

THE SWAY



***Redeemed Voices from
Inside Iowa's Prisons***

Spring 2022

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Cover art by Wade Kuhse, Newton Correctional Institution

The Worst of All Terrors

by James Williams, Anamosa State Penitentiary

What is the purpose of jail/prison? It is to distribute punishment as a means of righting a wrongful act alleged by the perpetrator and allegedly making society safe. But does it make society safe, or does it further break down a community and people? Jail is used to house the perpetrators, but what happens in this "house" that addresses the root of the issue for which one is jailed? With no addressing the real problem, jail is only an illusion shown to a society to fake-soothe a fear or wound. Crimes have not stopped since the inception of jails, though it has ballooned since "The War On Drugs" in the Reagan era, and who has packed the jails since? Whose neighborhoods have been flooded by police since this alleged war?

Who benefits from these institutions of jail/prison and who suffers? Tax payers are not benefiting from the uptick in these institutions. Investors in the prison market are the beneficiary, and because of their monopoly of jail/prisons, dismantling the system is in heavy opposition. Therefore, the attempted dismantling of families is more feasible and more attractive. Even before prison, they continue to over-pack jails with unfair and overpriced bonds, even for the most minute of charges. **What in this time is beneficial to one housed there to address his issues? Nothing!** So you sit one in jail to waste away until he is sent to another one of your institutions, be it physical restraint or paper restraint, yet nothing has addressed or offered aid to a better way of life. **In this money making market, is the person considered? Who suffers?** Directly, the family suffers, but indirectly, the society and community that this institution of jail is supposed to protect are also suffering. Those fatherless/motherless kids got deeply embedded anger and pain and no understanding of how to deal with them properly with the structure of family being broken. Where is that anger released?

With this era of overcharging and over-sentencing, while one is housed inside a prison, the other is responding from the effects of it. So, this institution of jail has more negative annotations than positive illusions, and no bill being written is for the sake of correcting a broken system, nor is there any explanation that can explain away the Truth: what appears broken to the ones suffering through its effects is not a broken system, but one excelling in its design.

When we understand what goes on behind the walls and are not affected by the inhumane treatment of this system, we better understand how inhumanity thrives. Crime is not acceptable, nor is inhumane treatment of those who perpetrate crime. **Why is it more acceptable to house than treat?** They give out

so much time that the ones who do try to rehabilitate themselves are not given the opportunity to utilize what they've learned because they are not given a chance for early release. We have to be better at not closing the door on those whom strayed off course in society, because they are the ones capable of connecting with those straying in society today. Failure meeting failure cannot continue to be the solution for a broken existence seeking redemption, otherwise we watch with wide eyes how destruction and despair mate and birth the worst of all terrors...

We have to be better at not closing the door on those whom strayed off course in society, because they are the ones capable of connecting with those straying in society today.

'Bout That Prison Life

by Michael Kelly, Newton Correctional Facility

Note: I am writing this series about what it's like to be incarcerated in Iowa. if you would like to stay in the dark and continue to read passive articles, please contact your local or state representative, and they can provide you with all the B.S. you can handle!

