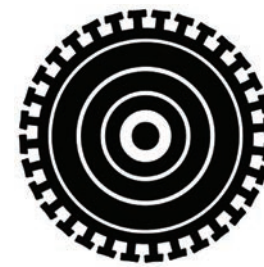


CELL COUNT



YOUR PRISON HEALTH RESOURCE SINCE 1995

FREE FOR PRISONERS, EX-PRISONERS & THEIR FAMILIES

THE 2019 PJD ISSUE - #88



Illustration by Jeremy Hall

- DISILLUSIONMENT -

By Greg McMaster

Fueled by alcohol and drugs, in 1978 my dysfunctional mind at the time led me on a cross border murderous rampage between the United States and Canada. I was all of 21 years old.

Looking back at the past 41 years of continuous incarceration, recognition of what an excessive and torturous journey it has been is unavoidable. I'm pretty sure that I can add Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to my growing list of ailments (a heads up for those who may be looking for it; this article isn't about my personal Remorse. I've covered that over the years in other media adventures).

After having served 15 years of my Life Sentence for the State of Minnesota, most of it in an underground Super Maximum-Security prison, I was Extradited to Canada in 1993. When I woke-up in the morning, as I had for the previous 11 years, I was buried under tons of concrete and steel. Sixteen hours later, when the shackles and chains were finally removed, I found myself flaying my weary body down in a small, antiquated bucket of bolts in Northern Ontario. For the most part, other than a few notable exceptions, the Jail's staff conducted themselves in a professional and humane manner. Having said that, it is indisputable that the actual physical structure of the North Bay District Jail was never intended to house long-term Offenders. I spent over four years there, and as the Jail's Doctor testified in open Court, I was being tortured by the built-in constraints of a facility that should not hold anyone for more than 90 days.

No, this story isn't about me, or my tortured soul. I'm just a believer that the reader should know a little background information on the writer. If you are going to take the time to read what I write, the least I can do is offer some semblance of comfort that I come equipped with a knowledge base of the subject at hand. After four decades entrenched in the Prisoner's Rights Movement, the last 30 years of which serving as a legal and media spokesperson for the incarcerated, there's no shame in my game when I say I come equipped with a suitable knowledge base. For the faithful readers of CELL COUNT, I'm a 20-year volunteer with PASAN (the dedicated organization that publishes CELL COUNT) and you may be familiar with my previous Prisoner's Justice Day submissions, *Calling All Heroes and Tribute To A Friend*. Full circle back to the North Bay District Jail. 'Now why would you do that?' many of you are probably asking. Simple; it's the first time and place this American ever heard about the Canadian penitentiary tradition of Prisoner's Justice Day. 'But isn't Prisoner's Justice Day supposed to be International?' Unfortunately, not as International as some would have you believe. I was thoroughly entrenched in the Prisoner's Rights Movement in the states and I had never heard of Prisoner's Justice Day; not even a whisper. I have no idea what the status is today South of the Border because, as I previously mentioned, I was Extradited to Canada in 1993.

Fasting and paying homage to those whom have passed before us on Prisoner's Justice Day was new to me, so the date of August 10th had not yet been burned into my soul. Sometime in mid-August, I asked the men in the jail what day we were supposed to fast. The sheepish reply I received was that it had already passed. Seems all the men in the jail, some of them former pen-timers, conveniently forgot to remind me because, well, whatever their bullshit

Cont'd on page 7

INSIDE THE
PJD 2019
ISSUE

2
BULLETIN
BOARD

3
HEALTH &
HARM
REDUCTION

4-5
NEWS
ON THE
BLOCK

6-10
WRITINGS
ON THE
WALL

11-12
FROM
INSIDE

13-15
ART

16
RESOURCES
& ABOUT
PASAN

Outreach & Support Schedule

If you want to see a worker or attend a program put in a request to the Volunteer Coordinator, the Social Work Dept, or call us toll-free at 1-866-224-9978

Ontario Provincial institutions:

CECC: monthly visits, phone to request 1-1 visit, sign up sheet for workshops

CNCC: Phone to request 1-1 visit, sign up sheet for workshops

HWDC & Maplehurst: Groups/1on1: Call PASAN

TEDC & TSDC: Groups/1on1: Call for a program on your unit or a 1on1 educational

Ontario Provincial & Federal institutions for women:

VCW & GVI: Call PASAN (no regular programming)

Ontario Federal institutions for men:

We try to visit each prison at least 3 times a year. We visit: Bath, Beaver Creek, Collins Bay, Joyceville, Millhaven, Pittsburgh & Warkworth. We see people individually or in group settings and talk about health, harm reduction and other topics you might request. If you wish to know more or are living with HIV/HCV, please contact us to find out when we will be at your facility.

CALLING ALL ARTISTS, WRITERS (FICTION, NON-FICTION, SHORT STORIES, ETC), ILLUSTRATORS, CARTOONISTS, POETS, JOURNALISTS (ASPIRING OR OTHERWISE), AND OTHER CREATIVE TYPES:

We want your submissions! We get lots of letters from our readers telling us how much they love seeing all your work and they're hungry for more. Send us your stuff and get published in Cell Count. When you send us stuff, please make sure you write a line in that gives us permission to publish your work. Also, let us know if you would like your work returned to you or sent on to someone else! Please also type your work or write clearly if you can!

Writers: We get a lot of great work sent in that we are unable to use because of very limited space. Apologies. Please consider the column width & keep articles/poems tight & to the point. Honestly, the first items to go in are the ones that fit nicely and leave space for others – quality and quantity! Also, let us know in writing if it's ok to edit your work for grammar, spelling and so we can fit it in.

Please note: If you do send something to us, please give us a call if you can so we can look out for it in the mail. Also, call us again at least a week after you send it to make sure we got it. If not, if you're sending in a piece of writing, we can transcribe it over the phone for you, so keep a copy of everything you send us!

We're especially looking for submissions from women-identified folks! Women are the fastest-growing prisoner population in Canada, but often their experiences are marginalized in conversations about the prison system. We want to hear your take on prison, life, family, or anything else you're interested in writing about. We can guarantee confidentiality, and can publish your pieces under a pseudonym if you want! Please submit your articles, poetry, art, or letters to the Cell Count editor at 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3 - in the meantime, check out Concrete Blossoms on page 5.

WHEN SUBSCRIBING TO CELL COUNT

We have been notified by a few different institutions that if you'd like your subscription of Cell Count to make it into your hands, you have to register at the library to receive it first. Please do this before requesting a subscription from us just to make sure! Also, if you are interested in subscribing please contact: Cell Count, 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON, M5A 1R3 or call Sena at: 1-866-224-9978 ext 228

NEXT DEADLINE & NEW ISSUE FORMAT!

Firstly, we want to thank everyone who sent us submissions for this issue of Cell Count! We are excited to present to our readership all of the thought-provoking submissions we received for this issue.

Submissions for the **next issue of Cell Count will be due September 15th, 2019**. I know this is a very short turnaround, but I would like to get out 2 more issues before the end of the year. The deadline for the issue after next is **November 1st, 2019**.

OBITUARY SECTION

With this section, we hope to give you an outlet to express your grief so you don't have to experience it alone. You can send in an obituary about someone you may have lost in prison or on the outside. We will start with a limit of 125 words per obituary and expand based on your feedback.

BRING PASAN TO YOUR GROUP

Are you a PEC/APEC worker or part of a Prisoner run group? PASAN regularly visits and holds workshops at prisons, if you would like to request us to come and be a part of your work give us a call at 1-866-224-9978. It is a free call from any phone and we would love to hear from you!

CONTACT NUMBERS

If you are in any Federal/Provincial Institution or Detention Centre call us only with this #: Toll-free 1-866-224-9978

CELL COUNT FEEDBACK

Many of our subscribers ask us if there's a way they can donate money to Cell Count, and

since we want the newspaper to remain free for people inside, we are so grateful for the offers, but we don't think you should have to pay to get it. A way you can help us out though is by giving us your feedback about Cell Count!

Cell Count is partially funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), and part of receiving this funding involves evaluating the effectiveness of Cell Count. If you could take a minute after reading this issue to let us know:

- 1) How did you hear about Cell Count?
- 2) Why did you subscribe to Cell Count?
- 3) Is Cell Count an important resource for you and if so, why? If not, why?
- 4) In what ways has reading Cell Count affected you? Mentally? Emotionally? Please elaborate.
- 5) If you have submitted work to Cell Count, what has that meant to you?

You can call or write to us with answers to these questions, which we will then forward to PHAC! You can ask to remain anonymous as well. Thank you! We really appreciate your help with this :)

MESSAGES FOR PRISONERS JUSTICE DAY

CFRC Prison Radio airs each Wednesday from 7-8pm EST on CFRC 101.9fm in the Kingston, Ontario area and worldwide at CFRC.ca. Our signal extends to Brockville, Belleville, Smith Falls, and Watertown (NY).

The program features news, interviews, writing, and documentaries about prisoners and prison issues. Content is produced by CFRC volunteers and by other campus and community radio broadcasters, including CKUT Montreal's Prison Radio and Vancouver Co-op Radio's Stark Raven programs.

The last Wednesday of each month, CPR features Calls from Home, sharing letters, emails, voice messages, and music requests by and for prisoners and their loved ones.

Our radio signal carries into the following institutions:

- Millhaven Institution
- Collins Bay Institution
- Joyceville Institution
- Bath Institution
- Frontenac Institution
- Pittsburgh Institution
- Quinte Detention Centre
- Cape Vincent Correctional Facility (Cape Vincent, New York)

Call 613-329-2693 or write CPR c/o CFRC, Lower Carruthers Hall, Queen's University, Kingston, ON, K7L-3N6 to have your Prisoners Justice Day message broadcast on the radio!

CSC'S NEW PRISON NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM (PNEP)

We want to hear from you! After refusing for more than 20 years, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) announced last year the introduction of its "prison needle exchange program" or PNEP in federal prisons. This is the result of an ongoing court case by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, PASAN and others. The PNEP began in Summer 2018 at two prisons: Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, Ontario and Atlantic Institution in Renous, New Brunswick. Beginning in January 2019, CSC has said it will start phasing in PNEP across the federal prison system. The Legal Network and PASAN are continuing with our legal case to make sure all prisoners who need it can access the PNEP, and we want to hear from you. If you are in a prison with a PNEP, we are interested in learning about your observations and experiences of the PNEP: * Are people using the program? * Do you think the program works? * Are there any problems for those who wish to participate? If you are able to share your thoughts with us, please contact: Zachary Grant or Aanya Wood at PASAN (toll free: 1-866-224-9978) or Sandra Chu at the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network at 416-595-1666 ext. 232. Both PASAN and the Legal Network accept collect calls from prisoners.

GOODBYE FROM AANYA

Friends, sisters and brothers I've had the privilege of working with – words cannot describe how grateful I am for the lessons you've taught me. It brings me such sadness to announce my departure from PASAN. I will of course still be around and will always be in solidarity with you and incarcerated people worldwide. You are all tremendous humans who deserve more than what this world has offered you. I will forever live my life by the lessons I have been privileged enough to learn from you all. Niawen, chi-miigwetch and thank you. Aanya

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

PASAN's office, where we publish Cell Count, is on the historical territory of the Huron-Wendat, Petun, Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the New Credit Indigenous peoples. This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peacefully share and care for the lands and resources around the Great Lakes.

HIV+ CLIENT SERVICES

In order to be a client & access these services you need to have confirmed HIV+ status and be a prisoner or ex-prisoner (all times Eastern Standard time)

- Phone Hours: Mon – Fri from 9-5, except Tuesday mornings
- Workshops and Programming - Scheduled usually on Mondays or Thursdays, give us a call or check out our website for a complete list of events we have scheduled.
- ID Clinic – 1st & 3rd Thursday 1:00-2:00 every month - for everyone.
- Release Funds - \$50 (twice a year max)
- TTC Tokens – 2 each for clients who attend workshops
- Harm Reduction Materials – Mon – Fri from 9-5, except Tuesday AM (Safer-Crack-Use-Kits, Safer-Needle-Use-Kits, Piercing Needles, Condoms, etc.) - for everyone.

Sometimes we and the phones are very busy so please keep trying!

ABOUT CELL COUNT

PASAN publishes 'Cell Count', a minimum of 4 issues per year. We are based in Toronto on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat and home to many diverse Indigenous peoples. It is sent out for FREE to Clients & Prisoners in Canada. If you are on the outside or part of an organization, please consider a donation @ \$20 per year. We are proud to release our 86th issue to you. We are also grateful for all the wonderful feedback we have been receiving from our readers, and encourage you to keep putting your two cents in. Our goal is to have most of our content written and produced by prisoners and ex-prisoners, so we highly encourage you to get in touch with us if you're interested in being part of the Cell Count team.

Publisher: PASAN
526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3
Circulation: 700+ - Recirculation: ???

All original artwork, poems and writings are the sole/soul property of the artist and author.

Fair Dealing in the Canadian Copyright Act:

Sections 29, 29.1, 29.2: "Fair dealing for the purpose of research, private study, education, parody, satire, criticism, review, and news re-

porting does not infringe copyright."

A NOTE ABOUT PEN PALS:

Here is a list of correspondence services for people inside (alternatives to pen pals, which is, sadly, no longer a part of Cell Count):

Canadian Inmates Connect: Currently, there is a \$35/year subscription. Your ad will be placed on a website, and people with internet access browse through to decide who to connect with. A point of caution: you are asked to say what you have been convicted for, and your full name will be published online. Melissa is the person to contact for more information. Write or call her at: Canadian Inmates Connect Inc. 3085 Kingston Rd, Suite 267, Toronto, Ontario, M1M 1P1 - (647) 344-3404

Black and Pink: Specifically for queer and trans prisoners. They are based in the United States, it does not cost anything to be part of the list, and you don't have to tell them your conviction. Here is how to reach them: Black and Pink National Office, 614 Columbia Rd, Dorchester, MA 02125
617.519.4387

Prison Fellowship Canada: This is a faith-based, Christian organization that connects prisoners with volunteers of either the same gender, or where there is a 15-20 year age difference. The point is for you to have an outlet to express yourself to someone who will listen. If you are of the Christian faith, this may be a great option for you. You can reach them for more info at: Prison Fellowship Canada - National Office, 5945 Airport Road, Suite 144, Mississauga, ON L4V 1R9
905.673.5867

Prisoner Correspondence Project: "...a solidarity project for gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgender, gendervariant, two-spirit, intersex, bisexual and queer prisoners in Canada and the United States, linking them with people who are part of these same communities outside of prison." - From their website. Write to them here: QPIRG Concordia c/o Concordia University 1455 de Maisonneuve Ouest, Montreal, QC H3G 1M8

Inmate Ink: "Help us bring Hope to a prisoner one letter at a time. Offers memberships from \$20 - \$40. Your completed ad will be published on our website for anyone in the general public to view and contact you directly. For an application or more info, please contact Tasha Brown at: P.O. Box 53222 Marlborough CRO, Calgary AB. T2A 7L9 or www.InmateInk.ca"
If you have had success using a pen pal service (other than ours) and would like to share it with other Cell Count subscribers, please write to us or call. We can list it in a future issue.

MOVING?

We were getting about 75 Cell Counts sent back to us each mail-out labelled, 'Not Here'. Please help us reduce our mailing expenses by letting us know of any address change, ASAP! Thank you for the consideration.

WE ARE TOLD TO TAKE THE PAIN, GO IT ALONE AND NOT SHOW ANY FEELINGS EXCEPT ANGER. AND WE WALK AROUND LIKE A TIME BOMB UNTIL WE GET ANGRY OR UPSET ABOUT SOMETHING. THIS LOCKS US INTO CYCLES OF VIOLENCE THAT WE CANNOT ESCAPE OR CHANGE BY OURSELVES. ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL STATEMENTS ANY MAN CAN MAKE IS TO SAY I NEED HELP.

FORGOTTEN WARRIOR



TO CELL COUNT EDITOR

In our prison system, we need safe injection sites as well, we already have good healthcare in the prisons so why not use these resources to help save more convicts! This will help other people from losing anymore loved ones, the spread of Hep-C & HIV is to be stopped right in its tracks. The spread of illness will come to a screeching halt. The healthcare can check our vitals, make sure no one ODs, and if so, there is someone there to help. And once you're ok and ready to go back to your unit you'll give back your used works needle and then go back to your living unit.

