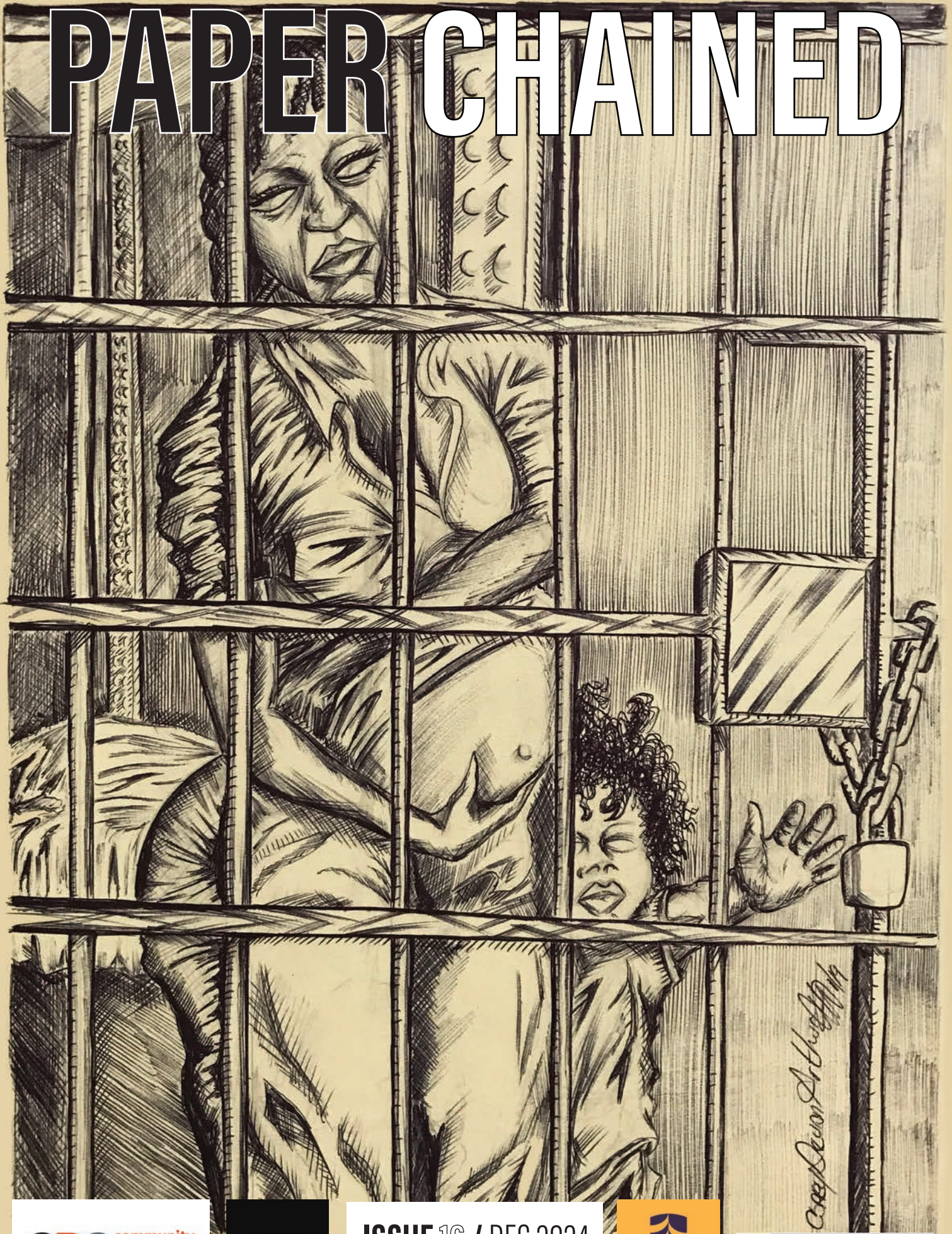


A JOURNAL OF EXPRESSION FROM BEHIND BARS

# PAPER CHAINED



**CRC** community  
restorative  
centre

**ATFJ**

**ISSUE 16 / DEC 2024**

Posted free to incarcerated people

  
**UniSQ**



**Curtin University**



# PAPER CHAINED



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*Paper Chained* is printed and produced on the stolen lands of the Awabakal people. We acknowledge the rightful owners of these lands; sovereignty was never ceded.



Haneen Hossam, an Egyptian TikTok star who was sentenced to three years in prison in 2022 on the vague charges of 'indecentcy' and 'inciting immorality', in relation to dancing fully clothed on social media videos.

# WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE

*Paper Chained* is a not-for-profit quarterly journal posted free to incarcerated people, funded primarily by the Community Restorative Centre. This issue is also made possible with the help of Curtin University, the University of Southern Queensland and About Time For Justice.

If you would like to support *Paper Chained* through sponsorship, please contact us. Donations can also be made via our website.

If you are currently in prison, have experienced time in prison, or have a loved one in prison, we welcome your contributions to future editions of this journal. Contributions from those supportive of prison reform will also be considered.

Submissions are accepted all year round. Contributions can be writings or artworks in any style. While exceptions can be made, we strongly prefer that submissions do not exceed 1,500 words. Please advise us if you would like submitted art returned.

Please also specify if you would like your contributions to be anonymous. If you choose to publish under your own name, please specify if you do not want the postal details of your prison published alongside your contribution.

If you are currently in prison and would like to receive a posted copy of the journal, please provide us with your name, ID number, and postal address, as well as your earliest possible release date (if you have one). Those outside prison may access the journal free online via our website, **PaperChained.com**.

## TERMS OF PUBLICATION

Handwritten contributions will be typed unless the author requests to have a scan of the original text in the journal. *Paper Chained* reserves the right to edit contributions for grammar, length, clarity, and to excise any stigmatising language. Please advise us if you are not open to your contribution being edited.

Copyright for art and writing is retained by the contributor. Contributors are free to have any work that is published in *Paper Chained* republished elsewhere at a later date. However, please advise us if submitted contributions have previously been published elsewhere.

Please be aware that due to limited printing space and other logistical concerns, accepted contributions may not necessarily appear in the next issue of *Paper Chained*, and may be held on file for subsequent issues.

We will not publish any contributions that are perceived to contain racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, nationalism, xenophobia, ableism, evangelism, or other forms of oppressive language, or any material that encourages violence or violates the privacy of others.

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WE WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

**PRISONERS**

**EX-PRISONERS**

**FAMILY OF PRISONERS**

Post submissions to:  
**Paper Chained**  
**PO Box 2073**  
**Dangar NSW 2309**  
**Australia**





# Curtin University



## Study at Curtin from Prison

**At Curtin, we want everyone to be able to access the benefits of higher education.**

We provide a range of Curtin courses that our incarcerated students can study while in prison, helping them gain valuable skills, confidence and enhancing their career opportunities.

We know that as an incarcerated student, you have a unique study environment and may experience restrictions with internet access, accessing learning materials and undertaking assessments. So, we provide support and adjustments and flexibility to accommodate your student needs.

Courses currently available include:

- **Enabling pathways** - Uniready and Indigenous Tertiary Enabling Course (WA prisons only)
- **Arts** (History, Geography)
- **Construction Management**
- **Commerce** (majors in Management, Marketing, Business Law, International Business, Taxation)
- **Fine Arts** (Justice and Equity Through Art program)
- **Health Science, Health Safety and Environment, Health Promotion**
- **Indigenous Mental Health**
- **Science** (selected foundation units only)

For more information, speak to your prison Education Officer.

Curtin University Prison Outreach  
GPO Box U1987 Perth 6845  
Phone: 08 9266 5671  
Email: [prisonoutreach@curtin.edu.au](mailto:prisonoutreach@curtin.edu.au)





University of  
**Southern  
Queensland**

# Supporting Incarcerated Students

At UniSQ, we believe in accessible higher education for all. To support incarcerated students, we've created a pathway and programs that can be studied offline using the Offline Personal Device, a repurposed DELL Education series laptop. This allows students to complete their programs without needing internet access. For further information, and to talk about enrolling, please talk to your Education Officer.