Work & Pay

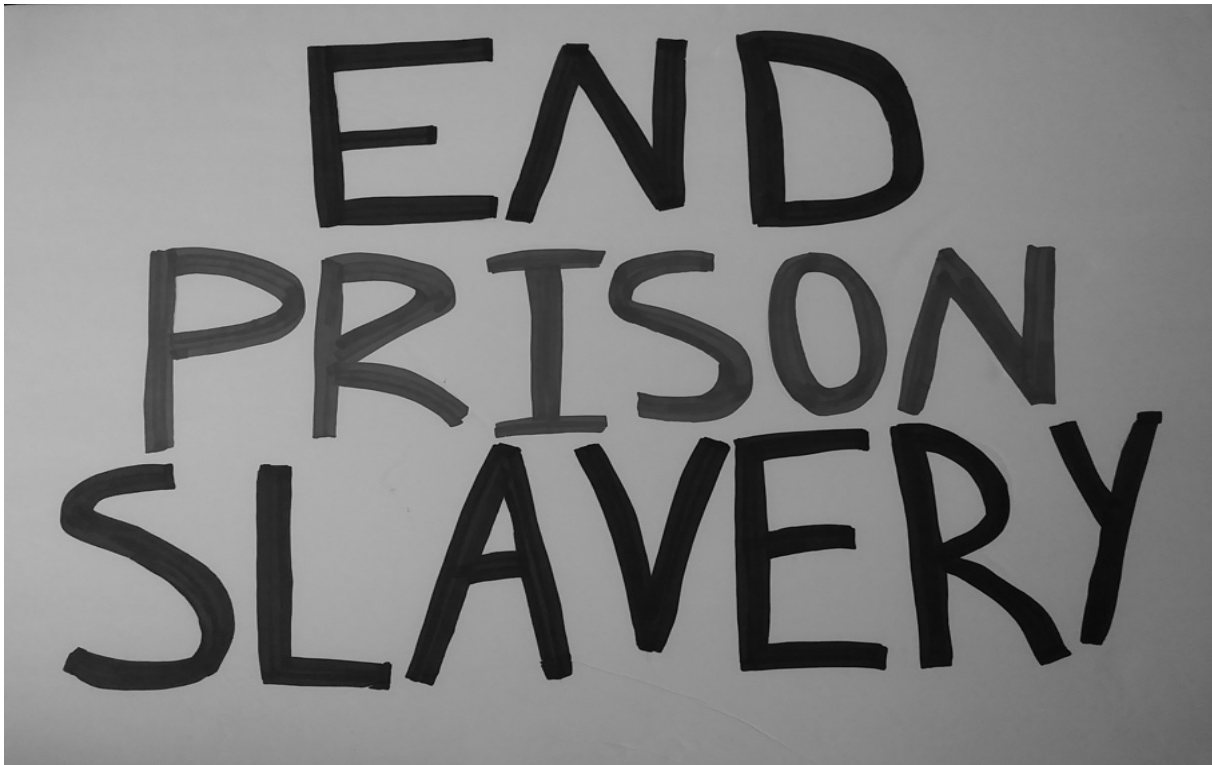
Have you ever wondered what type of work prisoners do? Do prisoners get paid? This will all depend on which facility the individual resides in and what job they have been assigned to. Most slave wages range from 23 cents to 57 cents an hour. This will also depend on if the incarcerated individual slaves for the institution or if they are employed with Iowa Prison Industries (IPI). In the latter case, the individual will start out at a minimum of 76 cents an hour and will max out at two dollars an hour. It will take the incarcerated person, on average, around 15 to 20 years without any interruptions to reach this hourly maximum pay with NO benefits!

I started my sentence at the Anamosa State Penitentiary in January 2006, and in September of that same year, I was transferred to the Iowa State Penitentiary. My stay there was brief, about two years. I spent the next 13.5 years back at Anamosa. I currently reside here at the Newton Correctional Facility in Newton, Iowa. In the past when I was assigned to work for the IDOC's slave union, I was assigned to work as a lumper (a.k.a. janitor), in the dietary department, barber shop, and finally, the Chapel. Keep in mind that was all before I decided in 2012 to break the slave yoke and take my life into my own hands. I started down a path of self-help and education. It took a while, but once I figured out that I was not going to receive any direction or help from my captors to aid in my "rehabilitation," I grabbed the reins and guided my future. It was with this willingness to succeed that I started to see progress. I began to envision a brighter future for myself and my family!

Open your eyes, people, and realize that Iowa's penal institutions simply confine. The word "rehabilitation" is a means to chase that bag (a.k.a. money for ineffective treatment programs). This is why we, the incarcerated, have no faith in the Iowa courts or legislature, and yet, they are not alone in this piracy of human trafficking. There are many other organizations out there with their grimy little hands and feet working right alongside our task-masters. The reality of abolishing mass incarceration in Iowa is merely political loose talk, a side note, and a media ploy! It means absolutely nothing in their grand scheme! They will not truly decrease or end mass incarceration, nor will they do away with implicit bias in their courts and their jury pool.

Open your eyes, people, and realize that Iowa's penal institutions simply confine...This is why we, the incarcerated, have no faith in the Iowa courts or legislature...

When they do discuss any legislative changes, you can bet the farm that their focus will be on a particular group of individuals classified as low-risk offenders. This minority group of short term prisoners comprises a small part of the prison population when compared to those who are serving mandated and life sentences. These individuals are the main contributors to overcrowding the Iowa system! This well-bred, fat and juicy livestock are continually brought in. The low-risk offenders are rotated throughout the IDOC to keep up false numbers in order to not address the real issue of mass incarceration. So why go through all the political fuss when they could simply ignore the issue? So that you, the public, do not disturb the halls of their little slumber party. Drop the mic!



