

The background of the cover is a photograph of a weathered, light-colored building, likely a prison, with several windows. The windows have green-painted frames and some are covered with dark material. A single horizontal barbed wire strand runs across the middle of the image. At the bottom, there is a dense, multi-layered section of barbed wire. A red rectangular box is positioned on the left side, containing the text 'OPENLINE 2010'. On the right side, there is a white rectangular box containing the title 'OpenLine' in a large, red, cursive font, with the year '2010' in a smaller, black, sans-serif font below it.

OPENLINE 2010

# *OpenLine*

2010

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SAN QUENTIN, CALIFORNIA

2010

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## Table of Contents

<i>Coming Home</i>   MICHAEL C. GALLARDO	4
<i>Eclipse</i>   JULIUS “KIMYA” HUMPHREY, SR.	6
<i>Looking for Life</i>   WALTER C. KILER	7
<i>Questions for Ananda, the River Spirit</i>   WATANI STINER	8
<i>From Innocence to Inmate</i>   DAVID MONROE, JR.	11
<i>God Forgive Us</i>   NICOLAS WŁODARCZYK	15
<i>Politics: for Politicians or Prisoners?</i>   DEREK MEADE	17
<i>A San Quentin Tradition is Dying Out</i>   QUINTON C. WALKER	19
<i>Vicious</i>   SEAN MALIS	21
<i>Fredome</i>   TROY THOMAS A.K.A. CELLTIME INK	22
<i>November 13, 2009</i>   HENRY EDWARD FRANK	23
<i>An Atavistic Idiot Speaks</i>   JOHN O. NEBLETT	27
<i>So, Daddy Won’t Beg Them Anymore</i>   WATANI STINER	28
<i>Blind Girl</i>   JULIUS “KIMYA” HUMPHREY, SR.	29
<i>Signs of Life</i> (collage and essay)   WALTER C. KILER	30
<i>The Adventures of Kayla and Alicia</i>   FRANK VALDIVIA	33
<i>Animus (Prison Riot)</i>   Sean Malis	49
<i>Everybody’s Got Something to Hide Except for Me and My Monkey</i>   MICHAEL FRENCH	50
<i>Whole Rest, Abstinence, and Pieces of Me</i>   FELIX LUCERO	52
<i>Three Strikes</i>   DEREK MEADE	55
<i>I Am</i>   PHOEUN YOU	56
<i>Best Kept Secrets</i>   C.S. ANGELES	57
<i>A Little Bit of Americana, A Touch of Grace</i>   PETER BOMMERITO	61
<i>from A Course in Reconciliation</i>   KENNETH R. BRYDON	63
<i>Reflections from the Cement Coffin: E-motion Observed</i>   LASHAWN TIAMU MILES – NOBODY	69
<i>A Letter from the Inside</i>   JONATHAN WILSON	78
<i>Contributors’ Notes</i>	80

## *Coming Home*

A note from outgoing editor, MICHAEL C. GALLARDO

I am coming home, after almost nine years. I am so excited. Being home has always been such a thrill for me.

When I was younger, I had loved to watch Mama in the kitchen prepare lunch, or dinner maybe. I remember how I watched her from the living room, behind the screen door, as she tended to her plants in the garden. Papa was always around the house fixing things. Then once in a while he walked to where Mama was and they kissed and hugged for a very long time. They almost looked like they had been dancing to an imaginary song only the two of them could've heard. I had loved how they looked and smiled at each other. They seemed to have been sharing together a forever endless joke.

My older brother and I continuously conspired what jokes to play on our sisters and younger brother. We usually settled to scare them. We took turns with hiding behind the doors or inside the closets. Mama and Papa chased us all over the house as soon as someone started crying. Then after Mama and Papa's lectures about "brotherly and sisterly love," we'd settle ourselves in a circle in the living room, taking turns laughing and sharing stories with each other.

Before I went away, life had gradually changed. Mama seldom cooked and Papa stopped fixing things at home. The cooking and the fixing have been delegated to us kids, to whomever was around. But Mama and Papa still kissed and hugged for a very long time every chance they got. Although a lot slower, they still danced to the same imaginary song. They still looked and smiled at each other. The forever endless joke was still alive.

The jokes my older brother and I played on our sisters and younger brother had all but ceased. We could no longer fit easily behind doors and inside closets, so we had to stop scaring them. Throughout the years, they were also learning how to scare us back. We are somehow a little older and perhaps a little wiser, sharing stories in our circle about our kids and our adult lives. How we all loved to be home.

Now it has been almost nine years since I was home. I am so excited. I can't wait to watch Mama and Papa dance to the imaginary music. I long to sit back in the circle with my brothers and sisters. I can't wait for my turn to share stories. I have so many stories. Especially about how much I have missed being home.

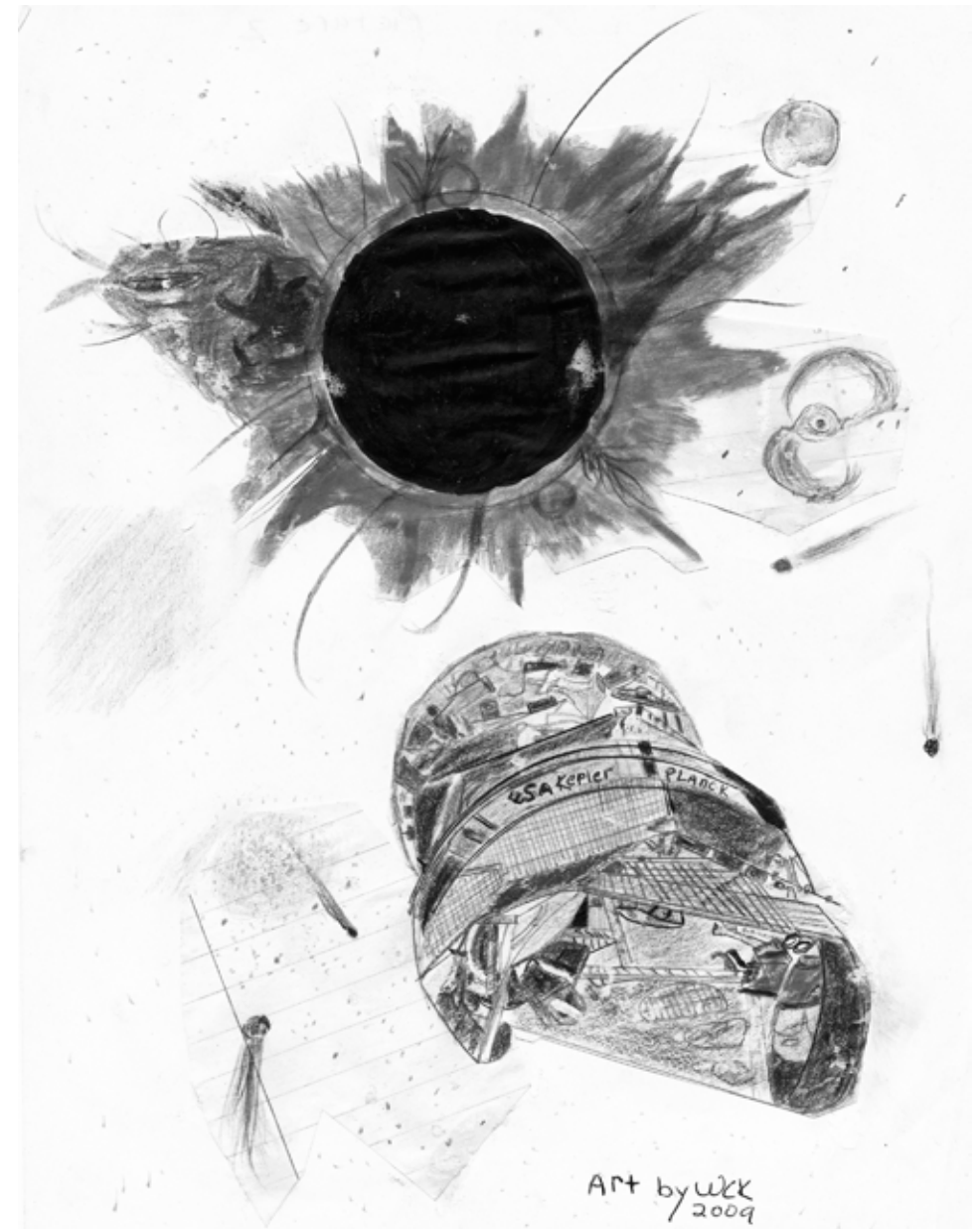
## *Eclipse*

JULIUS "KIMYA" HUMPHREY, SR.

He sat looking up into the heat of the sunlight, amazed how something 93,000,000 miles away could reach him. He felt so insignificant as he thought of GOD's great creation. The infinite stars that stretch across the universe—galaxy to galaxy and beyond.

As the moon moved slowly in front of the sun, repeating something it has been doing long before life existed on earth, he—a human being—felt so small. The darkness engulfing him until he became a part of it, taking the light the way death takes life until it exists no more. He sat there alone in total darkness not wanting it to end—praying—screaming—"please don't end." No sound other than the ticking of a clock somewhere in the distance.

In his mind he imagined the rooster that long ago crowed in his neighbor's backyard—confused as the sunlight slowly reappeared. Then he watched as the light became brighter and brighter filling the space around him, rushing in through the key-hole on the big door. Never had he experienced an eclipse in such a way. It meant everything for him, as he sat in the cell next to the gas-chamber—waiting.



## Questions for Ananda, the River Spirit

WATANI STINER

Ananda Sees

The Living Feels

But Only God Knows...

*After spending twenty years as an escaped fugitive in exile, Watani Stiner walked into the U.S. Embassy in Suriname, a small South American country immersed in political and economic turmoil, and offered to trade his freedom for the safety and welfare of his family. Distrustful and uncertain of his decision to surrender, he sat quietly alongside the Suriname river and invoked the name "Ananda," a Suriname river spirit...*

My ever flowing companion. My refuge and my confidante. I have sat down beside you so many times before. I have pitched you pebbles and paid you in coins; poured into you my deepest secrets, and I've even tossed you a silver ring. I have sought your counsel, asked for your permission; and now I beg you for your guidance.

The whole time I was inside that Embassy I had wanted to rescind my decision to surrender and retract my footsteps, but my legs refused to carry a wavering heart.

What do you see, Ananda? What will happen to my family? What will become of me? I sit with you in fear; fear that I have made an unwise decision. My children, all so very young. What will become of their future, Ananda? What will be the price of their childhood?

I cannot provide for my family here, Ananda. Is there another way? How long before I see them again? Is it not too late, Ananda? Another life hidden inside of me makes exile a lonely place.

Has the United States really changed that much, Ananda: inequality? injustice? discrimination? I remember a different time, another place, a younger perspective. What do you see, Ananda?

And I remember Bob Wells, too, Ananda. An old convict back then. Been in prison some forty years when I got there. Such a damn long time for such an old man! Two times my life span. Yeah, I do remember him. I remember the day when old Bob declared, "No more violence for me." And I can still see his eyes staring at me, Ananda, offering a tiny piece of his wisdom. "Looka here youngster," he said, "let me tell you something," always removing his dentures to make a point. "When you get my age, son, you put down your weapon and you pick up a philosophy." Didn't understand what old Bob meant back then, but I sure as hell understand and can laugh about it now. Wise man was that old Bob Wells. As my Pops would say: "A lot of true things are said in a joke, my boy, go ahead and laugh but don't you forget it!" What do you see, Ananda? Twenty years ago, old Bob must be dead.

And Ananda, a part of me really wants to go home. Never thought I'd miss that racist land where I was born. That land of milk and honey and racial injustice.

And I want to see my baby brother again, Ananda: Gregory, it's been too long. Got some things I need to ask him... Mama's funeral? Daddy's death? Got some things I need to tell him, too. Can you see their faces, Ananda, a glimpse of their hearts?

And what has become of Larry Jr. and Lionel Ray, two small sons I left behind? All grown up now. What have they become? Too many miles, so many years between us. Would they want to see me again, Ananda? So tell me, Ananda, what do you see?

And what about my two baby sisters, Ananda? All grown up now, and with grandkids, too. How have they been? So many childhood memories invading my thoughts... Do they ever speak of me, Ananda? Older brother... Uncle Watani... Reveal to me what you see, Ananda.

And what about Mama, Ananda? May she rest in peace... Those unfulfilled promises 15 years too late. So many things I never had a chance to say to her, Ananda. So much trouble caused. I'll always love you, Mama, a sacred promise I shall always keep.

Imagine that, Ananda, I'm actually turning myself in.... Surrender-



ing... Volunteering to go back to prison. I really must be losing my mind, Ananda. I ain't forgot about that place. A cesspool of caged souls and wounded spirits. Oh shit! What have I done, Ananda? To myself...to my family.... Please tell me, Ananda, what do you see?

I remember so well that place, Ananda: the prison politics, and all those one-wrong-move-and-you-lose-your-life situations. Turning myself in? Is this really such a sane idea, Ananda? Is it still not too late to change my mind? Betcha I could run so fast, so far, across so many rivers, cover myself so deep inside the Amazon that they could not find me... But I told them I was here, Ananda. Do you see this fool in me?

And Ananda, why would they make a deal with me? I escaped from a prison, a fugitive from their discriminatory justice. Could it be a setup? A sinister trap for me? But Ananda, they were all so accommodating inside that US embassy. And when I told them who I was and why I had come, expecting them to grab and arrest me.... They just smiled warmly and said: "Please wait right here Mr. -err-rah—"

"Stiner," I replied, reclaiming my abandoned identity. And that Embassy woman was so polite, so trusting; and she even allowed me to leave, right past that Marine posted near the door. I am an escaped fugitive. Has the United States really changed that much, Ananda? Do you see a trap for me, Ananda?

And Ananda, perhaps (just perhaps...) could you tell me if I am no longer a fugitive? Has the statute of limitations expired on my alleged crime? Am I really a free man, Ananda? Then again, there is no statute of limitations on murder-conspiracy. What do you see, Ananda?

But Ananda, I've already served five years before my prison escape. Can't be that many more years left to do. Seven years on a life sentence as far as I can remember. Five extra years for the future of my children would certainly be worth the sacrifice, Ananda. And tell me, what do you see? I can survive in there, Ananda. I know I can. But Ananda, how can I be sure that you are really who they say you are? And what if you cannot see what they say you can see? And what if I am only talking to myself? Only God knows...