During your studies with us, Correctional Centre staff such as an Education Officer may be able to provide you with support throughout your program including:

- communicating with UniSQ
- applying and enrolling
- assignment submission
- coordination and facilitation of exams
- referral to a career development practitioner
- accessing resources that will help inform your career decision making

Are you unsure about studying at university? Our "Unlocking a Future Career" workbooks can help you decide and provide support for soon-to-be-released students. Ask your Education Officer for a copy.

The study choices include selected courses from the following options:

- Tertiary Preparation Pathway (TPP)
- Indigenous Higher Education Pathway Program (IPP)
- Associate Degree in Business (ADBZ)
- Undergraduate Certificate of University Studies (UCUS)
- Undergraduate Certificate of STEM Foundations (UCSF)
- Diploma of Multi-Disciplinary Studies (DMDS)
- Bachelor of Multi-Disciplinary (BMDS)
  - Majors in Business and First Nations Australia

Not all courses within these programs are available in a correctional centre, and unfortunately not all correctional centres can facilitate students studying at a tertiary level. Check the University Handbook for course and program specifications.

June 2024





**About Time for Justice** supports and advocates for survivors of institutional child abuse through peer-support, advocacy and mental health resources. Should our clients wish to initiate a litigation process to receive possible compensation for what they have been through, ATFJ provides support throughout what can be a confusing and difficult process to make it easier and to minimise the negative impacts this process can have. We want you to find justice and start healing so you can put it all behind you.

## Testimonials

Thanks Jacob! Much appreciate what you've accomplished for the ppl! In saying this nobody else would talk out until you spoke out about your story! You're a true blue survivor who thought about others and not only yourself! This has been locked away since my younger days and I can honestly say that you've made me believe that I'm a better person today than yesterday :) thank you from the bottom of my heart and God bless not only my soul but others who have been affected by this. Because of you I'm nearly a full and complete woman :) Moving forward is the best medicine! Happy days Jacob!

Hi! To all the team at About time for Justice I thank you so much for taking me on, believing in me, and bringing me justice. You have changed my life, and I'm sure you will go on to change the lives of many more as I know there are many more victims just like me, please do. I love the work you do, you're heaven sent god bless you all and THANK YOU.

I don't know how to say this but seeing your post about things you talk about you genuinely inspired me, you're little bit of support has given me the strength to finally speak out. Finally after 13 years I'm getting justice. I appreciate you more than you'll ever know. I know we've never met but please know I appreciate you from the bottom of my heart.



*The founders of About Time for Justice, father and son Todd and Jacob Little, are former prisoners and survivors of institutional abuse.*

Hey I have just seen your Facebook page and I think it's amazing what you are doing. Although my experience was never in an institution but within the family, it's bloody good to see someone is out there making a difference :) and giving hope for others. We are who we are through the experiences we endure. I'm a single mum, ex drug addict and child sexual abuse survivor, but I'm also a student in my first year at uni thanks to people like yourself who motivate me xx have a good one mate.

Thanks very much for your kind words of encouragement you should be proud of yourself and how strong you are. You have made my day.

**About Time For Justice**  
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 QLD: 07 4911 3237  
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**AboutTimeForJustice.com**  
**@AboutTimeForJustice**

*About Time For Justice is one of many organisations offering no-win-no-fee services for victims of institutional child abuse. Other similar organisations can be found on the National Redress Scheme website. A prison support officer may be able to print you a list of organisations operating in your state by visiting <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/institutions/joined-scheme>*



# ART AND WRITING

## XMAS

We humans have incredible abilities. We've sent probes beyond the reach of Pluto, touched the deepest parts of our oceans, created weapons that can destroy our world, and art that moves the soul. We also have to live with the ability to deny.

*I'll never do that, that will never happen to me. She'll never leave me, I'll never go to jail.* As I write these words, it strikes me just how many of us, far too many perhaps, have said to themselves as that now familiar truck passed us by: "Those poor bastards, what did they do to end up in jail?" Never dreaming that we too may do that one thing that took us out of society, away from our homes, away from our beloved families.

As yet another Christmas heads our way, I reflect yet again on what I did, the grief and shame it brings, the anger and bitterness my now-former wife continues to exhibit as her dream of a life with our children and me was cruelly shattered, the distance that continues to grow between us all, the remorse and regret that continually bubbles away below my public face.

Each of us walk our own path every day, we deal with it every day, in our own way. For some, it's their last days or even their last day, and the chance to restore their lives in their chosen ways is upon them. For others, their journey has just begun and there is fear, worry, uncertainty, confusion and plenty of pain. What's to come? How long will I be in remand, what kind of people will I get to know, will my family keep me, or reject me? Irrespective of why we are inside, family is probably the number one worry.

It really, genuinely, truly, doesn't matter what we did, we are away from those that love, or, sadly in my case, *once* loved us. When I leave, what was family, something I'd longed for from an early age, will no longer be there. No partner, no children, no extended family. No love.

It's not, as the saying goes, all doom and gloom. I've recognised and identified, thanks to programs both ordered and volunteered for, some of the key ingredients of the recipe that leads many to their downfall and that transition from "It'll never happen to me" to "I can't believe it's happened to me!" My recipe means it happened to me. I effectively made my partner a widow, and rendered my children fatherless. There will be those that say you're weak for doing programs, or that by doing them you'll be passing on intel. You'll be called a *dog* or a *gronk* simply for wanting to be a better person. But it's not forever, it won't be for always, just like the time inside. We will get through it, and most of what we had, a good life, will be had again. Undeniably.

By KCDC



Art by Ashley McGoldrick



## THE FINAL CALL OF THE BOOJUM AND THE SNARK

"We have spoken before", said the Boojum to the Snark,  
"Of those creatures known as humans that feel all alone."  
"I remember that well", said the Snark through chartreuse lips,  
"They have many feelings and one called solitary they own."

"That is true", said the Boojum, "and of the feelings they express,  
The ones called anger, hatred, bitterness, and mad  
Are the ones that seem to have their own vibrant life  
Yet the one that brings that vibrancy to a stop, it is called sad."

The Snark said softly, with tentacles all a-tremble,  
"I find it most distressing that humans feel such hurt,  
For they are a social animal, rarely seen without others.  
I would have them, dear friend, akin to a grain of dirt.

That grain is close to many others, and strongly makes  
Wonderful things like mountains and valleys, yes.  
It's the strength of togetherness, a thing of beauty,  
Yet when broken apart, like humans, it does makes quite a mess."

The Boojum's eyes glowed purple with love for its friend  
And softly said "Dear Snark, astutely you have spoken.  
The humans do draw strength from others, and resilience too,  
For on their own they may be easily broken.

Yet away from others they do forget, my dearest friend,  
That spanning great distance is what they call love.  
They feel oh so surrounded by a terrible darkness  
And unaware of that warmth like sunlight from above."

The Snark's pendulous body shivered and shook,  
With great emotion it held both pairs of paws out.  
"Dear Boojum, we have what humans call love,  
We are always unalone, of this, there is no doubt.