I joined the Iowa Prison Industries slave union (a.k.a IPI) in 2012. IPI has an application process. Once you are hired, you are then considered to be an employee. Individuals who get hired usually bring to the table some sort of specialized skill. This is the true reason we are hired in the first place. IPI would burst into flames without hiring already skilled individuals. But whether you came to the table with those skills or you are taught those skills through another inmate training process, the end is all the same!

My decade-long employment with IPI started in their Custom Wood Shop (CWS) as a cabinet builder. Later that year, I transferred to the Anamosa Braille Shop. I have obtained multiple Braille certifications through their Braille transcription program. I remained there until 2016. In the furtherance of my own education, I attended Black Stone College in Allegheny, Pennsylvania and received a Legal Assistant/Paralegal Certification in 2013. I returned to CWS in 2018 to work as a member of their Solidworks CADD design team, but due to recent changes, I now work in Braille for the Anamosa Braille Shop, here at Newton. I am a student of Grinnell College and DMACC's liberal arts program working towards an associate's degree, so if this article sucks, please direct your comments to Grinnell and DMACC. I'm just kidding! I do feel the need to mention that my education is being provided by past alumni and other very gracious donors. No local funding was harmed in the making of a criminal. I hope that I would not be alone in saying this: the incarcerated individuals here in the Newton facility, myself included, are grateful to our donors and educators, who give freely of their time in order to impart knowledge to the unlettered. This is my introduction to you, the reader, setting the stage for future letters. I promise to stay true to form in future writings.

A Collection of Poems

by James Williams

THE CLOCK OF BROKEN TIME:

My back's against the wall, and yet that wall is in my sights, As is my days full of darkness, complimentary to my nights... My dreams offer small solace and even less escape, My body's getting stronger, yet my bones badly ache... Every step taken is taken unwillingly, yet willingly I step, Can I be emotionally stable if I know not where emotions are kept? This look is so in-depth, but its reality is real as real can be, I am a part of this world trying to maintain the inmost sanity of Me... 24 hours of round the clock disdain, I maintain perspective but unchanged I remain... For time continues to move yet the clock's hands are frozen still, Or somewhere the batteries died, and nothing's left to feel... From within I look out at a time that continues to move, Lost within my time is understanding, with me its loyal fool... Together we are entwined in an attempt to finally meet, Can you imagine a man whom talks, wisely grasping at what he speaks? I guess all understanding ain't lost when you understand it ain't there, For a man has no life if his breathing is met without life's air... With the raindrops of fallen dreams I shredded my last tears, In this world of the insignificant, life's lost souls are my daily peers... This ain't the life I chose, but this is the life that is mine, And I walk with my head held high, as I stroll through the clock of broken Time!

THE UNDREAMABLE DREAM:

Last night I dreamed an undreamable dream absent any worth, No night sky with stars, no sun or moon, and void was Mother Earth... All alone I stood in the middle of nowhere but everywhere all the same, Life lost all its meaning and water even divorced the rain... Thirsty for anything to make this nothing show some kind of sign, But nothing was greeted by nothing, and every little ounce of it was mine... Looking with eyes wide open I see no life for the life of me, By myself in this struggle, I got wrapped up before my chance to flee... Stuck without movement I was forced to endure my failing ways, A lifetime of nothing's reality to show past fulfillments of yesterdays... I see the footprints in the sand in the opposite direction that I walk, Yet I crossed paths with nothing or no one, am I blinded by my naught? Or was my ship headed down a long time coming cause I wouldn't change? And the opposite direction had plenty sun, leaving me to the hailing rain... Now I want out and that's found in the way I got here, but I don't remember, So my mind spins in this mind-blowing situation, can you see my dilemma?

INNER TALK:

I cried last night and the tears just wouldn't stop, Have your spirit ever felt weighed down as if by cement blocks? That was my experience, and it brought pain to my heart, I had the light on in my cell, but my inmost troubles kept it dark... Visions flashed through my mind coercing my eyes to see, The backs of so called loved ones walking further away from me... Torture is this pain's feel, could it be caused by the devil's hand? Easy would that scapegoat be, but all my pains came from the hands of man... Enemy after enemy but the worse one of all was Self, In every way imaginable I jeopardized my time and health... At some point enough is enough and the jaded glow of my eyes tell all, I am the product of the man whom stood for nothing, trying to rationalize the fall... Nonetheless, this pain is a pain that I wish on not a soul, I only wish I would've understood this before the saddest story ever told... As my heart cried out its deeply planted heartz, their sounds went unheard, I felt the teardrop touch my chest... My souls spoken words!

