

HELPING PRISONERS ON DEATH ROW
LIVE CONNECTED & FRUITFUL LIVES

COMPASSION

WRITTEN BY DEATH ROW PRISONERS & ASSISTED BY LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE PRISONERS

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- AND MORE...

Publishing compassionate and introspective articles written by death row and life without parole prisoners.

www.compassionondeathrow.org
P.O. Box 623 | Perrysburg, OH 43552

ONE NICKEL AT A TIME

Last week the doctors told my wife of 30 years that the cancer had spread to her brain and that there is nothing more they can do for her. The cancer is aggressive and terminal. They gave her only a few weeks to live.

They told her she needed to go home and get her affairs in order. This was devastating news. I immediately started praying and begging God to please extend the years of my wife's life.

Day and night, I prayed.

I remember when I was a little boy, I saw a dirt bike that I really wanted. I asked my dad to give me the money to buy it. He asked me how much it cost. I answered, "Only \$100." He replied, "I'll tell you what: I'll let you earn the money. I'll give you \$0.50 for every pair of shoes you shine." "Fifty cents," I cried. It'll take me forever to earn \$100." Dad said, "If you want the \$100 for that bike, that's my offer." "Can you just give me the \$100 now," I asked, "and then I'll shine the

shoes?" He said, "You will appreciate it more if you earn the money one nickel at a time."

It took me a year to earn enough money to purchase that bike. When it was time to pay for it, I placed my jar of coins on the counter and began counting out the coins one nickel at a time.

This morning as I was reading my Bible, as I do every morning, I was reading in the Book of Matthew where Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray. "Our Father, Who art in Heaven, give us this day our daily bread..." I paused and read those words again, and again, and again. Those words began to minister to my spirit. "Give us this day our daily bread."

I finally understood what my dad was trying to teach me with the coins. Just like nickels make dimes, and dimes make quarters, and quarters make dollars, days turn into weeks, and weeks turn into months, and months turn into years. So, this morning when I began

Continued on page 3

HELPING HAND

Wallowing in despair
feeling like nobody cares – then I see
you reaching out to me,
finding comfort there
as I become aware:

you imbue me with strength
to take one more breath, then
another when life overwhelms me,
when I'm drowning in negativity

none can understand
and still give a helping hand
as I desperately
struggle to be free.



Kevin Marinelli
Assistant Editor
Pennsylvania Death Row
Waynesville, PA



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor are welcomed from all prisoners (this includes non-death row prisoners) and the outside community.

In submitting letters, we ask that compassionate and introspective guidelines apply to your communications.

Limit size to 400 words or less. Letters may be edited for clarity and space considerations.

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All stories are subject to editing for grammar, sentence structure, and clarity.

EDITORIAL: TITAN ADVENTURE

T.V. tickertape scrolling underneath
the image of empty ocean
didn't mention names –
their names weren't important
right then; we had bigger things
to get excited about.
It said something impersonal
but telling, like, Billionaire missing
in mini-sub with four others!
Rescuers had 72 hours to find the rich
tourists in a vast expanse of water
twice the size of Connecticut
before the sub's rationed air
ran out. All pipes and cables
and big steel drum, the submersible
looked as cobbled together with junk parts
as our media coverage. The whole world, it seemed,
was short of breath
and reporters gasped
on-air
with canned concern
as they covered the search

and their excitement,
hour by hour, so it felt
none of us was shocked
at the discovery
or the irony
of the sub's debris
scattered near Titanic's wreckage,
though some were stunned
that a billionaire, a titan
of industry, was crushed,
a Billionaire,
reporters kept repeating,
a BILLIONAIRE,
as if we wouldn't believe it
took only 5,000 pounds of pressure
per square inch to kill him –
because isn't so much money invincible?
Isn't so much power unsinkable?