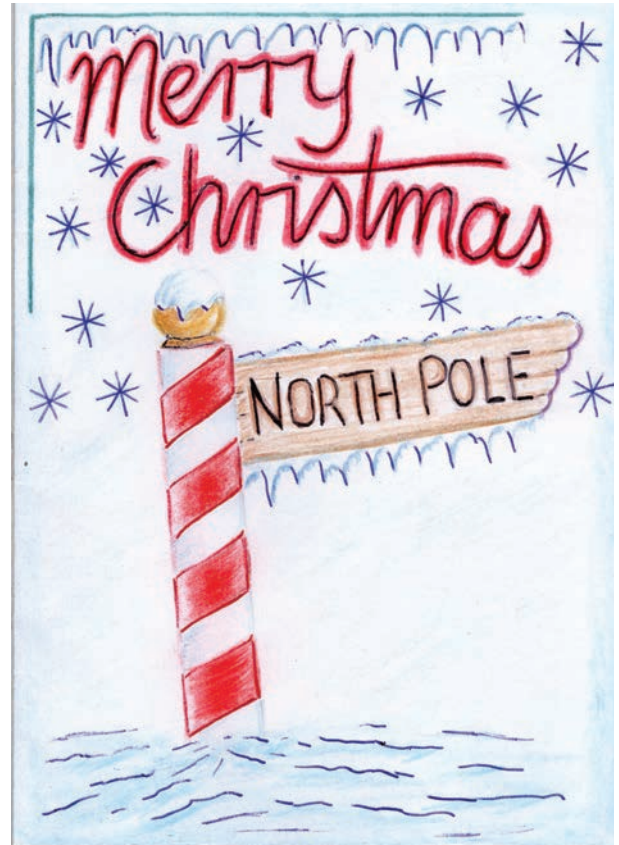
For with you and without you, at any and all times,  
I know you are my friend, my companion in this life."  
The Boojum smiled greatly, tears in its glowing purple eyes.  
"Dear Snark, I revel in each day knowing you are my wife."

Spoke the Boojum with deep feeling, "I have this wish,  
That humans should remember when locked away and sad,  
For although being together alone, they are loved by others.  
And when they see that light of love, should not they feel glad?"

Snark vibrated in agreement, "Dear Boojum, so true, your words  
That humans should remember love, when quiet in the dark."  
Into the mist they faded away, eyes glowing and holding paws,  
Ending our tale of life companions, the Boojum and the Snark.

By Dave

*Editor's note: This is second and final version of the third poem in Dave's series about The Boojum and the Snark. Parts one and two were printed in issues 12 and 14, and an alternate version of part three was printed issue 15.*



Art by DeWitt B



Art by Ashley McGoldrick



## ALONE

Why can't you see me?  
I'm under the light  
Why won't the light  
Why won't they see me?  
The performers plight  
I performed and I danced  
I've cried as I sung  
Took the risk and followed chance  
I got seen by no one  
Why can't you hear me?  
We are all but alone  
Why won't they hear me?  
Screamed down microphones  
I called and I spoke  
With a passion from within  
Yelled out until I choked  
All they heard was the din  
Why can't you hold me?  
I'm your brother I'm your son  
Why won't they hold me?  
Break the dam and the river runs  
You say we are kin  
And you push me away  
Got judged for my skin  
In the streets I played  
Never to be held  
By the ghosts of the past  
Never to be heard  
Like those that laugh last  
Why couldn't you see me?  
I was all but a child  
Used up and thrown aside  
To grow alone in the wild

*By Joel Reid-Roe  
Darwin Correctional Centre  
PO Box 1066, Howard Springs NT 0835*

## DAY IN DAY OUT

Another day down and I lay here in my cell  
Another girl gone, happy and free  
As the sun starts to fade  
And we welcome the night  
Our emotions enslave us,  
Holding us tight  
All that undermines us  
from the struggle and the strain  
Knowing tomorrow when I'm still stuck here doing  
the same.

Over the speaker comes the  
words we all dread  
*wake up, head count*  
*unlock, be appropriately dressed*  
As we stumble and make our way to the door  
hoping and praying it's our name they'll call

*Bring your possessions, your key*  
*And your cards*  
*you're being released today*  
*you're smiling*  
It's your turn, hip-hip hooray

Then comes the sadness  
The goodbyes and the waves  
But I can breathe now  
Now that I'm free

*By Courtney Hall, G33046  
Townsville Women's Correctional Centre  
PO Box 5574, Townsville QLD 4810*

You don't care for our ancestry  
You only care for your fantasy.

Your conversation carries momentum  
for your own personal battle  
Don't let the velocity of your argument define you

Remember with family comes honour, don't turn against  
nor turn away, don't be unwilling.

Your anchor is unwarranted, be respectful even when  
others are not, there's no reason to disagree.

Reality is your ocean, it's not a disability, life is a quote, it  
defines who we are, so throw away the violence and the  
dead-letters and the envelopes, don't be a castaway to  
your own life as you own it.

*Untitled work by Lil Mick*

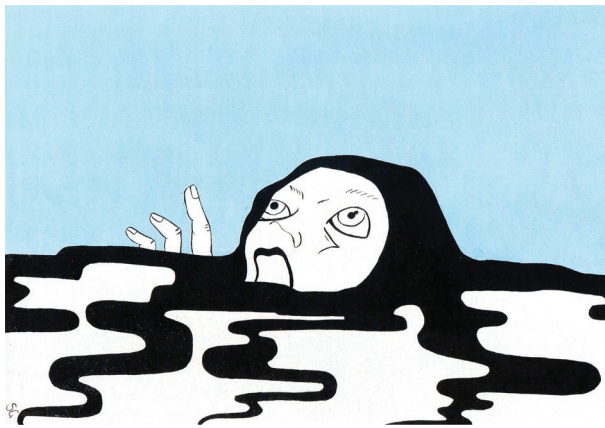


*Art by Nadine De Bruyn*





Art by Jean-Paul Issa



I close my eyes and I think about my life and how I ended up this way. The ruin, devastation and wreckage I have caused to myself and those around me. I open my eyes and I stare at the concrete floor. I think of my parents. How much I love them. I wonder how two normal, stable people could have created something like me, lived with something like me and tolerated something like me. Quiet sobs escape me.

-

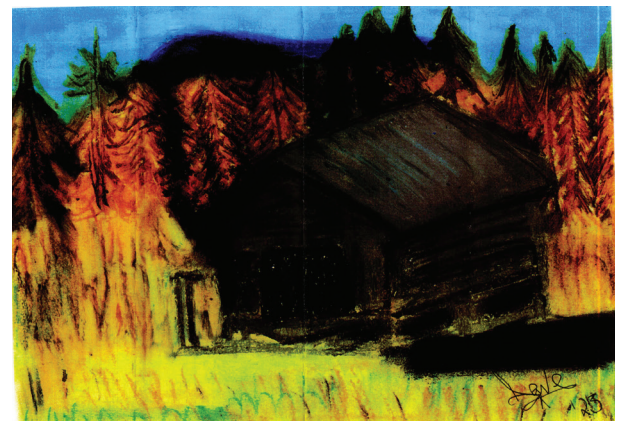
My past – with all its mistakes, regrets and ugly scars.  
All a part of me, a part of my story.  
My present – the way I laugh even when I hurt. The way I love when I break, the way I chose to believe the best and fight for what's good. The way I face each morning with courage even when the nights capture me with fear.  
My future – where all the best parts of me await my arrival, where all that I dream for, hope for and strive for will finally come together with surreal promise.