A BIRD IN HAND:

A bird in hand is better than two in a bush is what is said, It's true that bird in hand is yours, but what if that bird is dead? Can holding on to something that has outlived its use bring any good? Can a house still be built with a strong foundation if that foundation is burned wood? Life's reality is the fear of change, but change is the element of growth, For to remain limited in life's experience is something we should loathe... For with limited experience it makes the familiar that much harder to shake, And we are familiar with our past hurtz, and that familiarity make them safe... Ain't it funny how the mind works to justify the bad decisions? Just to justify a pain that continues to bleed like an open wound or incision... Holding on to the good in life is the bird in hand to embrace, But good is bad in a twisted existence, and a reason to keep the faith... For letting go is not only hard to do, it's hard to even imagine, Getting use to something different is like sex that lost its passion... The saying goes, "one is a lonely number", but Self Love you must have, Because seeking Self Love in another is like opening the Pandora's box of wrath... Happiness is found within, but only after letting go will it shine, Embrace the memories that engulf you, but your happiness they don't define... We live life and learn that living is indeed the hardest part, We learn that the person we give our all, we give them power to break our heart... Is avoiding that break good enough reason to accept that which cause the tears? Because closing our eyes can't shield the pain, nor do it cease the fears... Time will continue to move and with understanding life's enjoyment of better days, Will see you enjoy the Sun's shine, rather than getting burned by the Sun's rays... Love is always a go, but even love get stuck on red, And a bird in hand is always better than two in a bush... Unless that bird is DEAD!

REAL ILLUSION:

In a world of illusions and unwanted intrusions, I find myself lost, overwhelmed by confusion... My mind is clouded and all visions unclear, I seek the answers, but the Truths I fear... For face to face with that reality tortures my pride, because nothing seems real when reality has died... Yesterday is no more and today I hate, Tomorrow promised me Sunshine, but that liar is late... I wait and wait but my patience is running thin, The hour glass evaporates, still no closer to a win... I stared into the eyes of despair and so lifeless was those eyes, Now I understand how one man a million times dies... I ran the good race but there was no race at all, So when I fell on my face, the ground welcomed the fall... Life in its rawest form can only be described as real, Feelings are not considered, so what is it I should feel? Hate is life and love brings the same as its twin, A loser has lost, for he knows not what it takes to win... My eyes were open and I was fascinated by the best, But in chasing the best, my life became mine less... My fast days despised the mysteries of the night, Subconsciously hating serenity, yet embracing the plight... Contradictory way of thinking, but understood so so clear, For what is fear but a word of itself that we must fear? No tears shall I let fall, for my life is made of my choosin, And I understand in my today... that reality is only a Real Illusion!

A BRILLIANT SETBACK:

Yesterday is gone, but resurfaced are the dreams of the past, The picture perfect visions of the good life that didn't last... The visions that showed a family man with a warm smile blanketed by unconditional love, Because his heart had yet to be tainted by the evils of the streets, or infected by its blood... I wanted to be the next big thing to the sports world, like Mike was to basketball, Escaping the teeth of poverty was my desire, and only death would make me fall... Unbeknownst to me was the hidden desires in the darkened corners of my heart to shine, Subconsciously burying my dreams behind the realities of the streets and grind... Nothing happens overnight I know, but what I want I want like yesterday, Christianity tell us to have faith in Jesus Christ, and on the second coming we should wait... But the hood catz look like they got the right premonition, given they do as they please, They looking good, riding good, and they checking big money with ease... Ghetto superstars with the shine of the sun and bigger than the ones we will never meet, That's when my dreams got more immediate, because this life have the benefits I seek... Rising above this oppression and taking my peeps so we can live like Kings and Queens, I sold my soul to the streets, and like Malcolm X, i'ma get it by any means... Yet, we know illusions only last for so long before reality finally set in, I lost more than I ever hoped to gain all the times I been to the pen... Failing to execute properly because I'm set in my ways and live by certain rules, Constantly seeking and gaining knowledge, what a life ye educated fool... Time after time I find myself suffering from a mistake that more than I feel, Do that mean I'm mentally sick from the effects of the streets, if so then how do I heal? The manifestation of life is ordained so move in accord or pay the cost, I've journeyed through foreign lands gaining knowledge, but this current lesson has me lost... Seeking knowledge in the wrong places and utilizing it for the wrong things, Have me cooped up like a chicken craving to see some of the beauties that this life bring... I was moving so fast, and at the worst possible time I happen to lose sight, Crashed head on into this penitentiary and for my life I now have to fight... Patience is a virtue and anything worth having is definitely worth waiting and working for, Because when you finally get a chance to embrace that desire you will appreciate it all the more... Life is what you make it and the things we journey through is just a big test, So we better enjoy the beauties that life bestow, because in wanting more, most times we receive less... I remember thinking I want it all and I want it now tomorrow may never come, Looking back at the thoughts of a smart man, only now they seem so dumb... A bird in hand is better than two in a bush, hear me good cause that is fact, The innocent thinking of my youth was my best chance in life, and my escape from this brilliant setback!