## *From Innocence to Inmate*

DAVID MONROE, JR.

Going through a rough childhood filled with an abusive and alcoholic father and drug-addicted mother, poverty was just the beginning. My parents divorced and my father became a ghost to me. My older brother was sentenced to fifteen years to life in prison for murder and a few years later my little brother was killed. I was only 11 years old at the time so one can only imagine the heartache I felt after losing my little brother. What made it so hard to deal with all of these years is that I have always blamed myself for his death. It all happened at the end of our school year, and even though we were poor, my mother gave us money for getting good grades. Being that I was a straight A student at the time, I got a little more money than my brother did. Like we always did, we went to the arcade to play video games. My little brother brought one of his friends with us and when we got there I parted ways with them. I literally went to the other side of the arcade so that I wouldn't be around him and his friend. An hour or so had passed and they came over to me while I was playing a race car game and asked if they could have a couple extra quarters so they could keep playing and leave with me. The biggest mistake of my life was telling him "no" and to go home. I can't help but know that his last minutes on this earth were spent feeling sad, unwanted, unloved, and scared. Moments after he left, he was run over by a drunk driver in an 18-wheeler diesel who ran a red light as my brother was crossing the street in front of the arcade...

What made this so much more difficult to deal with is that I had spent most of his life picking on him and mistreating him. I never showed him how much I really did love him. It is the same old theme of people losing a loved one on bad terms. I was left with a million regrets and no one to blame but myself. I needed to share this with someone but my parents were so overwhelmed with grief that they neglected us. This left me

without any outlets to grieve myself and I quickly became overwhelmed by the feelings of being unloved and alone. I have never been able to get out of my head that all of this could have been avoided for 25 cents. Even worse, that my baby brother's life wasn't even worth 25 cents to me. This was the beginning of the end of my innocence.

I spent the next four years of my life burying all of this deep down inside of me so that I would never have to deal with it or expose my shame. When my mom would ask me why I didn't want to go to school, I would tell her that I blamed school for killing my brother because we would never have gotten the money to go to the arcade and he would have never been killed. Not knowing any better and not knowing what to tell me, she let me skip school. Over time, I started to believe my own lie and truly felt that school was to blame. This led to me all but dropping out. In addition to not wanting to go to school, I also didn't want to stay home because I didn't have anyone to turn to there. So I stopped going to school and started hanging out in the streets with thugs and gang members. As awkward as it may sound, they made me feel loved and appreciated more than my own family ever had. I was all but completely damaged on the inside but I never showed it. I would simply act out violently and transfer my pain onto others. This was my only means of relief because I didn't have any other tools to work with. However, this relief was only temporary and I found myself committing these acts of violence every day and these acts progressively worsened. Ironically, I was rewarded for my negative behavior with love and acceptance while most other kids were punished for it. While this may have confused me, the fact that it did not make sense was irrelevant to me. All I knew was that I finally felt accepted and loved.

Unfortunately, it didn't take long for all of that acceptance and love to vanish. At fifteen, I killed an innocent 16-year-old in broad daylight. On the surface, I wanted my friends to know that I was down and willing to die for them as I saw it to be a sign of loyalty. *A loyalty that I never showed my own brother.* The guilt and shame of knowing the truth made me even more vulnerable to proving it. But at such a young age, I was unable to

identify the signs of my broken heart and insecurities. The truth is that I was crying out for help from deep within me but with my only means of communication being to act out in violence, I did just that. Logically, this has never made sense, but I didn't know any better.

The sad truth is that I didn't see Eliasar Garcia as a victim. I didn't even see him as a human being. He was simply a means to an end. Through him, I was able to unleash all of the anger and frustration I had buried deep within me toward my father, the death of my brother, and other misfortunes. As tragic as my life experiences may sound, none of them are more tragic than the loss of Eliasar Garcia's life. This was an innocent young man who had his life senselessly cut short because I was unable to deal with my own life responsibly. Unfortunately, I cannot return the life I have taken; I can only make sure that the loss of his life does not go in vain. And like the saying goes, you can't help others until you've helped yourself. It is for this very reason that I have taken full advantage of all the rehabilitative programs that have been offered to me such as the Victim Offender Education Group (VOEG), Incarcerated Men Putting Away Childish Things (IMPACT), and Teaching Responsibility Utilizing Sociological Training (TRUST). Participation in these groups has given me insight into my past and the courage to face the truth.

My name is David Albert Monroe, Jr., and I am 27 years old now. I have since accepted the truth that school is not to blame for my brother's death and I am now a Patten University graduate. I am also a member of a youth mentoring program inside of San Quentin State Prison called San Quentin's Utilization of Inmate Resources, Experiences, and Studies (SQUIRES). Among many other things, I have completely changed my life and am now happily married. Most importantly, I am no longer that same fifteen-year-old lost kid. I am now a mature and responsible young man. I am a loving and caring person again and I have dedicated the rest of my life to education and giving back by helping troubled youth in the name of Mr. Eliasar Garcia with the hope of stopping youth violence and the senseless deaths of people like Mr. Garcia. While I cannot tell him in person, I owe him my life's accomplishments as the sadness of



his death at my hands has propelled me to change my life and become a better person. It is not only my life that he has saved, but also the hundreds of other kids who have been touched by this story and have chosen to walk away from the criminal lifestyle. The sad truth is, I could have been saved a long time ago, too; I just didn't realize that anybody cared enough to try.

Response to youth violence should not always be about punishment and incarceration, but about understanding the problem. Kids do not kill each other because it is fun to do. They do it because they do not fully understand how to deal with life's pressures and struggles. They become so overwhelmed by their emotions and insecurities that they become ticking time bombs. The solution is simple: "deal with the problem now or pick up the pieces later." Guidance is the key.

## *God Forgive Us*

NICOLAS WLODARCZYK

How can I feel joy when my bliss is void?  
Still paranoid from the pistol noise  
Little boy in the streets with pimps & hoes  
Wonder why all these adults still itch their nose

No longer innocent to the vindictive Nature of Humanity  
Before my eyes opened I could see insanity

Knew the world was crooked as a child  
Vigilance manifested from a wild environment  
Village was vicious  
And the villagers' villainous actions were visible to my third eye

Conceived before my time so my mind ran rapid  
Trying to find some answers I swear this crime a cancer  
And it's spreaded all through me  
Threaded all through me

You could see it in my jeans and I don't mean Levi's  
See I'm, a seed in a lost world  
Breeded from a lost girl

Drugs got the best of her  
still think no less of her

She a queen in my eyes  
And my eyes could never lie  
Never cry, though I sigh  
Brought up in a city where the little kids kill and die

If you don't understand please let me simplify  
Kill or be killed got the will of a warrior  
They say it never rains in Cali but it's pouring here

I think God is shedding tears for the orphans here  
Look at the positive, at least they ain't aborting here  
Wonder why we in the streets? Well, we feel important here

Now that's a perfect definition of the reason  
We scared to be abandoned and the streets never leaving  
Tell me do you know what it feel like never eating?  
Or never speaking, beat if you peek in  
House wasn't decent  
Never could be a home so we roam thieving  
But far from a thief leave the judgment to the precinct

Because they the ones that lock us up, beat us up and pop us up  
Hand cuffs in, billy club you tell you can't moan  
They say silence the violence but that be our tantrum

Bullets be our tears  
And the sacrifice our peers

God forgive us but this life you gave us, weird.

## *Politics: for Politicians or Prisoners?*

DEREK MEADE

Dear Mom,

Hi Mom, how's everyone doing? Tell Dad and my two baby sisters that I love them. Oh, and don't forget to give Julie a pat and scratch behind the ears. Dogs miss people, too, I'm sure of it.

Well, I'm here in prison again trying to make the best use of time. There aren't too many self-help programs for us to do. Barely any jobs either so that leaves us a bored bunch of people. Everyone is in everyone's business and throats. Sorry I'm here again; you raised me better than this. At least you tried to.

Some things around here have really been bothering me, Mom. I'm knowing what it feels like to be a racist, in a way that's almost out of my control. See I'm White (as you know), and as a White man in prison we have to follow certain White rules. You won't believe this but I'm serious, as funny as it may sound.

If I make a friend here, he had better be White. See if he's Black, Asian or half of the Mexican population, I have to treat him as less of a person. As a White guy I'm not allowed to eat after, drink after, play cards with, play basketball with, play handball with or work out with anyone unless they are White or half of the Mexican population. If I do, then all the other White guys will shun me or do their best to beat me up. It makes no sense; I feel as if I'm back in the 1700 or 1800 United States instead of 2009. I guess one bright side on this issue is I'm allowed to share my food with a non-White, but they're not allowed to share their food with me.

I know Grandma and Grandpa raised you better and those morals were attempted by you to be passed on to me. I feel as though I'm letting you down, Mom. Here I am trying to change my life and all it seems to be doing is getting worse.

As I look around, I blame a large part of this problem on the prison. If they kept all of us working, going to school or in any number of self-help programs, then people would have their own business to attend to rather than get into mine.

Please don't misunderstand this letter, Mom, I'm not in any danger and know how you worry. Don't. I'm playing by the rules just fine. Of course I'm not the only White guy here who feels this way. A couple of us talk discreetly from time to time about this sad state of affairs. Don't worry about us being heard, we just whisper.

Can't wait for your next letter. I like having something to look forward to. Certainly can't look forward to change around here. Not any time soon, anyway. Send you all of my love.

Your Loving Son,  
White guy

## *A San Quentin Tradition Is Dying Out*

QUINTON C. WALKER

An age-old tradition of segregation and separation known as the color line is showing signs of becoming something of the past, at San Quentin. In past years, the color line has been the cause of riots, chaos, and even death, when its victims have broken some of its "rules." Rules such as eating, smoking, or drinking "behind" prisoners of another race. Today, however, in some areas, such as sports, education, and housing, this practice is dying out.

In years gone by, sports were visibly one of the most segregated aspects in prison life. Sports were only played between members of the same race. However, today that practice is dissolving. Twenty-seven years ago, when I first entered prison, I was told that inmates played sports only with members of their own race. Penalties for breaking this "rule" were severe, and as a result, could possibly lead to death. Death was ministered by a number of ways. For instance, a pipe to the back of the head, strangulation, or being thrown off a fifth tier were some of the methods. Still, the preferred method was a homemade knife plunged into the heart, back, or neck. However, today, a quarter of a century later, I have just left the tennis court where I played against men of other races. What's more is that, as I look around the exercise yard daily, I see prisoners of each race involved in many sports and enjoying themselves. I also see very little evidence of those past years when the color line was more visible and vibrant.

Additionally, education has also been a useful tool and a key element in helping to dissolve "the color line." Moreover, it is through education that awareness is taught. Awareness empowers the students to break through barriers that protect this practice of segregation and separation. Penetration of these barriers forces the issue to the surface, and then it is discussed. As the students are confronted by the harsh realities of this

way of life, they become less willing to participate in its practice and are more willing in finding ways to dissolve it. The useful tool of education is where it begins.

Many old-time prisoners say that integrated housing won't work in California prisons because segregation and separation are traditions that won't ever change, but I disagree. Clearly, the color line is fading out in some areas, such as sports and education, for example. It has also begun spreading to the area of housing. For instance, three years ago I was in prison at High Desert (in Susanville, California) when integrated-cell living was just starting. High Desert is a hard-core Level IV prison. I did not hear of any incidents happening. In fact, if integration can happen in a prison such as High Desert, it could easily happen in any prison, even Level II San Quentin. Furthermore, in San Quentin there are rumors of integrated housing starting in six months. I spoke to inmates of different races concerning this matter. The majority stated it was "no big deal." Many young prisoners who are just coming in feel similar in that integrated housing is a very positive step toward doing away with the old tradition of segregation and separation: "the color line."

An old tradition in San Quentin is dying out, in some areas. In sports and education there is very little evidence it ever existed. Furthermore, integrated housing is on the verge of becoming a reality at San Quentin, according to a prison spokesperson on the five o'clock news. Additionally, because of those prisoners of all races who had the courage to stand up and say, "enough is enough," the color line is rapidly becoming something of the past. Moreover, like-minded prisoners should all take a stance against the practice in order to eradicate it. Lastly, be the difference that helps to completely wipe this old color line tradition out for good.

## *Vicious*

SEAN MALIS

Encircling circles circulate  
Yin and Yang in a dry pond  
Boldly going where  
Everyone  
has gone  
before going there  
again.  
BUT  
now it's  
Rotten white  
Sterile black  
outside on the  
inside and  
Down and out  
because Yang was  
up and in  
the one called Yin,  
of life, my wife,  
again.  
Now breathe.  
Or  
don't.



*November 13, 2009*

HENRY EDWARD FRANK

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! I wake up to a flashlight beam on my face. "Huh?" I respond. "Get up, pack your stuff, you're transferring," the C.O. says.

"Wow, I am actually leaving." I had hoped that I would have awoken around 7:00 AM still in 3-North-13-Low. That was not an option now. I lie in my bunk for another five minutes, going over the last two days, saying goodbye to the friends and family the creator had blessed me with at San Quentin. I feel so relieved that I got the opportunity to say goodbye to the people that contributed to my life, the ones that helped shape me into the person I am today. I cried all day Monday, mourning the friendships that will be severed by my transfer. I heard all kinds of loving and thoughtful remarks about how I affected individual lives. I was happy for confirmation of the connection I believe I had with people. I felt contentment within my spirit and a sense that my life at San Quentin was meaningful. I feel tears welling up, so I get up and start to take apart my bed and I get dressed in 3-North-13-Low for the last time.

On my way back down from my cell, I just can't leave in the middle of the night without a sound. I stop at six or seven cells to let them know, "they weren't lying, I'm gone." They are in disbelief as well. I am feeling overwhelmed again so I go back to my cell. My bunk is up, surprisingly. I should have known because he is a light sleeper as it is, I mean if a piece of lint gets pushed by the air coming through the vent he hears it. I grab another box and head down stairs and drop it off with my other one. I'm already sweating and I still have one more to bring down. I head back and before I get to the stairs here comes my bunk of about three years with my last box. As he passes by I say, "My other boxes are in front of the cop station."