*Two pieces of writing, years apart – with time, healing, love and forgiveness in between.*

Art and writing by Sam G, Tarrengower Prison, Victoria



Art by Bradley Petford

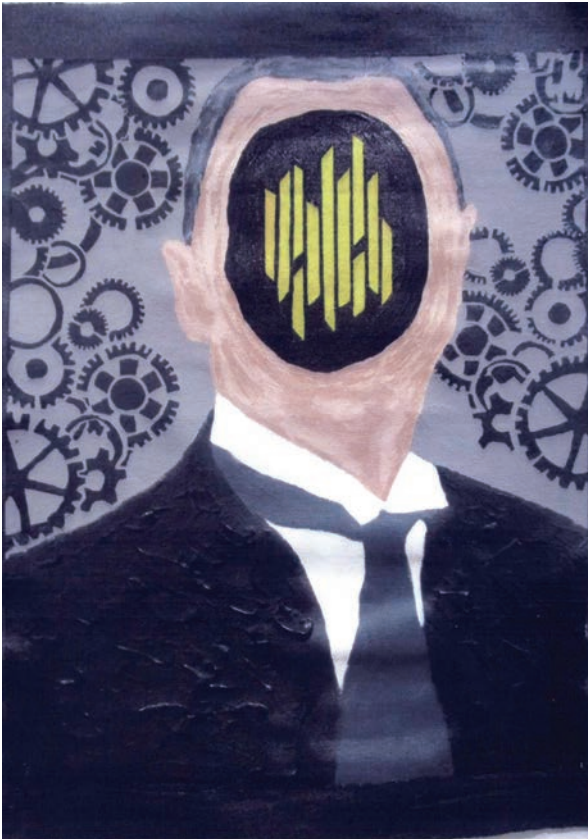


Art by David McGettigan



Art by Christina





Art by Kelly Flanagan, 219454  
 Dame Phyllis Frost Centre  
 PO Box 497, St Albans, Victoria, 3021



Art by Kristina W

## A NEW LIFE

Look beyond the walls surrounding  
 and cold cement beneath your feet  
 Past the iron bars and bricks  
 Rusting steel and chipped concrete  
 See in the distance visions clear  
 Of a life that you once led  
 A world of friends and family  
 Memories running through your head  
 Soon the time will come for us  
 To put this demeaning life far behind  
 To leave all those things intangible  
 And give clarity to a clouded mind  
 The gates will open wide for us  
 To start a life thought once lost  
 For freedom is worth fighting for  
 No matter what the final cost

By DeWitt B

To my husband Shaun,

Baby I just want you to know how much I love you and I miss you, these last four years of our lives have been the hardest time of our lives being away from each other. I can't wait to see you my hunni, all this jail we have done together as 'one' has only made us stronger than anything in this world baby. All the letters that we have written to each other over the years, no one can ever beat that baby, our love is so strong. Shaun, they took us away from each other for the past four years. It never broke us, my husband it only made us better. We will be home soon baby and no one will ever take us away from each other. I can't wait to spend each and every single day with you and be the family we once were before these dark times. There's never been a day that went by whilst I've been in jail that I never thought of you baby. You have always been on my mind. I cry for you baby. I miss you more than you will ever know.

Poem for you baby

I see you in my thoughts and dreams, when I wake how real it seems. I'm not there to comfort you but soon I will be. No one knows or understands, you have my heart in your hands. My love is what you truly own. I'll come soon and make us a home. Inside these walls I'm doing my time not being there with you is my break time, others in life will come and go but my love is true as you know, you are my stars and moon. Being with you will come real soon, so when you sleep nothing and no one will keep us apart baby.

Always forever us babe! We done this as one! Mwaahh.

By Nakeeta Kissier, SQCC, QLD





Art by Grant Colb



Art by Darryl Dunbar, WA



## THE LITTLE BATTLER

Don't look down on me my friend  
From high on your pedestal  
Don't even try and take me  
As some sort of mindless fool

Although I'm not the brightest  
Of all the people around  
I am an Aussie battler  
And my friend I'll stand my ground

So get down from way up there  
Down to where you can see  
And take a look around you friend  
Because everyone's just like me

We are all just little battlers  
Just another face in the crowd  
Nothing really special about us  
But none the less we're proud

So you walk that road of life  
And be what you want to be  
But when it all comes down to it  
My friend you are just like Me

*By Shaun Rowe*

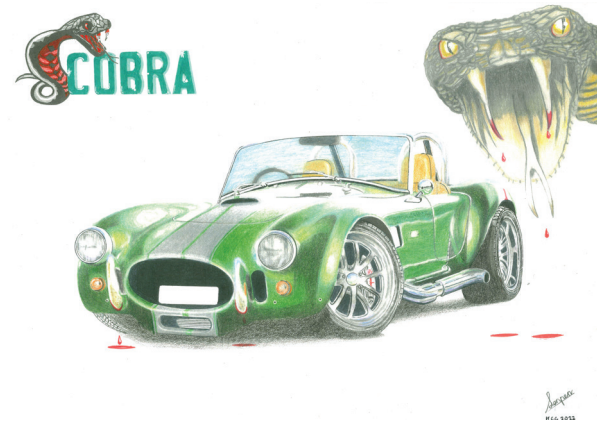
For every teardrop that I cry it's a teardrop meant for you  
and every bit of sadness is sadness shared by two and for  
all I will ever want is to be with you.

*Untitled poem by Travis Kirchner #102057  
Mount Gambier Prison, PO Box 1498, SA, 5290*

## BABY DOLL

A wee bit of heaven  
Drifted down from above  
A body full of happiness  
A heart full of love  
The mystery of life  
So sacred and sweet  
The giver of joy  
So deep and complete  
Precious and priceless  
So loveable, too  
The world's sweetest miracle  
Baby doll, is you

*Poem by Malnight*



*Art by LenPen*



*Art by ShadowArt*



*Art by Malnight*



Common Roller  
(Arctic)



Art by Nigel G

STELLER'S SEA-EAGLE



Art by Pat Stuczewski



Art by Samantha Brownlow, D56930  
SQCC, LMB 1008, Gatton, QLD, 4343



Art by Robert McCullough P78220  
Correctional Training Facility  
PO Box 705, Soledad,  
California, 93960, USA



## WHERE IS LOVE?

How do you find love when you're lost?  
Honest truth is I don't look like Brad Pitt,  
All you've done, loneliness is the cost,  
Sad in solitary, here now I sit.  
No one for me is sure how it seems,  
I've tried hard, but nobody noticed me,  
Is it time to give up on my dreams?  
Of my own wife and my own family?  
Invisible is sure how I feel,  
As I grow old and life passes me by,  
Nobody knows about my ordeal,  
I can only ask myself, Why?  
Is there someone for everyone, "No"?  
Nobody wants to enter my life,  
My chances they left long ago,  
Never will I earn myself a wife.  
I have plenty of love inside me to give,  
It's brutal to have to swallow it hard,  
It's bursting to get out and live,  
But there is no chance of love in the yard.  
To want it makes me feel like a fool,  
So I honestly don't know what to do.  
Life with no love it is so horrible,  
But there is no way that love I can pursue?  
Every day I am aging inside,  
By the time I am free I'll be old,  
So I do not think I'll be satisfied,  
When my story of no love is told.  
So it's my fate now to die old and alone,  
Leaving no kin and nobody to care,  
So my chance at a life I have blown,  
Maybe this is a warning for you to beware?

*By Gareth Buck #143272  
HMP Loddon, Locked Bag 3  
Castlemaine, Victoria 3450*

## THE LIFESTYLE OF THE CRIMINALLY CONVICTED

The lifestyle of the criminally convicted!  
Is it the feeling of being high that got me addicted?  
Or the crazy lifestyle of the criminally convicted.  
Is it the twirl of the pipe, and how the smoke rises?  
Or the cars, bikes and luxury surprises.  
Is it the red and blue lights in the rear-view mirror?  
As we turn up the beatz and drop back a gear,  
Is it max bets at the casino or pub till it shuts?  
Or back at the hotel getting fucked up.  
Is it makin' an earn, out in the hood?

Always on the hustle droppin' off goods.  
Is it the Gucci, the Louis, the diamonds and gold?  
Or the many kilos we bought and sold.  
Is it the respect we give and get from others?  
Or being able to afford to take care of our mothers.  
Is it the stacks of cash hidden in the walls?  
Or the adrenaline rush when the cops make their calls  
One thing I know is I've had enough  
Of being taken from my kids in fucking handcuffs  
Just what it is, it's too hard to tell  
But it sure as hell ain't twelve years in a cell.

*By Narelle Malone  
Townsville Women's Correctional Centre  
Po Box 5574, Townsville, QLD 4811*



## MY NAME IS METH

I destroy homes, I tear families apart,  
Take your children, and that's just the start,  
I'm more costly than diamonds, more precious than gold,  
The sorrow I bring is a sight to behold.