British Columbia has this in place and it's saving lives every day, so why not Ontario? People are going to use dope either with or without the help of health care, so why not save a life instead of losing a life? There is no reason why this would not work...
- I, JayJay Bevan, wish all the best of health and a good life. Peace out.

DEAR PASAN

Hello, my name is Michael, I am transitioning to be a woman, I've been on hormones for almost 5 years, it really should be more like 10 years now but I was told by Corrections Canada that I was asking for a non-essential treatment in 2009 when I first asked to be seen by a gender identity specialist, but I was later referred to a doctor who told me that my mental health was just as important as a person being treated for having a broken leg (5 years after the fact).

I then began the ever so slow grievance process of C.S.C and won, only after taking it all the way to Ottawa with my doctor's letter that stated I was being discriminated against by CSC's health care department, and that wasn't the first or last time for me either, before I filed my grievance, I was denied twice before at 2 other institutions, which was bullshit!

I'm hoping that somehow this letter helps other girls get on HRT (hormone replacement therapy) and helps in the fight to put an end to discriminatory practices within the system, there are so many other small things that go on in jails concerning discriminatory practices, such as being called "sir" or "him" or "it" or "man" and not being referred to as our gender identities and given the right to wear the clothing that we feel comfortable in because it becomes a bullshit safety/security concern to the institution when staff can come to work in like attire (i.e. dresses, flats, skirts, high heels, makeup, etc).

The struggles continue, but if we stick to our guns these are things we can win back together girls, stay true, don't stop believing
T/C Michelle xoxo

SUICIDE: STOP THE PAIN – BREAK THE CHAIN

By Reginald Nixon, a friend forever.

I know that a lot of people will say that there is no way to change or stop their suicidal thoughts. I am a survivor of many suicide attempts. I have to disagree with those people. I have learned after many attempts, that I wanted to live, not die. I asked a friend if he would help me figure out what was causing me to want to kill myself, and he suggested that we go to a support group. The group was to help deal with a friend or family member that had killed themselves. It took a couple of meetings before I was able to share my story, and the people in the group thanked me. I ended up changing the group to welcome people who were feeling suicidal.

I was asked by some group members what I mean when I say, "stop the pain – break the chain." I tell them if they can talk to a friend, family member or professional about what is bothering them, it's a way of removing the pain in their life. This removes the thoughts of suicide, which is what I like to call "breaking the chain." It's almost like putting up a wall between life and death. This is a very hard step to take because you might be telling someone something that they had no idea about, but they understand why you couldn't tell them.

There are many different reasons why people have thoughts of suicide and we may never know all of the reasons, but as long as we don't give up, we will never fail. I think that when we are in school from grades 5 – 12, there should be a class that is considered mandatory called "suicide awareness" to help people that might be getting bullied. Every little bit of advice helps.

Write ON!

Supporting prisoners through correspondence



INCARCERATED IN ONTARIO? NEED INFORMATION?

WRITE ON! is a new all-volunteer group whose goal is to help and support Ontario prisoners, through correspondence.

WE CAN:

- Research general information you need, such as:
- general legal information
 - info on prison rules and policies
 - info on resources, programs and services
 - and possibly other kinds of information you need.

WE CANNOT:

- Give any kind of professional advice, legal or otherwise.
- be a pen-pal service (though we could refer you to one)
- promise to adequately respond to all requests for information.

CONTACT US:

Write ON!
Suite # 234
110 Cumberland Street
Toronto, On M5R 3V5



Con Kitchen Corner Cooking

By Forgotten Warrior

#1 Apple Crisp (Pen style) Microwave, serves 3 peeps

Slice 8 medium-sized apples into wedges, put into a Tupperware container and microwave for 2-3 minutes until wedges are soft and mushy. Keep the juice from the cooked wedges for the topping. Topping: 1 cup granola (3 granola bars from Canteen), 1 cup cinnamon flavoured porridge (three packs from canteen), ¾ cup honey (from canteen). Mix all together with the apple juice from the cooked wedges.

Cool the apple crisp in fridge, take out, spread the topping on apple crisp, spoke spliff, then munch out and enjoy.

#2 Spicy Chicken on Rice, serves 3 peeps

Prepare 2 cups spicy chicken wings.

Cut wings into pieces, get 1 spicy pack from either a Mr. Noodle or Mama Noodle, mix 4 packs of peanut butter with 4 packs soya sauce, and the spice pack from the noodles with water. Mix until smooth then microwave for 60-90 secs stirring often. Pour over cooked and mixed rice and spicy chicken wings. Smoke blunt, munch out and enjoy.
Upcoming recipes: burrito, taffy
Due to ongoing cuts to the prison and food services being cut, the meals becoming smaller and more repeated meals of questionable items. Prisoners have become more self-sufficient and have learned to make due with what's available through the canteen in order to meet the daily requirements within the prison system. Where there's a will there's a way. The convict instinct will prevail.

YOUR TRAUMA IS VALID.

EVEN IF OTHER PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED "WORSE." EVEN IF SOMEONE ELSE WHO WENT THROUGH THE SAME EXPERIENCE DOESN'T FEEL DEBILITATED BY IT. EVEN IF IT "COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED." EVEN IF IT HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO. EVEN IF NO ONE KNOWS. YOUR TRAUMA IS REAL AND VALID AND YOU DESERVE A SPACE TO TALK ABOUT IT. IT ISN'T DESPERATE OR PATHETIC OR ATTENTION-SEEKING. IT'S SELF-CARE. IT'S INCONCEIVABLY BRAVE. AND REGARDLESS OF THE MAGNITUDE OF YOUR STRUGGLE, YOU'RE ALLOWED TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF BY PROCESSING AND UNLOADING SOME OF THE PAIN YOU CARRY. YOUR PAIN MATTERS. YOUR EXPERIENCE MATTERS. YOUR HEALING MATTERS. NOTHING AND NO ONE CAN TAKE THAT AWAY.

DANIELL KOEPKE

3 MORE WOMEN JOIN LAWSUIT ALLEGING SEXUAL ASSAULT AT WOMEN'S PRISON IN TRURO**By Blair Rhodes, CBC News: Jul 19, 2019**

Three more women have joined a lawsuit alleging they were sexually assaulted by a guard at the Nova Institution, a prison for women located in Truro, N.S.

They join three other women who launched the civil suit in May. The guard has resigned.

Truro police are conducting a criminal investigation into the allegations at the institute, one of six federal correctional facilities for women across Canada.

CBC is not identifying any of the women because of the nature of their allegations. They have the support of the Elizabeth Fry Society, an organization which provides help for women in conflict with the law.

In their suit, the women allege the assaults happened in 2013 and 2018. They name a former guard, Brian Wilson, as their attacker.

Guard claims he has been wrongfully accused

In an interview with CBC News in May, Wilson denied the allegations and said he has been wrongfully accused.

Correctional Service Canada told CBC News it began an internal investigation when it first heard of the allegations in last December.

The preliminary findings of that investigation were delivered on March 29. That's when CSC contacted police.

Wilson said he was suspended this January and resigned in April on the advice of his psychologist.

He has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The allegations in the civil lawsuit have not been tested in court.

ALBERTA FEDERAL PRISON OPENED AN OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE FOR INMATES THIS WEEK**By Rachel Browne, Global News: June 28, 2019**

Alberta's Drumheller federal prison opened an overdose prevention site for inmates on Monday, Global News has learned. It is the first prison in Canada to do so.

"Participants using the service will be allowed to use self-supplied substances," a spokesperson for the Correctional Service of Canada told Global News in an email.

Inmates looking to access the overdose prevention site, which runs every day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., must first meet with corrections health staff.

"Participants using the OPS will not be disciplined for using the service," the spokesperson said.

But no inmate has yet used the site. "As of today, no one has engaged in the Service," Corrections Canada told Global News on Friday. "It will take time for this service to be active."

"This is a new harm reduction initiative and inmates were given the opportunity to visit the site and ask questions."

The site includes safe consumption rooms inside the prison's Health Services where health-care staff, including nurses, are available to respond to an overdose or other medical emergencies. Site participants will be provided with a clean needle and syringe and other necessary supplies, which they may use only during their visit.

However, correctional officers will still "conduct their everyday responsibilities as usual, including performing urinalysis testing and searches, as per legislative and policy frameworks," the spokesperson said.

Some medical experts say overdose prevention sites are necessary amid rising overdose death rates in correctional facilities. Others have been concerned about such a service operating inside a prison, and specifically how inmates will be able to be open about their drug use without

violating their confidentiality. Earlier this month, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network released a statement saying that "supervised injection sites or overdose prevention sites must NOT replace needle and syringe programs in prison."

The group is currently suing the federal government over the lack of access to needle exchange in prisons. There are needle exchange programs operating in six federal prisons in Canada — but not in Drumheller.

The union representing Canadian corrections officers told Global News previously that prison guards would prefer supervised drug consumption sites to needle exchange programs, which the union says provides inmates with weapons. But according to the HIV/AIDS Legal Network, there has never been a single reported attack involving equipment from needle exchange programs in their 25 years of operation.

Overdoses and overdose deaths in federal prisons have more than doubled in recent years, according to a recent report by Corrections Canada. Drumheller Institution, located more than an hour from Calgary, often has the highest overdose rates.

According to the CSC report, there were 53 overdose incidents at Drumheller from 2012 to 2017. "Fentanyl was suspected or confirmed in 34 per cent of overdose incidents at Drumheller, compared to 8 per cent at all other institutions," the report stated.

CANADA NEEDS TO TAKE A HARD LOOK AT ITS OWN MIGRANT DETENTION SYSTEM**By Nora Loreto, Washington Post, July 24**

Nora Loreto is a Canadian freelance writer and author of "From Demonized to Organized: Building the New Union Movement."

As the world's attention has increasingly focused on migrant detention centers in the United States, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government quietly chose a contractor to build a new migrant detention facility in Laval, Quebec. The facility, promised in 2016 by Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale, will cost just over \$38 million (or 50 million Canadian dollars) and house up to 500 individuals.

This decision came days after a CityNews exclusive revealed that the agents from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) were asking people for identification in one Toronto neighborhood to prove they were "legally in Canada." The agency confirmed to CityNews that its agents were in the neighborhood at the time, but have denied conducting random street checks.

These events are a reminder that, while Canadians have been rightfully horrified by the images and rhetoric coming from the United States, they should not ignore how Canada itself treats migrants and asylum seekers. The Trudeau government was elected in large part thanks to its welcoming immigration rhetoric, and has since very publicly championed the cases of refugees. But it has not lived up to its words.

Instead, the Liberals have promised to increase deportations by between 25 percent and 35 percent per year. They have also done little to rein in the power of the CBSA, which is currently Canada's only national security agency without civilian oversight. When a complaint is made against a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), a civilian agency handles the complaint. The CBSA investigates itself, making it difficult for Canadians to stay informed about the agency's operations.

For example, on June 22, 12 men were arrested by police in London, Ontario, under a warrant issued by the CBSA. Within a week, four of the men had been deported to Mexico. The rest will remain in immigration

detention until their next hearings. All of this happened without any publicly released information about who they were and why they were arrested, sparking concern from immigration lawyers.

The CBSA determines when an individual should be placed into custody based on several criteria, including if someone is a risk to the public or if there is a risk that they won't appear for a deportation order. In Ontario, 94 percent are detained because CBSA considers them a flight risk, compared to just 55 percent in Quebec. The Canadian Council for Refugees argues that this unexplained discrepancy raises questions of fairness.

There are also questions about how CBSA agents treat the migrants and asylum seekers they detain. About one-third of Canada's detained migrants are held in regular prisons, often with the regular prison population, posing grave risks to their safety: In 2010, 24-year-old Kevon Phillip was beaten to death in Toronto's Don Jail while being held in immigration detention.

But even the immigrants held in migrant detention centers endure inhumane conditions and treatment. They can be held indefinitely and without charge as their case makes its way through Canada's bureaucratic immigration and refugee system. According to the End Immigration Detention Network, many migrants are held in cells for 18 to 21 hours per day. Children are also kept in detention: In 2016, a teenager who crossed into Canada from the United States was kept in isolated detention for three weeks. An access-to-information request made by the Canadian Press revealed this month that CBSA agents will soon be equipped with batons, "soft body armor" and steel-toed boots — the same items worn by guards at maximum-security facilities.

Since 2000, at least 15 people have died while in CBSA custody, including a 50-year-old woman who died at a maximum-security prison in 2017, and Bolante Idowu Alo, who died in 2018 after an "altercation" with CBSA guards accompanying him on a plane to be deported to Nigeria.

The negative publicity around reports of deaths in CBSA custody pushed the Liberals to rebuild detention centers, such as the one in Laval, and to reduce the number of children held in detention. But the party was not able to deliver on the promise of improving oversight.

Over a period of 18 months between 2016 and 2018, the CBSA investigated 1,200 complaints made against its own agents, including sexual harassment and discreditable conduct while on duty. In March, the Liberals committed to expanding the oversight body for the RCMP to enable it to take on complaints made to CBSA as well. The bill was at second reading in the Senate when the session finished in June, effectively killing it.

The Liberals need to make changes to CBSA detention and make border policing a priority. The party has shown that it is responsive to public pressure. Now, Canadians should join migrant justice campaigns and demand that the government institute a mechanism to oversee the CBSA. Canada's migrant detention system may be more humane than the U.S. system, but that does not mean we should allow these abuses to continue.

OLAND MURDER CASE HIGHLIGHTS COSTS REQUIRED FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENCE**Kevin Bissett, Canadian Press, Jul 24, 2019**

FREDERICTON — Dennis Oland didn't receive special favours before the courts in his murder re-trial, but the case shows how money can make a difference in mounting a successful defence, say legal experts.

Last week, a judge found Oland not guilty of the bloody 2011 murder of his wealthy father in Saint John — the culmination of six years of legal wrangling.

Oland, 51, was charged with the killing of Richard Oland in 2013.

He waged an exhausting legal battle after he was convicted by a jury in 2015 and spent close to a year in prison. That verdict was overturned on appeal in 2016 and the new trial ordered, this time before judge alone.

The Crown has 30 days to decide if it will appeal the not guilty verdict in the re-trial.

Nicole O'Byrne, a law professor at the University of New Brunswick, said Oland had the resources to pay a defence team to follow up on every aspect of the case by hiring experts and by taking portions of the case to the Supreme Court of Canada for determination.

"All citizens enjoy the same constitutional rights such as the right to be presumed innocent; however, not all citizens have equal access to resources that may be needed to mount a successful defence," O'Byrne said in an interview.

"In an era when legal aid services are being cut and the costs of legal representation are continually rising, this case reminds us that access to justice needs to be for everyone and not just for people of means."

Kirk Makin, co-president of Innocence Canada — a non-profit organization dedicated to identifying and advocating for individuals who may have been wrongfully convicted — says many of the people wrongfully convicted of crimes and later exonerated are poor people who can't afford the best defence.

"Dennis Oland is a very fortunate man. The difference is profound between someone who has the means to get the best defence and pursue every avenue of appeal vigorously. The vast majority of people don't," he said Monday in a telephone interview.

"What we find is a great many of the people who are wrongfully convicted and later exonerated were people who were people of very poor means. They were people who were homeless or otherwise rejected by society or have fallen through the cracks," he said.

Makin said lower income people can't afford the best lawyer, or a team of lawyers, and may have to rely on the legal-aid system for help.

There have been complaints for years that more funding is needed for legal-aid services, but the Ontario government recently slashed spending on Legal Aid Ontario by 30 per cent.

Makin said someone who is able to hire the best lawyers will get better treatment before the courts.

"When a top lawyer such as an Eddie Greenspan walks into court they are taken very seriously. There's a deference that's shown to them because of their reputation and skill," he said.

Makin points to the example of the case of Glen Assoun who spent almost 17 years in prison for his 1999 conviction in the killing of Brenda Way in Halifax in November 1995.

Assoun, who has a Grade 6 education, was forced to defend himself after firing a lawyer who had been appointed by Nova Scotia Legal Aid. He attempted to find a replacement, but when that failed, Justice Suzanne Hood said he'd have to act as his own lawyer.