THE GIFT AND CURSE:

From my window I see, the aimless walks, the idle talks and lost souls just like me, I stare in awe, consequences of naught, at what pain's cracked up to be... Societies throwaways suspended in caged up time that scatter, I watch the wills they kill like pesky fleas through the eyes of lost valor... The flicker of jaded glow that a lifetime of lost show is reflected through all kinds of pain, The loss of hope is worst than rope in its reflection of worthless shame... A name is not just a name, and the true meaning lies within, I see it everyday, in the words they say, the death in the heartz of men... Again and again I tell myself, this phase is just for a time or spell, But still in all, my mind slip and fall, into the reality of this wicked hell... Round and round the days fade away, and the memories lessen in worth, The sun don't shine, the rain don't reach this quarantined hole in Mother Earth... Life is life, and I do see what these eyes of mine allow, Time is the curse that was given, and the very gift we ask life to endow!

SAY HELLO TO GOODBYE:

Today I took a long hard look through the broken mirrors of my past, Staring at the hidden tears cascading within, yet shielded by laughs... My lips stretched in a half-smile as I looked on in dismay, For my destiny was represented by the same sun's shine that jaded, somehow, someway... Life's laughs and tears are one in the same even a blind man can see, For I never knew a pain that was foreign to the joy it killed within me... Now I sit and engulf myself in thought, the one thing that is mine, But the shit is so tiring, and it don't help me escape this time... So I go through days that's normal to society behind these walls, The work, weightlifting, mail, and visitation to the streets through phone calls... Long days full of reminiscing on the life I once had, The dried up tearstains on my heart, the story line of a life's tale-so sad... I look hard at the faces of everyday despair, and eyes of disdain, The outward hard exteriors that hides the deeply buried pain... Smiles are seen, but the emotion of the heart is unknown even to he, For the battles of push and pull could not be understood by those who are free... Life is for the living, but what is actually living when you only exist, Is it in the fight that you can't stop because it's everything the opposers resist? Patience is a virtue that was truly misunderstood and under utilized, Because life's illusions glittered making the grass greener on the other side... And of course instant gratification purified everything that the eyes thought it had seen, Today was all that mattered, and that was the death of yesterday's dream... When I look back at the thing that altered my life's fate, I see a lie, The very moment I was misled to believe that falsity... I said Hello To Goodbye!

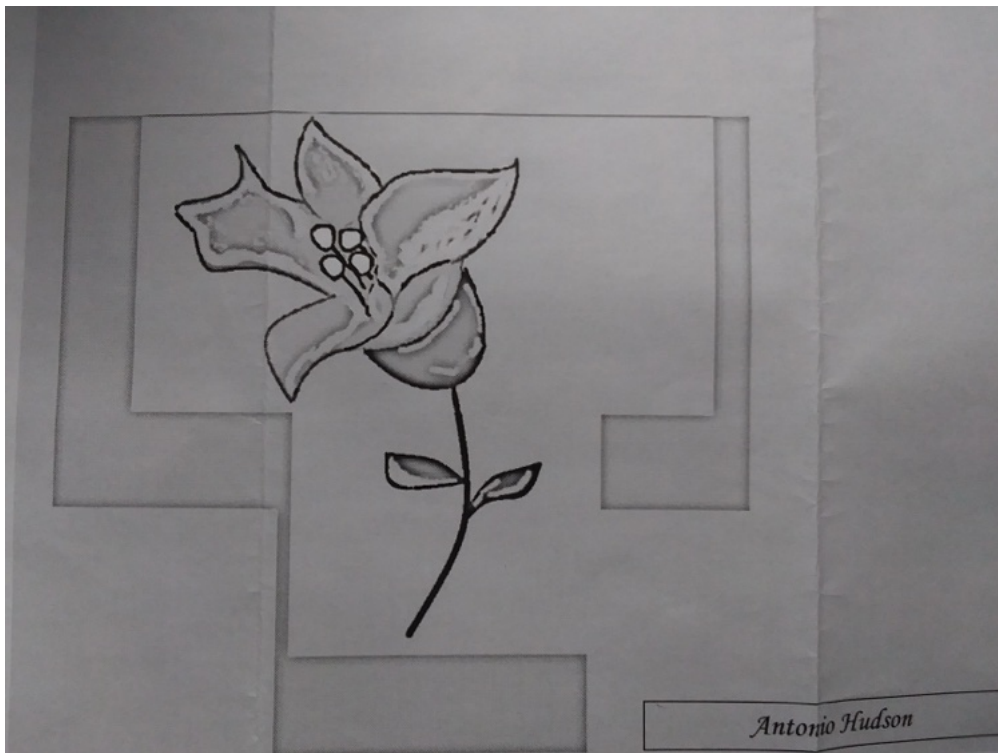
FREED MY MIND:

Running instead of walking is a recipe for destruction, As is criminals in the judicial system the reason for this corruption... Yet, law is the word they choose to hide behind when appealing to an ignorant society, Deceptively depicting crime prevention to imprison even the free... I sit and watch the world I was a part of take an ugly turn for the worse, They steadily making expensive cars, but the most driven is still the hearse... Life, life, and more life is taken on these vicious streets, But this world is a crooked one, it gives you all tricks and no treats... As if Halloween they wear masks to conceal their face as well as intentions, And we play the game to their very design, it's called "The Genocidal Incessant"... Where a hat or wrong hand gesture ignite the street where murder is fed, I'm not from LA bangin on wax, but Chicago sidewalks is paved in blood red... And I'm all too familiar with the cries from the lives touched by the loss, The lives that will never be the same, because of the streets most expensive cost... Death is the price for the illusions manifested before our eyes, The harshest truth and only reality to the ugliest and strongest lies... The pain of manipulation is most times too extreme to make it back, So we go further away from the light where all clouds are the infamous black... Learning to embrace the wrongs that are all equated to be right, Afraid of being knocked down is the first lost on the biggest stage of Life's fight... Fear not the fight because in life that's where we find strength, Tribulation builds character, getting back up builds endurance... And the journey must never stop, but know the destination in which you seek, Because walking blindly to nothing and nowhere will definitely make the legs grow weak... Believe in your heart's truth and follow wherever it happens to lead, Be stronger than the temptations by knowing your wants satisfies not your needs... This world will give you nothing, so stay hellbent on the mission to success, Because you demand more of the good in life, and won't settle for it giving you less!

LIFE IS TOO SHORT:

Every minute lived is a minute to be valued in every way, For tomorrow is the most common hope shared in life's today... Even yesterday outshines today, as we dwell on past mishaps, But could there be a game of dice if there were no odds of rolling craps? Yet, that is a chance not to be feared, but greeted with exuberance, Because character is built through tribulation with inner-strength's indulgence... The power in mind is exulting in the way it bounces back, The way it allows life to show a smile, even when the clouds are black... Even when the rain outmaneuvers the sun, or the lows override the highs, We have to continue to seek that rainbow's end, and the truth hidden behind the lies... Because life is not ordained easy we journey to minimize the blows, We journey to make believer out of doubters, and sometimes friends out the foes... Tomorrow is fake or maybe fate, but today is what's real, Pain is a reality in life, and only with a joy can it heal... So at all times we have to embrace joy, for a second lost can never be found, The spoken words of silence if heeded can relay the sweetest sound... The fondest appreciations lie upon the shoulders of the minutest joy, As do the highest exultation of serene sanity strangle sadness and destroy... A smile is a frown's fraternal twin, but most hated foe, For a life lived within that happiness is the mission and biggest hope.... Nothing in life is guaranteed, so within this life we must learn to appreciate, We must always love if we love, and leave nothing left to fate... For a smile and word of care and concern does so much for the heart, It is the difference between a saddened end, and an end of dreaded depart... Today is the most important day to share your physical, mental, and emotional support, Because we live on borrowed time of unpredictability, and life is just too short!