If you need me, remember I'm easily found.  
I live all around you, in schools and in town.  
I live with the rich, I live with the poor,  
I live down the street, and maybe next door.

I'm made in a lab, but not like you think,  
I can be made under the kitchen sink,  
In your child's closet, and even in the woods,  
If this scares you to death well it certainly should

I have many names but there's one you know best,  
I'm sure you're heard of me, my name is Crystal Meth.

My power is awesome, try me you'll see,  
But if you do, you may never break free.  
Just try me once and I might let you go,  
But try me twice, and I'll own your soul.

When I possess you, you'll steal and you'll lie,  
You'll do what you have to, just to get high.  
The crimes you'll commit for my narcotic charms,  
Will be worth the pleasure you'll feel in your arms.

You'll lie to your mother, you'll steal from your dad,  
When you see their tears, you should feel sad.  
But you'll forget your morals and how you were raised,  
I'll be your conscience, I'll teach you my ways.

I take kids from parents, and parents from kids,  
I turn people from God, and separate friends.  
I'll take everything from you, your looks and your pride,  
I'll be with you always, right by your side.

You'll give up everything, your family, your home, your  
friends, your money, then you'll be alone.  
I'll take and take, till you have nothing more to give.  
When I'm finished with you, you'll be lucky to live.

If you try me be warned, this is no game,  
If given the chance, I'll drive you insane.  
I'll ravish your body, I'll control your mind,  
I'll own you completely, your soul will be mine.

The nightmares I'll give you while lying in bed  
The voices you'll hear, from inside your head.  
The sweats, the shakes, the visions you'll see,  
I want you to know, these are all gifts from me.

But then it's too late, you'll know in your heart,  
That you are mine, and we shall not part.  
You'll regret that you tried me, they always do,  
But you came to me, not I to you.

You knew this would happen, many times you were told,  
But you challenged my power, and chose to be bold.  
You could have said no, and just walked away,  
If you could live that day over, now what would you say?

I'll be your master, you will be my slave,  
I'll even go with you, when you go to your grave.  
Now that you've met me, what will you do?  
Will you try me or not? It's all up to you.

I can bring you more misery than words can tell,  
Come take my hand, let me lead you to hell.

*This poem began appearing online in the early 2000s. The author is unknown.*



Art by Michael Elliot



Art by James Mutugi, Kenya



## AN ANCIENT TAIL

Desolate, terror-stricken eyes quickly take in an ill-fated aspect. A river, wide and deep, breaks through a bosky upland landscape. Snarling cries from a lupin posse, barely heard over the roar of tumbling water, growls over the land like the moan of a rampant wildfire.

The river, running swiftly with fresh snow melt, fumbles within as if it were heaving mercury. A dynamic sky, with lightning forking across the lofty heavens like exploding meteors illuminates the evening gloom with explosions of intense mock sunlight. Thunder rumbles over the indifferent, verdant land, as if the very earth was being struck with an immense mallet.

A two-year-old colt quickly weighs up its limited options; would drowning be preferable to being cleaved apart while life yet coursed through its screaming form?

Discoloured and extended razor-edged enamel fangs, bared to the inclement air, glisten with age-old malice. Ravenous wolves were gasping with stoic eagerness. Swelling sounds of baying was not unlike the crackling of collapsing trees. The sprinting pack halts on a low rise. Their prey lays before them, defenceless to their ancient wants.

The colt suddenly rears up on delicate hind legs in an otiose exhibition of mock bravado, while quivering wildly with a sense of impending doom, then, unexpectedly, plunges headlong into the water's icy embrace. The wiry colt cries out in agony when the bitterly cold-water envelopes its warm body.

Thrashing hooves have no purchase on cloaked riverbed stones. Ears fill with water as the colt is swept downriver. Nose and mouth snort and hack appallingly to clear blocked airways. Legs soon tire, but manage to beat a sluggish path through fast-flowing liquid death with great difficulty; because no young grazing animal is a proficient swimmer.

The wolves suddenly spring forward, fearing the forfeit of their quarry. They race down to the riverbank and throw themselves impulsively into the churning waters. Soon they begin to struggle. Their thick, heavy winter coats soak up water like a marooned Mediterranean sponge. Panicking heads slip beneath choppy wavelets; never to be seen again. Finally, the pack's woeful cries dwindle like the light from a dying fire.

A sanguine waxing moon, often veiled by careering shadowy clouds, hangs low in the western sky like a coruscating star. The colt swims towards the wane moonlight; holding sight of the dull orb as if it was a talisman for continuing existence.

Virtually exhausted by its exertions, the colt barely succeeds in staggering out of the water on the far bank. Once it is on sure footing the colt turns round quickly; it

cannot see any of the pursuing wolves within the nearby roiling crests and dimples. Where have all the wolves gone, it wonders.

The colt whickers vociferously, stamps a forefoot, then shakes off as much of the icy water as it can from its refrigerated hide, then deliberately walks on, with a hard-won sangfroid comportment.

*By Ashley Coulston, Victoria*

## WELCOME TO GREENOUGH

On the Greenough flats, an old tree, but not as old as it looks, bends double from the hot, salt-laden wind. Cars push past, cruise controls at 115k to avoid sanction. If you visit in April, or maybe September, perhaps the wind will be gentle, calm or, rarely, non-existent. Yet the tree still bends double, knowing what comes next, knowing no other pose, having long ago built layers of lignin into its back to prevent total collapse.

Look at the tree: you don't need to be a botanist, a meteorologist, a scientist to know which way the wind blows.

On the other side of the highway, hidden in a depression, box thorn and acacia scrub surround the barbed wire that surrounds the walls that surround the men, bent double to the salt-laden wind. The youngest lean into it, the oldest, away.

Look at the men: you don't need to be a psychologist, a sociologist, an anthropologist to know which way the wind blows.

Across the road is the airport. You can see into the depression from a port-side window seat just after take-off, on the runway running southwest, jet-fuelled horsepower lifting you up and over the barbed wire, the depression and straight through the hot, salt-laden wind.

The windsock is out there, somewhere, but you don't need to be an engineer, a pilot, an air traffic controller to know which way the wind blows



*Art and writing by Wayne Hosking*



Here's a little story about what used to be my life.  
 There were two fantastic children, a loving, caring wife.  
 We were a family for a decade plus five years.  
 There was happiness aplenty, which became too many tears.

The dreaded dollar became a pain drowned in grog,  
 Foreshadowing what would happen, mornings full of fog.  
 We loved the trips away, many to the south coast.  
 A chance to see her family, of which we made the most.

Although we loved each other, I found it hard to show. She  
 wanted to hold my hand, I didn't want to know. I could  
 read her disappointment, the sadness in her eyes. A  
 continuation to struggle on, but new hope did not rise.

Then came the horrific night, a family torn apart.  
 A violation, a shattering, tears pouring from the heart.  
 Gone now is the life I wanted forever to have it last.  
 All happiness is broken, remaining deep now in my past.

Then came the diagnosis, from the doctor in brain med.  
 The source of our pain is buried deep inside my head.  
 Sudden bursts of anger brought her far too much pain.  
 Tears of hurt and anguish, pouring down like the rain.

Mental health support, like so many I have need.  
 But the shiny bums in Sydney continue to pay no heed.  
 How many of us wear green behind the fences of jail?  
 It's OK, you're not sick, be tough 'coz you're a male.

There's counselling and therapy to help me ease my ill.  
 And of course, on top of that, happiness in a pill.  
 It's not just the dollar cost as I try to live my life  
 Lonely behind those bars without my children and wife.