I stop by a couple more houses (cells) and some people don't wake up. I whisper good-bye to them and say a prayer for each brother. I return to my cell for the last time, make sure I have everything I want to take with

me. I went over with my bunkie, James, what goes to whom. I know he will do what he says he will do. That is why I lived with him for the last three years. I step out of my cell and say, "Well it has been great, bunkie, thank you for everything." As we shake hands he gives me his mom's address and I give him a hug and he says, "And thank you for everything, too." I take off down the tier.

It is 2:00 AM and all of us that are transferring, about 46 of us, have our boxes on the carts and we head out to R&R. I look up into the sky to see the stars and nothing. It is pretty cloudy; I'm glad I grabbed my sweatshirt.

I'm sitting on the bench outside of R&R and looking at the yard and remembering all the great times I had on it. From the sweat ceremonies to the Michael Franti concert, to the Breast Cancer Walk-A-Thon, to the medicine ball workouts with Arylis, to my weekly Sunday night volleyball game with the guys, all the way down to just walking across the yard to our class with June and Carol. I feel the throat feeling just before you cry.

I look around and see if anyone else wants to cry; nope, I'm the only one. I think to myself, "Is there something wrong with me or is there something wrong with everyone else?" I don't come to an answer; I accept it for what it is.

I don't cry, but I want to. They call me, distracted at the right time. I pick up my boxes and take them in. I set them in the line of boxes and step into a holding cell. It's about the size of a dog cage in a pound and there are twelve of us in it. I am in the first cage of three that is across from three other cages as well, which are all full. People are squeezed together on benches, two people standing up, three people on the floor, which I am one of, and one man sitting on the toilet.

It is entirely way too loud and everyone except for me is talking about everything and anything. I don't get irritated because they are all meeting needs of some sort. I don't even try to figure out what needs they are.

An officer starts reading off names and tells us, "If your name is called step into the big holding cage." After everyone is called we get locked

in and given a bag lunch, with the infamous peanut butter sandwich. I'm not trying to eat anything because I'm going to be on a bus for who knows how long and don't want my stomach adding more stress to my life. I give it away.

Around 5:00 AM the transportation officers show up. They start carting off our boxes to be put on the bus. As everyone crowds around me staring at the boxes as if they are a singing frog, I think, "Get a freaking grip, people, our property is just getting put on a bus." About fifteen minutes later I hear an officer say we only got room for about five more boxes. I turn around and clearly see three boxes with FRANK written on them and another stack of boxes next to them. "Please grab my boxes," I think to myself. He picks a box from the stack beside mine and places it into the cart, then two then three, he stops, pulls the boxes out and says, "This dude has ten boxes, he can wait." Whew who! I celebrate too soon; apparently five of the boxes have already been put on the bus so the other five get pushed in the cart and I get screwed.

We get called out of the cage one by one; I am actually relieved with the ritual because our ride is about to begin and the sooner it starts the sooner it will be over. I'm fighting the tears again. I'm thinking, don't cry on the bus, Hen, don't cry on the bus."

To stop my hurting and sadness I begin to create enemy images of the administration and the CSR board. "Why are they doing this to me? Don't they realize how much good I have done here; don't they realize how much good I will continue to do here? Would they care if they knew how much San Quentin means to me and what it has done for me? They are heartless bastards."

I catch myself and let go of those thoughts. Instead I thank the creator for letting me be a part of the lives of the people of San Quentin. I thank him for letting the people of San Quentin be a part of my life. I thank him for all the opportunities he has given me to grow as an individual, to let me understand my spirituality and who I am and who I want to be, for letting me achieve my A.A. degree, for letting me become an I.M.P.A.C.T. and N.V.C. facilitator, for letting me become a GED and R.E.A.C.H. tutor,



for letting me truly connect with other people, to care about people I don't even know. Thank you for the life you have blessed me with. Thank you for letting me be a part of the Alliance for C.H.A.N.G.E. and I could go on forever.

Then in my head I think of everyone by name and visualize each face and thank them for their friendship, understanding, acceptance, love and authenticity. Before I move on to the next person—I sent this message spiritually—I hope people felt it as they woke up and got ready for work, “I love you and I pray for the best for you.”

The cops come aboard and give their speech. We are locked in and the motor roars as we pull out of San Quentin's R&R to begin the next phase of my path to freedom.

## *An Atavistic Idiot Speaks*

JOHN O. NEBLETT

I saw/heard myself  
through another's eyes/ears today.

And since everything I say/write  
can/will be used against me—

I've said/written all I can safely  
say/write about it for now/ever.

*So, Daddy Won't Beg Them Anymore*

WATANI STINER

There is no compassion  
in parole-board rooms  
where justice should prevail.  
I have pleaded long enough.  
So, Daddy won't beg them anymore.

One-and-a-half decades separated from you,  
time has surely taken its toll.  
They stole the years, kidnapped the dreams  
I negotiated for you.  
So, Daddy won't beg them anymore.

I wanted to curse them when I heard,  
*Parole Denied!*  
But only a whisper found its way:  
*What about my children?*  
So, Daddy won't beg them anymore.

I will not seek their sympathy ever again—  
Sons and Daughters cast aside.  
They have taken everything meaningful  
far away from me.  
But I shall not surrender my dignity.

So, Daddy won't beg them  
anymore!

*Blind Girl*

JULIUS "KIMYA" HUMPHREY, SR.

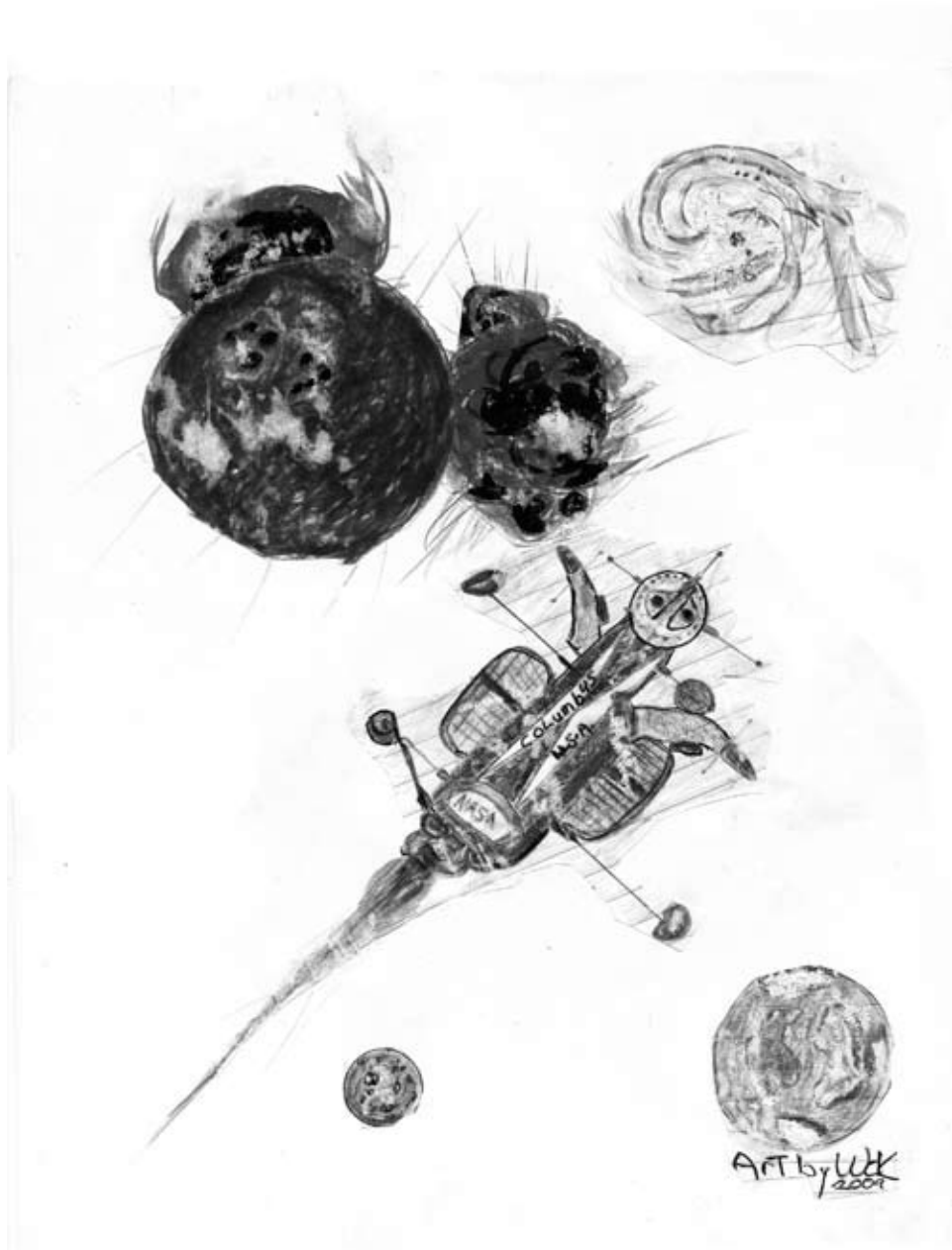
Every morning she looked out her bedroom window, holding back the sheet that served as a curtain. In the field across the street, years of broken wine bottles sparkled like gold nuggets against the early sun. Excited she looked on – she always looked on, further and further into the distance until her eyes reached the high rise buildings that sat miles apart from her world.

"Nik-Nik. Baby...you gonna be late for school," her mother yelled. "And come eat yoe mush befoe it get cold and hard."

Folding the extra length of her socks under her feet, she slipped her shoes on and smiled into the mirror, admiring the old dress her mother bought for her the day before at the 99-Cent Store.

Walking to school the chaos was wide awake, huddled in groups in front of Rock's Liquor. As she passed a voice shouted, "One more ice cream season, lil-sis." Her inexperienced mind was too young to unravel such a metaphor. Eyes refusing to see the images of life wasted all around her – rejecting them. "No! You're not welcome here," she whispered.

Every morning was the same. The window, her socks, the chaos as she walked to school. She told herself she would not always have to live in the world that surrounded her. "I can have something better – I will have something better," she said. Smiling into the early morning sun as she looked out the window to the high rise buildings that sat miles apart from her world.



*Signs of Life: In the Alpha Centauri system, a G2v type star like our sun, looking for an Earth-like planet*  
WALTER C. KILER

## *Signs of Life*

WALTER C. KILER

When I was thirteen, I got my first telescope. It wasn't much, a three and a half inch Newtonian. It was small, but I thought it was great. It was made by the American Sky Scope Company. I bought it in 1953, when I saw it advertised in *Reader's Digest* magazine. I purchased it to see the Mars opposition (this is when Mars comes close to Earth.) I saw Mars like I had never seen it before. This I believe was the moment when I realized that astronomy would be a lifetime hobby.

Over fifty years later, I was very fortunate to meet the astronaut Buzz Aldrin. He was in Oakland, California, to dedicate the new Chabot Space and Science Center in the Oakland hills. The year was 2000. It was to be an eighty million dollar facility. I was present when he gave a lecture on the then new International Space Station, given at the old Chabot Observatory location. I was able to ask him when was the space station to be completed. He smiled and said, "It depends on those Russians keeping on schedule." I believe that this lecture helped me keep my interest in astronomy going. Never in a million years did I ever think I would ever meet the second man to walk on the moon back in 1969.

Due to this experience, I want to help people learn about the importance of astronomy and what it means to the future of the United States.

Many people feel that spending money on the space program is a complete waste of money. It would be better spent on helping the poor. There is some truth to this statement, but I believe we need good things to look forward to. Our space program, NASA, is doing this beyond our wildest expectations. The space program is only costing less than 1% of our national budget! We spend nearly 50% of our national budget on national defense.

New ideas have been spawned by the space program: Velcro, perfectly round bearings, stronger plastics and metals, to name a few. The list goes on and on.

I believe in progress; astronomy has given us a new view of and information on the Earth, stars, galaxies, black holes, and the Big Bang, which was the start of creation as we know it. We have found over 250 new planets circling distant stars in our own galaxy alone!

Buzz Aldrin and other scientists have come up with various means that are practical and will allow us to travel to Mars, and stay there a short time, within the 25 next years!

I believe this quest will eventually lead us to the ultimate answers that humans have been trying to find since life on Earth began some 3.5 billion years ago: the meaning of life itself, the real truth, the belief in a higher being we call God.