George Wilkerson
Editor
North Carolina Death Row
Raleigh, NC

LWOP LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR:

GUARD YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Recently, I read an article titled "Guarding Against Identity Theft." It reminded me of two years ago when someone tried to steal my mom's identity. Posing as a representative from her bank, the thief told my mom that someone was using her credit card number to rack up some expensive purchases. My mom did not fall for it. "Ma'am! We need your social security number if you want us to stop this crime!" the thief told my mom. She hung up and called the bank. The thief tried to get her to give up her identity freely. Because the bank had instructed her on how to guard her identity, she confidently stopped the thief's attack. As Christians, our spiritual identity is under constant attack.

Jesus warned us that the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Satan wants to steal our identity in Christ, kill our victory over sin, and destroy our fellowship with the Father, but because God's word instructs us on how to guard

our identity in Christ we can confidently stop Satan's attacks.

In Ephesians 1:3-14, Paul explains how God has secured our spiritual identity in Christ. He says that God chose us, adopted us, saved us, and sealed us with His Spirit. Paul assures us in Romans 8:31-39 that because we are in Christ we have victory over Satan's schemes and nothing he does will separate us from God's love.

Even though Satan knows that our identity is secure in Christ, he still attempts to scam us into giving it up freely. As he tried with Job, Satan tempts us to deny our standing in Christ. The father of lies says, "You're just a convict and

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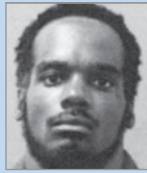


Barry Mintz
Assistant Editor
Nash Correction Institution
Nashville, NC

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

WHERE HAS MY LIFE GONE?

From hoop dreams to Power Ranger dreams
To Dreamgirls to baseball dreams
From wrestling dreams to boxing dreams
To football dreams from hip-hop dreams
To poetic dreams then street dreams
To triple beam dreams
Then nightmares and waking in a cell
Thinking where has my life gone?

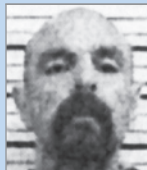


Brian Leeks
Bellefonte, PA

WHERE I CAN STAND

Lonely nights
and cloudy days
I'm a prisoner
in a metal cage.
I feel in my heart
relentless pain —
Lord, I'm sorry
for the mistakes I made!
As I walk this stone jungle,
Lord, I know you are beside me.
Let me smile
despite this world of misery.
At night, I look out my little window
as I meditate on your Word —

and see how beautiful
is your universe!
When I'm sinking
into a depression
You lift me
up in your Fatherly hands.
You hold me
up so that I can stand.



Antonio Serna
Santa Fe, NM

ONE NICKEL AT A TIME (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

praying for my wife instead of asking God to extend her years, I thanked the Lord for giving her another day. And tomorrow I will thank the Lord for blessing her with another day. And the day after that, I will thank the Lord for yet another day.

My mother used to sing this song: "One day at a time, sweet Jesus. That's all I'm asking for. Just give me the strength to carry on one day at a time." Obviously, I would like to have my wife here for as long as I can, but my prayers are not for 20 more years, or 10 more years, or even 5 more years. I'm thanking God for one day at a time. That's all I'm asking for. Every morning she wakes up, I'm thanking God for blessing us with

another day. Each day she is with us I am going to rejoice and be glad in Him. Instead of begging God for more time, I'm going to praise Him for each day. Maybe one day I'll be able to set this jar of clay on the counter and see how God has filled it with days, weeks and months, maybe even years — but we appreciate it one day at a time.

This is dedicated to my loving wife, Kelly Marie Ann Weaver. I will love and cherish you forever.



LaTwon Weaver
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA

A NUMBER ATTACHED TO MY NAME

With a number
Attached to my name,
I live in a celled box.
Listening to the rain
Fills the cell with pain,
Family members pass away;
Tears stain my pillow
But tomorrow will be
The same.

I am in prison.
Trapped physically —
Mentally free to
Learn to write,
To obtain a GED.

I am in prison.
Staying drug-free,
Have to be.

No one puts you
In a mental prison
But you and me.

Take advantage
Of Education,
Free your brain
From the pain.

I am in prison.
Waking to violence;
Being someone not
Intended to be.

To survive
You can't be weak
I've seen it all,
I played the game,
Years still go by
with tears and pain.