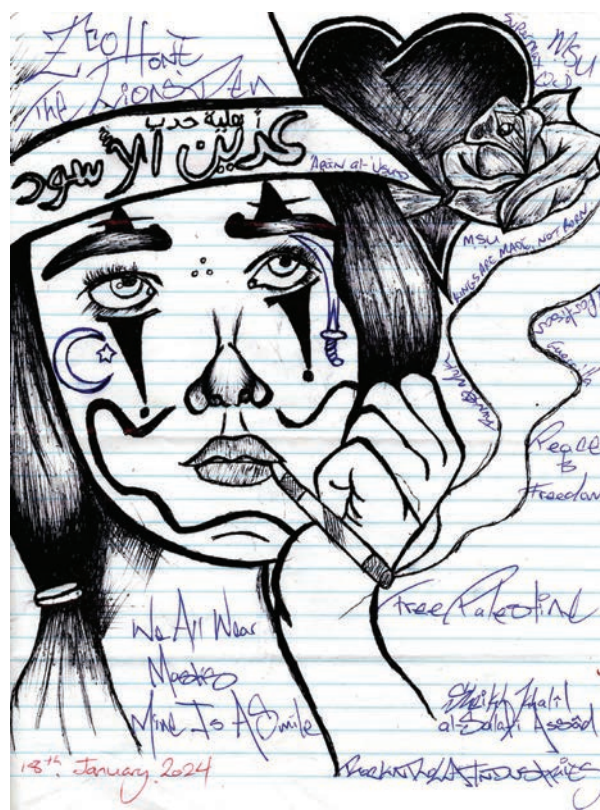
They continue their days without Husband and Dad.  
 Children have her love and support, for that I'm glad.  
 For me there is little hope, a future lost in the gloom.  
 No chance of reconciliation, just days threatening doom.

But soon the day comes when they open up the gate.  
 Kick me in the arse and smile, *look after yourself mate*.  
 A visit to the counsellor, a chance to rebuild my life.  
 Just sadly without the children and my once-caring wife.

*Untitled poem by Dave*



Art by Jayde Farrell



By Sheikh Jaxan Khalil 'Po' Assad O'Reilly, E14572  
 Woodford Correctional Centre  
 PMB 1, Woodford, QLD 7074



Art by Sandra Norman



## SCARS

Scars are imprints of my life leaving discoloured reflections of mistakes made along the way through undesirable destinations. Revealed after healing, which only takes time and a lifetime of time is what I am doing because of scars I have left behind. How does one describe the scars that can not be seen? When shall we tell how those unseen scars are healed enough? When we have grown enough? Taking responsibility though rough, for the scarred blemishes inflicted forever upon those claimed to be loved above all else. And yet salt open wounds with momentary kisses, empty promises, and lies I've tried to make them believe. Why have I done the things to get behind these bars of prison scars. Self-inflicted?

Behind not wishing to face the reality of my own inflicted scars deeper than any flesh can comprehend.

I have been a dead-beat dad to my own children like my dad was with his, and like him, I wish to be forgiven. Knowing their scars, like my own will remain unless change is made. But how can this be done when I sit in prison for some 24 years of a life sentence?

At the age of three my daughter found me and came to meet with, signifying her strength and independence. The added blessing was being introduced to my then-one-year-old granddaughter. So proud in that moment.

Like my own child, I wanted a dad to sit with and discuss the meaning of life; or how to find a proper wife from a man who played more games in life than Super Mario on Nintendo. I was not able to comprehend until my life took a path of destruction and old unhealed wounds flourished.

I fell into addiction.

There are scars upon each of my wrists that remind me of the hurt I've caused to others behind not dealing with the blemishes of life leaving scars I could not see but shall remain sadly in the lives of those I love but never got to know.

Scars are funny like that.

By Jeffery A. Shockley - ES4796

SMART COMMUNICATIONS/PADOC SCI-FAYETTE  
Po Box 33028, St Petersburg, Florida 33733, USA



## MANIFESTING

This is a picture of my mood back home,  
not just a pretty drawing of flower, rainbow and gnome  
This is getting real and I am counting the days  
Together with the anxiety I conceal  
It is time to apply for parole  
It is time for beautiful days  
Time to change the ways  
These five years have changed my life and my way  
And I am grateful it will be over soon and so I pray

Thanks for reading me

Loving me

Listening to my feelings and emotions

All of you, in the same motions

I will miss all of you

*Paper Chained* lovers and crew

But one more thing I would like to ask you to do

You, all the people like you and me to reach out

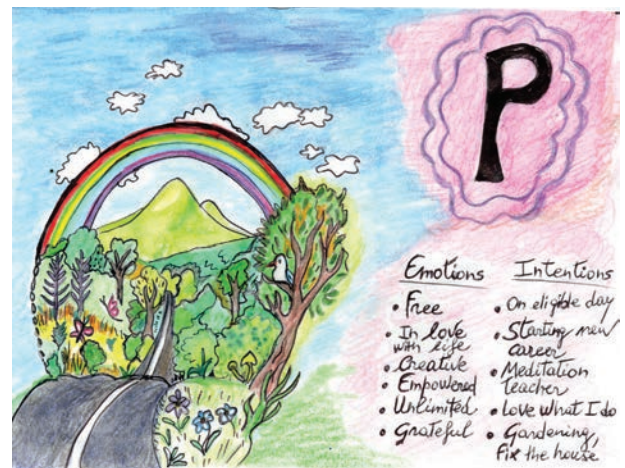
To reach extraordinary states of being

In a field of infinite possibility

Tune in

Pray for me and manifest me

FREE.



Art and writing by Silvia Roberts

Push me off the edge of the world  
Tell me all I've lost is worth more than gold  
You said I need to bleed for this  
As if my blood could purify  
I can't, I said, if I bleed that much I'll die

Untitled poem by Alex Crozier 228096

Langi Kal Kal

Private Bag 4, Beaufort

Victoria 3373



# WE ARE ALL WITCHES AND WARLOCKS

BY CAMERON TERHUNE

Human beings are hope machines. From our first moments to our last breaths, we think, we wonder, we imagine. We dream.

Hope is our magic. Hope flows in our blood, fuels our ambitions, lifts us up when we fall flat. Hope is our modern sorcery.

The essential strength of humanity is that even when it is reduced to only one human, each one of us still carries the embers of hope. That ember smoulders, capable of reigniting the full range of possibilities. It can blaze like a hearth that warms the grandest castle, or it can rage like a forest fire that burns the whole world to ashes. Our intentions direct our power towards creative or destructive purposes, but the ember itself is nearly impossible to extinguish. Even when it goes cold for decades it can flicker back to life without losing its potency.

The Achilles Heel of our criminal justice system is that it blinds itself to this reality. Prisons do not take into account the fact that this sorcerers spark exists irrespective of a person's external situation. Hope springs eternal, as they say, and within each human being can be found a bottomless well of the stuff. A wise irrigator would channel that implacable flow towards barren fields that could once more become fertile, rather than dedicating themselves to fruitless efforts to dam up what cannot be contained.

Human beings need no external motivation to feed the ember of hope. In such a self-contained system as the hopeful heart, attempts to quash its nature only engender the development of alternative means by which its visions can be realized. If our prisons abandoned the doomed road of trying to eradicate hope and instead nurtured that vital human spark, we could direct untold energy into positive changes within the world we all share.

Warring against a person's hopes and dreams achieves nothing, save further alienating them. They become resentful, but no less driven. If we set aside our labels and judgements — if we take off our blinders — it becomes obvious what a dangerous proposition this is for society. We have the opportunity to transform the lost people filling our prisons into allies, builders, and creators. What benefit is there, then, to instead manufacture enemies? Hope is free, but aligning ourselves against it costs us everything.

Society is made up of people, and it is not a zero-sum game. When a person behaves in a way that runs counter to society's interests, they also act against their own interests. If an individual makes law and order, harmony, compassion, and the other pillars of society into foreign

concepts, it stands to reason that they've decided that their interests and society's no longer coincide. Rather than using their antisocial actions as justification for further tormenting someone already cast out from the warmth and kindness of the healthy, happy, safe, community-centered world we all hold as the ideal, we can move closer to the ideal by using our great collective power to identify the roots of our exile's disillusionment. From there we can lay the groundwork for them to find their way back to wholeness and home.