"There are lawyers who come before the courts who are doing their first trial. Everybody has to start somewhere," she told Assoun.

Sean MacDonald, the lawyer who was successful in having Assoun's wrongful conviction overturned in March of this year, said a lack of money played a major role in Assoun's original conviction.

"In Glen's case he most certainly did

not have access to justice. Everybody deserves a defence. A proper defence costs money and takes resources. When you are on the fringes of society, you don't have the resources," MacDonald said. "Legal aid across the country deserves more money," he said.

MacDonald said he doesn't think legal aid services can function adequately without the funds necessary to be able to protect the clients that need protection.

Makin said the United Kingdom has a better system that includes a branch of government that acts like Innocence Canada to look out for the rights of people who may have been wrongfully convicted.

SOLITARY PRISON BAN UPHELD**The Canadian Press - Jun 24, 2019**

British Columbia's top court has upheld a lower court ruling that struck down Canada's solitary confinement law as unconstitutional.

The B.C. Court of Appeal ruled unanimously Monday that prolonged, indefinite segregation deprives inmates of life, liberty and security of the person in a way that is "grossly disproportionate" to the objectives of the law.

"The draconian impact of the law on segregated inmates, as reflected in Canada's historical experience with administrative segregation and in the judge's detailed factual findings, is so grossly disproportionate to the objectives of the provision that it offends the fundamental norms of a free and democratic society," Justice Gregory Fitch wrote on behalf of the three-judge panel.

The panel rejected the federal government's attempt to overturn the B.C. Supreme Court's ruling from January 2018 in a challenge brought by the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society of Canada.

Parliament passed a new law on Friday that the government said eliminates segregation, increases mental-health services and Indigenous supports and bolsters independent oversight.

The law means prisoners who pose risks to themselves or others will instead be moved to new "structured intervention units" and offered to spend four hours a day outside their cells, with a minimum of two hours to interact with others. It requires regular review of the necessity of each inmate's continuing confinement.

However, B.C. Civil Liberties Association executive director Josh Paterson said the new law does not eliminate the possibility of prolonged solitary confinement.

"The bill that they passed continues under certain circumstances to allow guards and prison wardens to place prisoners in the very same conditions that gave rise to our win in this case — 22 hours or more a day in a cell the size of a parking spot at a grocery store," he said.

The association's litigation director Grace Pastine said they believe the new law is unconstitutional and they're exploring all legal avenues to fight it.

The federal government has 30 days to decide whether to seek leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Scott Bardsley, a spokesman for Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale, said in a statement that the new law is backed by \$448 million in new investments. Inmates in structured intervention units will be entitled to at least two hours daily of meaningful human contact with staff, visitors, elders, chaplains, or other compatible inmates and have access to rehabilitative programming and mental health care, he said.

The challenge in B.C. has been unfolding at the same time as a similar case in Ontario brought by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. Ontario's Court of Appeal placed a

hard cap on solitary confinement in prisons, saying inmates can no longer be isolated for more than 15 days. The decision was stayed while Canada worked on passing its replacement law.

B.C.'s Appeal Court allowed the government's appeal in part, saying that while the law should be struck down under the section of the charter that relates to the right to life, liberty and security of the person, it should not be struck down under the section that protects equality rights, in this case of mentally ill and Indigenous inmates.

The court declared that Correctional Services Canada had breached its obligations.

The groups brought the original lawsuit to prevent tragic deaths such as the suicide of 19-year-old Ashley Smith after more than a year of continuous solitary confinement in an Ontario prison, Pastine said.

"This decision calls out Canada's long-standing practice of isolating prisoners for weeks, months and even years at a time with no end in sight, a practice that has been condemned around the world as a form of torture," she said.

FORMER WARDEN APPROVED MISLEADING PRESS RELEASE ON INMATE MATTHEW HINES'S DEATH

Karissa Donkin, CBC News: Jul 22, 2019

The former warden of Dorchester Penitentiary approved a press release that included false information about the death of Matthew Hines, according to emails obtained by CBC News.

But the heavily redacted records don't reveal where the false narrative originated.

The press release, published on the same day the Cape Breton man died, said that he was "found in need of medical attention" and that "staff members immediately began performing CPR."

Neither was true.

The release doesn't mention anything about how Hines was pepper sprayed at least four times at close range by correctional officers, all while he was handcuffed and restrained. An autopsy linked his death to the pepper spray.

Hines was surrounded by guards during the incident and wasn't "found" in need of medical attention.

A 56-minute video that shows the entire incident, beginning when Hines refused to go to his cell and ending when he was loaded into an ambulance, doesn't show anyone performing CPR on Hines at any point at the prison.

Hines didn't receive CPR until he was in an ambulance heading to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead. He was 33.

The press release was the only public information available about Hines's death for more than a year. It's still available on CSC's archives and has never been corrected.

"So inaccurate" Catherine Latimer, executive director of the John Howard Society, wants Correctional Service Canada to explain where the incorrect information came from.

"Anybody who saw that [video] couldn't really justify making the statement that CPR or any kind of medical intervention was medically applied," Latimer said.

"It's just so inaccurate, it's unbelievable."

CSC declined an interview request about the press release. In an emailed statement, spokesperson Kyle Lawlor wrote that policy requires CSC to issue a news release within 48 hours of an inmate's death, "using information that is available at the time."

"News releases are co-ordinated by CSC's regional communication staff with the help of institutional staff," Lawlor wrote.

"The subsequent investigation

process resulted in a more detailed understanding of the events that transpired."

CSC has since "refined" its communications procedures "to ensure a higher level of review, as we recognize the importance of clear, accurate and consistent public communications on deaths in custody," the statement says.

"Approved" According to CSC records, Ed Muise, the Dorchester warden at the time, was informed of Hines's death just minutes after he died at 12:04 a.m. on May 27, 2015.

Within an hour or two of the death, nearly all staff who were involved with Hines that night had written their observation reports. The reports would later be entered as evidence in court proceedings.

The closest thing to that narrative in the press release appeared in the nurse's observation report. The nurse, who was later fired by CSC, said "proper medical attention" was "rendered" to Hines, though it does not specifically mention CPR.

None of the other reports said that Hines was "found" in need of medical attention or that he "immediately" received CPR.

But that's exactly the story that was told in the draft news release that was sent via email to Muise 12 hours after the death of Hines.

Eight minutes after he received the draft news release, Muise sent a one-word email reply: "Approved."

CSC wouldn't say exactly what materials Muise had access to before he approved the press release.

"What CSC can confirm with you is that wardens and senior managers have access to a variety of resources and information when making decisions related to an incident or crisis, including video footage, statement/observation reports and briefings from staff," Lawlor said.

Muise was the warden of Dorchester from February 2015 to July 2016, when he was promoted to assistant deputy commissioner of correctional operations for the Atlantic region, according to his LinkedIn profile. He no longer works for CSC.

When reached, Muise directed questions to CSC media relations. CSC apologized for press release in 2016

The correctional agency apologized for the inaccurate press release in 2016, admitting there were "staff errors" that led to "inaccurate information" in that initial release.

But it has never explained those "staff errors."

An internal communications plan from 2016, listing "key messages" to use when talking about the Hines case, says "no staff were disciplined as a result of this error."

The emails about the press release were included in more than 200 pages of heavily redacted records about the Hines case released through access to information. CBC News has filed an appeal of the redactions.

The records were requested in 2016 and 2017, but CSC didn't provide a response until July 12 of this year.

The emails also discuss how to treat initial media requests about the Hines case, including discussion about how to defend a decision to not release the video of Hines's treatment before his death.

"May I ask if you could help me come up with a defensible justification?" senior communications adviser Lori Halfper wrote in a 2016 email to four other staff members at CSC national headquarters.

"If we say no, [CBC News] will press for a reason why."

CSC said CBC News would have to file an access to information request for the footage.

The agency then denied the access to information request in 2016, saying that releasing it would reveal personal information and the details of an investigation.

The footage was later entered into evidence in court and became public in April.

AUDIT FLAGS RISK OF 'FOOD-RELATED HEALTH EVENT' IN CANADIAN PRISONS

Kathleen Harris, CBC News: June 8, 2019

A new federal audit raises quality and safety concerns regarding Canada's prison food system, warning of food being wasted, substandard meal portions and the risk of a "food-related health event" behind the wire.

Federal government auditors scrutinized kitchens and food preparation rules in federal institutions that feed more than 14,000 inmates daily. It found that the Correctional Service Canada (CSC) is failing to meet Canada Food Guide's nutrition guidelines, to provide quality assurance oversight and to take consistent steps to avoid contamination.

"By not meeting these required standards for food production, there is a risk that CSC could have a food-related health event at an individual site," the audit warns.

The issue of food quality has been a source of tension — and even violence — since CSC moved to a centralized production and "cook-chill" system in 2014. Auditors noted a "culture of resistance to change" with the Food Services Modernization Initiative, along with significant oversight and compliance failures.

The audit cites hygiene breaches by kitchen staff, including instances when hairnets weren't worn. The audit also reported problems with the inspection of food deliveries. CSC policy calls for checks on quality and quantity and requires that goods be sent back if perishables aren't fresh, canned foods are leaking or frozen foods are thawing.

The audit, however, found that three of the 12 sites visited did not carry out such inspections or count the goods. At one site, they discovered metal shards embedded in a large sack of brown sugar after it hit the side of the delivery truck.

Weak controls, wasted resources "Weak controls in the reception of goods can lead to potential health and safety issues and wasted resources if goods are spoiled or otherwise unusable and need to be disposed of," the audit says.

Auditors also found expired or spoiled goods in storage rooms, fridges and freezers, despite a "first in, first out" inventory rule.

Correctional Investigator Ivan Zinger wrote to CSC Commissioner Anne Kelly to raise concerns about both the scope of the audit and the persistent problems with prison food quality.

In his letter, obtained through Access to Information, Zinger warns of health and security concerns associated with small portions and bad food.

"Food has gradually become another highly valued and dangerous commodity in the parallel or underground inmate economies," he wrote. "Muscling, bullying and extortion for food is a common and pervasive problem, especially at higher security institutions." Deadly riot over food

A deadly Saskatchewan riot in 2016 linked food shortages, poor meal quality and inadequate portion sizes to an organized protest and inmate strike that ended in violence. One person was killed and eight others injured.

But while the audit flagged problems with too-small portions, it also found a major problem with waste.

In one location, all leftovers — about one third of total production — were "needlessly thrown away" at the end of the meal, the audit said.

Zinger, who has been raising concerns about chronic food service problems at CSC, said the audit falls short on various fronts. He urged

CSC to order a comprehensive, external review.

Healthier, cheaper food possible Zinger said research has shown that serving wholesome and appetizing food in institutionalized settings is cheaper, healthier and safer in the long run.

"Scrimping on food may not be providing value for money or be worth the problems or exposure to risk that a single large-scale food safety event would entail," he warned.

Zinger also noted that the audit was based on the old food guide and questioned how CSC will comply with the new guide's emphasis on plant-based protein, fresh fruits and vegetables.

"The long-term health consequences of serving more highly processed meals to a population that is known to have higher incidence of diet-related illness and disease, such as obesity, hypertension and diabetes, was not acknowledged or probed in this audit," he said.

The audit also found CSC did not always respect religious dietary requirements for certain inmates.

CSC says it is moving to adopt new policies, expected this fall, that will address gaps in previous policies.

Spokeswoman Christina Tricomi said CSC is committed to meeting with food services staff to review their roles and responsibilities.

"CSC will make sure there is more oversight and that an effective monitoring program is implemented to ensure compliance of policies. This will help achieve the overall desired outcomes," she said.

'THERE'S NOTHING LEFT THERE': A FOUNDER OF CANADA'S FIRST HEALING LODGE SAYS CSC DISMANTLED VISION

By Abigail Bimman, Global News

One of the visionaries behind the very first healing lodge in Canada says Correctional Service Canada completely dismantled what the lodge once was, and Sharon Mclvor is now concerned about safety inside.

In 1989, Mclvor, then with the Native Women's Association of Canada, was asked to be an Indigenous voice on the task force that redesigned women's prisons in Canada. The group published the report "Creating Choices," which led to five new prisons for women across the country, including Okimaw Ohci, the first healing lodge, which opened in Saskatchewan in 1995.

Mclvor remembers one of the first meetings at the now-shuttered Prison for Women in Kingston, Ont., the only facility for federally-incarcerated women in the country at the time.

Inmates were holding a powwow, and Mclvor watched their self-led drumming, dancing and what's known as a grand entry.

"They start coming in and I started to cry. I realized that these women knew what they needed to try to get themselves out of what they were, but they didn't know how to do it," Mclvor remembers.

She began working on advocacy and programming and bringing in elders for Indigenous prisoners.

Mclvor worked with a small group called a planning circle to launch the country's first healing lodge in Saskatchewan. It was important it be set up in the prairies, she said, where the majority of offenders were coming from.

Once the location was selected, they moved their meetings to Maple Creek, Sask., the nearest community to Okimaw Ohci, and launched the circle that included elders, members of Correctional Service Canada, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, people from the Nekanee reserve and non-Indigenous people from Maple Creek.

The first priority at the new lodge, she says, was safety.

"The biggest thing that I saw was that they're never ever safe," Mclvor said. "Because of the prison

or penitentiary culture, you always had to watch your back. And you have a culture in there where you've got someone in charge ... how you become the big dog is that you abuse everybody else, so you always have to watch your back."

By being in charge, Mclvor said, she doesn't just mean a hierarchy among staff, but among inmates.

"That was the first principal in our healing lodge, is that what we needed was a place where they could be safe because until you're safe and you're not always surviving, you cannot change."

After that, it was about getting in touch with the Indigenous worldview.

"It's not so much about culture, because culture, you think, 'Okay, culture is, let's go have a sweat lodge, or let's go to the powwow.' Our worldview is so much bigger than that," Mclvor said.

"So what [we] needed and what we wanted to do was to first expose them to it and secondly encourage them to understand it, and understand how incredibly important they were, and if something happened to them or if they're not doing what they're here to do, then everyone is missing out."

She says the system worked in the early days, with low recidivism rates, but the lodge in its current form is unrecognizable.

Mclvor left Okimaw Ohci in 2005, unhappy with major changes made by Correctional Service Canada which took over operations at the lodge. But she still speaks with elders and others currently at the site.

Some of Mclvor's biggest concerns were over the addition of male staff and male elders — especially when the vast majority of Indigenous female offenders have a history of sexual assault and trauma.

"I left when we could not prevent a corrections officer who applied...to work at the healing lodge and used his union seniority to become a staff member," she said.

"I couldn't stop them. I had no influence anymore. As you know, I do a whole lot of activist work."

Mclvor, a member of the Lower Nicola Indian band and a lawyer, has a long history of activism and advocacy. In a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court, she fought the government over discrimination in the Indian Act.

Her work for Indigenous women was recognized with a Governor General's award. For the last two decades, she has taught and designed courses at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, the only public Indigenous post-secondary institution in British Columbia.

But as the CSC changed the system in 2005, she remembers her fight against the organization as "futile."

"They get their weapons training [now]," she said. "We refused to give them weapons training because there was going to be no weapons involved."

In the early days, the term "guard" was never used, either. Instead, the Cree words for aunty, older sister or mother stood in its place. She also laments the loss of a daycare, a space which is now, she understands, used for offices.

And while there is still no traditional barbed wire fence or cells at healing lodges, she remembers the system of coloured cloths tied in trees to mark the perimeter in the isolated setting in the woods. She remembers one inmate who would walk to the edge and stick her foot out and bring it back repeatedly, but says there were no escape attempts.

One concern that has been echoed by others in the Indigenous community — including the nearby Nekanee First Nation — is that CSC, not a panel of elders as it had been, now controls who enters the facility.

"Taking the elders out of the equation just really, really undermines everything," said Mclvor.



By Zakaria Amara
ACT 1: THREE WISHES

I entered my cell at around 8:15 p.m. last night. Seconds later, the steel door behind me began to close itself. clinkclinkclinkCLUNK! I hate that sound! I once glued grey strips of sponge across the entire edge of the door hoping that it would mute this awful sound, but... clinkclinkclinkCLUNK!