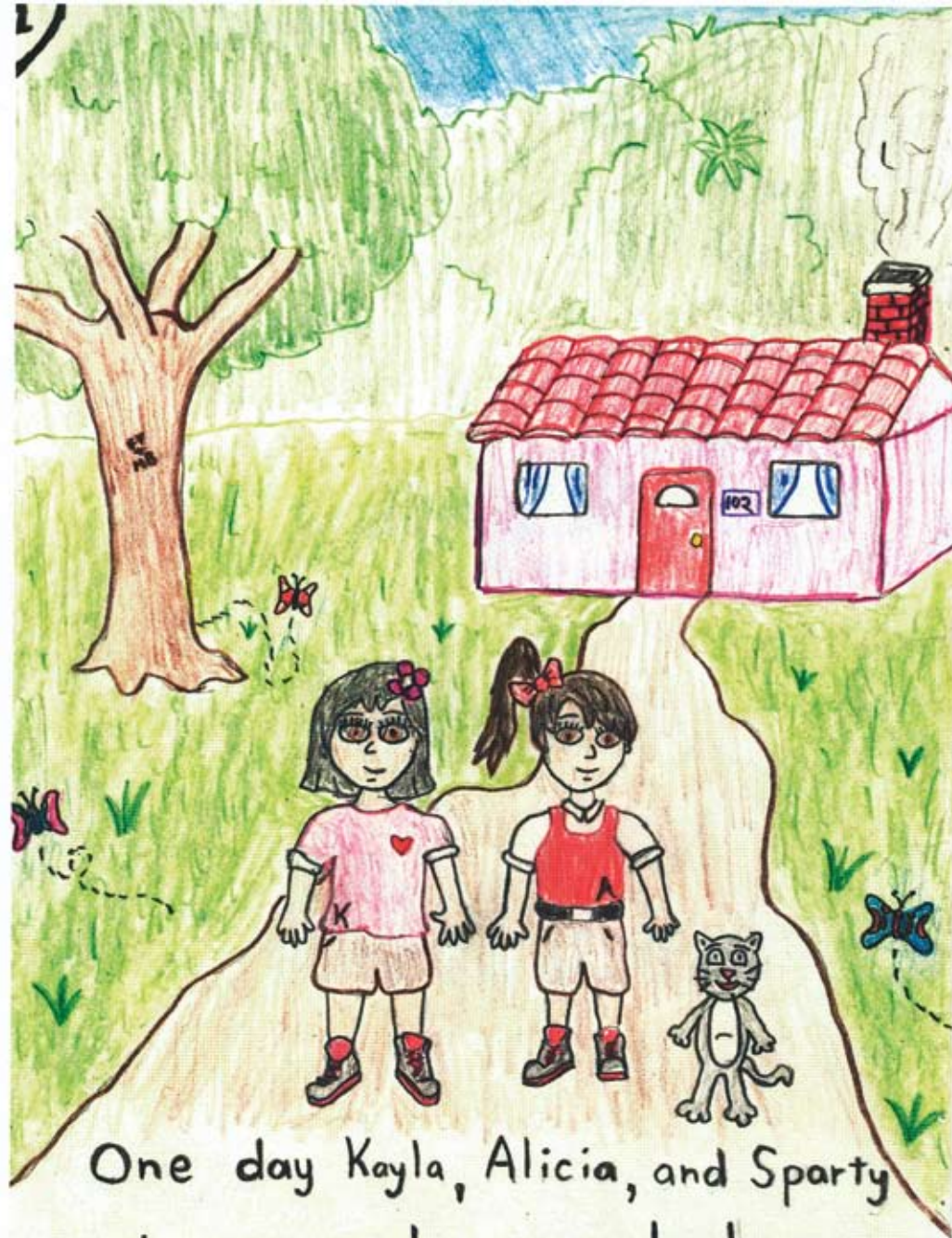
# The Adventures of

# Kayla and Alicia

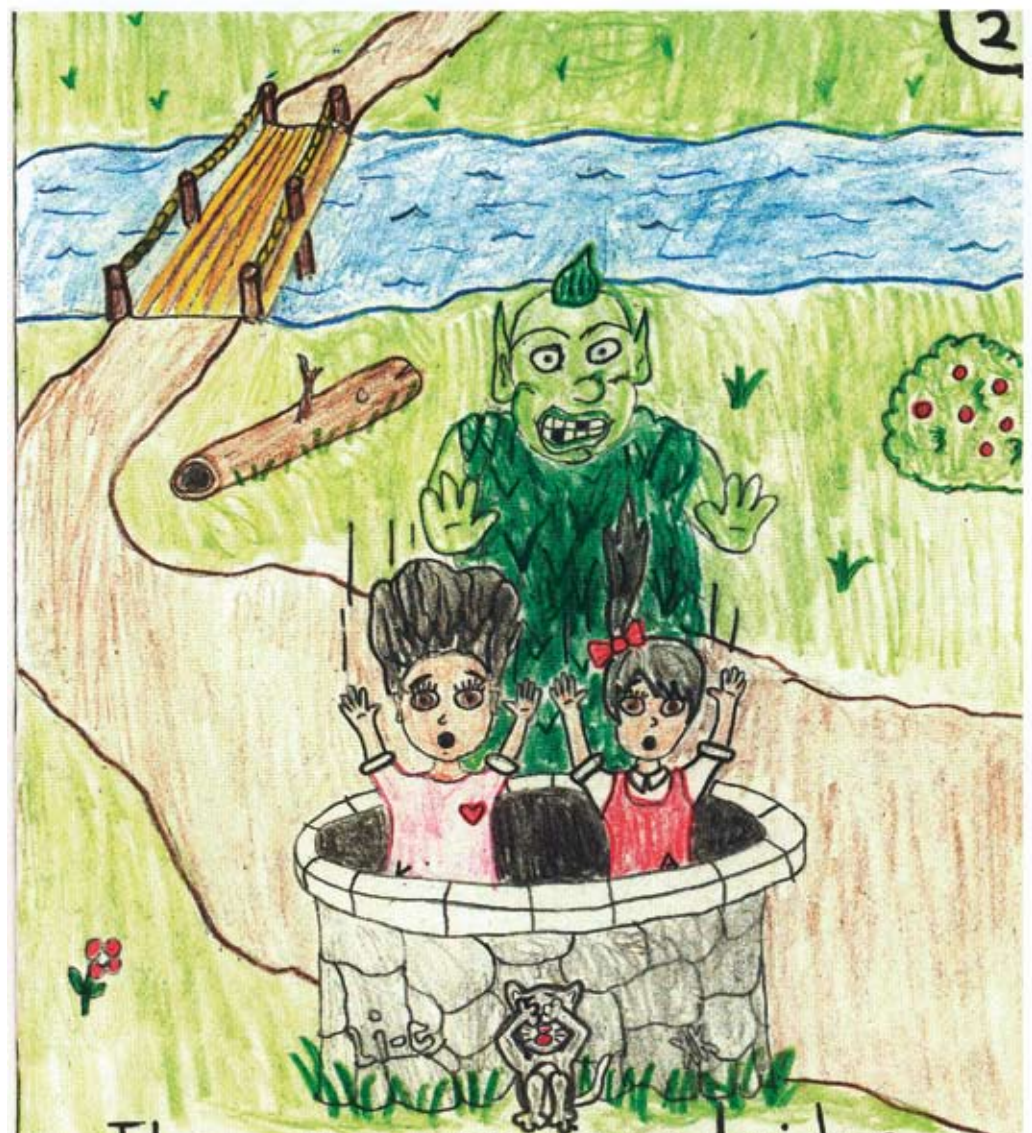
Written and  
Drawn by  
Frank Valdivia

with special  
appearance by  
  
Spartacus





One day Kayla, Alicia, and Sparty went on an adventure looking for treasure



They were crossing a bridge when a troll came up growling it was his bridge and threw them in a well. Everybody knows trolls don't like cute girls.



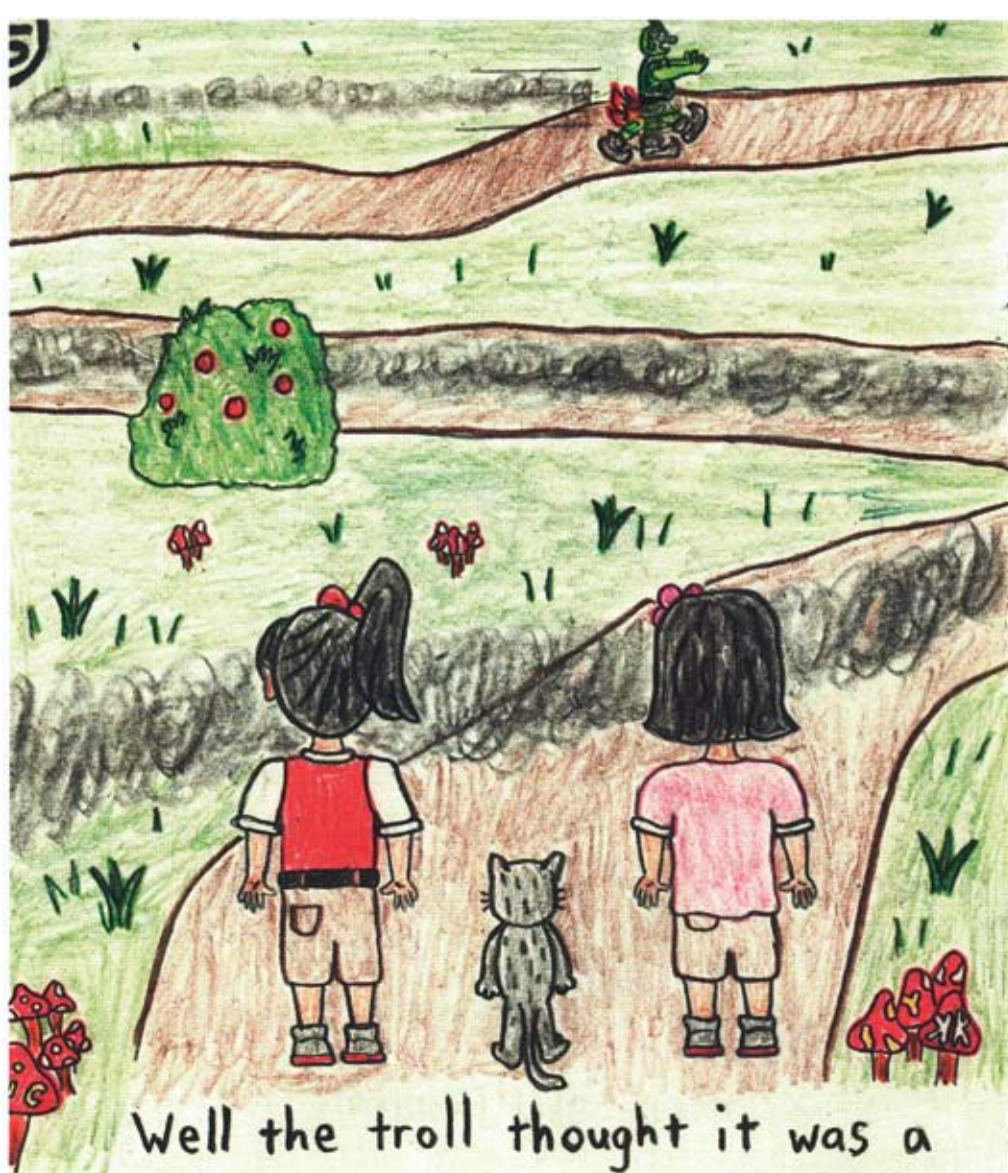


Well everybody knows girls are really smart, So they used teamwork to climb out of the well at night.



Kayla & Alicia saw the mean troll in front of a fire so they snuck up behind him. Then they both kicked him in the fat butt and he landed in the fire.





Well the troll thought it was a ghost and everybody knows trolls are scared of ghosts so he ran away with his butt on fire.



The next day Kayla & Alicia climbed a tree to see where they should look for treasure. While they were up there a giant came by and almost stepped on Sparty. Alicia got mad and threw an acorn that hit the giant in the eye.



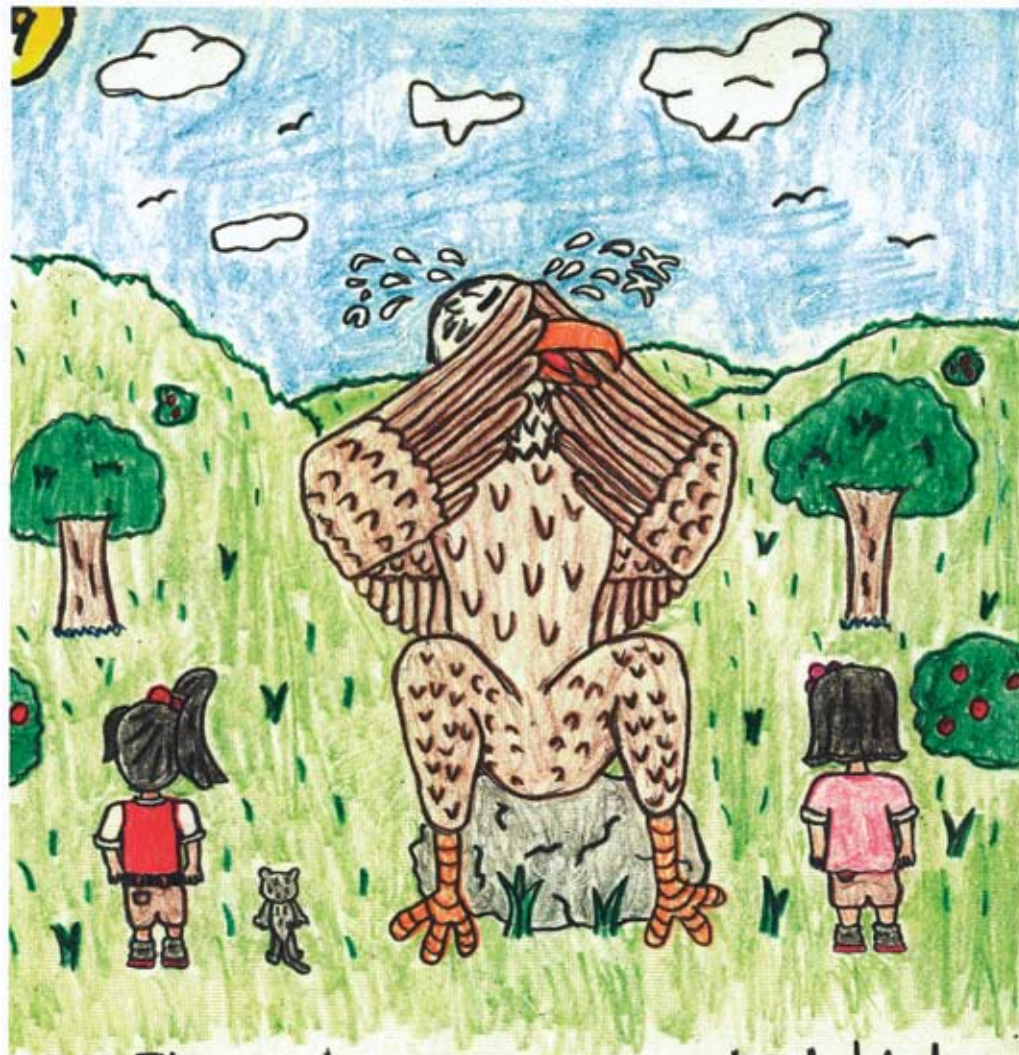


The giant thought a bee had stung him. Well everybody knows giants are scared of bees so he ran away crying.