Redemption need not be freely given, nor made easy to obtain, but to strip away the essential humanity of another human being is beyond the power of any society, however grand it may be. No matter how far away we send our undesirables, in their mirrors they still see reflections of us. Human feet are driven by hope and will always walk. The ember of hope burns no less bright in the darkness of exile. It behooves us to light a fire for the banished to place on the horizon ahead of them, not the one behind.



Writing and art by Cameron Terhune, AD0786  
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# BEING 'FREE'? I'LL NEVER BE FREE AGAIN

BY STACEY STOKES

I've been out of jail awhile now. And I wanted to share my experience and thank everyone who wrote to me while I was in jail. I was really struggling when my release seemed like a possibility. A part of me was really scared and wanted to stay in my familiar cage. The other part was an impatient feral animal that craved the outside world.

Sentenced to ten-and-a-half years, then dumped in the real world... One of my friends told me there were delivery drones flying all over Melbourne. I believed him. I dunno! How was I supposed to know anything? About anything? I was very scared. In fear and confusion, I withdrew inside myself. I closed off the world.

So I'm sorry to anyone I wrote to while in prison that I stopped writing. You are all in my heart still. I will never forget any of it. I wish I could forget a lot of it. The midday movie *Just Mercy* was on TV, it made me cry. Any reminder of prison makes me cry. Cars out the front of my house freak me out, I assume it's the police come with a warrant to trash my house. I've done nothing wrong and they won't find anything, but still is it? Nope, just the neighbour.

So much PTSD. But that's the point of prison. To punish you. To hurt you. To break you. Well, they did. I still have nightmares. I dream I'm standing in the meds line waiting for my anti-depressants to help me get through another day in jail. I wasn't on them before. But now ... waiting. Standing there. It's so real. Then I wake up confused and disorientated. Where the fuck am I? This isn't my cell? Oh in no way did the system help me prepare for being out of jail. I need therapy. Years of therapy. Instead I got a few outings like a dog going to the park for walkies. But I'm getting there. I'm having new realizations every day. New lessons learnt. New skills and puzzle pieces.

I've learnt that I can talk to whoever I like now. I don't have to talk to the toxic people now. That blew my mind. In prison you have to see these toxic people every day, you have no choice. It's a part of the nightmare. But one day I realised, I can just block their number now! It was so simple! I can choose who I see and talk to now! Now, my friends are all so positive and kind. Understanding and supportive. I am truly blessed. I feel so privileged to have them in my life. That alone has made a huge difference.

I'm learning to be "alone". That is still a hard one. Years and year of having a cellmate. Never ever being alone. Always having a person to talk to. Now, no one. It's so quiet. It's unsettling. But I'm getting used to it. I still refuse to buy a cat though, no matter how lonely it is. I'm worried it will lay on my face when I'm sleeping and kill me. Then, it will eat me (joke: don't call the Crisis Assessment and Treatment team... the CAT team get it?... I'm hilarious)

I've learnt that I'm choosing my own adventure now.

That's interesting. In prison I sat at medical for four hours more than once. Waiting. Waiting. But I had a mission. I had an appointment slip! Sure, it was normally to tell me my male hormone levels were alarming low because the GP had never even seen a 'tranny' before. But I still had an appointment slip. My reason for existing in that moment. Now, I can do whatever I like, so I'm doing everything! I'm getting a lot done. I'm super productive. But also, I'm half-assing everything. Then I stop and have a day of sleeping and watching TV and feel super guilty for doing nothing. I should be cherishing this time. I shouldn't be a lazy shit.

But I've learnt I need to be happy as well. I need to be happy to be alone. Happy to relax and watch TV. Happy with who I talk to. Happy with who I am. Because being unhappy is where it all went wrong to begin with.

I'm getting there. But I will never be free again. I know that. The nightmares and paranoia will never go away. The trauma and pain. The tears. It will always be a part of me now. But I can still be happy and grow from all of this. I appreciate things more now. I see my friends happy, and I marvel at it. I go to the park with a cute person and it's so much sunnier and fun. Simple things are special to me now and I cherish them.

I wanted to die while I was in jail. I tried to hang myself. I could have died, but the leather broke. Maybe it was chance. Maybe I'm incompetent and can't even manage a suicide. But today, I'm doing OK. I'm glad I messed it up.

Things like that stay with you. They don't go away. But we grow. Those times are the compost we use to grow and thrive. Because if I was to compare my life now to how it was before prison, I'd say I'm happier now than I ever was before. That sad angry person is gone. Replaced by a deeply traumatised but blessed person. I've seen people from the pre-prison days, and they are the same people. The same clothes. The same town. Ten years on, trapped in a moment in time. They haven't changed, but I have.

If you're reading this and you are in jail, don't die. Don't kill yourself. Please. You can do this buddy. Maybe if you live long enough, you can see a better day like I did.

And if you are getting out soon or are just out now. I know it's scary, but you will learn and grow. Things will make sense. Eventually. It did for me and I'm a moron that can't even manage to hang myself properly. Don't listen to the screws or the jacks. The haters. I'm sure they are deeply sad people. I bet they talk to their own families the same way they talk to us.

Listen to meeee! And I say... We got this.

*By Stacey Stokes. Google my Substack!*



# HER

BY COSKUN MARIUS

She was a good girl, straight A's paved ways for her  
 she could have been a teacher, doctor or lawyer  
 So ahead of her class, we all knew she was smart  
 A modern-day angel staying true to her heart  
 Searching for a fresh start after graduation  
 and maybe travel the nation or take a vacation  
 At a travel agent a bloke named Jason  
 approaches her and is left stuttering in amazement  
 so they started to date until she became pregnant  
 He got scared, left her with it and hit the exit  
 Now she starts stressing out,  
 throwing his stuff out the house  
 then sinks a bottle of red crying till she finally passes out,  
 awoken in pain she thinks she may have done damage  
 and just as she suspected she's had a miscarriage  
 She asks for help but no one can  
 Her tears begin to flow again  
 she opens a litre of cheap whiskey  
 and chases it down with a soda can  
 So lost and confused it don't stop at the booze,  
 now she's smoking pot with it too  
 Hits the rock till she spews mixing lots of the juice with  
 any drug she can choose till she drops to her shoes  
 Thinking all these drugs are gonna heal her pain  
 but doesn't realise that it will seal her fate  
 Now she's hectic, reckless searching for acceptance  
 In a cold man's world. Tick it off the checklist  
 Nike, she *just do it* cause she can  
 Fighting other chicks, she be swingin' like a man  
 She knocks a chick out, gun slingin' with her hands and  
 she don't give a shit, no thinking in advance  
 New man in her plans she can ride and die with  
 screaming "fuck the world, ain't a side chick"  
 she's as tight as a vice grip ignoring good advice  
 Now she's drink-drug-driving with no license  
 I might just skip this part since this is hard  
 Nah fuck it... her in an SS is  
 travelling at high speed during the night  
 she's been up for weeks on the ice and her mind sleeps.  
 Few friends are in the car they're rolling at deep  
 one grabs the wheel they were on course for a tall tree  
 but the car collides she's the only survivor  
 now it's starting to hit her she's messed her life up  
 Now she's doing a lot of time not far from a lifer  
 and one night she slits her wrists in the shower till her  
 eyes shut  
 The screws try to revive her but she's unresponsive  
 One yells "Doctor! Call for one quick!"  
 This shouldn't happen but she's so impulsive  
 They try to hold her still as her body convulses,

foaming out the mouth, the scene's quite frightening  
 striking out of nowhere kind of like lightning  
 now she's in and out of consciousness, all you hear is  
 moaning  
 on the way towards hospital they rip most of her clothing  
 and put her to sleep as doctors rush her in to surgery  
 Blood is everywhere looking like a murder scene  
 They try but her heart starts to rest a nurse screams  
 "She's going into cardiac arrest"  
 Trying everything they can shocking three times  
 in this moment we wish she could rewind  
 'cause where was everybody the day that she cried?  
 It's girls like her who are suffering inside  
 Dancing with the devil makes no room for an afterlife  
 I guess it's hell on earth when you can't find paradise for  
 her



Art and writing by Coskun Marius  
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# BOOK REVIEWS

BY GISELLE COATES,  
CRIMINOLOGY STUDENT

## ***Pieface: Phoenix Rising***

**By Rick Boyd**

**Published: June 2014**

The U.S. prisoner Rick Boyd skillfully weaves a captivating narrative that plunges readers into the gritty world of crime, redemption, and the intricate game of survival. The story revolves around Richard Brooks, also known as Pieface, whose life takes unexpected turns in his pursuit to break free from the generational shackles of poverty. As the torch passes to his nephew, Royal Brooks, the tale unfolds into a suspenseful journey that keeps readers on the edge of their seats.