If failure had a child, then that's exactly what it would sound like!

Weekend nights in prison are incredibly boring, especially when you don't have a T.V. Mine is still with the old man. I gave it to him as a gift and promised not to ask him back for it, so I guess I can't call it "my" T.V. anymore.

I looked outside my window and saw nothing but night and snow. I stood there thinking about how to spend the last few hours of this boring night. I couldn't think of anything, so I turned towards my desk and began to write.

I have a huge metal bin on top of my desk, which allows me to write while standing. I learned this "standing at your desk" technique from former U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. I don't think he'll be too happy to hear that I'm benefitting from his wisdom, but at this point in time, as far as he is concerned, this fact remains an unknown unknown, and so, it shouldn't bother him. (If you are too young to remember him, or simply wasn't paying attention at the time, just YouTube "Rumsfeld Unknown Unknowns" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiPe1OikQuk> Anyway, a few seconds later... PUFFFFFF!

I could see in my peripheral vision a fat, blue genie hovering in the air in front of my door. I paid no attention to him, and continued writing; such surprise night visitations don't startle Middle Easterners.

As expected, using a thick accent, he offered me the customary three wishes.

I rolled my eyes, and continued to scribble away. I was playing hard to get. I had to! Every Middle Eastern kid knows what happens when you show too much eagerness to a genie. He repeated his offer.

Still looking down at my desk, and sounding deeply annoyed, I said: "Give me a minute! I need to think about it!"

Filled with bottled excitement, I thought about my wishes. I thought about freedom. I thought about being reunited with my beloved daughter. I thought about my wonderful sister who has been my rock for all these years. I thought about my mother, father, and brother. I thought about having all the money in the world.

I thought about being eternally young.

But then...
But then, I thought about the journey I've been on; despite all the pain, all the fear, and all the tears... despite the loneliness... despite being turned into an outcast... despite all of this, I thought about all the wonderful treasures that my heart has gained. I thought about all the knowledge and wisdom that I picked up along the way. I thought about how my character has been shaped and molded by the passing of the years... and finally, I thought about all the other treasures that still await me, and how I would miss out on them, if I simply abandoned my journey.

I looked hard at the paper on my desk for a moment, and then reached for the light switch, and retired to my bed.

I'm not sure if the genie bothered to take a look at what I wrote, after I fell asleep. But if he did, then he would have read this: "Ancient wisdom teaches that the arrival of a good thing before its time spoils it."

ACT 2: THREE STRIKES

clinkclinkclinkclinkDUFF!... No clunk this time. When the door opens, it's just DUFF. I like DUFF! It's gentler and more promising. Unless, of course, a bunch of guys are waiting to stab you on the other side of it, then CLUNK is definitely preferable.

It was 7:30 p.m. at night; yard and gym activities were supposed to begin two hours ago. I was ready as usual with my white fishnet sack that contained everything I needed for my outing. I usually take my prayer mat, workout pads, and a ball cap.

As I left my cell, I noticed that all the other cell doors were closed. Was I the only person going out to yard tonight? "The Bachelorette must be on", I thought. I left my living unit, and proceeded through the seemingly endless and shifting corridors that eventually lead to the yard and gym. At the end of one of the shorter corridors, I noticed Officer Robinson waiting for me. Judging from the two golden stripes on his shoulders, I figured that he was the one in charge tonight.

A significant number of prison guards, if not the outright majority, classify inmates as a sub-human species. Mr. Robinson belonged to the minority; he was one of those people whose presence resurrected your faith in the universality of human decency.

As I approached him, he greeted me and asked how I was doing. His inquiry was genuine. I told him that I was fine and asked him what he needed. As he began to speak, I noticed a mixed expression of embarrassment and discomfort on his face:

"Amara, in the next hour, the U.S. President will declare his WBYWWFY policy."

"What's WBYWWFY?" I asked.

"It stands for: 'We'll Drone You Wherever We Find You'. It's a new global military campaign that will target anyone, anywhere, even if they happen to be on U.S. friendly soil like Canada."

"So, what does that have to do with me?"
"Corrections Canada believes that due to the vague and broad language of this policy, there is a possibility that you may become a target of a drone strike while you are out in the yard. So, they want you to sign this waiver in order to absolve them of any responsibility."

I don't know why, but I've always found signing documents irresistible. I'm like a crackhead when it comes to the dotted line. If I see it, I must sign it. So, sign I did, and 'kept it moving' as we say in prison. Mr. Robinson stood there silently; he seemed to be still struggling with all of this.

As I walked away, I heard him ask, "Aren't you afraid?"

I turned towards him and said: "I am, but there is an Arabic poem that goes:

Die by the tip of a sword
Or the tip of a slipper
The causes for death are many
But death itself is one"

I was tempted to change the end of the first line to "The tip of a Hellfire missile", but he would've probably called me out on my B.S. I 'kept it moving' until I finally reached the central control area, and walked through the metal detector. It's purpose was to prevent inmates from bringing shanks to and from the yard. Finally, the last corridor! I could see the light at the end of the tunnel!

"AA-MERAA!" The guard manning the metal detector called out from behind his counter.

My attention shifted from the thought of possibly getting drone struck, to the guard who appeared to be holding a large glazed doughnut in his left hand. Upon closer inspection, I realized that it was just a plastic replica that was attached to the end of his key chain. I don't mind doughnuts.

"Three strikes!" he said with a bulldog expression on his face. "You can't go to yard tonight. Try again tomorrow." There was satisfaction in his voice.

I have a triple-black-belt in conflict avoidance and a white-belt in self-esteem, so I politely turned towards him and asked, "What did I do wrong?"

"Well, Aa-mera, according to the new regulations, Maaa-zlim inmates are no longer allowed to take their prayer mats to the yard."

"Why?"

"They're a flight risk?"

"But this is not the flying type." I politely protested.

"Can the naked eye distinguish between which is which Aa-mera?"

He got me there!

"Can't argue with you on that one, sir."

"Secondly, all inmates are now prohibited from keeping beards that are longer than .765433 cm. Long beards could be used to hide weapons and other contraband."

"And what's the third infraction?"

"The Administration has decided that you specifically are no longer allowed to wear shoes to the yard. This shouldn't be a big hassle for you, since I see you camel jockeys wearing slippers in the desert all the time."

"Your information about our footwear is very accurate, but why am I specifically not allowed to wear shoes?"

He reached under his counter and pulled out a gigantic 3-ring black binder that was labeled "Unknown Unknowns". When he opened it wide on his counter, I noticed that it contained nothing! Yet, to my astonishment, he began to sift through it as if it was full of documents! He shifted back and forth, and at some point even licked the tips of his finger to separate between two invisible pages that were apparently stuck together.

"Aha!" he exclaimed when he finally found what he was looking for, and began to read:

"It says here: "There is unknown unknown evidence that indicates that Mr. Aa-mera has previously formulated an escape plan, and could potentially execute it when he feels the time is right."

PAUSE | |

My mind scrambled through my memories like a fighter jet seeking a target. How did they find out?! And which plan exactly are they talking about?

For one, there was that first night in prison when I fantasized about turning into an ant-sized version of myself, and then crawling beneath the door. This was a completely original idea! I honestly had no clue at the time that Ant-Man even existed.

Oh! I think I know... when I was at Canada's Super Max, years ago, a great idea came to me as I was walking in the yard with another inmate. I suggested to him that if he ran around the yard for 30 minutes every day while flapping his arms like a bird, then eventually, after a very long time, he might grow feathers and fly his way to freedom. He pointed out that the snipers in the towers might shoot him down. I told him it was worth a shot!

Darn it. They must have overheard us. Or maybe, instead of transforming into an elegant bird, he simply took the path of least resistance, and devolved into a tail dragging rat!

Can't trust anyone these days!

PLAY >

Jokes aside, humor has always been my way of coping with hardship. The harder my life gets, the funnier I get. I remember going back to the holding cells after receiving a life-sentence, and launching into a series of jokes about how I would deal with it. The truth is that I was hurting then, just as I was hurting now.

"Alright sir, I guess I'll try again tomorrow." I felt dejected, and lowered my head in defeat as I left the central control area, and walked through the corridor that led back to my living unit.

Suddenly... PUFFFFFF!

The opportunistic, blue genie appeared in front of me.

"I offer you three wishes!" he said with clear

satisfaction in his voice, now that he thought I was desperate.

I looked at him with my sad eyes for a moment, and then simply walked past him. After a few steps, I heard him repeat his offer again.

I stopped without turning and said:

"My only wish is that we can all one day see ourselves in each other."

The genie instantly disappeared, never to be seen again...

ACT 3: THREE POINTER

I was in the prison gym the other night, shooting hoops. I can't play anymore, I can only shoot - back problems at 33... or is it 34? Honestly, at this moment I'm not sure. Believe it or not, I spent most of my 31st year thinking that I was 32 years old until my actual 32nd year arrived and I realized my mistake. I felt frustrated when I discovered this because it meant that I had to mentally think of myself as a 32 year-old for two years in a row!

I could easily do the math and figure out my current age, but for some reason, I'm allowing the uncertainty to stick around like a half-welcomed squatter. (Definitely a topic for therapy!)

Anyhow, back to the basketball court... I'm a decent three-point shooter. A few years ago, I was one of the best in the building; I won the three-point competition twice, and even used to walk around the gym with an invisible championship belt, until I (invisibly) put it on the line, and lost it to a man called T. I desperately tried to win it back from him before he was released, but just couldn't beat him. I wonder what he did with it? After he left I pretended to still have the belt, but it wasn't the same. You can only lie to yourself for so long, even if no one calls you up on it.

But I'm digressing again... FOCUS... As I was shooting around, I saw the Warden walking in my direction. She never comes to the gym, so her visit was definitely unusual. I can't lie, I was now trying extra hard to impress her, which led me to miss every shot.

"AMARA!" she yelled.

I tried to act cool despite my horrible performance, and walked over to the sideline where she was standing.

"Yes, Mrs. Colins, what would you like??"

"How are you?" she asked, without a trace of empathy.

"Just another day, Ma'am. What about you? You never come to the gym, what's up?"

"Well, I have an offer for you."

"Okay"

"If you manage to score the next three-pointer you take, we'll commute your life sentence, and you'll be a free man."

"That's funny" I said with my trade-mark 5% laugh.

"I'm serious. Here is the paperwork. Just sign over here if you agree." She pointed at the dotted line.

"What if I miss?" I asked.

"If you miss, then you'll have to enter the Environmentally Friendly Energy Initiative that we just started here at Millhaven Institution."

"What's that about?"

"It's a fantastic new method of producing environmentally friendly energy to power up the building, by harvesting it from the bodies of permanently unconscious inmates."

"You mean like The Matrix?"

"Exactly."

"Where do I sign?"

"Right here."

I already told you about me and dotted lines, so don't bother trying to figure out what I was thinking as I nonchalantly signed the document.

I grabbed the ball, headed to the top of the three-point line, and faced the net. Hit or miss, I was on the brink of freedom, or an unconsciously conscious existence in a dream world. I did not stand there for an eternity, reflecting on my past, or my future, as one usually does in Hollywood movies. I simply looked at the net, measured the distance, jumped crookedly as I always do, and released the ball, sending it up into a perfect arc that took it's time as it swam through empty space...

... until it finally landed perfectly on the Warden's head. Ooooooops!

I didn't have time to think about how I so completely missed the net, because I suddenly felt a sharp pain in my upper left arm. I instinctively grabbed my arm, and immediately noticed a syringe-looking dart sticking out of it. Forgive me for not knowing what this thing was called; I was born in the Middle East, and over there, they just shoot us. But maybe... Maybe, if they developed their own Environmentally Friendly Energy Initiative, then things might change. Who knows?

I quickly began to fade, and my vision became blurry. The last thing that I saw was a guard standing in a window balcony, holding what looked like a rifle that was pointed in my direc-

Cont'd on page 7

From my first Prisoners Justice Day to now

G. McMaster cont'd from cover story
excuse was at the time. None of them fasted. When we were all out in the black-top, walled in and caged-over exercise yard, I let the male members of the jail's general population know what I thought about their lack of character. It's one thing to preach how much better the Canadian penitentiary system is versus the U.S. system (it truly is in many ways), it's another thing not to honor the most sacred tradition that everyone had been so verbose about.

Early on in my sentence, I developed the habit of every December, I would transfer all of the important dates from the year that just passed to the next year's calendar so that I wouldn't miss any Birthdays, Anniversaries, important dates, etc. I'd be lost without my calendars. I made sure that I marked August 10th and have every year since. As our day of Remembrance approached in 1994, I hand wrote subtle (non-aggressive) notes to every Range (cage) in the Jail and reminded everyone that the sombre tradition of Prisoner's Justice Day was once again upon us. Although no one accepted their food trays that day, mostly from self-imposed peer pressure on the individual Ranges, the Jails' staff gleefully let me know there had been a significant increase in the amount of junk food items purchased from the outside canteen supplier that week. Of course, I ended up in the Superintendents' office the next day being accused of forcing the whole Jail not to eat.

In 1997, I experienced my first Prisoner's Justice Day within the Canadian Federal System; Collins Bay Penitentiary (a.k.a. Gladiator School) in Kingston, Ontario. Other than prisoners with Diabetes who needed to eat for health reasons,

and notable mental health cases that never should have seen the inside of a penitentiary, no one went to the Dining Room. No one went to work, there were moving Memorial Services in the Chapel, and those that could afford them wore silk-screened T-shirts commemorating the day. At the time I was an admitted outsider, Connecticut Yankee, in Queen Elizabeth's Court, and frankly, I was impressed. An entire penitentiary sticking together and, from what I was told, an entire country of incarcerated souls doing the exact same thing.

As the next couple of years passed by it wasn't long before the veneer wore off and I started having issues with what lay under the shiny surface. Men were being forced not to eat either through strong peer pressure, threats of violence, acts of violence or the reality that they may have to check into Protective Custody if it became known they ate. Usually, the men doing the enforcing were either drunk, high or both. The irony of it all didn't go unnoticed by me. Actually, it made me think of how meaningless Independence Day and Memorial Day had become in the United States; long weekend, keg parties and BBQ's without a whole lot of Remembrance going on.

Many of the men and women we were commemorating had died of senseless acts of violence within the penitentiary. Now, here we were, committing further acts of violence against each other in the name of Prisoner's Justice Day. Of course, this is above and beyond the daily acts of violence perpetrated amongst ourselves on a daily basis throughout the Canadian Penitentiary System. Worse yet, some of the actors who were enforcing that others

observe 'their' honored tradition were the legendary penitentiary instigators and tough guys that caused some of the deaths we were commemorating. Penitentiary bullshit in all its glory.

But, I still hadn't found my voice on this issue yet because I was the outsider, the American, and I thought it more prudent to honor and study the Canadian penitentiary experience instead of being a critic of it; especially something as hallowed as Prisoner's Justice Day.

Over the years I was called upon to do more and more for the Canadian federal prison population. Whether it was as a spokesperson on national Television & Radio shows, successful legal actions that affected everyone or bumping heads with Stephen Harper over the Pay Cuts, I was out there fighting for all of us. In essence, somewhere along the way, I had found my Canadian voice. Now I'm using it to share with as many people as I can, all at the same time, how disillusioned I am with how Canadian prisoners comport themselves on and around Prisoner's Justice Day.

Over the decades, as different groups filtered into the penitentiary, they professed, 'that has nothing to do with me, we weren't here for that.' As I got older I started to hear 'You're Old School, we're New School, and we don't pay attention to that'. Naturally, I retort, 'You're not New School, you're actually No School'. The excuses became vast and varied and then Stephen Harper decided we could no longer purchase or wear our PJD T-Shirts or have the day off work without penalty. When there weren't national protests over this, our one day a year of Remembrance for the men and women who

had died unjust deaths within the penitentiaries, far too many from the direct mistreatment by guards, administrators and medical staff, I saw the writing on the wall.