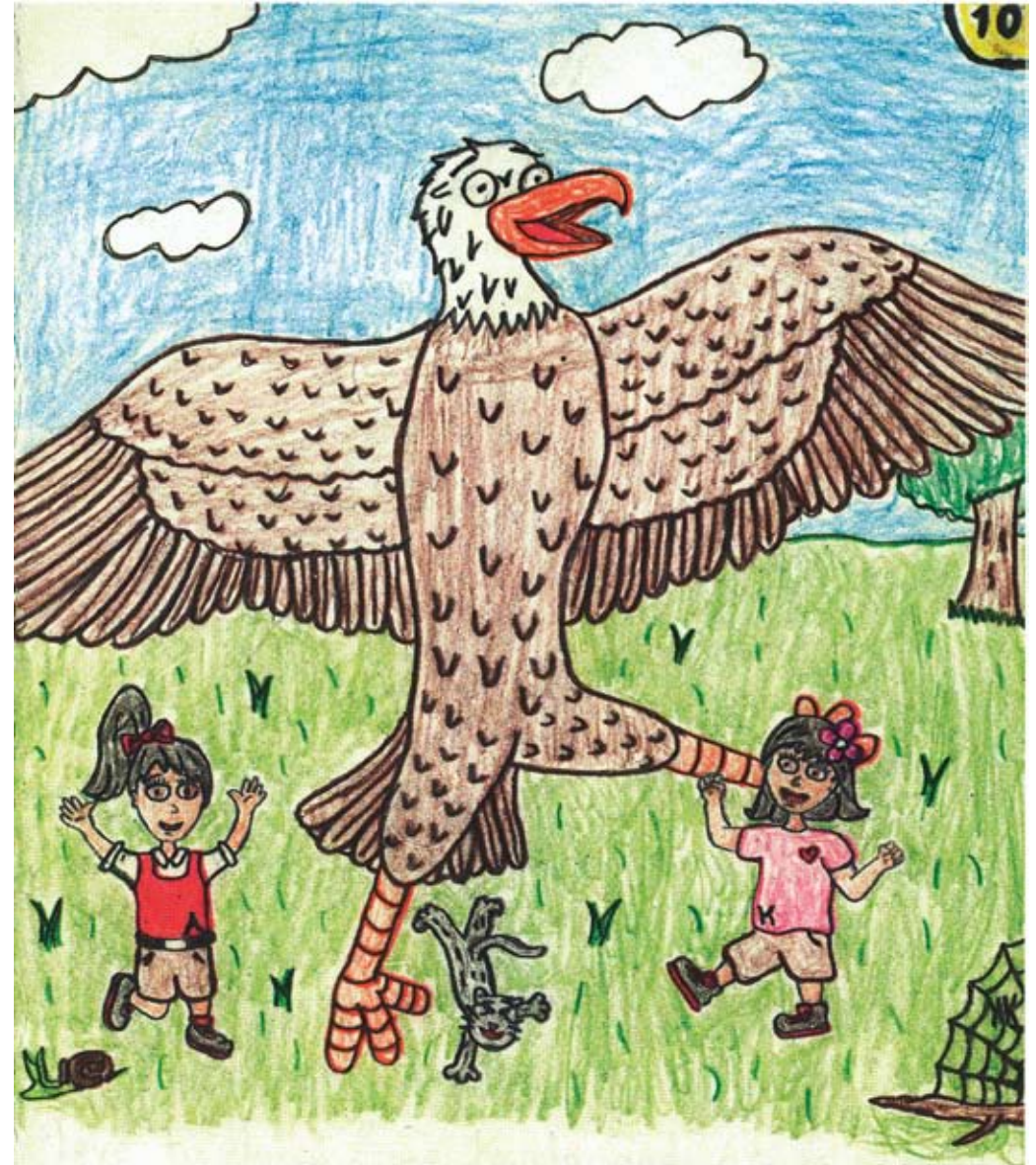
Looking for treasure is hungry work, so Kayla and Alicia were happy when they found a cake tree. And everybody knows cake trees always grow chocolate cake. Yum.





The girls came upon a giant bird crying and asked him what was wrong.

"I'm crying because I don't know how to dance and everybody knows birds love to dance."

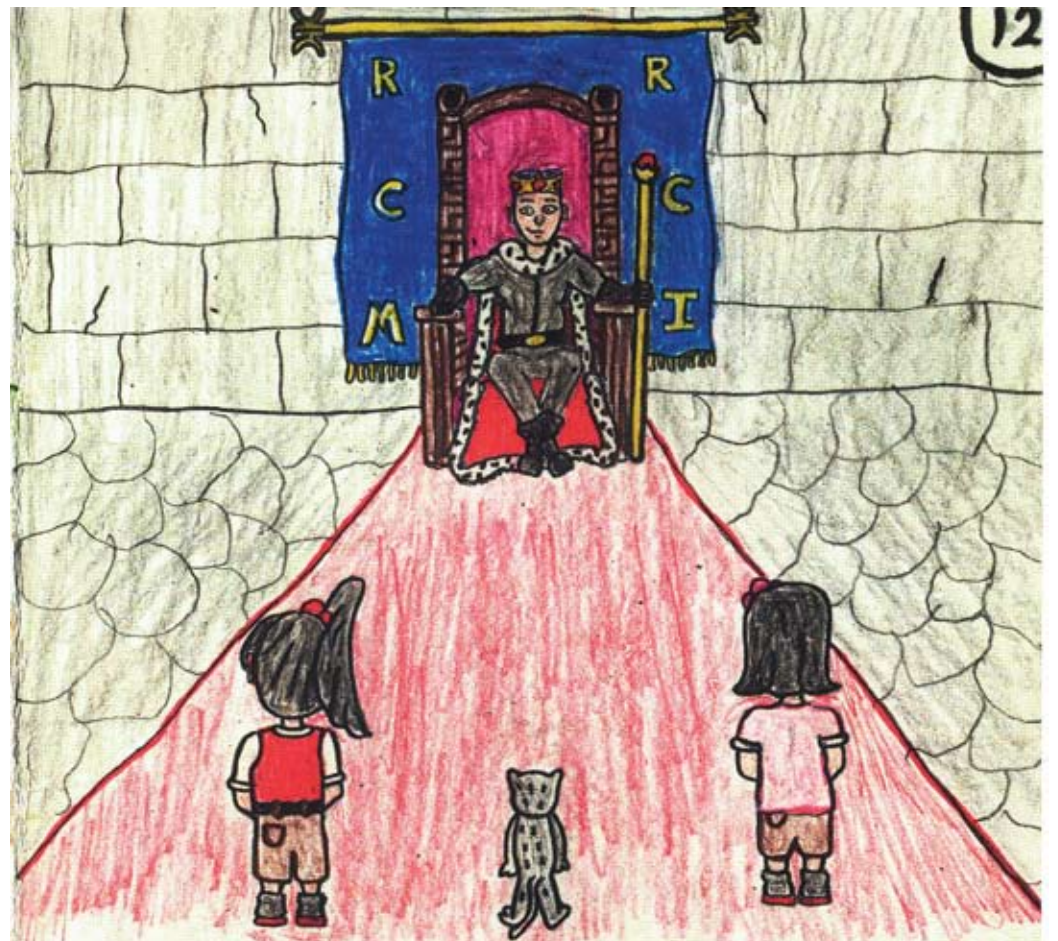


"We can teach you to dance. We love to dance!" So Kayla and Alicia taught him how to dance.



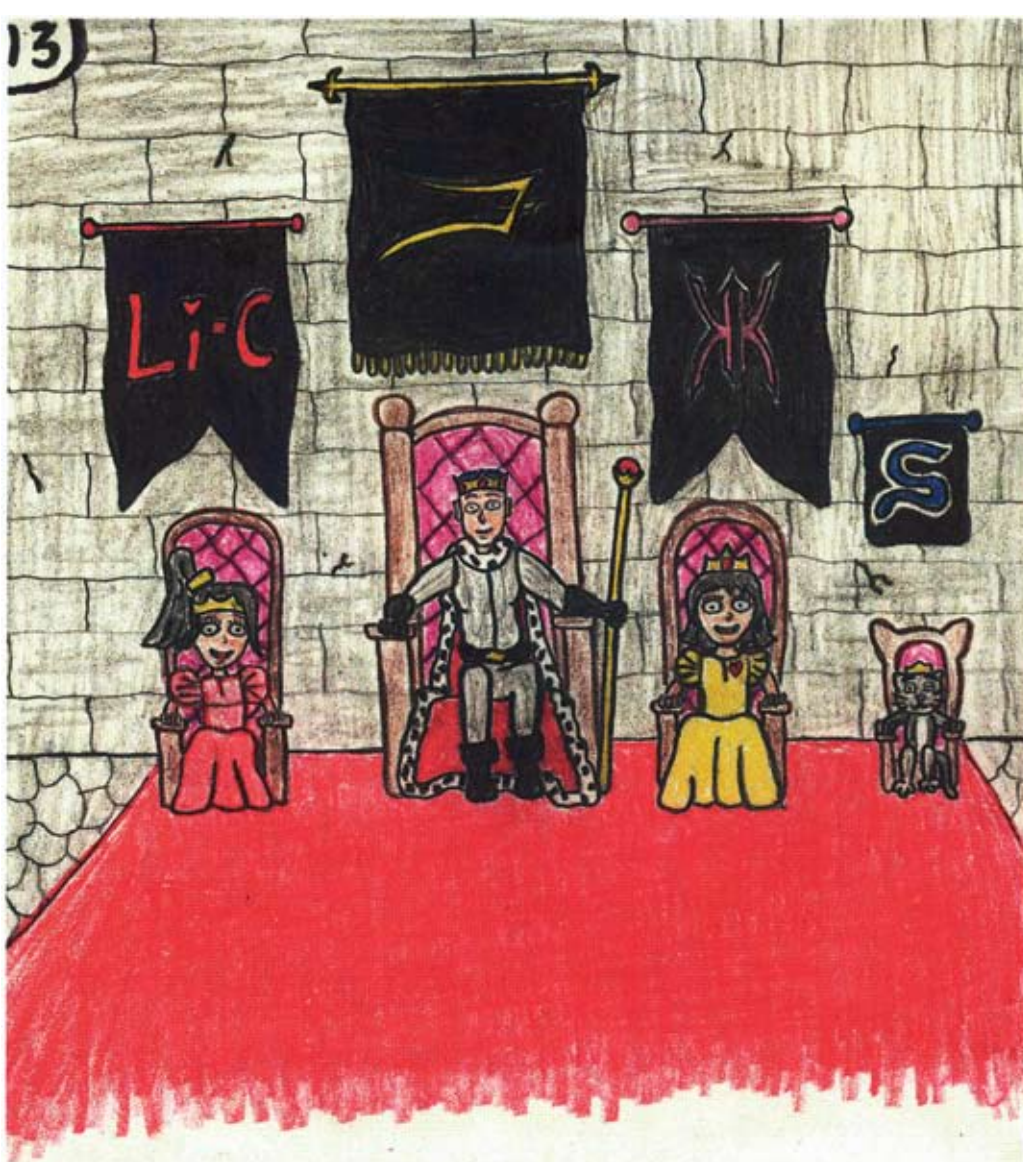


"I'm the best bird dancer ever now!  
Can I fly you girls anywhere to thank  
you?" Kayla thought about it and said,  
"Well, castles always have treasure. Can you  
fly us to a castle?"  
"Sure I can. Let's go!"



Inside the castle the girls meet King Frank  
and ask him where the treasure is. He smiles  
and says, "Silly girls, You are the treasure!  
Everybody knows a king needs princesses.  
Will you both stay and be my princesses?"  
Alicia thought for a second then said,  
"Only if Sparty can be a prince."





So they lived happily ever  
after..... but everybody knows that.

This book is for my two beautiful daughters who  
mean more to me than the world.  
I can't wait to share your adventures with you.

Frank Valdivia  
1-11-09

On each page I hid a **(KK)** (Kay-Kay) and  
a **(Li-C)** (Lici). The locations are below. Also, on page 12  
the letters represent the names of all your Grandmas and  
my Grandpa: Consuelo, Richard, Cristina, Mercy, Irma, and  
Rebecca. Strong/Smart girls come from strong/smart  
women.

- pg 1 - The butterflies
- pg 2 - On the well
- pg 3 - Bones in dirt
- pg 4 - Flames of fire
- pg 5 - On Mushrooms
- pg 6 - Tree and birds
- pg 7 - On the fence
- pg 8 - on the tree
- pg 9 - The birds tears
- pg 10 - Snail and spider
- pg 11 - Clouds
- pg 12 - Top of throne and ends of bar
- pg 13 - Banners

*Animus (Prison Riot)*

SEAN MALIS

Caged animosity, something like a cornered viper,  
Waits for release, waits for ejaculation,  
Every tick a smoldering awareness of every detail  
And every nuance of its unburdened environs.  
The unheard resounding starting bell/  
Nerve-snap/techno-ping/psycho-chem B A N G—  
The inhale, the clench, the squinting focus—  
Signals the event horizon, ground zero, and  
With simmering sap filling veins,  
The flashing heat of exploding hate  
Thins the blood which carries away the vile bile.  
Adrenaline-crazy violence dulls the dullness,  
The maddening guilt-flooded boredom abandoned;  
The soul becomes a universe—alone exploded,  
With its fury flung, nova-like, wide  
And far to engulf-consume-obliterate  
Its object of denied desire and to empty  
Itself of need, of want, of emptiness.  
Space and time—body and mind—warp,  
Casting off the shape given, and stop, cease  
To exist, discovering ecstasy in nonexistence,  
Destruction, and the strobe of raging physicality  
that lights black and white everything but  
the Self.

3B  
(Big Butt Books)

*SV*



## *Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except for Me and My Monkey*

MICHAEL FRENCH

I have been tasked with writing a personal narrative. This first sentence is very telling; if I could direct your attention to the fourth word. A task implies a chore or perhaps even a burden. I've grown quite uncomfortable talking about myself, but I've had a life-long companion I'd like to introduce: my Gorilla.

I never did name him. He came into my life in my fourteenth year. He arrived fully grown; it would be inconceivable to think that he had ever been anything else. This creature was never a little monkey. He also arrived hungry and with a somewhat bad attitude which he kept for the thirty-three years he was with me.

At first I was very proud; having a Gorilla was a badge of honor. He decided who I could be with, for if he didn't approve, there would no doubt be a scene. He influenced where I could work and how I would spend my free time. A lot of accommodations had to be made for someone with a Gorilla. Have you ever tried to keep a Gorilla fed? It's almost impossible, but I managed to year after year. It was especially daunting because the Gorilla appeared to be growing hungrier as time went by. Still I tried to remain proud as I was in the beginning, but it was becoming hard. Random thoughts of getting rid of the beast came and went.