So be your own man!
Rise to the occasion!

Read a book,
Leave this modern-day plantation.

I am in prison,
But education is free.
Teachers smart and willing
To teach.

Learn, learn, learn!
We are in prison
And can be rehabilitated.
Not under-rated or
Degraded, but Liberated.

Faded from Society
The time inside of me
Propelling me forward —
Just like a GED
Means to me:
Great Every Day.



Bailey Jackson
California Death Row
Vacaville, CA

SUNLIGHT AND SHADOWS

Have you ever wondered why looking at a sunset engenders feelings of nostalgia, reminiscence and romance? Once you realize the reason it seems oddly apparent. But because of the paradox which exists between what we are actually doing and what we believe ourselves to be doing it is sometimes difficult to see.



Most times when we take time to look at a sunset we are on vacation at some exotic locale. Or we are at least taking time out of an otherwise busy life to bask in the moment of that sunset. For this reason, we believe ourselves to be living in the moment, when in truth, we are living in the past – due to physics. The light we are seeing right then actually left the surface of the sun roughly eight minutes earlier. By living in that moment passed by we feel the weight of our yesterdays. And for those fleeting moments we are bathed in the romantic nostalgia of all the moments we held, cherished, and lost.

I suppose I have been thinking a lot about sunsets lately because of the many I have seen this year. None of them were fixed on the horizon, though. Rather I saw them in the lives of my friends and

family. While the year was still young, the State took Don and Tip. Sometime between then and now an aunt and uncle slipped back into the ether. I have heard that cancer put its indelible mark on Paul this year...though I'm not sure exactly when he shuffled off this plane and onto the next. And then time claimed my father, there in the darkness, Sunday night while I slept.

As I sit basking in the warm afterglow of their existences, I am overtaken, even overwhelmed, by yesterdays. The memories and moments slip through my fingers like so much sand. With no more tomorrows to be had, standing in their light, these evanescent phantoms and a few photos are all I have left of them.

Much of the wisdom we obtain in life we only possess after the moment we could use it has

already passed. But in this instance, I am blessed... as I now realize we should not wait for the sunset to bask in the warmth of family and loved ones. We must take time while their light still shines. Hold the sunsets in your heart as you remember them for what they are...which is what was. But cherish what is...this moment, with the people you love. There will always be the luminance of memories to see us through dark days. But the sunlight of this moment is finite and fleeting. So, open your eyes and be dazzled by the warmth on your face as this moment fills your heart.



Johnny Calhoun
Florida Death Row
Raiford, FL

VICTIMS VOICE

By Makayla Bagsby / Mobile, Alabama

My mom, my younger brother, and my grandmother were the other three people in the house on October 15, 2020, the day my dad was murdered. I still live in that same house where it happened, so this is something that's on repeat in my head. Just minutes prior to his murder I last saw him making his way back to his room down the hallway. After hearing seven gunshots I heard my mom calling my dad's name, "Mike!" I hurried and discovered his body halfway in the door. The living room was covered in broken glass and a broken candle. Dad was not breathing, so Mom pulled him inside the house and flipped him onto his back

to start CPR. She spent a long time working on him until the ambulance and police arrived. After they transported him to the hospital Dad was pronounced dead.

After Dad's death I developed severe depression. I changed from being an outgoing, cheerful girl to an insecure, irrational one. I don't talk to people very often unless they speak to me because I'm afraid of speaking in front of others. Since that terrible day I've changed a lot. I tend to snap at people, but it's only out of anger. It aggravates me every time I think about it. I try to move on, but I know that

LIFE IS PRECIOUS

that experience will always be an open wound.

Our lives can be profoundly affected by losing a loved one. It has the power to mold our priorities, values, and worldview. My loss made me realize how precious life is and how important it is to treasure the time we spend with the people we love. It also increased my compassion and empathy for other people going through similar situations. Even though the grief of losing a loved one may never completely go away, it can shape who we are and inspire us to live life to the fullest in their memory.