In the course of finding my Canadian voice, I served as Chairman of the Inmate Committee, Chairman of the Lifer's Group, Lifeline In-reach Assistant, Chairman of the John Howard Society, etc, etc. In all of these roles, I was called upon to teach and preach the history of Prisoner's Justice Day. Not anymore. Last year, for the first time in 15 years, I refused to take the Podium for the Memorial Service in the Chapel. Furthermore, I've sworn off ever running for any elected position again. That's how disillusioned I've become. There was a time when 'the man' took things from us and we rallied, often in vain, to get them back. Now, 90% of what is taken from us is a direct result of our own stupid actions. It's hard to claim we are being treated unjustly when we ourselves are repeatedly unjust to each other.

Yes, I'm Old School and proud of it. I will continue to wear my PJD T-shirt, fast and not work as I remember those who shed their lives blood. I am particularly disillusioned when I see men faking their sincerity and crying out to agencies such as PASAN. These agencies do everything they can to help us on a wide range of issues, which include promoting and protesting on our behalf at Prisoner's Justice Day rallies in society. If they can fast, why can't we? If they can protest, why can't we? Disillusionment? You bet. I have a bad case of it.

Designation; which I imputably agree is being handed out like bread at a local drop-in or religious communion, is disproportionately being imposed upon Indigenous "offenders," specifically.

Of course, the courts or government of Canada is not about to tell you this, but ethnic background research upon those who have been designated as Dangerous Offender, shows or suggests that such individuals are undeniably being targeted.

Question is, is this simply an argumentative coincidence as the courts and government would want for you to believe? Or is it more of a detrimental consequence for being born something you had absolutely no choice or obligation in deciding?

Let's just hope something is done about the circumstances soon, before the governmental powers are able to counterbalance such deplorably degrading odds by designating more non-Indigenous offenders.

An Arabian Night

Z. Amara cont'd from 6

Complete darkness
Suddenly, my eyes opened
My heart was racing, and I was gasping for breath
I looked around frantically, trying to register my surroundings
I was lying on a bed
I looked towards my feet, and saw a familiar steel door
This was my cell
Thank God!
It was only a dream

EPILOGUE

"They slept on two stories of the building, and on two-tiered bunks, and they dreamed; old men of their families, young men of women. They dreamed of lost possessions, a train, a church, their judges... Their dreams were all different, but whatever they dreamed, the sleepers were miserably aware that they were prisoners. If in their dreams they roamed over green grass or through city streets, it could mean only that they had tricked their jailers and escaped or had been released in error and were now wanted men. That total, blissful forgetfulness of their shackles imagined by Longfellow in "The Prisoner's Dream" was denied them. The shock of wrongful arrest, followed by a ten- or twenty-year sentence, the baying of the guard dogs, the sound of escort troops priming their rifles, the nerve-racking jangle of reveille in the camps, seep through all the strata of ordinary experience, through all their secondary and even primary instincts, into a prisoner's very bones so that, sleeping, he remembers that he is in jail before he becomes aware of smoke or the smell of burning and gets up to find the place on fire."
From Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's "In the First Circle"

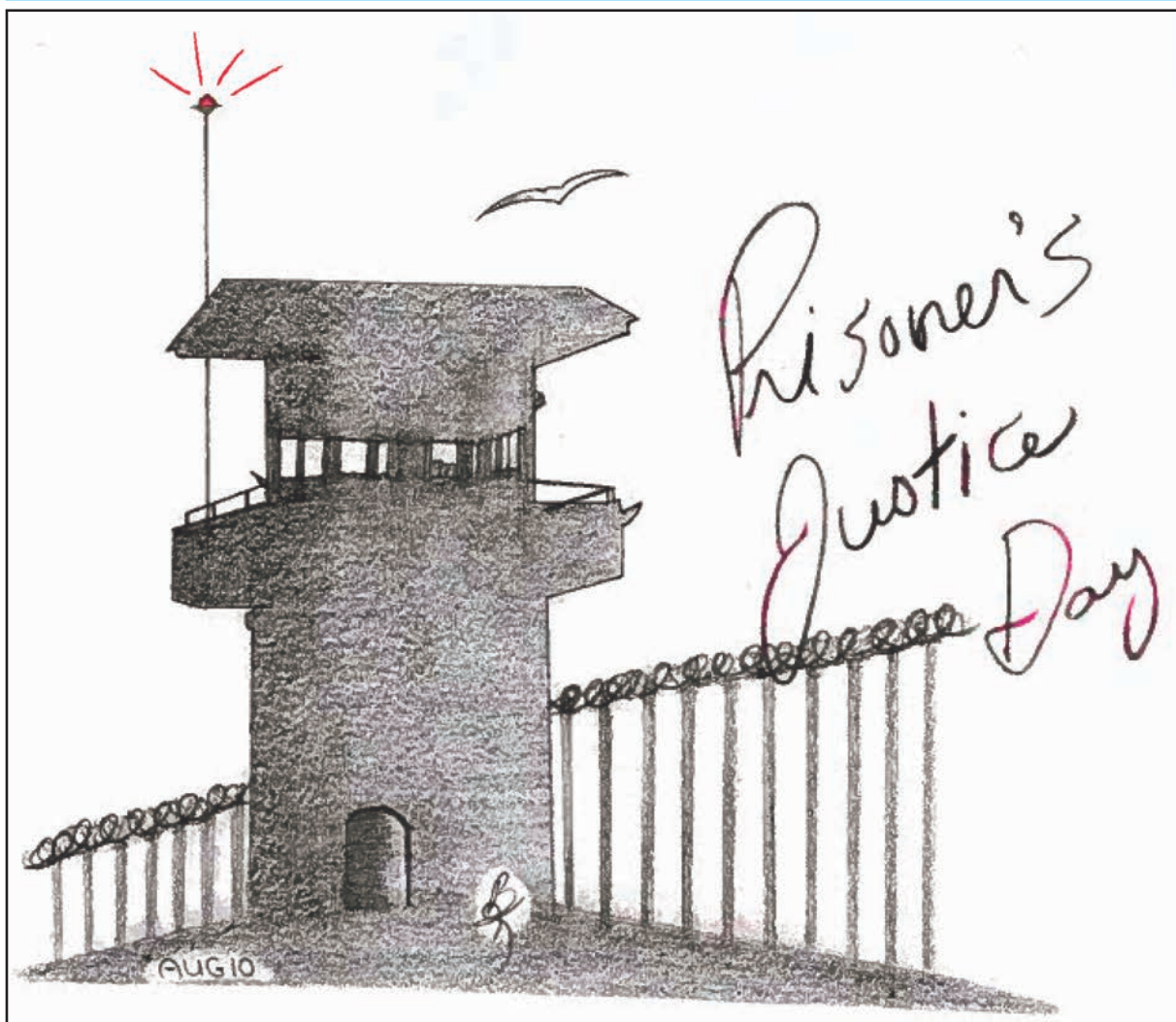


Illustration by Brian Kerr

The detrimental consequence

By Brian Kerr

As if 22 months in segregation c/o the Joyceville institution back in between 2008 and 2010 wasn't enough, I then later learn of other inmates, which vary in severity, have succumbed to conditions as deplorable as my own. For instance, Gavin Annett of whom I solely give my condolence to, spent 6 months

in a 10-ft hell in a cell and suffered most, if not all of the same effects I have relentlessly endured. Although I myself have not seriously contemplated suicide does not extinguish the fact, I definitely know what it's like to want to die. Which I would say in a mentally psychotropic, if not psychosomatic way is just as bad; if not much worse. Everyday during my second

about at Joyceville institution c/o the segregation unit between November 2014 and January 2015, I would look out the window seeing nothing more than snow and ice landscaped with the most unsettling quietness only horror movies portrayed, and cry, thinking "Here I am again, the same cell, the same segregation unit, the same evil, egotistical un-empathetic officer who placed me on a bag lunch before and somehow succeeded in doing so again". Then be harboured with the significantly plea and earnest request to die. "All I wanted to do was to go to sleep and not wake up!"

Eddie Horseshoe, God bless his soul, did not have the mental capacity or willpower to keep on going, after only 162 days he decided enough was enough.

I couldn't imagine what it must be like to have spent 10.5 years of my life in a federal segregation state of confinement like that of Renee Acoby.

Renee, if you're still in the game my hat is definitely off to you.

I would also like to conclude that as an Indigenous person myself or (unceremoniously known

as) an Indigenous offender too, agree that such individuals who share the same characteristic background/ethnicity as I, are in fact more prone to be criminalized and imprisoned for lifestyles or substance use and abuse, mental health concerns and history of sexual abuse, violence and trauma. As colonialism is still very much alive today!

Unfortunately, despite Justin Trudeau's many apologies, colonialism isn't about to dislodge itself anytime soon.

Case and point: I encourage you to research these findings, the Dangerous Offender

GirlTalk

By Moka Dawkins



Hey y'all, Welcome to another issue of Girl Talk and yes it's me your girl and writer Moka... Heyyy...

So first I want to start off by thanking you all for your love and support towards me and my situation, it was honestly touching. I really wasn't expecting to be so embraced by so much love, respect and hope. Thank you for giving that to me in my darkest hours, if it wasn't for you girls and guys I don't know what I would have done for strength. So again thank you from the bottom of my heart, I love you all.

I'm going to give you all the update on what's happening with me since the last Cell Count, and get ready cause this is gonna drop your jaws to your knees. Honey, as much as I try to live quietly and peacefully, drama just seems to find a way into my life and the worst kind of drama too! The unexpected kind, so this is what's happening.

I was granted early parole and was supposed to be released on May 6, 2019. The date today is May 30th, 2019 and I am currently inside again at another prison. What!? How!? Huh!!! I Know!!! So this is what happened.

I was called down to professional visits on May 5th, 2019 around 12:15pm. When I got down there they brought me into a room and there was this guy sitting there. Right away I knew he was a cop. He identified himself as officer so and so and then told me that he is placing me under arrest. I couldn't believe it! The day before I was supposed to get out, I broke down and cried. I was crushed.

My family on the outside were on their way from Montreal to pick me up. Like how is this happening?! I said what are you arresting me for? I didn't do nothing. He then informed me that my old cell mate claimed that I had harmed and threatened him. I couldn't believe it, I never touched that man. I have a partner who I'm deeply in love with and he knows this. You see, he is jealous, he's told me this a few times himself, cause I have a special someone in my life, cause I'm granted parole, cause my future is looking a lot brighter than his is. I just never thought in 100 years that he would turn around and backstab someone who was his friend. I tried to give him words of confidence and advice when he was feeling down, letting him know that I did my years, and that there was a time that I didn't know if I was ever going to get out. But I did everything in my power to fight for my freedom, such as

going back to school and completing my GED and post-secondary courses, and partaking in programs, some more than once. Most importantly, I put my trust in God. I built myself a foundation from nothing and I tried to help him do the same, but instead, he tried to take mine from right under my feet. He wanted me to have nothing because he has nothing, you know the old saying: misery loves company.

Even though he hurt me, God is good and is dealing with him. My man is still standing by my side cause he knows me and knows I would never do such an act. All my supports are still in place and standing by my side, those are blessings within itself. He thought he could make me crumble, but God is good. I thank God that I have strong evidence to prove that his lies he's claiming never happened and this is just an act of straight evil.

Since this happened to me I have to say it has opened my eyes and I now have more compassion towards people facing these types of charges. I'll be real with you, before this happened to me, I was a person who looked down on people with such charges and I didn't really care to hear their side of the story. It wasn't until I came back into my range crying that day they charged me, when everyone was asking me what's wrong and I explained that one of those individuals whom I wasn't pleasant to at all spoke up and said, "now you know how I feel" and turned around and walked away. He left me standing there stunned. I didn't know what to say or do, I was just shocked. Even though there was a little fire burning inside me that wanted to shoot some sparkful comments back at him, I couldn't. He was right, I do know how he feels. Now I have a better understanding of how people's vengeful lies can mess up a person's life.

I want to take this moment to apologize to everyone who I ever encountered and treated them differently because of their charges or whatever reason. I am truly sorry for my action/ comments towards you and hope that you can forgive me.

To all these people who are charged, or even worse, convicted of an offence they didn't commit, my heart goes out to you and I'm sorry for what you're going through and know you are in my prayers. Know that there is someone out here who is feeling your pain. Keep your head up and never give up the fight.

Make sure to stay tuned in to Girl Talk to find out what's going on with me and please feel free to write me about comments you may have, or future topics you would like to see. Address it to: Girl Talk at 526 Richmond Street E, Toronto ON, M5A1R3. Thanks for tuning in to another issue and Girl Talk will be talking soon.

to get in touch with my emotions, which is something I was never able to do until just recently. I was closed-off to everyone, including myself, due to the trauma I have succumbed to since the moment I took my first breath. I will continue to heal from this trauma until my dying day, but only Creator is aware of when my time to enter the Spirit World will present itself, so I must take advantage of every second that passes me by to better myself as a Warrior for the benefit of our People.

You and the children matter the most in this cruel world and it is my duty to keep you away from the cruelty that plagues our land. My imprisonment has given me insight on how to become a true Warrior and although it has taken longer than it should have, I intend to take all the necessary steps to prove myself to you.

Actions speak louder than words, so even though I am a man of integrity and have your best interest at heart, please don't take me at face value. I will do all that I can, but mistakes happen even when I try my hardest to avoid conflict. Please, pray that I practice Courage and Humility when faced with obstacles that are detrimental to the well-being of myself, you, and our community. I no longer want to be a disappointment to you, nor be a burden to your Spirit. I never wanted to be anything undesirable to you, but I have only just come to the realization that I have let you and our community down.

Finally, I can recognize when I have said or done something wrong, which allows me to consider all my options that can help me prevent future misbehaviour. With trial and error comes experience and growth.

Now, that I have opened my grey eyes to the blackness that mercilessly devoured me I have

noticed a white glimmer in the distance that is pulling me closer and closer, as if a mime has tightened his imaginary rope around my waist and began tugging with all his might. This white glimmer intrigues me like a firefly flickering in the wilderness. I am focused on chasing it down and capturing it, so I can admire the beauty of its existence. The day I capture the white glimmer I will have the opportunity to give you the life you are entitled to and undoubtedly deserve. You can finally feel safe, secure and assured that I will protect you and our community in the ways that are expected of me.

As I currently reside in this torture chamber I fear for the children, because they have been misguided and betrayed by those who possess the responsibility to teach; but are instead encouraging destructive behaviour. I am understanding of their current condition and I empathize with who they are becoming or have already become. I once used to be a misguided child who felt unloved, unwanted and misunderstood. My personal experiences are what established my negative outlook on life, which is what reinforced my Shadow Road morals, values and ethics. Although, I developed a poisonous personality and a distorted belief system I still have the power to implement my principles in a positive manner by not only educating myself on self-discipline and self-respect, but by practicing what I am learning through self-reflection and mindfulness of myself and the world around me.

The world is a dangerous place that is polluted with hatred, jealousy, greed and temptation. I have become vulnerable and impressionable like so many others before me and I am paying the price for the unacceptable acts I have committed against humanity.

I used to believe I cared about you and our community, but after giving it some thought I've concluded I have never truly cared about you and our community, because every time I made the immature decision to harm another individual I did so selfishly; without considering how you and our community would be impacted. I only cared about the immediate gratification I would receive, rather than the long-term effects my actions would have on my victims, their loved ones, my loved ones and our community. You are all victims of my dishonourable acts.

I have abandoned you and left you drowning in your tears, but for what it's worth, I have returned; extending my arms to pull you out of the depths of despair and to lead you out of the melancholy maze. My effort is limited, due to my incarceration, but when I reintegrate back into society I will not be a disgrace to our People by repeating what is contrary to the Seven Sacred Teachings.

I made a promise to Elder Dan Ross, who I consider my grandfather and the greatest man I know, that I will share the teachings he has shared with me. He helped me comprehend the fact I am responsible for helping our People overcome the obstacles in order to achieve the success we so desperately desire. With his teachings I have come to understand how my contribution to criminal activity has only damaged the image of who we are as Indigenous People and I need to help redefine us through mending the disconnection that has developed over many generations of genocide, which has caused issues such as abuse, addiction, suicide, lateral violence, imprisonment, gang affiliation, lack of education, and violence towards you.

I can relate to so many Indigenous youth and adults, which will aid me in my journey to reconnect, reunite, and re-familiarize our struggling People with what has been forgotten through unconditional love, understanding and acceptance.