I managed to get married twice while I had my Gorilla. I think he was patient and accepting at first with these ladies because he wanted to see if they would feed him and pay him attention. When he discovered that they were only interested in me, he became insane with jealousy. He did whatever it took to drive them away. In the end it was always me and the Gorilla, the Gorilla and I.

It's amazing all the places I took my nameless companion. I brought him to weddings and funerals, schools and church, to work, and on vacation. The one place I regretted taking him was in the car or on the back of my motorcycle. Sometimes while I was driving he had the bad habit of getting too excited and he would cover my eyes. Of course not being able to see caused some pretty erratic driving, which in turn caused me to lose my license a couple of times.

Of all the losses I've sustained over the years, the people that were driven away hurt the most. Almost hard to believe I chose the Gorilla over them time and time again. I even came around when it became obvious that he was plotting my demise. Though I should have parted ways so many times it was just comfortable having him there. Part though we did after thirty-three years. It happened at the prison gates. Ironically I was trying to feed him when I committed that indiscretion.

Being a wild and uncontrollable beast by nature, the claim was he could not be himself while incarcerated. He called a few times in the beginning and then stopped. After a period I found I didn't miss him and am, in fact, better off. In fact, I hope there are no more calls. In fact, I hope the Gorilla is dead.





## *Three Strikes*

DEREK MEADE

California's Three Strikes law isn't working. More like it's overworking. This law is meant to deter criminals from committing violent crimes and put away career criminals. It's not meant to rid the streets completely of people who have committed violent crimes. Should Californians have the comfort of knowing they are not walking hand in hand with career violent criminals? Absolutely! Are all violent offenders career violent criminals? Absolutely not. California is in need of a major change in law. Change to what? That is something that should be debated at length.

To date 24 states have adopted Three Strikes as an answer to deter violent crime. Some states have yet to use the law. Every state except for California has used the second and third strike clause at most 400 times. Unbelievably, California has used this law a staggering 100,000 times. That's 2500% more use than any other states. Huh!?! And let the facts show that the states that have used this law's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> strike clause 0 to 400 times, the crime rate has fallen at the same rate as California's has. Yes, California has a larger population than all other states, but all could agree that the population is nowhere near 2500% larger.

Should people who break the law pay their debt to society? Of course. Should violent crimes yield longer prison terms? Of course, and they already did prior to Three Strikes. California needs to find a different way to classify a career violent criminal. Three Strikes just isn't working. And why should it, it was solely meant as a deterrent, not a standard.

## *I Am*

PHOEUN YOU

I am quiet and somewhat a thinker  
I wonder at times what people perceive of me  
I hear the sounds of the environment I'm in  
I see many people come and go  
I want to not be forgotten  
I am simply quiet and somewhat a thinker

I try to visualize my life  
I feel the pain I've caused  
I touch my spoon and wish it was home cooked  
I worry about things I can't control  
I cry because I miss the outside world  
I am quiet and somewhat a thinker

I understand I did wrong  
I say we must learn from our mistakes  
I dream of one day being the best I can  
I try because I can't give up  
I hope to one day lead by example  
I am quiet and somewhat a thinker

## *Best Kept Secrets*

C.S. ANGELES

Imagine what it would be like if you were locked up in a room the size of a walk-in closet for months and years at a time. Imagine the build-up of sexual desire as you spend every waking and sleeping moment without intimate contact of any kind and no satisfiable outlet in sight. Picture yourself in the same situation but surrounded by other sexually frustrated people. Sounds fun, doesn't it? Now imagine they are all the same sex as you are. What would you do? If you believed no one you knew would ever find out, would your answer be the same?

Anyone who has spent time in prison knows how difficult life can get. When faced with the consequences of their own actions and with choices they don't want to accept, many prisoners embark on serious lifestyle changes in order to continue indulging in creature comforts like smoking, drinking, and having sex. Due to a sudden lack of both a loving relationship and female companionship, some inmates have chosen to engage in sexual activities which conflict with their sexual orientation and personal morals. Many of these inmates face more judgment and scrutiny than even the homosexual population in these institutions because they are caught in the conflict of judging themselves as they try to keep their activities secret.

As an inmate in prison myself, I often wonder what goes through the minds of the men who have convinced themselves that what they are doing is simply "scratching an itch." In fact, a phrase that is thrown around in prison far too casually goes something like: "It doesn't count in prison," when in fact it *does* count to many inmates, especially those who get involved in sexual encounters for the wrong reasons. Some are searching for instant gratification while others are trying to secure an emotional connection with anyone willing to provide some attention. Who suffers more in these scenarios?

The following account is a personal observation of how men have learned to adapt to the lack of female companionship in prison. Let's talk biology. First of all, long before the "horizontal mambo" happens for any species, a lot of prep work, pomp, and ceremony go into the event. Both sexes, in their own way, start pumping and preening in the hope of catching another's eye. Some don provocative clothing or adopt a walk that is sure to prompt the stopping of traffic. Whatever it is we do while getting all suave, at the same time our bodies are producing chemical scents and signals that we are unaware of.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not just the *opposite* sex that is susceptible to these messages. Remember that we are talking brain waves, pheromones, and other chemical symbols that are part of an automatic response system that is triggered even before the arousal state of sexuality. Pick up any high school biology book and you will find that all living creatures possess a reptilian brain kernel (diencephalon) which predates Homo sapiens by millions of years and which responds to the cycles of nature and basic instincts. Along with the need for food, water, and shelter, sex is a primal instinct that is hard to ignore.

Because these primordial urges eclipse much of what has been taught by society and religion, in order to understand the function of sexuality we must step away from our modern views and personal politics for a few moments. We must go back in time when the community as a whole viewed sex as healthy, natural, and desirable. It was an age when men were not held in contempt for their sex drive and when women were not denigrated for their sexual desires. The Judeo-Christian concept of whore had not yet evolved. Homosexuality and heterosexuality were nothing more than definitions of sexual activities, such as the Roman way of life.

Now, let me put down the textbook and take off the gloves. It's time for the layman's terms. Sex is a natural and pleasant experience. It can be part of one's expression of love, or it can be simply a sharing of pleasure or lust with another person. Whatever the reason for "getting jiggy with it," nature always finds a way to get needs met.

Have you ever noticed how intense a sexual relationship gets when prolonged due to foreplay and seduction? Be honest, getting there isn't always as much fun as the journey. The heat and passion involved in the chase can be just as much, if not more, gratifying than the conquest. So, in response to those who assume they are simply "scratching an itch," whether you realize it or not, you are putting forth an effort to "get your issue."

Now, before I continue with these observations, I'd like to clarify something. I am by no means suggesting that all men who go to prison engage in either homoerotic behavior or gay sex for any reasons. I am not even including those who claim the label "bi-curious" in my scenario. My focus is on how people learn to adapt to life-changing situations and how they respond to the choices they make when they may not be able to accept them.

Kudos to the thousands (and indeed majority) of men who manage to abstain from vices and infidelities in prison. I commend them for their strengths—but as I said before, this is not about them. Nor is it about those homophobes and transphobes who often react with ignorance and violence when force-fed something they do not understand.

Since I've already covered the "who, how, and why" these choices come about, I'd like to touch on the repercussions of some of these choices. Speaking as an individual who both indulges in and enjoys these same sex encounters, I want to call attention to the fact that (from personal experience and word of mouth) the majority of these encounters lack foundation and substance. Most of these experiences fall short of real relationships in these circumstances because, admittedly, those of us who are receptive are simply a substitute for what some may call the real thing. This is much evidenced in the disproportionately low self-esteem level and suicide rate of many gay and trans persons who allow themselves to fall victim to this emotional trap. When the emotional need is not reciprocated, we think there is something wrong with *us*.

Many of these feelings of worthlessness come from our families, since more than 80% of our waking hours up to the age of eighteen are spent



under their direct influence. What if *they* don't have positive self-esteem? How can they instill it in us? If we are treated in ways that indicate to us that we are insignificant, incompetent, or unworthy, we believe them. This hurts. In fact, what chance is there for high self-esteem, if even our churches tell us we are born sinners? Once we realize that nothing is further from the truth and that we are worthwhile people, we steer ourselves away from the need for instant gratification.

What it boils down to is that there is no disputing that our basic instincts override every function of our being; and, when pushed into a corner, Mother Nature comes out fighting. Does this mean that we are immoral or bad people for indulging in some of these acts? I think the decision lies within the moral standards of the individual facing the issue. In life we are often faced with choices that we do not want to accept. When we discover that we've taken the road less traveled in our decision-making, perhaps it would be wise to consider this:

When our minds are habitually altered, whether by drugs, food, or lack of affection, compulsive thoughts, imprisonment, or lack of sex, we think in some pretty distorted ways. We judge our problems and ourselves unmercifully. We blame ourselves for stooping so low. We think in extremes like everything and everyone is all bad or all good. When we start to believe that our problems and how we have solved them are who we are, we start losing touch with our true natures. Then we assume that if others knew our secrets, they would think us horrible, immoral people as well. So we lie. Then we're ashamed because we have lied. Thus we create these cycles of guilt without ever realizing their impact on our lives. Before any life altering decision is made, it is always best to consider what possible consequences it may have on yourself and others.

Why does it never occur to us that all those people whose lives seem so perfect are struggling with secrets of their own? It is amazing how we can lie to ourselves and others to protect our beliefs when such beliefs come into play only through our interpretations of them. So, we continue with pre-taught concepts of what is natural and what is not, judging ourselves for the decisions we've made: Our Best Kept Secrets.

## *A Little Bit of Americana*

PETER BOMMERITO

In the spring of 1945 my father and I were entering the Amusement Park in Bay City, Michigan. I was four years old at the time and my family lived in Saginaw, Michigan, nearby. J. Robert Oppenheimer, the man who designed the two atomic bombs that were dropped during World War II, was leaving the park as we entered. Doctor Oppenheimer noticed me and seemed struck dumb at my appearance. I asked my father who that man was and he told me he didn't know, but my father added that Doctor Oppenheimer had "certainly noticed me." Doctor Oppenheimer and my father greeted each other as they passed and continuing along the walkway, I glanced back and saw another man open the back door of a 1941 black Cadillac sedan as Doctor Oppenheimer entered.

The atomic bombs that were dropped during the war on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were code named "Fat Man" and Little Boy," and in 1972, a CDC-employed psychiatrist told me that they had been named after my father and me. There is an old adage I would like to interject in this bit of Americana, and that is that, "Kings shall see and arise and princes shall also stand up." Doctor Oppenheimer was certainly a prince of our people and time, but not so well appreciated in later years. Finally, I might add, in this country, there are certainly "princes walking on the face of the earth and beggars/servants mounted on horseback," just look around and see.



## *A Touch of Grace*

PETER BOMMERITO

When I was a boy of seventeen or eighteen, my family and I were watching an old Burt Lancaster movie on TV, “The Prince,” when he boasted that the real flag of Sicily was “three golden lilies on a white field.”

I turned to my Dad and said, “that’s us!” indicating my brother, my Dad and myself. When my Mom interjected, “what about me!” So I quickly corrected, “well, you’re the white field, Moma,” and she conceded that she had had all three of us lying on top of her at one time or another. That turned out to be the nicest thing I ever said to my mother, “you’re the white field, Moma.”

## *from A Course in Reconciliation*

KENNETH R. BRYDON

In loving memory of my father, Loy Brydon

I smelled the buttered popcorn as I came up to the visiting room entrance. “Visit!” I said to the prison guard on the other side.

He looked me over a moment as he opened the door. “You been out here before?” he asked.

I looked up at the ceiling while turning around with my arms out wide. “I’ve been seeing my wife twice a week for the last two years,” I said as he started to give me a pat search.

He finished his search with a light tap on both my ankles. “Okay!” he said, leaving me to walk in without telling me the rules I already knew.

The visiting room was two-thirds as long as a football field and half as wide. Three rows of knee-high tables ran its length with chairs on both sides. The noise level was the constant of many voices intermixed with loud shrieks of young children who wanted more attention.

Dad stood with Ty at the far end from me. I gave my prison ID to a guard at the podium and walked the length to where they both were. Both smiled as I approached, but my eyes were on my father, and the still fresh pain showing.

“Hi, Dad,” I said, hugging him.

“Hi, son,” he said in his deep voice. I stepped back and we stood with arms on each other’s shoulders. We quietly shared the joy of seeing each other after a year; our strong grips on each other’s shoulders spoke of the reason for the visit. His gray eyes misted, but he remained as I knew him.

“Hey, bro,” I said, turning to my brother.

“Kenny,” he said, hugging me. Ten years younger, he lived in Arizona as did Dad. About ten years ago, he started writing to me as a teenager, wanting to know his “Lifer” brother. We’d written and I’d called through the years.

In some ways, I felt a very deep connection with him. Perhaps too many of my letters were more sermons about God and sobriety, but he was always glad to talk with me on the phone.

Ty was a prison guard in Arizona. He'd come to visit me ten months ago. Being that I was a clerk for a captain, I'd managed to swing Ty a tour of inside of San Quentin with a Lieutenant.

We picked out three seats against the wall before heading to the vending machines. I got several hugs from other people's visitors. Betty and I were part of a collective visiting room family. We played cards and scrabble, and even embarrassed ourselves with cakes and crowds singing, "Happy Birthday!"

Their greetings to me were subdued, giving gentle nods to both my father and brother. A fellow Lifer and his wife had amused grins on their faces, looking from me to Dad, and then to Ty. "Don, Kathy," I said as we passed by.

We took another five steps and I pointed to what I wanted. Dad began feeding in the dollar bills I wasn't allowed to touch. "What were they all grins about?" Dad asked, nodding back to the couple.

I gave a chuckle. "They see how much we look alike," I said, pulling on the plastic door to get to my roast beef sandwich.

Dad looked back at them a moment, and then he grinned. He stood five-eight to my five-six height, and Ty stood five-ten. I used to rag on Dad about why he'd picked Mom, who was only four-ten, when Ty's mother, Tee, was five-six.

All three of us were broad shouldered, thick chested, and well defined jaw lines. We all had voices as deep as the Sha Na Na baritone Bowser. A tattoo of a black panther marked Dad's left forearm with its claws digging into his skin. Vietnam veterans doing time with me had that panther; they'd only give me a pained smile when I asked what it represented. Dad wouldn't explain it.

