The comments, experiences and insights - voiced by inmates and documented in this essay - make clear that at some level, writing - especially in the context of a group writing workshop - functions as a response to some of the fundamental forms of violence that constitute incarceration. In particular, I'd like to suggest that these comments, experiences and insights seem to indicate that the joint processes of writing and sharing pieces of original writing with others in the space of a workshop become what cultural theorists call "performative."

British philosopher J. L. Austin first developed the notion of the performative in his book *How to Do Things With Words*, in which he coined the terms "a performative sentence or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative'" as a way of pointing out "that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" and not "just saying something." (6-7) For him, a performat-

tive is some spoken statement that actually does or accomplishes the very thing it describes, articulates or narrates. The classic example of a performative speech act is the phrase “I thee wed” or “I now pronounce you . . .” at the end of a wedding ceremony. The preacher’s vocal articulation of these phrases out loud and in a particular context not only describes a particular action or idea, but actually accomplishes the action or idea, bringing it to life in some materially meaningful way.

A short time after Austin’s first explanation of performative speech acts, French cultural theorist Roland Barthes extended the notion of the performative to include written texts as well as spoken language. Barthes argued that in the modern era, “writing can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, ‘depictions’; rather it designates exactly what linguists . . . call a performative, a rare verbal form . . . in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered - something like the I declare of kings or the I sing of very ancient poets.” (145-146)

Finally, and more recently, scholar, theorist and activist Judith Butler moved the notion of the performative even further to encompass the cultural performances of everyday living and, particularly for her, those associated with the construction, presentation and maintenance of gender. In her groundbreaking essay “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” Butler argues that “gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express” (314). While Butler’s discussion of the performative here is focused specifically on gender, for the sake of this essay, I want to highlight the way that with her contributions to the idea of the performative we can now think about the possibility of a speech act, a piece of writing or a moment of lived social interaction as all possibly being performative - as not only describing or articulating a particular idea but actually accomplishing and calling into reality that same idea. Simply put, a performative speech, text or act is unique because it simultaneously articulates and creates.

\* \* \*

He’d worked on his short memoir all winter long and on the day he’d signed up to present to the group, he delivered a passionate and emotional reading. In the collective conversation following his reading, he commented that the experience of reading something he’d written out loud to other people was surprisingly powerful. “I’ve never felt anything like that before. It made me feel like I wanted to stand up and shout my words,” he told us.

\* \* \*

According to this man, the act of reading a piece of original writing out loud to the larger group of workshop members was a powerful experience. From my perspective as a member of the group that day, it was an equally powerful experience to be a listener and an observer. The more I’ve thought about how this man described the powerful experience he had while reading his work,

the more it seems clear that what he was describing was something along the lines of a performative. He was not only communicating ideas that day, he was actually creating something, calling something into being. His words carried a real, physical, bodily energy that extended much further than the surface of their semantic meanings. This energy, this physical thing created through the act of reading his writing out loud, is what animated his body to want to stand up and shout. It is this energy that I think makes his reading that day a performative, an act that simultaneously describes and creates. Through the act of turning his written thoughts, experiences and ideas into a physically audible voice, he instantiated - for a moment - a different reality, characterized by different possibilities, than the one we'd all been occupying prior to his reading.

While this man's reading and the comment he made immediately afterwards explicitly draw attention to the ways in which the processes of writing and then sharing pieces of writing with others in the context of prison and jail writing workshops operate as performative acts, I believe that the other moments of articulation documented elsewhere in this essay are also deeply performative. When the two men in the first anecdote wrote about and described the ways that writing counteracts the violence of carceral space by giving their minds a temporary channel of release and escape, they were not simply articulating an idea. They were, through the joint acts of writing their ideas and then giving voice to these ideas, momentarily instantiating some alternative vision in which greater agency, autonomy and freedom became possible - the very agency, autonomy and freedom described in their bits of writing. In these moments, they were not just describing an antidote to the violence inflicted on the mind and the body in prison; they were also momentarily bringing to life their unique and particular visions of a reality beyond the confines of the prison. They became, through the joint acts of writing and reading their writing out loud, creators and actors, and instead of having their bodies turned against their minds, they were now embodying the activities of their minds in order to bring into view new realms of possibility. Similarly, when another workshop participant read his poem about looking out a jail window and experienced his mind fly away toward the woods, he was not only narrating a tale of mental escape, he was performatively constructing a new and temporary reality in which he did in fact become possessor of a new type of control and freedom, if only for a very brief moment.