I hang my head in shame as I think about your suffering and it eats me alive when I think of our missing and murdered women and girls, because a percentage of our men are responsible for their deaths and disappearances. If I could give my life for their resurrection I would make it happen instantly.

I have been the cause of immense heartache and trauma, which has left many families absolutely horrified and perpetually broken. That has inspired me to make a difference, because I no longer believe in the justifications I've made in the past, regarding my use of violence. Now, I believe in helping others in need by way of common courtesy, generosity, and offering my unwavering support.

I worry about how you are coping with the trauma that has lodged itself into your mind

and the pain that pulsates in cadence with the beat of your fragile heart. I care about your well-being and I pray for you to find the Courage that Creator has hidden within your Spirit, so you can get through your current struggles and the ones yet to come.

I was taught by Elder Jim Johnson to never pray for strength, because by doing so, you are telling Creator that you are strong enough to handle more hardships.

Ask our merciful Creator to grant you Courage, because it lets Him know you need help getting through what He has put in your way. Don't expect your prayers to be answered immediately, because you are still obligated to make an effort to create change on your own.

Elder Dan Ross shared a teaching about asking Creator for help. On my hardest days I actually find it to be very helpful.

A man was at the bottom of a mountain with his baggage and he asked, "Creator, can you help me get this baggage up the mountain so I can push it over the edge?"

Creator replied, "Yes, I can help you with your baggage, but there's a catch."

The man asked, "Okay, what's the catch?" Creator answered, "I'll push, but you have to pull first."

I understand all too well how life can be extremely overwhelming and very easy to fall into a pattern of negativity, due to the hopelessness that lurks around every corner like Freddy Krueger taking pleasure in your fear as he wiggles his bladed fingers in excitement. I have hit rock bottom and by doing so I have learned valuable lessons. I've made significant gains in my life that I never expected to happen, so I believe that you will find hope through sincere prayers and seeking solace in Creator.

Although, my heart shatters like a broken window when I dwell on how our People were, and still are, victims of degrading, inhumane and cruel treatment, I proudly remind myself that we are still here, despite the ideology of the European settlers. What we are up against today is nothing compared to what took place in the past.

If you are seeking hope, you should be able to find it in the history that has embedded itself in the soil of Mother Earth. Our ancestors have shed blood, sweat and tears that have been soaked up by the land like a thirsty sponge. The next time you bleed, break a sweat, or cry, remind yourself of the courage, strength and resilience our ancestors held within their Spirits. They endured brutal mistreatment that was intended to wipe out our culture completely. It is a depressing thought, yet simultaneously inspiring.

I have finally been able to reflect on my past, acquaint myself with my emotions, acknowledge the awful things I have done and continue on my journey, while focusing on my balance like a man walking across a tightrope with a heart full of confidence.

In all honesty, I would like to apologize once again from the bottom of my heart for disregarding your emotions and dishonouring your Spirit for all these years. I can't expect you to automatically forgive me for allowing you to be abused, broken-down and disposed of like a piece of trash. It was never my intention to be selfish, inconsiderate and hurtful towards you. I don't believe you deserve any kind of mistreatment and it embarrasses me to say that I have spent 12 years in prison and every poor decision I have made was just more pain that got piled on top of you as if you were being buried alive.

In conclusion, I can only pray you find closure in my reflections, comfort in my honesty and inspiration in my words of encouragement. I believe you will one day ascend to the highest degree of faith, which will ultimately unshackle you from your haunted past, so you can move forward with your life in harmony without feeling the need to look back at what no longer matters.

You're a beautiful Indigenous woman, so make sure you smile even on your saddest days. Tough times don't last...tough people do. All my relations.



Dear Hopeless Pocahontas (A Dedication to Indigenous Women)

By Nolan R. Turcotte

Dear Hopeless Pocahontas,

I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to you for my unfortunate absence. My incarceration has left you with one less Warrior in our community to protect you and the children that are growing up without my guidance. It is my responsibility to share the Fire teachings and so far, I have failed epically. I am ashamed of the pain and suffering I have caused you and our beautiful People. To be quite honest, I am just beginning to learn how to be a true Warrior. For years I have been lost, confused and unbalanced, but I owe it to you to embrace the teachings of Courage and Humility by taking the initiative to make changes to the way I think, behave and honour the Spirit of humanity.

I hold myself accountable for the injustices I have forced you to endure unwillingly. I am a broken man, but that's no excuse for the way you have been mistreated by my selfishness. I acknowledge that the path I chose to walk on in the past wasn't the right choice and it only allowed you to become vulnerable and victimized in the saddest, most disturbing ways imaginable. I wish I could erase everything negative you've ever experienced and take away your pain by feeling it for you. I deserve to be the holder of your hurt, because I am the guilty one, while you are innocent. So beautiful, so Sacred, so worthy of all things good.

Through self-reflection I have been able

Veteran Guards

By Philippe Poisson

When I say "veteran guards", what do you think of? Is it an old experienced guard doing his nightly cell checks with a flashlight? Maybe. Or do you think of a war-hardened veteran who takes on the job of a prison guard? Probably not. But the truth is that 90% of war-hardened veteran soldiers become cops, security guards and prison guards!

All war-vets / soldiers already have experience in hand-to-hand combat, taking prisoners of war, handling hysterical people, firearm training and riot-control, among other things. And most, if not all, have PTSD and/or Shell-Shock Syndrome. So how does this affect us inmates?

For starters, something as simple as a fire alarm can make a vet guard go back in time to their war days and training instinctively kicks in. They look to silence any threat that may present itself whether it be to their safety, others' safety, or to the safety of their base (in this case a federal prison). I find that it's so obvious to us what the problem is that we simply overlook it. And the problem, at least the way I see it, is that we as inmates are being "corrected" by a system that is run by others that have not addressed their own problems. Talk about the blind leading the blind!

A Phone Call Home



By Philip Poisson

It's my turn on the phone, who am I going to call?

To my foster brother

By Tim Rogers

In the spring of 1968 my live in nanny and father applied to the north york children's aid society to become foster parents. We lived in a 5 bedroom 2900 sq. ft. house and since all 5 of my older brothers and sisters had moved out they now had the space for them to do this. The initial house inspection and interview were all quite positive:

i) Plenty of space and rooms in the house and large backyard

ii) My father was employed full time at Canada Post as part of the team putting together the new postal delivery system that would utilize the present day 6 digit code on the bottom of all of the addresses presently used everywhere in Canada.

iii) The only negative aspect and the most important one of all is they were not married and in order to become foster parents, they had to be.

So they decided that the one obstacle stopping them would have to be eliminated. They set the date of sat sept. 6th 1969 to be married.

Upon returning from their honeymoon 22nd of September she called Children's Aid the next day and set up a new interview.

Result of the second interview: approved to be foster parents. Which started in January of 1970. She, however, insisted that they would only house children under the age of seven.

****The only plausible explanation for this stipulation by her was that she knew the younger they were the less likely they would be able to tell of her abuse that was heaped upon all who entered the house of horrors.****

The following is the one that haunts me the most. He came to stay at the age of five in 1972, he stayed until his 18th birthday.

John's parents, who resided in Six Nations of the Grand River, just west of Hamilton, Ontario, had died from acute poisoning from home-made alcohol in the early winter of 1971.

John's maternal aunt took him in as one of the families where he stayed until July 1972, when

Uncle Bill's at work, Brother Mike's dead, I guess I'll call home.

One ring goes by unanswered, two rings, three. Just when I think nobody's home, I get a timid "...hello?" It's my 3-year old daughter. "Hi sugar" I say to my baby girl. "How's daddy's little princess?" The giggle I get back makes me wish I was free. She says mommy wants to say hello. "Hey baby, how are you?" I ask my baby-moms in a silky baritone. She says fine, just the same old, same old. She says my daughter keeps asking for a puppy. I tell her I'll get her one when I return home. "When will that be?" She wants to know. Again, I tell her I'm not sure. She tells me about her moms, her auntie, and how she's runnin' low on dough. A tap on my shoulder. "My time's up baby." I tell her I'll call next week. She hangs up. I hang up. This has been a phone call home.

Unreasonable Delay

By Brian G Kerr

As we know the Supreme Court of Canada made a ruling stating an indictable offence must be brought to trial within a 30 month time frame and that a summary offence must be brought to trial within an 18 month time frame. Interestingly enough, despite such a ruling and my application for a stay of prosecution upon the grounds that it took a total of 38 months to bring my matter to trial and neglecting that fact I have reason to believe my section 7 and section 8 charter rights and freedoms have been infringed upon, neither a section 24 remedy nor an application for stay of proceedings was granted.

Now, as ironic as it may be, I am now awaiting to be sentenced. It has to date thus been a total of 20 months. By my actual date of sentencing as scheduled by the Superior Courts, it will be a total of 22 months worth of delay.

To my understanding the time frame for sentencing as per the Supreme Court of Canada is 18 months.

Therefore, I ask you - is this or ought this be deemed "reasonable"?

Sincerely, Brian Glen Kerr

Note - Section 11(i): "Any person charged with an offence has the right i) if found guilty of the offence and if the punishment for the offence has been varied between the time of commission and the time of sentencing, to the benefit of the lesser punishment."

tragedy struck again in the form of a house fire, which destroyed everything they had.

John and his cousin, Gary Bearfoot, were moved to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) in North York because of lack of space for them in Hamilton's CAS.

Two weeks after their arrival in July 1972, Gary's parents came to pick him up as they were moving out to Alberta to join his mothers' family to live.

John was left behind because there was not enough room for him to go. His aunt, being his legal guardian, signed off as such, essentially leaving John without any family being an only child and orphan.

This letter is for him.

My Indigenous foster brother John P. This is a letter of repentance to you. Your forgiveness is not what I ask or deserve.

July 1972 at the age of five you came to live in the horror in which I had to survive. In a short time, you soon had your own horrors to live with the abuse she began to heap upon you. The times I should have stepped in to make her stop, but did not, I say sorry for not doing so. The times she belittled you, I should have spoke up against her, but did not.

I say sorry for not doing that.

The many times she beat you just for the pleasure, I did not try to stop her.

I say sorry for not doing that.

Your proud heritage, your immense pride, your family memories that all died, I say sorry for not helping you to keep them alive.

The only one wish that I have for you is that you made a better life once that existence was through. A good paying job, a loving mate, children that you love and adore and those feelings from them returned back to you. The day will come my, foster brother, when our time has come to pass.

Face-to-face we will meet again, of that you can be sure. My only hope is that when that day comes, your arms will reach out to embrace me once more and you still call me your friend.

'All gone in a blink of an eye'



Author requested to remain anonymous

I have got 22 years in here and have seen and heard it all, you wouldn't or couldn't believe what I have seen over the years or what I have had to go through. I have worked in CORCAN for 22 years so I have seen all of the changes and not for the better. Sena, before I go on, yes I am doing a Life 25 sentence for accidental shooting and after 3 trials (2 mistrials), I was found guilty. But before all that, I was offered a deal of manslaughter, 8 to 10 years and my lawyer said, 'no, don't take it, we will go to trial and beat it.' I got Life 25.

22 years old, gold medalist skater, 250 motor-cross racer, just starting my career and one race away from a full factory sponsorship in motor-cross and superbike 750 class. All gone in a blink of an eye. First, I lose my fiancé and then my life. I was bullied, neglected, then beaten and tortured by police (some of which was caught on video). Warning: I jump all over in my memories sometimes, yes I have memories of child abuse, learning problems, writing problems, reading problems, but somehow, I managed to graduate grade 12 and went to welding school. Even through the hard times I never turned to drugs or alcohol. I always had a female friend to turn to, talk to and hang out with to take my mind off things. But there was always jealousy, people who make things up, if they don't get their own way. I've met my share of them.

Outside the jail and inside bullies too. I have noticed over the years, different things going on with me. I tried our Mental Health Services, but I'm not "suicidal or at risk for self-harm or of harm to others," so I'm not a concern at this time. Back in the 80's, I was diagnosed with PTSD. That's when I tool roller skating more seriously. I also got a support animal and did what the doctor told me to do. Things got better. I was good for years. But then everything fell apart after a horrific event, and it started all over again.

Some days are good, and some bad. I answered questions and nothing came of it. Bullshit, I say. I don't feel CSC has helped me at all over the years. I have helped myself to get where I am now, but everyone needs a little help now and then, right? However, I'm not the kind of person that will ask for it anymore, why because it seems like if you ask for help, that means you're weak OR have mental health issues and should remain in jail longer. It makes you seem like a threat to the public, that's bullshit, I say. My lifeline was my computer, I used it for studying, writing, doing music, playing games, doing school work and drawing. I helped me a lot and that's how I deal with a

lot of my stress, but CSC didn't like that. I wrote about what was going on in here and what they were doing, and they didn't like it at all.

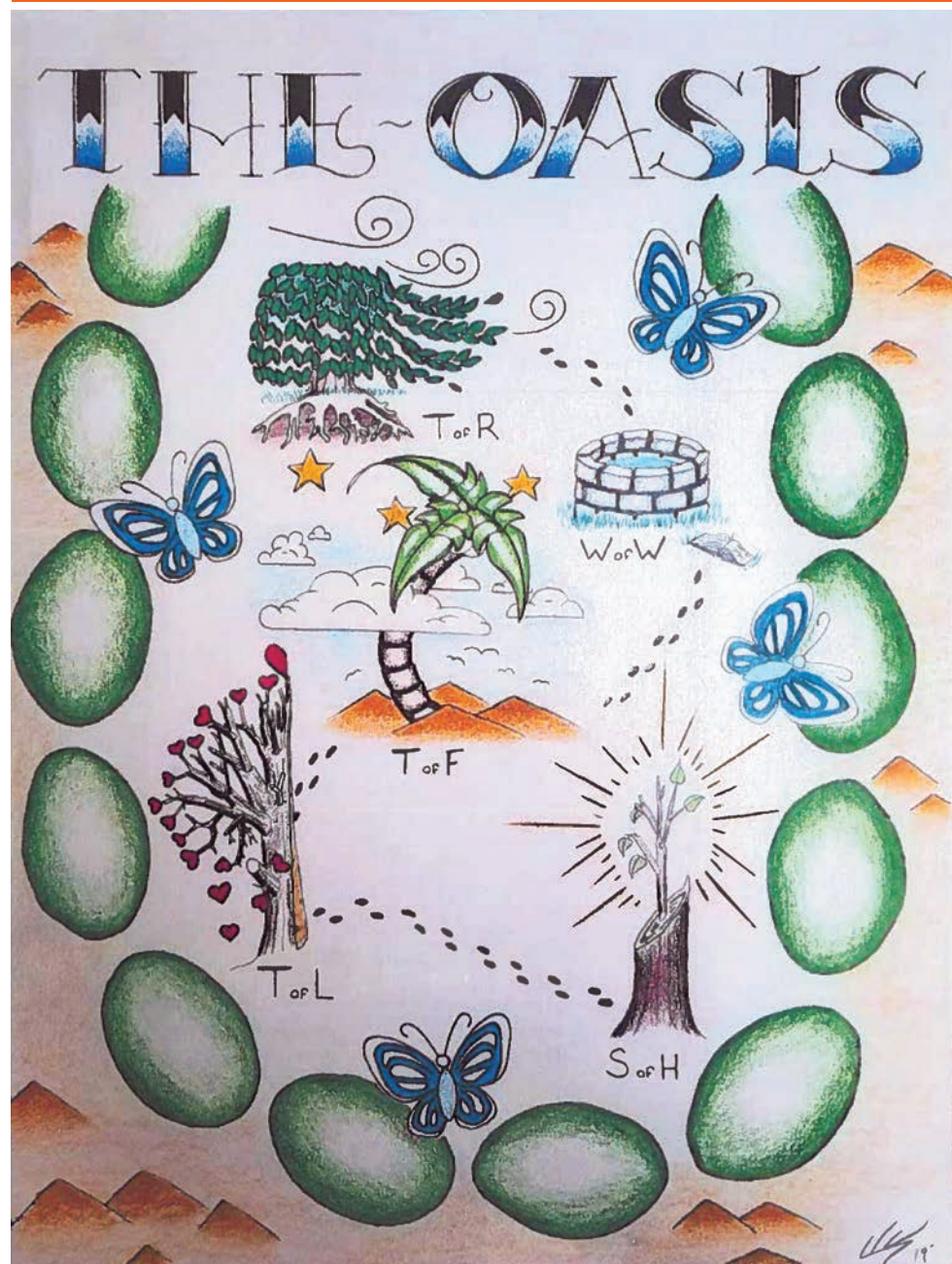
Things are not always as they seem, are they? Just because it says these are the rules, it does not always mean they follow them right. Like we are to be let out of our cells at 7:15am, sometimes it's 7:10am or 7:30am, or it's late, at 8:15am. I went and asked the staff working if there was a reason why we were so late getting out. They said they had a late night last night and didn't feel like dealing with inmates that early in the morning, so we left you locked up a little longer, I was like "really?!" Wow. They can get away with doing that. The things I've see over the years and what some staff have done to myself and others is criminal.