ORIGINAL ART WORK FOR SCHOLARSHIPS



WHO LET THE DOGS OUT?

By Kevin Marinelli 14" x 11" / Pen & Graphite on Bristol
Pennsylvania Death Row \$100.00
Somerset, PA

To purchase make your check to Compassion and send to the address on page 2.

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LWOP

WORD OF LIFE

The Word of the Lord is indeed powerful. It gives hope. It guides and encourages, proclaiming the goodness of our Father and declaring His love endures. When we read it, our thoughts are suddenly quieted and our hearts become focused. When we hear it, our souls respond with longing for His presence. And when we speak His Word, our very existence is changed. The Word of the Lord brings forth Life and healing. So, I'm asking you to declare His faithfulness over all of your doubts and fears. Stand in faith as you make known the greatness of our Heavenly Father and the promises His Word contains. Praise Him every day when you wake

up and every night before you sleep! For the Lord will inhabit your praises and draw near to you in times of both weeping and rejoicing. Begin to declare His Word out loud and watch as He moves through the Holy Spirit in your life and every circumstance! Start now with this verse from Psalm 139. Make time each day to announce with full faith that God will respond.



Darrell Sharpe
Norfolk Correctional Institute
Norfolk, MA

THE GREAT SECRET

Infinite Light, the source of love's energy,
God's true nature – the perfect One –
oh, universe.

Turned into You and I, the highest
expression

of Her majestic arrival, the cosmos that
lives in us all.

How sweet and tender it is
to know we are God's playful kids,

The Universe's creation of her
own consciousness.

Life's sacred organism became humanity;
this intelligent life form became Earth's
pride and joy.

If only we could see each other,
we'd be much more to each other.

That intelligent light, whose little
particles came to life.

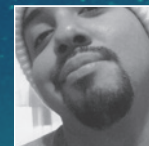
Dear World, I hope you can understand this
and align with your True nature –

The Great Sacred Secret that stars
born billions of years ago

was the raw material

God used to mold

our bodies, our minds, and gave us life.



Pablo Maldonado
Georgia Death Row
Jackson, GA

THE ROW

The road that we stroll

The price on our head

The rope on our throats

Like yokes on our neck

We hold onto hope

Like the edge of a ledge

We choke on the smoke

Of the lives that we've led

Broke down from the load

And the crowns on our head

With the boulders we hold

On our shoulders and neck

It's cold on the Row

Alone as we tread

It takes a toll on the soul

When the hopelessness spreads

An oath to the ghost

of the dead in my head

I know what is owed

For the tears that were shed

The lives that I stole

The pleas that were pled

'Tis my ode to the souls

For the blood that they bled



Victoria Drain
(sentenced under the
name Joel Drain)
Ohio Death Row
Youngstown, OH

TIME WELL SPENT

One day my daughter spent half an hour in the bank with her great grandmother, who had to transfer some money. She couldn't resist herself and asked, "Grandma, why don't we just activate your internet banking?"

"Why would I do that?" Granny responded.

"Well, then you won't have to spend time here for things like this. You can even do your shopping online. Everything will be easier!"

Grandma thought for a minute and asked, "If I do that, I won't have to step out of the house?"

"Yes, that's right! Amazon delivers everything right to your door!"

Granny said, "Since we entered the bank today, I have met three of my very good friends. I found it refreshing to chat with them. You know, I am alone. . . this is company that I need. I enjoy getting ready, getting out, I have the time, and it is the personal contact that I crave. Two years ago, when I was sick, the store owner where I buy my fruit and vegetables came to see me and make sure I was alright. The local grocer found out I was

ill, got in his car and brought me a basket of food. Would I have that 'human touch' if I did everything online?"

In our world of technological advances there is an endless pursuit to computerize everything in the interest of saving time and money. Just maybe, in this dogged pursuit of convenience and efficiency, we have overlooked the true value of relationships and "time well spent" with friends. Have we also inadvertently abandoned or neglected other important values?