The instances of personal expression and articulation that occur in these types of settings are performative acts through which new and alternative visions are both narrated and momentarily brought to life and through which possibilities are simultaneously imagined and made distinctly visible. Most importantly for the context of this essay, these performative acts call into being moments marked by a distinct reversal of the prison's attempt to discipline and punish the mind by forcing restrictions on the body. As prisoners engage in the processes of writing and then sharing aloud their compositions with each other, the abstract ideas and activities of the mind become embodied as physically

audible, present tense, lived moments of performance that are shared with others and that occur in a time and space set aside specifically for that purpose. And as expressed by the man reading his memoir, this process of lending embodiment to the abstract very often carries with it a unique type of energy capable of moving, in a variety of ways, both the individuals in the workshop and the small community they create. The combined effect of all this is the momentary creation of realities, visions and options that offer temporary reprieves from the constant violence of incarceration. During these few moments of performative expression, prisoners transform the carceral space into one of possibility, movement and agency in which what matters most is the now-embodied reality of their own expression. Even when the content of what a writer has written and shared has nothing to do with freedom or the struggles of life as a prisoner - moments of writing and sharing written composition are moments marked by the type of articulation that transforms ideas into physically audible expressions energizing a lived group experience. It is this shared experience, this momentary reality called into being through the act of speaking one's ideas, which constitutes the brief reprieve from the constant controls and pressures of incarceration.

Of course, carving out space and time for writing workshops and other programs focused on facilitating expressive production and communication is not always possible in carceral spaces, and when it is possible, not all workshops and programs will operate the same way. Different facilities will grant such programs varying degrees of privacy and autonomy. Prisoners participating in these types of programs may be subjected to varying levels of scrutiny and censorship depending on the facility in which they're held, and there are any number of other possible variables, barriers and challenges that could crop up to challenge or complicate the functions of these types of programs. What I want to suggest, though, is that regardless of the specific shape or format they end up taking, writing workshops and other expressive programs represent a potentially powerful way to disrupt and counteract the violence inherent to carceral space by allowing for the performative creation of alternative visions, possibilities, communities and momentary realities. It's important to note, however, that whatever degree of disruption, safety, or resistance such programs make possible are always only temporary, they are always only short reprieves that will sooner or later be shattered by the return to subjection, control and restriction, and that, even in their brief moments of articulation and existence, are always vulnerable to the intrusion of correctional officers and administrators.

For this reason, writing workshops and other programs focused on facilitating expressive production and communication are incapable of ever becoming a solution, in any sustained or meaningful way, to incarceration. Rather, they align with Angela Davis's call to work for the improvement of the situations of those already incarcerated even as the focus remains squarely and firmly on the need for abolition:

“Radical opposition to the global prison industrial complex . . . calls for the abolition of the prison as the dominant mode of punishment but at the same time recognizes the need for genuine solidarity with the millions of men, women, and children who are behind bars. A major challenge of this movement is to do the work that will create more humane, habitable environments for people in prison without bolstering the permanence of the prison system” (103).

Writing workshops and other expressive programs make possible moments of reprieve from the underlying and persistent violence of the prison, therefore helping to establish “more humane, habitable environments” for those already locked away. Yet, precisely because these reprieves are always only temporary moments of relief from what is in fact a general state of violence, they also highlight the need for abolition. Writing workshops have great potential for power, but must operate firmly within a broader perspective that recognizes the need to address the fundamental violence of carceral space with permanent solutions.

\* \* \*

It was the last meeting of our 12-week long writing workshop. Everyone shared one final piece of writing with the group. “Until I started writing, I never really knew what I was capable of. When I come here and I hear all of your ideas and I try to write down my own ideas, it’s just amazing,” he said after reading his piece. “Coming here is like a break from all the drama that goes on around us everyday. It’s like we can get away for a little while and go to our own little worlds.”