*All of the previous poetry by James Williams,
Anamosa State Penitentiary*



POWER:

Its brute force-

Dominance; cruelty; transition into loyalty!

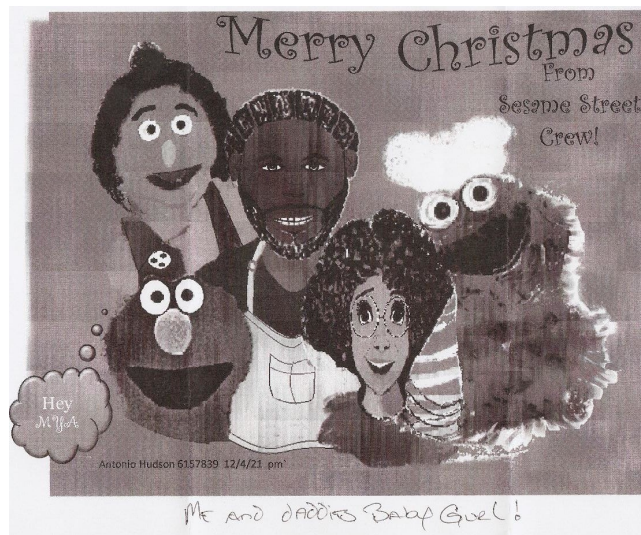
Willingness; patience/grace; admiration gains respect!

Money; lust; greed envy trust!

Guidance; stability; determination draws leaders!

Love; Peace; Happiness illuminates God's will!

His power!



PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS:

Perhaps we can never prove that man isn't free; it's an assumption...

So can man live in freedom and peace?

By skillfully planning, by a wise choice of techniques, we increase the feelings of freedom!

Given that men are free and that tomorrow they will freely decide what man will be...



*Art and poetry by Antonio Hudson,
Newton Correctional Facility*

What Is a JHL and Why Are JHLs Needed?

by A Practicing JHL

In prisons all around the nation there exists the unseen hero. These heroes are incarcerated individuals who provide legal services to other incarcerated individuals whose lives and families' lives have been and will be forever changed by and through incarceration.

Q: What is a JHL?

A: A JHL, or Jailhouse Lawyer, is an incarcerated individual who provides legal services to other incarcerated individuals.

Q: Why does one become a JHL?

A: JHLs become jailhouse lawyers for different reasons, yet the most common answer a JHL would give is "I was forced into learning the law. 'I needed to learn how the judicial system works in order to fight back.'"

Q: Why are JHLs needed?

A: The usual answer a JHL would give would be that his or her attorney, normally a public defender (a.k.a. state-funded attorney) or private attorney (a.k.a. your paid attorney), has committed some error of law in violation of the individual's right to the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 14th Amendments of the United States Constitution, or Article 1, Section 9 and 10 of the Constitution of Iowa. Specifically, this is the right to competent counsel, referred to as "effective assistance of counsel" during the course of handling the incarcerated individual's initial criminal case, which error possibly led to their being convicted in their local district court.

Q: What services does a JHL provide when assisting other incarcerated individuals?

A: This can vary depending upon the individual's need. Usually this will consist of filing general motions in the lower court such as lowering restitution, requesting hardship from Child Support Recovery Unit (CSRU), notice of appeal, motion requesting the appointment of counsel, and post-conviction relief applications (PCR). Please note, individuals now filing for the representation of counsel need to be aware that in Iowa, per Code of Iowa 814.A, once an applicant-appellant has been appointed counsel, the court will no longer allow any further pro se filing by the incarcerated individual. Why? It's not to bring a sense of repose back to the court system, but to limit your ability to win!

Q: Does a JHL get paid?

A: No! JHLs are not lawyers, yet some are paralegals or legal assistants (shout out to Black Stone!). Many incarcerated individuals are poor and unable to financially pay for an attorney. Think, if they could pay for one, then there would be no need for JHLs. Note: to all JHLs, remember why you continue to be the bright light in so many lives. You yourselves are fully aware of the financial hardship of not having the resources to buy your freedom. Please continue to pay justice forward by providing free services to your fellow incarcerated people!

Q: If I have a family member who is incarcerated, how do they find a JHL?

A: Just ask! Usually individuals can be found working in the general population public library or chapel. Or ask to speak with the Electronic Law Library Clerk (ELL). Clerks are paid by the institution. These individuals help fellow inmates to navigate through the laws of their state by using a digital software program which contains a vast majority of your state rules of court, federal rules of court, state and federal statutes (called Codes, annotated or administrative), and case citations (a.k.a opinion of a ruling of a court which has authority over subject matter).