"Kenny," Ty said, "you want a soda?"

He was already walking to the soda machine as I spoke, "Doctor Pepper."

We'd stepped to another machine as Ty came back. "What's with the handcuffs?" he asked.

I looked over my shoulder to an area next to the visitor's entrance, and saw an older fellow with his hands cuffed behind him. A prison guard securely held onto an arm. "He's on death row," I said.

My brother nodded as he studied the well-groomed inmate in the same denim blue clothes as myself. Condemned visit away from us in a secure cubicle large enough to seat four people, without the cuffs.

"I got the clipping you sent," I told him. It was a photo of Ty in his uniform standing guard during a commutation hearing for an Arizona condemned inmate. Ty said he really didn't like being there. My brother gave the manacled person another brief look and then looked back my way; I thought I saw Ty shudder.

Carrying my food back to our seats, I sat down with my back to the wall and my father and brother across from me. "How was the trip?"

Dad didn't hesitate. "Other than Ty being a real pain in the ass, it was all right!"

Ty turned a bit red as my father acted as if he was talking about the weather. "Yeah," he answered, "and you wouldn't even stop for a minute!" It was a family moment; Dad never stopped, and Ty wanted a beer.

We ate in silence for a moment before Dad began. "The funeral went well," he said. "Your brother Kevin shared a poem, and Mary asked a pastor of a local church to speak." Dad paused, looking at me. "He did a good job."

I thought of asking about the pastor, but Dad went on. "Your mother was there with your sister Cathy." My sister was from my mother's second marriage. His voice suddenly shifted as he said quickly, "Mary had Mark cremated."

I felt a twist in my stomach from that. A body lying in a coffin somehow didn't seem so absolutely dead, but there was no debating a pile of ashes. Pushing past the point I asked, "How's Mary taking it?"

Dad took a deep breath. "Well," he said, "she seems okay."

I nodded and turned to Ty. "How's the kids?"

"Getting big," he said.

"How's Hugh?" I asked both of them of my other half-brother.

"Dad went to see Hugh perform," Ty said.

My eyebrows raised at that. "Really?" I asked. "Did you bring ear-plugs?"

Dad laughed. "I should have."

We talked of family still living for a while. Ty's four kids were the only grandkids Dad had. Our sandwiches finished, Ty stood up. "I'm going to go talk with them," he said, pointing to the prison guards I'd introduced him to the last visit.

A couple very close to Bettye and myself stopped in front of where we sat. "Dad, you remember Rusty and Diana?"

He looked up at them. "Yeah, sure," he said, standing and shaking their hands.

"We're very sorry for you," Diana said.

Dad nodded. "Thank you."

They gave me a caring look while waving. I smiled and nodded as they walked away, and then watched as my father sat back down. When he looked at me, I began a scripted conversation. "Dad, what are you going to do?"

Dad's face went hard a moment, and then he looked down before saying in a calm voice, "Well, I'm going to drive Ty home, and then I'm going back to Fresno and check things out for myself."

I felt my heart flutter at his words. He looked up at me again; his face was blank. I looked away, reaching for my soda, trying to keep my hand from shaking. I shouldn't speak my next words. Yet, it now fell on me; it was what a first born ought to do. A self-imposed weight pressed on my mind and heart; I spoke for all five sons, living and now dead: "I don't think you want to be my cell-mate, Dad."

There wasn't any hesitation in his answer: "No one does that to my son!"

Prison is where you need to know a real threat from empty words, and seventeen years had taught some clear meanings. Adrenalin had my heart beating fast; it felt like a riot was kicking off around me.

Seeing past my own pain, I'd considered how the rest of the family might react. Mom would only be able to bury herself in a bottle, but Dad... He would not find solace in such passive ways.

Dad was a "man's man." A book in the San Quentin library on the history of skydiving documented him as the first American to log over a thousand free-fall jumps, and his pioneering work in the testing of parachute designs. While he was putting together the Golden Knights Army Parachute team at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, I was born in the hospital.

A Master Sergeant in the Green Berets, he fought in some of the hottest battles zones in two tours of Vietnam; a Purple Heart recipient, he'd risked his own life to rescue then Navy Lieutenant John Kerry from a booby trap.

My father sat across from me, his eyes wide. His shock slowly ebbed as he considered what it meant that I understood his intentions. I finally broke the tension-filled silence. "Let the legal system deal with them, Dad."

He leaned forward, bringing his head halfway over the table between us, and spoke in a hushed voice that was still impossibly deep. "I don't want those fuckers alive! I want them dead!" Among the hats Dad wore in the Army was drill instructor; a private would have been shaking in terror. He pointed a finger at the table as if it were responsible. "I'm going to tie them to a tree, and they're going to see what I can do with a knife!"

He pulled back, sitting upright and looking around the visiting room with his jaw clenched and his strong hands opening and closing. "They're going to die like dogs. Just like they left my son!"

When he'd finished, I continued my prepared words. "You know, Dad, prison is full of people who've done just what you're thinking about."

He raised eyebrows while looking to me; it was a long/brief moment before a slight grin turned up one side of his mouth. "What are you going to do," he asked, "turn me in?"

I shrugged at his comment, grabbing my soda. "There are no perfect crimes." I used my soda as a pointer, waving it about to remind him of where we were having our conversation.

He sat there with resting elbows on knees, his hands grasping, still trying to take hold of what wasn't there to satisfy his lust. I waited, glancing over to Ty, who was enjoying his time talking shop with visiting room officers.

A moment later, Dad's shoulders dropped slightly. "I know Mark wasn't a saint," he said with difficulty, "but he didn't deserve that."

"I know how you feel, Dad," I said, stepping back to my readied speech, "but maybe you should consider this." My heart was heavy as I looked at my father. "There's a family out there that hates me; they feel the way you do. Would you like them to do to me what you want to do to them?"

Perhaps the idea of me being assaulted stirred up more anger as he once more took several deep breaths and looked around the room, but then he leaned forward and exhaled, staring at the ground a moment. "I hear what you're saying, son," he said, while bringing his head up.

Dad's jaw was still tight when Ty returned. My brother looked at me and then our father. "What's up?" he asked.

As Ty looked at Dad, my father was staring intently at me. A slight grin turned up one side of my mouth as I said, "On the way back Dad's going to stop, and you two are going to toast Mark with a beer."

"Really?" he asked, looking from Dad to me. My father glared at me; he was pissed.

## *Reflections from the Cement Coffin: E-motion Observed*

LASHAWN TIAMU MILES – NOBODY

i've been in my cell by myself since Friday night – went on lockdown Saturday evening – serious contraband found in someone's cell is what i hear, but i can't be certain – you know how rumors are... lockdown – in the cell by myself – i see it as an indication to invest more energy into getting this writing done, which is what i'm doing – trying to sleep as less as possible taking advantage of quiet time because when it comes to concentrated thought focus, the difference between having a cellmate and not having one is so transparent i can literally feel subtle densities withdraw from my awareness when the transition from cellmate to no cellmate occurs. it's like your mind gasping for a breath of fresh air after however long you've suffocated underneath the stress, worry, aimlessness of somebody – and even though the positive lesson is always there and such a cellmate is not the norm, there is still nothing like a breath of fresh air in the stillness of early morning hours while facing head-on the contemplation of self contemplating you.

the thinking mind began to exert itself – my concentration was seemingly interrupted and awareness started wandering to thoughts of being grateful for the food brought to me by officers – for bringing the garbage can allowing me to discard trash from the cell – my situation would obviously be drastically different if the Omniscient Intelligence allowed no one to feed me two trays – one for myself and one for the cellmate i don't have – or do i? i am in the cell with my-self. i like to think the extra tray is the Omniscient Intelligence responding through officers to the work i am putting in which pushes me to work harder.

then my awareness wandered to thoughts of my tier officer telling me to remove all the coverings from around the bunk – coverings used to lessen cellmate distractions – i thought the admonishment was puni-

tive but that's the thinking mind for you – always paranoid – negative – somebody always against somebody – turns out removing the covering was the best thing for me – makes the cell feel more spacious and now i have discovered the most convenient place for me to write and study is sitting on a bucket at the end of my bunk underneath the light with my mattress rolled up and writing cardboard on bed – the covering around the bunk previously prevented me from doing so underscoring how useless it is to judge – you never know how things are going to work out – i mean – if the Omniscient Intelligence knows all things maybe it means i know nothing – and knowing nothing isn't a bad thing when you realize nothing has been working to achieve collective peace and unity.

there is a lot going on in my mind, so i am not concerned with sentence structure as much as i am with getting thoughts out on paper. consequently, some thoughts are redundant, so i ask for your understanding and open-mindedness when reading. there are times when the flow is moving at a steady pace, but movement is what EarthVibe is about, which brings me to the intention of this writing. after nearly nineteen years of rehabilitative self-discovery, i have been allowed to connect with the Vision EarthVibe, speaking through me. it is with E-motion observed that i begin reaching out sharing with you the experience of EarthVibe.

the first watch officer shines her light in my face until i wake and asks the following question:

“Are you alive? You were sleeping with your eyes open – I thought you were dead.”

i wake and rise up to turn the tele-vision on to see what time it is. the clock reads 11:51PM – nine minutes left. i want to ask if i can quote her asking the question but she disappears. is the question for me or for you? i already know she will say it is for you if i ask. yes, i was once asleep

in the flow of dualistic emotional state, but now i am rehabilitated and alive in the state of E-motion observed. what better way to conclude this introduction than with another experience.

DECEMBER 2, 2007 – 6:51PM

the poetic flow . . . the poetic flow . . . the poetic flow i know speaks the truth from the heart. there is so much given to share i don't know where to begin. last sunday morning i was sitting alone outside on the upper yard thinking about this letter and a brother walks up to me . . . late forties early fifties brown skinned complexion . . . i gave him my breakfast tray one morning and a few days later we had a pleasant conversation about life . . . but as he approached i told him i was working on a letter to my family hoping he would get the message and leave me alone . . . but then it dawned on me . . . “be careful to entertain strangers because some have unknowingly entertained angels” (Hebrews 13:2) . . . so i invited him to sit down and we began talking about life again.

“I see God working in you, brother,” is what he told me . . . and i expressed to him the process i was going through learning to communicate with simple clarity . . . how the reading and studying over the years had complicated my mind . . . he assured me that i was just taking my time because i wanted to get the message right . . . and then he recited this scripture . . . “settle in your heart not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer . . . for I will give you a mouth and wisdom (i.e., experience) which your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.” (Luke 21:14 & 15) . . . he told me to stop trying and simply let God . . .

Highway patrol – red flashing lights – screaming sirens – i remember thinking to myself as they sped up behind us – DAMN! – it's over – all i was trying to accomplish – family – love – being a good dad – hand-

cuffed and put in the back of the police car – i wondered – “what the fuck happened?” – i just knew the game plan was tight – work at the medical center – hustle pounds of marijuana – take classes at the community college – stack a little money – there was no doubt in my mind i would achieve all i dreamed of – it just didn’t make sense – on my way to prison in the back of a police car – i wondered to myself – this shit can’t be real – then i felt a calm – everything became quiet – i heard a gentle voice in my mind – “just forget about it . . . seek truth” – a life line dropped from the sky – i listened – a life line dropped from the sky – i listened – didn’t hesitate to grab it – at that moment i let go of everything i thought i knew and set out on a path to discover truth.

after nearly nineteen years of incarceration i am allowed to realize that enjoying my right to free speech is contingent upon freedom within. free speech is not running off at the mouth about what i think i know while this world falls apart around me. free speech is allowing the fullness of E-motion to speak through me – and what i mean by fullness of E-motion is the beauty of life in all things.

i researched the word “aware” (i.e., watchful/observant) and the suffix “-ness” (i.e., degree) and came away with the understanding that awareness is to measure the quality of one’s feeling (i.e., observation/experience) in this world, for the purpose of measuring the evolution of it. but what is the quality being observed and measured? is it the feeling of incorruptible peace and joy (i.e., the Kingdom of Heaven within)? if so, why is the quality of this feeling important? well, what if the feeling of incorruptible peace and joy is the difference between being asleep in life with eyes open or being alive? this takes me back to the question asked by the first watch officer, “Are you alive?” a person may have evolved ninety-nine degrees and may be living a complacent E-motionally financially comfortable life, but that one degree may still be the difference between being asleep with the eyes open and being alive. so if awareness is the degree of one’s

feeling and quality of feeling over all degrees of observation/experience in this world is incorruptible peace and joy, what does that have to do with the way someone may feel?

you know – the instability of i feel good today and bad tomorrow or you are my friend today and i dislike you tomorrow. it’s like eating from the proverbial tree of good and evil every day as opposed to the tree of life (i.e., incorruptible peace and joy). and remember, not overcoming one degree of this instability may be the difference between being asleep with the eyes open and being alive. but how is the cycle of feeling-feel-emotion broken? the short answer is E-motion observed.

NOVEMBER 9, 2009 – 1:35PM – MONDAY

I gave another presentation in Mr. Shimel’s pre-release class today (inmates introduced to self-awareness teachings and given information on available social services and other resources to facilitate return to society) – i’ve been doing so every month for nearly a year now and was feeling i had finally taken a step forward – didn’t think i needed to do much preparing – my plan was to open with a spoken word – discuss the holistic relationship between the mind of this world – share my answers to the essential questions helping lead me along this journey – questions like who am i? where do i come from? why am i here? and where am i at – would the current conditions of this world be the same if the collective mind of peace in this world re-membered? so i began the presentation...