#### Works Cited

- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things With Words*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. “The Death of the Author.” *Image—Music—Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. 142-148.
- Butler, Judith. “Imitation and Gender Insubordination.” *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*.
- Ed. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale. New York: Routledge, 1993. 307-320. Print.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003. Print.

## **I Call This Authentic Non-Reality**

*By Jelani Zulante*

I call this authentic non-reality because it truly happened, however, it truly did not – I think. Anyway, during or about 22 May 2014, I did begin to suffer some delusions and paranoia, though I did not know this during the actual happening. What neurological dysfunction caused these disorders I do not know; I do know these delusions and paranoid disorders were being fueled by real events.

My name is Jelani Zulante and I am fifty as winters and summers are counted. I consider myself fairly intelligent and mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually stable, at least. I had considered myself to be standing upon such a rock solid foundation until the foundation literally shifted and I began to sink or rise into a new dimension/reality.

Mental illness! What is it? Before I attempt to recount my journey, I have to avow that it was, in fact, the best two months, the most empowering two months, the most free two months of my entire stay on the planet. I walked with God. I did things which normal mortals could only dream of doing. In fact, that's it! I was really dreaming lucidly. I dreamed a dream for two months. However, the nightmare began once the dream ended and I returned to my physical body only to discover how badly damaged and abused I was. But most frighteningly, I realized that some antagonists from my dream world were real. I mean really real.

On or about 22 May 2014, I understood enough to know that I was suffering some kind of brain trauma. So, against orders of the security staff, for they had refused to help me, I made my own way to the facility hospital at Midstate Correctional Facility. Once arriving at the facility hospital, the medical staff refused to see me but, oddly enough, admitted me into the infirmary. I recall that upon entering the infirmary, rather real or imagined, the right side of my body became weak and I slid to the floor. I do believe that I was left to lay on the floor for about 24 hours without any form of aid or assistance from the medical staff and, from their conversations, I gathered that I'd urinated on my person and was left to lay in that condition. Some time later, the chief of the Mental Health Unit was called to the hospital and it was determined by him and the medical staff that I would be placed in one of the hospital isolation rooms. I do recall that a couple of corrections officers were directed to carry me to the isolation room for one of them stated a couple of times that I "was lucky that witness was around."

I can't say exactly how many days I was in this room because by this point I was suffering a full-fledged psychosis. I was delusional beyond delusional; I was gone! However, I guess that after about four or five days a group of about five corrections officers came to the hospital, opened both doors to the isolation room, entered and began punching and kicking me. I do recall that during this assault, I did inform the responding sergeant that I was a federal agent and

that he had better arrest the officers. This apparently left these officers and sergeant in an unsure state, for a few immediately left the room, including the sergeant.

I was left in the room with these three officers who, after handcuffing me, held me standing facing the wall. There was an officer on each side of me and one at my back. The officer at my back was directing the other two officers as to how they should hold me and, at that time, I did feel the officers thumb and finger at the base of my neck and I almost instantly lost consciousness. I managed to shake off whatever they were trying to do and I began shouting that that was how they killed the inmate in December. (It was said that, prior to my arrival at Midstate in January, an inmate had been killed and it was made to appear that the inmate had hung himself. Now, as I understood the information, the medical examiner concluded that the inmate did not hang himself but could not determine the exact cause of death, so no charges were ever filed.)

So now, during those moments wherein I'm sure that these officers were trying to kill me, some person had alerted the Superintendent about the assault which was taking place and he hurried to the hospital. However, when he did arrive, all of the officers had vacated the room and left me in there alone and handcuffed. Now, from this point, the Superintendent becomes, in my mind, and I believe that, in reality, my protector; he was a good guy who was battling evil from all sides. I still want that part to be real. The next day, I do believe that I heard the Superintendent direct his security team via radio communication that I was to be taken to the 10 building (a locked down area at Midstate) and that I was not to be assaulted. I was handcuffed, shackled, driven to 10 building and, once inside, I was assaulted by two officers who were assigned to work that receiving area and one big blond haired officer who transported me from the hospital.

Now, I have to step back and provide some information about an officer who, I believe, led the assault against me at the hospital. This officer (the convicts call him T-1000) was upset because I did not wish to participate in yet another Alcohol and Substance Abuse Therapy program (ASAT). Deciding to punish me in some way, this officer knowing that I had a bad back chose to change my sleeping location to a top bunk. However, I never climbed into this top bunk but for eight days I slept in a chair until another officer reassigned me to a bottom bunk.