Do we feel that talking to a friend a waste of time? Or, is it a vital connection? Amazon can't deliver that kind of relationship, and neither can any social media interaction replace the benefits of face-to-face conversation. Spending time with people, not with devices, is time well spent.



John Robinson
Kansas Death Row
El Dorado, Kansas

GUARD YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

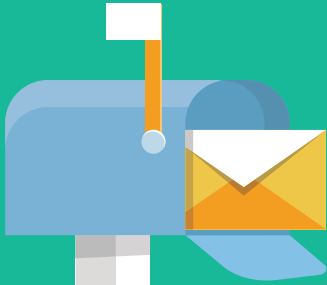
a criminal... You're never getting out of prison and God doesn't love you." Then his greatest lie, "There's no way you are a chosen child of God. Jesus didn't die for you!" Do not fall for these lies.

My mom did not fall for the thief's lies. The bank taught her how to guard her identity and she trusted in the instruction to stop the attack. God has given us instructions in His Word on how to guard our identity from Satan's schemes. James tells us to resist the Devil and he will flee from you (4:7). Tell him that you are a chosen and saved child of the One True King. Trust in the Lord's instruction and guard your identity in Christ.



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If you want to share someone else's work, please be sure you include the name of the author or its origin.

PRISONERS OF DEATH ROW YOUR ASSISTANCE WILL BE APPRECIATED

7 SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES

1. Write about an experience that impacted you.
2. It doesn't have to be religious. Here are some themes: anger, apathy, beauty, betrayal, boredom, change, complacency, courage, fear, friendship, growing older, jealousy, pride, purpose, vices, and wisdom.
3. Use sensory details – the smell, who said what, its color, how cold it felt. Sensory details connect your experience to your readers.
4. There's no need to use big words when a simpler one suffices: leave your ego at the door with your case: this isn't the place for either one.
5. Look for ways to unify; help; and solve problems.
6. Be authentic. Be yourself. No one's perfect.
7. Try to limit it to 400 words or less, and if possible enclose a photo of yourself.

As there are numerous submissions it may take up to eight months for selected articles to be published.

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TRACKS OF JUSTICE

For thirty years my comrade K.P.
sat on Death-Row

fighting the Ravenous Beast
blow for blow.

As fate would have it and time
would reveal,

I carried him in spirit as I walked
the wheel.

Father Time could not erase the bond
forged in the Terror Dome.

Neither could the legal gauntlets we
traversed trying to find our way home.

In his diligence, he found a hole
in his case.

I was shipped out West and 35 years later
my Bro and I are again face to face.

We are now two old men but giddy
like school kids.

We spun the track, filling in the blanks of
what happened during our bids.

At the end of the day, a knee was still
on our necks.

With our hands in the air and backs
to the wall,

we looked at each other knowing the
Satanic Succubus still wants it all.

We are no longer the ignorant teenagers it
swallowed in '88.

Blackstone taught us the game and our
legal knowledge is straight.

This miscarriage of justice stole
our youth.

Get your discovery files –
in them you'll find the proof.

What was ours, as men we now
take back

And one day soon will be the last time
we spin this track.



Carl Daniels
Pennsylvania
Sci Greene DR



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LWOP

MINUTES AFTER SIX

Tonight, our government puts on a
grand production;
Of which, I'm the unwilling star.
It's of tragedy, travesty, and lastly corruption —
The stage decor is glass and bar.
The State is the executive producer.
Governor is the director.
An actress in scrubs plays executioner.
Suppose the guards are the extras?

Our audience ushers in; takes their seats
in this enclosure.

I'm escorted in, then promptly restrained.
Some have come to give solace; others to
get closure —
They shall ALL be entertained!

I tremble with stage fright.
Cry my line, "Bloody murder!" and "Legal!"
Thus, a performance of my life.
The nurse inserts a prop needle.
Convulse, then take a bow to a tune of
silent score;
The curtain's now descending.
Our villain is no more.
In these minutes after six – there is
no happy ending.



SELF-PORTRAIT

Brandon L. Williams
Pennsylvania Dept.
of Corrections
Frackville, PA