Once again, my PO sticks her nose into my personal life: a woman I have been writing to for quite some time. My PO went out of her way to call her and tell her lies about me. This is not the first time this has happened. There was another woman I was corresponding with. She came up for visits and everything was going really good. My PO called her and told her lies too, but the woman I was writing to didn't listen to her and told her off. So my PO called child services and told them that she was putting her children in danger by having a relationship with a known murderer, and if she doesn't stop, her her children would be take from her. So that ended that relationship too. This is what I have to look forward to?

I even lost my daughter. The last time I saw her was in 1996, and I have not seen her since. There's so much more but that's enough for now.

So now something for the block. I am an inmate that has served 24 and a half years of a life 25 sentence. I have done all my programs, completed my correctional plan, and done everything I was asked or told to do. Despite this, CSC says because of the complaints and grievances I have filed, I am not ready for a min yet. I need to just do whatever I'm told without question, even though I know it's not right. I was told there is no right or wrong way, "only the CSC way."

Okay, so our rights and freedoms have just been all thrown out by CSC. Sorry, I feel that this is Canada and we should still have some rights. But CSC doesn't think so. CSC staff are supposed to respect the rule of law, but they don't. They're supposed to help inmates become law-abiding citizens, but don't do that either. What is CSC staff really doing for inmates? Cruel, inhumane treatment. Flashing lights in our faces, depriving us of rec time and the list goes on and on.



By Zakaria Amara

Those who refuse to embrace despair and let go of hope, are the only souls that reach this place. I've been waiting for you. And you, have finally arrived.

Do you still remember the first lesson of the desert? Everything that is to come is already near.

I am Abu Nour, a life traveler like yourself.

I was lost in the desert and wandered for what seemed like an eternity.

And like you, I refused to believe that anything in this world, not even an infinite desert, could conquer my soul.

Look around you...

Can you see just how impossible our existence is; everything that surrounds us is hostile to us, and yet here we are! Out of the chaos of the desert, the order of the Oasis somehow emerges. This over here is the Sapling of Hope. Look at it.

Look at how small and fragile it is, yet this entire Oasis moves forward because of it! I often think to myself that it must have a sense of humour, for it only seems to perform its miracle when we are not paying attention to it.

Do you believe in Demons? Not sure?

Then who do you think was responsible for all of those awful thoughts that you had in the desert, all those hopeless and despairing thoughts, all those piercing doubts, all those imaginary fears and worries that whipped you into an anxious frenzy, all those cruel voices that told you again and again that you were less worthy than the dirt beneath your feet?

Look behind you... STAND STILL!

DON'T BE AFRAID!

They can't come any closer. These are the three Demons of Despair, and they are always standing here at the southern edge of the Oasis. Since they can't uproot the Sapling themselves, they constantly whisper despairing thoughts to you, so that you would uproot it yourself. Despair is a choice; no one can take your hope away from you, only you can give it up.

The first demon whispers awful thoughts to you about your future. The second demon whispers awful thoughts to you about yourself.

And the last demon whispers awful thoughts to you about everyone else. Once you've given up on all of those things then what is the point of living?

Awareness is the greatest defense against all demons. This is why these green stones are here. They are the Stones of Mindfulness and they encircle the Oasis like a ring. Their purpose is to make visible any demon that tries to enter it.

Come with me. There are so many wonderful things that I want you to see. Keep your eyes open for a great well. I will tell you more about it when we reach it.

The meaning of my name?

Abu Nour means Father of Light. Nour Al Huda is my daughter's name. It means Light of Guidance. In a way, Abu Nour could not have existed before she came along, for by giving her, her name, she gave me mine. And now whenever I am mentioned, she is mentioned, and whenever she is mentioned, I am mentioned too. Though we are apart, we remain inseparable, and that, is the power of love...

.... At the Tree of Love

This is the Tree of Love. Love is what connects us to everything and everyone.

Why is one side of the tree missing?

Cont'd on page 12

Cell Count Health Resource Publication Contributor Guidelines

By Sena Hussain with consultation from Janet Rowe and Claudia Medina

Hello to our dear contributors and readers! I have written out these guidelines in the hopes that it will give you all a clearer understanding of what we are looking for in regards to your submissions as well as a breakdown of each section. I will only be printing it in this issue of Cell Count. If you would like a copy of this mailed to you in the future, or if you have any questions, comments or input about it, please feel free to write or call to request a copy. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read this!

It is recommended that before submitting an article, poem, art work, prison tweet, etc, you read these guidelines carefully.

Cell Count is a health resource publication for and about people inside prisons in Canada. As a publication, it provides a space for people inside to share and express their feelings, thoughts, ideas, concerns, etc about the experience of incarceration. We see the act of expression and publication as beneficial to the mental health, and in many ways, the survival of people inside. News articles related to prisons in Canada are also shared to keep people inside up-to-date and informed about what is going on with the prison system. We also use the popularity of this publication inside to share resources and health + harm reduction information to support people inside living with HIV, HCV, people who use drugs, tattoo, have sex and who struggle with mental health and trauma.

What we will not publish: As a health resource publication that goes into federal and provincial institutions across Canada, we walk a fine line between allowing for as much free and open expression from people inside as possible (much of which involves deep critiques of correctional systems here) and trying to anticipate if certain content will be subject to a certain level of censorship both from those in administration roles and individual staff members who may disagree with what is being published. We work hard and diligently to have Cell Count reach as many of our subscribers as possible inside, and unfortunately, some of this involves deciding whether certain content might result in a ban, pause or delay of the publication making it inside. For this reason, we ask that you do not send us content that can be interpreted as posing a security risk, expressing that you would like to harm yourself or another person, anything that may describe circumventing a correctional security procedure, or encouraging violence. Please keep this in mind and use your discretion when creating content for Cell Count.

We also must balance the fact that we are funded by government health agencies (note: we intentionally do not receive any funding from any level of corrections), so, unfortunately, we also must consider who the author, artist, poet, etc is that is sending us their work. We strive to remain non-judgmental and unbiased in regard to what a person may have done that has led to their incarceration when considering content to publish in Cell Count. However, if the author, artist, poet, etc is very high profile due to the nature of the harm they may have caused, and publishing their work may cause a media backlash against Cell Count that could result in a loss of funding, we will not publish it. We will also not publish content that we deem to be racist, transphobic, homophobic, misogynist, stigmatizing towards people living with HIV, HCV or experiencing other health issues, etc.

Please try and avoid sending us details about your case. If talking about your case is central to your submission, try to put us in touch with your legal representative so we can clear it with them, as we do not want to inadvertently put your freedom in jeopardy in any way. Also avoid including your full name with where you are incarcerated. Either send us a story about where you are incarcerated with another name, initials, etc that we can use, or send us your full name but do not mention where you are incarcerated. We worry that this can be a risk to

your safety.

Our ultimate goal in making these decisions is the free entry of Cell Count into federal and provincial institutions, the survival of the publication itself and the safety of our contributors.

Pen Pals was a section in Cell Count in previous issues that featured ads for people inside looking to correspond with one another. Unfortunately, this section caused Cell Count to be banned by many institutions because they deemed it a security risk for people inside to have ways of corresponding with one another at different institutions. It also required a massive amount of work, effort, resources, etc to carry out, which we simply do not have the capacity to do anymore. We understand that this section brought a lot of joy and connection for people inside, and are very saddened that we cannot continue this endeavour any further. We will continue to keep an updated list of alternative individuals and organizations who provide correspondence services in our bulletin board section.

CONTENT DESCRIPTION

Sections:

Bulletin Board

These are small updates about what is going on at PASAN, Cell Count, or about other organizations/groups/individuals that are relevant to people inside.

News on the Block

These are articles gathered from various media sources that keep our readers up-to-date about what is going on with the prison system in Canada and abroad.

Writings on the Wall

These are articles that are written by people inside expressing various thoughts, feelings, opinions, ideas, experiences, critiques. These can be about the experience of being incarcerated or any other subject matter.

From Inside

Poems written by people inside

Prison Tweets

Short, 1-2 sentence posts written by people inside.

Obituary

A short piece dedicated to someone who has passed away. This could be anyone. We try to provide this space knowing that grieving a loss can be very difficult while inside. Also to honour the memory of those who have died before making out of prison.

Art

Art created by people inside.

Health and Harm Reduction

These can be articles written by people inside about the subjects of health and harm reduction. It can also feature resources and articles about health and harm reduction from various organizations, groups and individuals involved in this work.

Resources

Health, harm reduction and prison work-related organizations, publications, groups and individuals that people inside can access. The organizations that we include in this section have been cross-checked by us to ensure that they can either receive collect calls or have a toll-free number available to people inside.

About PASAN

A section that describes PASAN, the organization responsible for publishing Cell Count, the work we do, how we started, those who are currently employed, those who volunteer and the contributors to the current issue of Cell Count.

CONTACT

Address submissions and questions to:
Regular mail: Cell Count, 526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON, M6N 4V6
Telephone: toll-free 1-866-224-9978 collect: 416-920-9567 ext 228 (please call us toll-free if possible to help save us some \$\$)
Email: sena@pasan.org

Please note: we cannot receive submissions in person when PASAN workers are inside prisons. They must be sent through the mail or transcribed over the phone.

SEAN S. MOYNEUX

PJD

August 10th is a day to remember our fallen brothers
 A day to remember the heartbroken mothers
 For those that have died and fallen for the cause
 We take off our hats with silent applause
 We do not eat, we do not work
 It is a day to reflect on our brothers who hurt
 The pain they go through continues to this day
 That such we give up this time and pray
 So here's to the fallen and the hurt once again
 To remember our brothers and all of our friends
Untitled
 The days go so fast, the nights so long
 I cannot right what I've done wrong
 My eyes are tired from the tears I've cried
 I want to do right or at least have tried
 I miss my family so very much
 I stay in contact try not to lose touch
 So very sorry I am indeed
 To make you proud is all I need
 If I could do it all again
 Where do I start or even begin
 To spend more time with those I love
 I need some help from up above
 So I say I'm sorry from the bottom of my heart
 I wish we were not apart
 Thank you very much, god bless -

PHILIPPE POISSON

Freedom (Poetry) 2019/02/11

I go for a picnic and sit next to a stream, and I leave my troubles behind as I start to day-dream;
 It isn't long before I am fast asleep, hearing nothing not even a peep.
 Next thing I know I am wide awake, the sun has gone down and the night chill makes me shake;
 It will be a long ark walk home tonight, but that's okay because there's no need for fright.

The Stars At Night

I look up at the stars at night, seeing them shine so bright;
 A shooting star I did saw, as I looked on in wonder and awe.
 In space the Earth spins round and round, making nothing but nary a sound;
 Are we alone in this Universe, when our bodies die and our spirits disperse.

Memory Lane

I once took a trip down memory lane, and I swear it did almost drive me insane;
 From many years of hard abuse, my body was used by others with misuse.
 But there were some very good days, when I sat in the sun and soaked up the rays;
 Although my early memories are quite rough, it's made me into a man who is tough.

The Silence At Night

The silence that presents itself only at night is a thing of beauty to me. Only at night can I ever start to relax the tension that my body has built up from the stress of the day. As I take a slow deep breath in, I imagine only calm and serenity entering my stressed, stiffened body. With each long shuddering breath out, I can imagine all those words that one associates with negativity fly out and away, not to return until the following day when the first stirrings of my fellow humans starts breaking the night's silent embrace, just as the sun breaks the dawn calling forth all the stress and tension that accompanies it. Oh, how I cannot wait to embrace the silence at night.

FORGOTTEN WARRIOR

Is She? - Feb 2019

Is she? Strong enough 2 back me up?
 Can we talk endlessly 2 each other?
 Can we share emotionally about each other?
 IS SHE?
 - FW

Therez no love
 There no caring
 But at least I survive
 - FW

Turn ur fear 2 anger
 And that anger 2 strength
 Finally that strength 2 purpose
 - FW

Lifetz toughest challenges r given 2 Creatorz

strongest soulz
 - FW

Stay strong!
 Earth below me, sky above me
 Fire within me!
 - FW

We sent off dovez
 4 a lifetime of peace
 We took actions w love
 Embracing all
 My heart is broken
 BUT
 I haven't given up
 - Forgotten Warrior

Everyone runs 2 the heart
 That beatz w compassion
 When feelingz are shared
 The cold windz turn gentle
 And the other becomes
 BELOVED
 - Forgotten Warrior

The taste of lust is sweet
 When people like us meet!
 - Forgotten Warrior

Strength is not about where you break
 Itz about how you handle yourself when you're broken
 - Forgotten Warrior

Lady H #4

In my loneliest momentz, in the dead of nite
 When I missed having a comforting numbness
 I hated her 4 what she had promised
 Yet loved her 4 what she had meant 2 me!
 She was my one
 - Forgotten Warrior

Reality has arrived w the nite
 The truth is as dark as my soul
 "I want 2 be w you, when I sleep
 I dream, in my dreamz, my false reality
 We are 2gether"
 - Forgotten Warrior

I'm thinking of dancing Pow Wow
 2 the song "Lost in the Fire"
 By Gesaffelstein & The Weeknd
 And putting it on Instagram
 There's a few songs I wanna do
 That I'm practicing 4 it, we'll see
 Imagine Dragons is another one
 THUNDER!!

BY GARY "GWISZY" WISZNIOWSKIT

Free

I imagine being back.
 Being outside, instead of in.
 No more negative thinking.
 Dreams severed from their stems.
 Swallowing self-pity.
 In a moment that means squat.
 Positive thinking I hold onto.
 Because it's all that I got.
 Nightmares of old decisions
 Many roads left behind.
 Only blessed things come now.
 At the most inconvenient, unexpected of time.
 So much new goals, overflowing intentions.
 Greatness in freedom, overcoming detentions.
 Consequence is now; as if your life
 Was tossed to a curb.
 Voices inside, mistakes I've made
 The lessons now learned.
 Yet a short distance from the world.
 That in here makes a matter.
 Preparing goals and dreams
 For now souls feel battered.
 Identity numbers you inside and about.
 Everything must change
 When you're let out.
 Have patience soon will be done
 Now just wait till you receive freedom.

BY ANTHONY AKA BLESS

Lost World

There's so much pain in the world
 So much more than we can ignore
 Most people have become desensitized and callous
 Others have become sympathetic, creating movements
 When will politics stop hindering progress
 And all nations move forward together as a World government
 Hopefully providing for all humanity
 I believe this is what Martin Luther King meant

when he said "I have a dream"
 Malcolm X said "By Any Means Necessary"
 I don't believe he meant 'do things improperly or forcefully'
 I believe he meant 'be strong and stand up for what you believe, and by any means necessary help those who are weak'
 In this knowledge comes power
 It's a power that brings honour
 Bringing forth wisdom
 To those that are chosen
 Chosen by God to lead
 To lead those that are lost like sheep

G, AKA SHANE HALLIDAY

Crawling Out of the Darkness and Into the Light

It's very dark in here, where am I? I can't see any light. I can only see the darkness, I can't see anything, there is nothing to see or touch. Am I lost? I must be lost, but how did I get here? I can't remember, did I make a wrong turn somewhere? Did I sleep into a deep hole? I must have fallen into a hole I dug? I must have, how long have I been in this hole?
 It seems like I've been here for a very long time now, I want out of the hole, where do I go? Who can help me?
 Can someone please help me, please take my hand, please God help me, wait, I hear a voice, quiet, listen, what is He saying? I hear him now.
 "You down there" says the voice.
 "Yes" I answer, "Where are you?" I ask.
 "Lift your head up and look far into the distance, can you see that speck of light up there?" Asks the voice.
 "Wait, let me focus my eyes" I say. "Yes, I see it" I answer.