Needless to say, this officer (T-1000) was upset and he had convinced a few inmates into trying to frighten me so that I would request protective custody. The officer wanted me isolated from the rest of the population so that he could have me assaulted by himself and his gang. (In hindsight, I believe this is why I was so willingly admitted to the hospital infirmary without medical evaluation).

Now, judging from the record, I stayed in 10 building from 27 May 2014 until 2 June 2014 without incident and then transferred to the Special Housing Unit

(SHU) 200. Now, I think the following information is important and warrants some investigation. In the SHU 200 I was housed in C2-37 T and my cell mate was a guy who was accused of assaulting officer T-1000 and the two convicts in the cell next to me (C2-36T & C2-36B) were also accused of assaulting this officer T-1000. It was like this officer had his own special section of the SHU wherein he was collecting convicts.

I believe that on the morning of 3 June 2014 I was taken from the cell to see a mental health person because of my psychosis and when I returned to the cell my cell mate had been moved. Since that day I've always had a terrible feeling that something bad happened to this person. Also, a day or two later, the two convicts in the cell next to mine (C2-36 T & C2-36B) were no longer there. I have addressed this concern to several people hoping that they would put my mind to rest on this issue but I remain concerned and sad.

In any event, while I was in this cell I believe that I was totally delusional; however I really believe that a group of officers were concocting all types of excuses that would allow them to enter my cell and assault me. I believe that I did successfully fight off some type of sleeping gas attack; however, judging from the written record (I have no knowledge or recollection of this event) an extraction team removed me from my cell and took me to the hospital on 9 June 2014. The reason given is that an officer reported that I was trying to hang myself by tying one end of a towel around my neck and the other end to the head board. Now, at most, I have a 32" waist and this towel barely wraps around me. One might tie one end around the neck or one end around the bed but you will not do both without magic.

Again, at the hospital, I was placed in an isolation room and I do recall ranting and raving about things that were happening in my mind. I could not talk and I was under the belief at the time that their sleeping gas attack (real or imagined) had damaged my brain. Nevertheless, on 10 June 2014, an extraction team was sent to transfer me to the Mental Health Observation Unit.

In my mind I was in a mental health unit where female staff members were being beaten and raped by corrections officers and Muslim convicts were being collected, housed and systematically murdered. In reality, I was in an observation cell where an officer had thrown a bucket of water on me. The sink and toilet were turned off so I could not drink water or flush the toilet. I had no mattress or bed covers and I was being denied food. All of the above occurred with the full knowledge of the observation unit psychologist.

This is what I believe. During my state of psychosis there was always a group of security staff dedicated to doing good, which included the extraction crew. I say this because every time they showed up they appeared to be protecting me and I really felt safe when they were on the scene. And, somehow, they always managed to show up in the nick of time.

There was also a faction of staff who were bent on doing me serious harm, which included the observation unit psychologist, who antagonized and

seemed to take my psychosis as a personal affront, rather than act in a professional manner.

I am beginning to realize that if I continue to reconstruct these mental delusions then I'd be writing for days, because I went places and did things and spent so much money and talked with loved ones long past and talked with God and communicated with people via mental telepathy. I looked death in the eye and laughed on several different occasions. And when the psychosis passed I found myself in a cell in Upstate Correctional Facility and I felt so utterly empty, alone and scarred and I, I wanted my psychosis back. I really wanted it back. How crazy is that?

## Notes

Documentation of movements:

5/22/14 Infirmary,  
5/23/14 Infirmary Isolation,  
5/24/14 Infirmary Isolation,  
5/25/14 Infirmary Isolation,  
5/26/14 Infirmary Isolation,  
5/27/14 Infirmary Isolation 10 Building Keep Locked,  
6/2/14 Special Housing Unit (SHU) 200,  
6/7/14 Infirmary Isolation,  
6/8/14 MHU – OBS  
6/9/14 SHU  
6/9/14 Infirmary Isolation  
6/10/14 MHU – OBS  
6/20/14 MHU - OBS