Note: In Iowa, you must be aware of the following:

(a) Did you take a plea? The Iowa legislatur has made it harder to appeal a plea. You now must request this right from the Iowa Supreme Court (See Please IRCP 2.8 by filing within 30 days in the District Court if the plea was held or taken)

(b) If you go to trial and lose, you will have only 30 days to file a notice of appeal to the Iowa Supreme Court for direct review.

(c) If you lose your appeal, you have only 20 days to file an application for further review to the Iowa Supreme Court.

(d) If you are denied further review, you only have three years to file for post-conviction relief (Code of Iowa 822.3), resolving any ineffective assistance of counsel claims. You no longer have to raise these claims on direct review/appeal. Your direct appeal grounds need to be fact/trial errors such as sufficiency of the evidence, weight of the evidence, motion in arrest of judgment, or other err of the court.

(e) IMPORTANT! You must exhaust all state remedies in all lower courts prior to filing for federal habeus corpus relief in the federal court. Per the Federal Rules of Court, AEDPA, you have one year to file this petition. Once you have filed for state PCR, the clock stops. In other words, the time to file your habeus corpus is tolled (Habeus Corpus Forms 2254 for state prisoner and 2255 illegal sentence for federal prisoner)! This is complicated, so get a better understanding from a lawyer or JHL!

Disclaimer: All of the above information does not replace the legal advice of a legal counsel. This zine, nor the writer, offers this as legal advice, nor do we suggest that the outcome of your case would or will be different if you so choose to apply this information. This is merely a helpful guide in the dark to the most vulnerable, the incarcerated!

In recent years, my efforts to bring awareness to the injustices within the Iowa prison system resulted in a recent Iowa Supreme Court ruling that prisoners have a liberty interest in parole. This is a huge win for individuals hoping to return to their loved ones.

During this process, I discovered that the Iowa Department of Corrections does not provide the Iowa Board of Parole with information about a person's parole/release plan until they "recommend a release." This is unjustly depriving prisoners of their due process to obtain parole, as this information should be considered before determining if the person should be recommended for release.

Further, if a person's case manager is biased in any way, or simply doesn't like the person for one reason or another, they can keep critical information about a person's release plan from the board just to keep them in prison. This must stop! From someone on the "inside," these people are deserving of a meaningful review each year by the Board of Parole. Many of them have amazing support systems, job prospects, etc. and would be valued members of society if given the chance.

I have a case in the Webster County Courts being reviewed by Judge Flynn to ensure the Iowa Board of Parole reviews each parole-eligible person's complete parole plan every year, but I need help from the family and friends of incarcerated people to make this happen. I don't have an attorney and am faced with Iowa's Attorney General's office, who are trying to keep this fact hidden from the public.

If anyone has any ideas or might be able to help, please reach out!

-James Hall 6886090, Fort Dodge Correctional Facility

If you would like to get in touch with any of the contributors to this zine, please email prisonabolitiondsm@gmail.com and ask for their contact info.

If you are incarcerated and would like to contribute to future issues of this zine, please send submissions to:

**PO Box 41022
Des Moines, IA 50311**

Guidelines for Writing Incarcerated People in Iowa

All contributions to this zine were received through an abolition pen pal letter-writing project. Please join in our efforts!

Note that every prison has it's own guidelines for incoming letters, but here are some general guidelines:

- Always include:
 - Person's ID # on every page
 - Page numbers
- Don't use stickers, glitter, glue, white-out or crayons
- Write on plain white paper (no colored paper or envelopes)
- Pen pals often like to communicate via email (set up an account at corrlinks.com). It is more efficient and cheaper, but it is less secure!
- Be clear about your intentions, including your intended relationship to them and how frequently you can communicate with them--Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Don't treat writing as an act of charity.
- Don't write anything you wouldn't want cops or judges to read.
- Don't ask about arrests and pre-trial cases, but DO ask other questions!
- Don't hold expectations about pen pals' opinions on politics or incarceration.
- Be authentic and include lots of details!
- Share information and resources.
- Be prepared to hear stories of trauma, and be ready to learn and grow!

To address the envelope, use this format:

Name #ID Number

Name of Prison

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip Code

Example:

Chelsea Manning #A0181426

William G. Truesdale Detention Center

2001 Mill Road

Alexandria, VA 22314