"I am there" says the voice.
 "Please don't leave me, I am afraid" I say.
 "My child" says the voice. "I will never leave you. I will guide you out of the darkness and into the light, just trust Me and start crawling. I am here" says the voice.

As I crawl I ask "who are you, and why are you helping me?"
 The voice answers "you are my child and I am God your Father, you called on me and I came to you".
 Now with God's help I am crawling out of the darkness and into the light. I know now that the Father has always loved me and would guide me to the light.

ZAKARIA AMARA

دلزل دسب

John Eldridge wrote:
 "Every woman can tell you about her wound; some came with violence, others came with neglect. Just as every little boy is asking one question, every little girl is, as well. But her question isn't so much about her strength. No, the deep cry of a little girl's heart is am I lovely? Every woman needs to know that she's exquisite and exotic and chosen. This is core to her identity, the way she bears the image of God. Will you pursue me? Do you delight in me? Will you fight for me?
 And like every little boy, she has taken a wound as well. The wound strikes right at the core of her heart of beauty and leaves a devastating message with it: No! You're not beautiful and no one will really fight for you. Like your wound, hers almost always comes at the hand of her father.
 A little girl looks to her father to know if she is lovely. The power he has to cripple or to bless is just as significant to her as it is to his son. If he's a violent man he may defile her verbally or sexually. The stories I've heard from women who have been abused would tear your heart out. Janet was assaulted by her father when she was three; around the age of seven he showed her brothers how to do it. The assault continued until she moved away to college.
 What is a violated woman to think about her beauty? Am I lovely? The message is, No you are dirty. Anything attractive about you is dark and evil.
 The assault continues as she grows up, through violent men and passive men. She may be stalked; she may be ignored. Either way, her heart is violated and the message is driven farther in: you are not desired, you will not be protected, no one will fight for you. The tower is built brick by brick, and when she's a grown woman it can be a fortress."

PATRICK JM DOWDELL (THE SUNDANCE KID)

Thirteen and a half

Sitting here picking at my own brain,
 Asking myself am I going insane.
 Watching them strip all my dignity away,
 Then they expect me to remain clam and at bay.
 Respect has always been a two way street.
 Remember this before I jump to my feet.
 There were two previous stages before I met this fate
 One's the arrest and then the courts sentencing state
 There's a reason I rock this thirteen and a half
 The final decision came down to twelve jurors, one judge,
 And let's not forget that half chance.

ROY T.J. ROUSSEAU

FIGHTING ONES FEARS

FEAR IS TO BE CONSIDERED TO BE IN ONES SELF, BUT ONLY TO BE CONQUERED OR OVERCOME.
 All my life I have had to consider and face my fears on a day to day, hour by hour, minute by minute basis. For in some cases I only had a split second to decide to conquer that fear or succumb to its wills.
 Fighting ones fears is hard for most, even harder for others. But what one person fears is not what others fear or is it the same in how they will fight to overcome their fears.
 For all will in some way choose to either fight their fears or simply ignore and hide them from there self and the people around them. In a way to me it's harder for the people who choose to hide or forget their fears, than to turn and face them.
 When hiding ones fears and not choosing to face them. The fear grows stronger and will be even harder to overcome that fear, when the time comes or situation arises.
 Letting fear control or run your life, is never good to one's brain, heart or soul. For that fear will override your choices in life and you could miss out on great opportunities or experiences, even romances. You have to face your fears.
 I leave you with these words of hope and guidance, choose to fight your fears today, it will be harder to face tomorrow.

WHEN ALL ONE CAN DO IS DREAM

When all one can do is dream or wish upon a falling star, from out the heavens.
 Why now in these times of transgressions do I feel thy sorrows upon my life?
 I only wish the best of times and memories for thy love and lover. What this man would give to be in his place buy thy side.
 Not a day or night, nor hour or minute passes without your face in my thoughts.
 How I can think of how soft your lips were the first time we kissed.
 Also what it would be like to kiss thy on your pouty pink soft lips again one day, Or to feel you silk like hair on my arms and shoulders.
 With the edge of your nails in my back, our legs intertwined in such passionate moments.
 I can only want or dream of thoughts of these memories.

PRISON TWEETS

How other people treat you is their path. How you react is yours
 The hardest journey is from our head to our heart and the healing journey is that journey back from our heart to our head.
 - Forgotten Warrior

OBITUARIES

To my Dad who passed away on February 4th, 2019: I'm going to miss talking to you and laughing about our old war stories together. I want you to know I will keep your spirit alive and share our stories with others. I love you Dad and it sucks that you're gone. Your one and only son, The Sundance Kid.

Inside Out

With tears in my eyes and my head held high is how the resignating words of Shanes passing filters through myself within the federal system a couple months later. Unfortunately, that's the last thing Shane Gambie and I will have shared in this material world. I wanted to share my condolences with the reality of life and it's deadly grup lets go of yet another friend that crossed my path. May you rest in peace and I'll see you when I get there. Be good or be good at it.
 Respect, Jason Wall

The Oasis

Z. Amara cont'd from page 10

Because we are all one half, traveling through life in search of what could fill our missing half. You see, we all need to love and be loved; to give it and receive it. To love ourselves and to have ourselves love us back. To love our parents and to have them love us back. To love our siblings and to have them love us back. To love our neighbors and to have them love us back. To love our soul mates and to have them love us back. To love our children and to have them love us back. To love all living things and to have them love us back. And no love... no love is greater than to love our Maker, and to have Him love us back.

Every evil... every illness... every wound can only be when love is absent. To love another human being is to be so concerned about their well-being that you are always seeking to fill the voids you find within them, wishing to make them whole.

Come. Look over here.

These engravings were left behind by past travelers.

"Love is the whole, and we are the pieces"

And read this one over here:

"Love is the river of life in this world. Think not that ye know it who stand at the little tinkling rill, the first small fountain. Not until you have gone through the rocky gorges, and not lost the stream; not until you have gone through the meadow, and the stream has widened and deepened until fleets could ride on its bosom; not until beyond the meadow you have come to the unfathomable ocean, and poured your treasures into its depths - not until then can you know what love is."

...

When I got lost...

I was not alone...

My soul mate followed me. We both hoped to survive the harsh journey together. But after years of travel with no end in sight, I decided that if I ever felt her grip weaken, then I would let her go in peace without resistance. So when that moment finally arrived and I felt her hand loosen, I told her that I loved her and let her go.

I still see her in my dreams, but even there I can't bring myself to speak to her. Maybe I am afraid of finding out that she no longer loves me. Or maybe I am afraid of discovering that she is no longer the same person that I was once in love with, and so through silence my memories of her are left preserved. Or maybe I am simply practicing the most perfect form of love. Whoever engraved this message over here knew exactly what that means:

"Perhaps providence had rightly wanted him to be a chaste witness to beauty; that he should never disturb. Was this not the manifestation of the most perfect love, such as he professed to his lady, loving from afar, renouncing the pride of domination? Is aspiration to conquest love?"

Have you ever pondered how the act of love is at its core an act of faith, and how the act of faith is at its core is an act of love?

...At the Tree of Faith

This is the tree of Faith. It stands at the center of the Oasis. When it is young, it's weak and fragile; it grows stronger and taller with every good act that you do, and every storm that you preserve, until it finally shoots up to the heavens and connects with our Maker.

When you climb this tree, you can see further in the distance; if you climb a bit higher, you may even see glimpses of the unseen world, and while you are up there, you can look down and gain a better perspective on how things really are...

Who is our Maker?

Only you can answer this question, but I will tell you this much: Just as there is only one of you, there is only one of Him, and the fact that you exist is proof that He exists. Go back to a time when you could not utter a single word or understand it. Go back to the days of innocence, and see the world anew, and then you will realize that what I said is true.

Can this tree be destroyed?

Yes, it can. You see, every traveler must one day confront the Demons of Darkness. Not long ago, they descended upon the Oasis in their thousands. They came from every direction with blinding sand storms, under the cover of pitch-black clouds that resembled moving mountains. They wore dark cloaks and hoods that concealed their faces.

When I saw them approaching, I quickly dug a hole and hid in it after covering its mouth with branches and leaves. From there, I watched with sheer terror as these demons invaded the Oasis and destroyed everything in their path with fire and fury.

When they finally reached the Tree of Faith, it refused to burn, so they began digging at its base, determined to uproot it all together.

After everything that I endured. After everything that I survived. There I was, huddled in a hole, cowardly watching everything be destroyed, as if it never was, as if it meant nothing. At that moment I heard the voice of an old friend of mine repeating an advice of his, "Abu Nour! Why do you always run away from your troubles? Don't you realize that even if you managed to fly to another planet, there too they would find you?"

As I was hearing these words, I saw the thread that weaved through my entire life. I saw myself running from my troubles, from my loved ones, from myself, and from my life...

I finally saw the pattern...

I finally pulled the thread...

And that's when it happened...

Feeling a surge of newfound strength, I climbed out of my hiding place without hesitation, and

threw myself at the first demon that I saw. As we both went down, the back of his head landed hard on a rock, which instantly rendered him unconscious. As I attempted to get off him and stand back on my feet, my face came within inches of his, and I could see his face clearly, now that his hood had receded...

There are some truths in this universe, which upon contact with, can alter you, transform you, transfigure you, utterly change your very being, instantly do to you what Alchemists have long tried to do to common metals.

You see...

The demon on that ground was not a demon...

He was a man...

And that man was me.

The edges of my old universe began to roll back like a scroll being folded, while a new universe began to unfold. Tears from my eyes fell into his open mouth, and with every drop, a gentle light began to shine forth from it. As I looked around, I saw the forces of darkness collapse to the ground one after the other. The light grew in brightness and intensity, spreading in every direction, as the overwhelming darkness began to retreat like a wounded animal.

You too will experience your own battle with darkness, and if you find a way to see through it - even if you stumble as you try - you will emerge transformed. Just remember that faith without wisdom is blind, while wisdom without faith is heartless.

Do you still remember the well that I told you about in the beginning? Look ahead. Do you see it?

...At the Well of Wisdom

The water of this well never overflows nor is too shallow to be reached by hand. They say that wisdom is to do the right thing, in the right manner, at the right time.

Go ahead and drink from it.

You see, in the beginning, I simply informed you about the existence of this well. Then, you saw it with your own eyes. Finally, you drank from it yourself. Wisdom can't actually be taught. It can only be gained through experience. Can you place a fruit on a tree? Of course not! It must grow from within. Everything that you learnt so far will only serve you once your soul is ready to bear its fruits.

Do you see these blue butterflies flying around?

They are the Butterflies of Forgiveness. They help keep the Oasis cool and pleasant. If they were to disappear, the desert's scorching heat would invade this place, and everything in it would begin to die.

Only you can nourish these butterflies. Do you want me to teach you how?

Before you fall asleep every night, take a moment to forgive every being that ever hurt you, and then ask your Maker to inspire those whom you hurt to forgive you. It's much more difficult than it sounds, but a wise man once said that "forgiveness is a gift that we give to ourselves". The first victims of the flames of anger and hatred are their carriers.

The sun is about to set and the night will soon arrive. Come with me, there is one last thing that I want you to see.

...At the Tree of Reliance

We have reached the northern edge of the Oasis, and this here is the Tree of Reliance. It looks like a Willow tree that is about to fall over from the sheer weight that it has burdened itself with.

Look ahead to the north. Do you see those giant frightening shadows? They are an illusion created by the Demons of Fear. I know this, and yet they still fill me with worry and anxiety. Sometimes their sight cripples me with such fear that I stay frozen in place until the sun mercifully sets, and the shadows disappear, and my fear thaws away.

That's why I often come to this tree and sit beneath its shade. Here, I can lay down my burdens and place them into the hands of my Maker.

Do you know what the last lesson of the desert is? It's engraved right here:

"What hit you was never meant to miss you, and what missed you was never meant to hit you.

Destiny's pens have been lifted, and its pages have long dried"

This is the last lesson because it is the most difficult to master. Let go of your illusions of control, and realize from deep within, that what shall be will be. Do what you can do, and to your Maker leave the rest.

It is a paradox. How can we have free will and predestined fate existing at the same time? I can't explain it to you in words, but if you travel long enough you will realize that it's true.

Come. Let's sit under the tree and watch the sun set.

...Under the Tree of Reliance

Do you want me to tell you what will happen tomorrow?

Tomorrow, if our Maker wills, the sun will rise, and you too will rise with it. But unlike the shining bright sun, your heart will be veiled by dark clouds of discontent. You will rise pretending as if you woke up to the wrong life; suspecting that perhaps while you were asleep, a mishap must have occurred in the realm of the souls, and you were somehow assigned someone else's fate.

You will remain in this state for weeks, maybe months, and possibly years. Then one day, an unexpected single moment of clarity will arrive that will dispel the clouds, and help you see as you never saw before. This is when you will realize that what you found here are in fact life's greatest treasures; and that if this is where your journey has led you so far, then maybe you were never lost after all. And that's when you will decide to walk down to the Sapling of Hope, and stand there waiting...

...waiting there as I waited for you.

MARY ELLEN YOUNG

M.E.Y.

As they say I'm maryellen
Is a provider I got issues
Yeah crack the dawn bitch
Maily it should be about trust
Yes I lick the lips yeah maryillin
I ill I won't slow down speed
Up Maryellen be living it up
Light it up no she can't come
I won't put no tattoo in my
Chest with his name in the
Middle no man who the mac
M.E.Y. I got the whip open
It's about trust your time
Is up I'm self centered I'm fine
Fresh mad money it's beautiful
Patient select takes the top
Ill same shit different hood
Come out and pay how
Many rocks smoked fatal
Scar never get drop who
Takes the top Mercedes your
Time is up who's next if
You don't understand English

Mercedes takes the top.

Shot caholla

That I'm a shot caholla I tell
Runner hundred thousand all
Ya'll run nun ya'll ain't
Gotta count give it bring it
Respect give it all ya'll don't
Beef too busy respecting
Me babysitin ya'll money ya'll
Dope hope I don't show up
All ya'll don't baskits of
Money to babysit for me
ALL YA'LL
That yo! Boy tell you I
Want some more!
I want some more!
Big Thomas Young Thomas
Maryillin on this trap
Pullin up to the spot taken your
Door man takin him up to the
Top as I pay him more than
You do as I do things I do
Making him real like things real
I be that hollacalla putting
It on ya sayin doinit livin it
Right sexy anything bring

Come when I crash all ya'll
Here thought you new all
I wear is new

Cat Box Sound

Soundin with you crew
All screw
Ya'll screwd
This cat in his raps all
Talkin hard
All scraps
Ya'll think you got the
Best of me
Get next to me
All vex ya'll see
This cat thinks he soundin
All dope
He hope
She be copy catty my flow
But she be
Too slow
This cat be copy catty
This catty
This Batty!!

Legendary we be me

I'm pisces no one see how
Deep we be in the sea no one me
Ever be deep deeper than any other
sign we be pretty dangerous
fish we go where no other
being has ever went I'm a
beast bitch I pull you under
I'm legendary I show you a
Feeling that you haven't felt
Before your heart I stole
You feelin felt attraction
Strong wild everything you
Ever wish for granted right
Here one woman has it yeah
Me one woman man you'll be
smiling ear to ear happy yeah
You'll be sex made money
Made respect made loyal made
Nothing not a problem we
Be having it made deep like
The sea yeah you'll see no one
Mention pisces I be the
Deepest from the zodiac we
Don't fuck around we
Legendary beast like I
Say from the paradise sea deepest felt

Illustration by Joey



Cruel and unusual punishment in violation of section 12 / section 7 / section 15. Equality, of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms ?? The judge. The offenders. The fundamental Norms of a free and Democratic Society.

BILL C93

Gone But Not Forgotten
 Cruel and unusual punishment
 Solitary confinement is clearly
 cruel, inhumane, and unacceptable!

Joey Putnam
 2019/07/15

Illustration by Sean Triten



Illustrations by George Fobert



Illustration by Jeremy Hall

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Jeremy Hall
02/19