“thoughts of love-peace-unity wake me up early in the morning – so i begin writing – warm summer days find me sitting outside studying all day and i can’t stop – like the prophet jonah no longer is there a choice in the matter – the drive – the passion to serve peace faithfully continues



to build – despite years of frustration from witnessing adults play devilish divisive games – and then point the finger at the youth for following the example set – you-bet-this-shit-done-got-silly – the so called faithful assembled in million dollar hide-outs – i call it pride and ambience in the midst of increased transience – pain and confusion recruit children to fill beds – so much for what the transformative power of truth said – SHUT-THE-FUCK-UP!!! – is what truth is told – by those minds shut off – locked in – reality no longer cared about – playing who-can-climb-the-charts-of-who-right-on-the-list-of-who-most-righteous – according to...somebody – and somebody keeps teaching – preaching – believing the same things over and over and over and over and over and over and over again – get my point? – and the ineffectiveness is clear to the inner-city – but false pride and ego won't let go – afraid to cross the line – i'm talking about the line drawn in the sandbox – like little children fightin' over the front seat of the car – while community and family structure fall apart – ”

suddenly my mind goes blank and i'm not even a quarter way through the piece – i don't understand what's going on – i've performed in numerous open mikes and the blank mind face has never happened to me before – can you imagine how silly i felt standing there in front of my audience – one – two – three – more seconds pass and i shake it off – not wanting to feel outdone i immediately transition into my presentation and begin discussing the holistic relationship between the mind of this world – but then – middle way through a young Hispanic guy raises his hand and says, “Man, I feel like you talking down on us – like you think we stupid or something.” huh? say what? i realize no one like being told s/he might not know what they think they know and that is exactly what i challenged the class to consider – but what i said had nothing to do with the way he chose to respond – he could just as easily have opened his heart and seriously considered the experience of EarthVibe being shared – i talked with him after the presentation to see what i could learn and he told me he felt offended – i questioned his experiences and beliefs

– that i had no right to do that and i agree – it was not my intention to do so – and then a middle aged white guy comes up to me and says, “I believe prophets are sent to us from time to time, but do you know what is funny to God?” i say no and then he tells me, “Somebody with a plan.” i thought about the lackluster presentation just given – the blank mind face – the young Hispanic guy – the ebullience out of control – thoughts all over the place – not connecting with my audience – i thought about how my plan didn't go as planned – and even though i laughed at the joke i feel like the joke is laughing at me because i still don't understand where i went wrong.

NOVEMBER 11, 2009 – 10:30AM – WEDNESDAY

went to the yard and took a walk – breathed some fresh air – stopped and communed with the sleeping lady (Mt. Tamalpais) to see if she would help clear my mind – then went and sat up against the chain link fence on the other side of the yard – pondered – tried to think things through – why? – the pain and the frustration – still disappointed from the presentation – subtle pangs of sorrow digging their claws into me – light weight despondency – i feel it! okay! i feel it!!! – the anguish transforming into anger – one step forward two steps back – the presentation – committing blunders i shouldn't be committing – was it a lack of preparation – bogged down – too much on my plate – at least that's the excuse i try to pawn off on myself.

dammit!!! make up your mind! i've given you my soul – what else do you want – dummy, you can't give what already isn't yours – but i feel like crawling into a corner to hide – the judgment – the hate – arrogance-greed-anger-selfishness – it's all chasing me deeper within – what kind of world is this – bam! disappear – who have we become like – a nobody to it all – i think about the youth still trying to find their way – i think about those seeking to experience the greater fulfillment beyond glitter

and gold – interpretations told – the encouragement received telling me to keep writing – to keep doing what i do – yet still i continue to battle inside with my-self talking to my-self writing to my-self working to humble my-self to my-self that i may – to a greater degree – learn the lessons she is teaching – speak your truth from the heart is what i hear Her voice keep saying.

today i feel i have been released from the flow of this E-motion observed i have been writing about in my journal and it should come as no surprise that signature moment indicating the conclusion is the presentation i gave in Mr. Shimel's pre-release class...i went in there this time with Her plan in my mind – humbled myself before the class – explained that i was there to share but more importantly to learn and thanked them in advance for helping me grow in speaking my truth and i believe for this humility i was well received ... i shared some moments along my journey i feel are keys to rehabilitation in the experience of incorruptible peace and joy – for example – the sincere intention to be against no one and nothing in this world – the desire to know truth and the humility to admit that i don't know what i think i know and of course humility through heart's intention to the power of the Omniscient Intelligence – i also mixed in some verses from inspired poetry to underscore the experience of each moment – then i began discussing the nature of our story – why becoming serious about rehabilitation within is important and concluded the presentation with what i believe is the meaning of the allegorical story of noah and the ark...

to believe is to accept something as true and just because i accept it as true doesn't mean that i have to hold on and cling to it for dear life – this to me describes the evolutionary process of rehabilitation – accepting and letting go of beliefs once held true – it is the critical thinking process at its finest – it is the essence of religion i believe before it evolved into a system of belief – this makes me think of the wise saying, “there are many wells that lead to one stream” (i.e., one emotion) – i believe religion in

its truest sense is the path that leads one back to her/his original source – being peaceful – against no one and nothing – but going back to what someone said – i believe we have to understand how to believe in order to evolve collectively into practicing true religion (i.e., the kingdom of heaven within) – anyway – the presentation went well today – i experienced no sorrow or frustration afterwards which indicates She is satisfied with my delivery – not to say there is no room for improvement because there always is – i am just making note of the night and day difference between following Her plan and thinking I have one – well – Her plan is my plan – this makes me think about how everybody is talking about their plan, but nobody is talking about Her plan for peace and unity.

i like to sometimes think of myself as the watchman in the tower (Ezekiel 33) working hard to share with everyone the vision EarthVibe i am being allowed to see or a story-teller with the experience of the greatest story ever told (i.e., rehabilitation) to tell or the voice of the inner-city prophet with a beautiful message of love, peace, and unity to share and, after an eighteen year journey of rehabilitation behind stone walls and electric fences in the belly of the beast guided by the Omniscient Intelligence, i like to sometimes think of myself as the sign of the prophet jonah in the bell of the whale (a rose by another name is still a rose), but inner-city born – street educated – San Quentin College Program rehabilitated – i like to also think of myself as nobody because everyone, from family to friends to volunteer teachers – to correctional officers to inmates, play an integral role in my journey – you know – it takes a village to raise a child and i feel i am a child raised by our village – many voices becoming one speaking through me – and maybe this is why i don't pretend to ultimately know who i am. how can i if life is this eternal question – if all that exist is the ultimate truth which has no beginning – no end – is the unimaginable contemplation beyond my comprehension and is to never be completely known.

## *A Letter from the Inside*

JONATHAN WILSON

On Tuesday, June 8, 2010, at approximately 6:00pm, David Lewis, a friend, a mentor, an agent of change, a loving member of our community here at San Quentin, was shot once in the back and slain in a parking lot in San Mateo. Ironically, he was minutes away from his place of employment at the San Mateo County Health Department and minutes away from Free at Last, a nonprofit drug rehabilitation program he co-founded in East Palo Alto to assist former drug abusers and ex-cons. David was scheduled to retire from the health department in two weeks and go back home to the place he co-founded, Free at Last. That I believe is where his heart was and stayed no matter where else life may have taken him.

David, a former addict and ex-con himself, decided during the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989 that shook the Bay Area, that he would come to prison no more. He once told me the story while attending and facilitating a group here at San Quentin State Prison. He said that when the earthquake occurred, correctional offices ordered him and an associate into the rotunda area of the building and locked it. "It was then that I realized that if the building collapsed there would be no way to get out, and I didn't want to die in prison. I felt powerless." I also feel powerless as I write this. Powerless because I could do nothing to prevent the death of David. Powerless because I'm not able to do anything now to possibly stop the deaths of other men who believe in change like David. Powerless because it seems no one is listening to the appeal of other men such as David, who shun the senseless violence and death of all others.

David Lewis, co-founder and former president of Free at Last, recipient of the 1994 California Wellness Foundation Peace Prize, cognitive skills teacher for Gordon Graham & Company, believed in the power of people to change the world. David was one of those people. Although the people

in the community of East Palo Alto are mourning and undoubtedly will feel the loss of his presence, there are just as many incarcerated men around the state who are also mourning and already feel the loss of his presence. We love David because of who he was. As individuals, we would share many intimate truths and personal issues with him and always got the sobering truth—the reality, not just what you'd like to hear. His no-nonsense approach brought about the realization that the only way a person can truly change is to change what it is they believe and think about themselves and others. As all communities mourn his death and others spread rumors and gossip surrounding his death, the people that love and respect him know this truth: that he consistently over the last 20 years reached back and assisted those in need (his people) struggling from all types of addiction.

It's sad that his presence is now gone away, but his legacy lives on. Fifteen years ago he told me something I will never forget, something I wasn't then ready to receive. While I was sitting in San Quentin Reception, he walked up to my cell saying, "Your sister called me and told me to come see you because she was worried." During our conversation he asked me, was I tired? I looked at him not fully understanding the full implications of his statement. He then said, "When you get tired you'll stop." I hope you can hear me now, David. I'm tired.

David died doing what he was called to do. Helping men and women change their lives and break the cycle of addiction. How many of us will be able to say the same when we pass on? David Lewis continues to be an agent of change because his life, his words will live on with me. For him, if there is any consolation for his soul: he didn't die in prison. And he is free at last.

## Contributors' Notes

A true creative visionary, C. S. ANGELES challenges concepts of religion, sexuality, and belief systems by shedding light on some of the darker aspects of life. Originally from Chicago, Illinois, with roots as a professional entertainer and artist, Angeles is now working with San Francisco artist Ronnie Goodman on a project entitled "The Forbidden Fruit."

PETER BOMMERITO was born in Saginaw, Michigan; his father was capo regima for Salvatore Maranzalla, in the Midwestern United States, 1919-1931. Peter graduated from the California State University with a degree in government, and was born late in his parents' lives.

KENNETH R. BRYDON: This story will also be printed by Resilience Multimedia.

HENRY EDWARD FRANK is a graduate of the San Quentin College Program and a past contributor to *OpenLine*. He was transferred to Corcoran State Prison in 2009.

MICHAEL FRENCH: I have thoroughly enjoyed taking courses through Patten College. I was assigned to write a personal narrative for English. I anguished for two weeks writing about "myself." I ended up giving myself the blues. Then, the night before it was due, I wrote about my "monkey" instead. It only took about twenty minutes. Using a metaphor made the story easier to tell, and hopefully more interesting.

MICHAEL C. GALLARDO: 42 yrs. old. Paroled on 01/10 after serving 8 years at San Quentin. "I am continuously learning and putting in practice the life lessons I've learned inside the high walls of the toughest educational institution I have ever been in."

The author JULIUS "KIMYA" HUMPHREY, SR. was born in Stockton and raised in Sacramento, California. He is the author of an urban fiction entitled "JOJO," a published poetry writer, and in 2010 he wrote the song "WHAT'S HAPPENING Y'ALL" for the documentary "Green Life" and non-profit organization LEAP (Land Empowerment Animals People). He's currently working on a poetry book that will feature 50 of his favorite poems along with a brief narration on what inspired each one.

WALTER C. KILER: I have always liked writing, photography, art, archaeology, and astronomy. I'm 68 years old and was born in Oakland, California. I graduated from Castlemont High School in 1958. Attended Oakland City College, where I received a liberal arts education. I transferred to Armstrong College in Berkeley and received a BBA degree in International Business and graduated in 1964. I took the GRE test at Cal Berkeley in 1965 and worked on an MBA at San Francisco State University in International Business. I spent 35 years in the commercial business and finance field. My goals are to take Patten College classes, get a minister's degree of divinity and theology from Golden Gate Academy, write a science fiction book about Mars, and work at the new San Francisco Bay aquarium. I also have 55 years' experience as an amateur astronomer.

FELIX P. LUCERO lives in a gated community just outside of the city; his art work offers no freedom via transposition except that which comes from understanding absurdity.

SEAN MALIS: "Vicious" is the cycles of our lives, never new but always unique, personal choices determinative but inconsequential; "Animus" is the observation of violence and its true nature (an·i·mus – noun [L., spirit, mind, courage, anger] 2: a usu. prejudiced and often spiteful or malevolent ill will). I am what you make of me – nothing and every thing, dark and bright; what I've written here was me, is you, will be us. Yet paradoxically, these define no one, but help us see what is worth being:

Love, which words cannot (truly completely) define; only the action of being can (wholly) express Love (with purity).

DEREK MEADE left San Quentin in 2010.

LASHAWN TIAMU MILES: Nobody. An emotional being with a peaceful intelligence born into this world on 1-22-71. Nobody is a messenger of peace and unity for everyone whose focus is working to effectively share and write about the vision EarthVibe. Third world meaning being received through the community of San Quentin.

DAVID A. MONROE, JR.: Born in Sacramento and raised in Stockton, California, David faced many hardships as a youth but has made tremendous strides in becoming a responsible and mature young man.

Born in New York City, 1963, JOHN OWEN NEBLETT has been a resident of California since 1982. His interests, other than reading/writing poetry, include acting, running, and managing the equipment for the San Quentin Giants baseball club. He has memorized way too much poetry and hopes to perform Elizabeth Bishop's "The Riverman" with a conga drum accompaniment at Patten University's next poetry share. "An Atavistic Idiot Speaks" was written under the influence of Seamus Heaney's verse translation of *Beowulf*, and John's innate empathy and highly evolved paranoia.

After 11 years of a reneged U.S. agreement, WATANI STINER's children were allowed entry into this country. In 2009, he was denied five years at the Parole Board. When asked: "Why did you choose to come back to prison?" Watani responded: "Because I love my children more than I hate my incarceration."

TROY THOMAS a.k.a. CELLTIME INK: I've been doing artwork for years and I'm very proud to finally be a published artist. I hope all who look upon "Freedome" enjoy it completely.

FRANK VALDIVIA: I lost everything I had and everyone I love when I came to prison. But the person I was didn't deserve any of it. There are people outside these walls that love you or that you love. They deserve the best, so be your best. I'm finally doing my best and my daughters Kayla and Alicia deserve it.

QUINTON C. WALKER was born 30th January 1958, in Gary, Indiana, but lived most his life in San Diego, California. He is fluent in several languages, and is presently pursuing an Associate of Arts degree at Patten University. He is an aspiring author and is currently writing his memoirs.

JONATHAN "JW" WILSON continues to move forward in spite of the obstacles being incarcerated presents. He continues to volunteer and work on projects such as *OpenLine* in the hopes that these positive contributions will in some way impact the lives of other individuals who read this. People heal each other.

NICOLAS WLODARCZYK left San Quentin in early 2010.

PHOEUN YOU: I dedicate this poem to those who have been affected by my careless actions. I believe redemption starts from within.