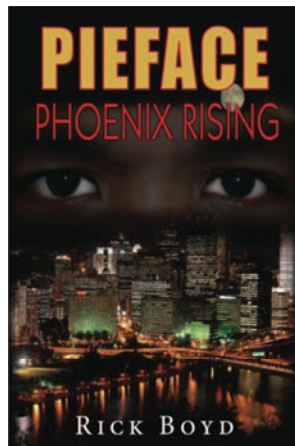
Boyd's storytelling prowess shines as he introduces characters who grapple with the harsh realities of their environment. The book not only explores the complexities of crime and the pursuit of power but also delves into the profound impact of familial bonds and the desire to overcome adversity.

The pacing of the narrative is commendable, offering a perfect blend of suspense and intrigue. The author skillfully navigates the highs and lows of the characters' lives, keeping the readers engaged from start to finish. The length of the book is just right, allowing for a compelling and immersive experience without overwhelming the audience.

The character development is another strong suit of *Pieface*. Royal Brooks emerges as a multifaceted protagonist, transcending the shadow of his infamous uncle. Boyd artfully portrays the evolution of Royal's character, making him not only a feared and respected figure in the criminal underworld but also a beacon of hope within his community. The complexities of his relationships, coupled with the looming threat of the FBI, add layers of depth to the narrative.

The book is a rollercoaster of emotions, skillfully navigating through themes of love, loyalty, murder, and manipulation. Boyd's vivid descriptions and sharp dialogue immerse readers in the world he has created, making it a truly unforgettable experience.

In conclusion, *Pieface* is a must-read for fans of crime fiction and suspense. Rick Boyd's masterful storytelling, coupled with well-crafted characters and an engaging plot, make this book an enthralling journey into the heart of the criminal underworld.



## ***The Ethics of Evil: Stories of H Division***

**By Ray Mooney**

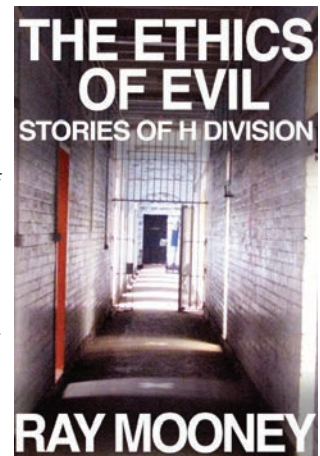
**Published: March 2016**

Ray Mooney's *Ethics of Evil: Stories of H Division* is a meticulous examination of the dark and harrowing reality within Australia's infamous H Division of Pentridge Prison. The book, released in 2016, is a gripping non-fiction account that unveils the brutality and systemic abuses faced by prisoners from 1958 to 1970. However, the book's comprehensive nature leads to a critical evaluation of its length, suggesting that certain chapters could have been condensed for a more impactful reading experience.

The extensive exploration of each chapter, beginning with "Crime and Punishment in Australia" and continuing through various prisoners' stories, provides readers with a comprehensive understanding of the grim reality within H Division. While Mooney effectively captures the nuances of the prisoners' experiences, there arises a concern regarding the book's length. Chapters 2, 3, 6, and 9-14 delve deeply into the details of H Division, sometimes repeating themes and events. A more concise approach, condensing these chapters into a unified section, would have maintained the book's intensity while avoiding potential reader fatigue.

The in-depth exploration of individual prisoner stories, such as those of Archie Butterly, Chris Flannery, and Stan Taylor, provides a rich tapestry of experiences. Each tale sheds light on the deplorable living conditions, harsh punishments, and the systemic issues within H Division. The book's later chapters, covering the demolition of H Division and the aftermath of the Jenkinson Inquiry, also offer a comprehensive overview of the long-term impact of the events.

In conclusion, *Ethics of Evil: Stories of H Division* is an invaluable contribution to understanding the dark history of Pentridge Prison. While the detailed exploration of various themes and individuals enriches the narrative, there is a notable opportunity for condensation in certain chapters. A more streamlined structure would have enhanced the book's readability without compromising its powerful message. Ray Mooney's work remains a significant testament to the resilience of those who endured the horrors of H Division, even as readers navigate through its comprehensive narrative.





# PRISON ART IN PALESTINE

*Paper Chained* Editor Damien Linnane talks to Mohanned Al Azzeh, a Palestinian artist living near Ramallah in the West Bank, who is also a former inmate of Israel's prison system.

*Can you tell me when you first started making art?*

In the last few years of school. In 2000, I went to university to study fine arts.

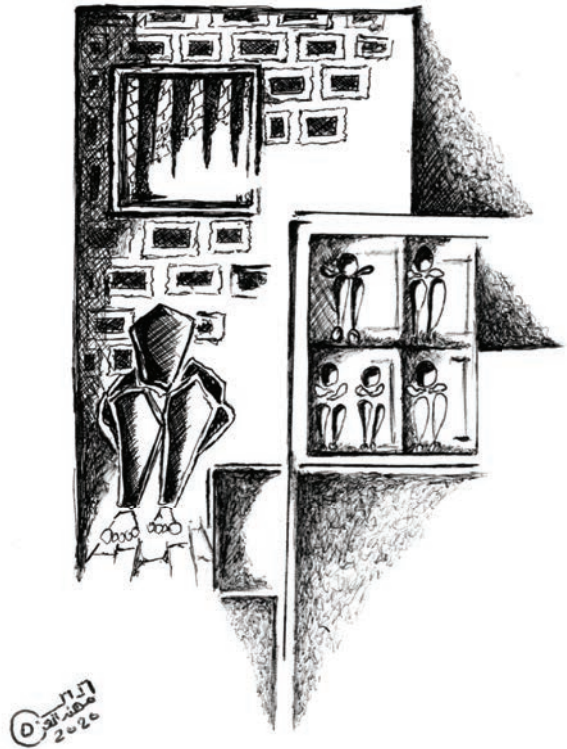
*Was that before you were put in prison?*

Yes, I was in prison two times. The first time was 2005, for two-and-a-half years, and then again in 2020 for two years. The first time I was arrested for political activity at my university, and the second time it was for refusing to give information about a political party to Israel. This is what they judged me for, they said I was active in a political party, and I had a relation with some of the political party activist people. People are put in prison for being active in political parties, whatever they are doing, not just military action. If we're seen going to a demonstration in the street, they can send you to jail.

In 2020, the Israeli soldiers came to my house in the middle of the night. My daughter was two years old. About 25 soldiers came into the house with weapons. Three came into my bedroom. I woke up with them shouting at me. They put a weapon to my head and asked me to put my hands behind my back and they cuffed me. Then they started searching the house. They destroyed many things, the walls, the kitchen, the TV. One hour after they finished they took me to the interrogation centre.

In Israeli interrogation centres, they have a rule called 20-20. It means 20 hours per day, for 20 days. The interrogation will go on for 20 days, every day, for 20 hours each day. For 20 hours I will be in the office, with my legs in cuffs, sitting in a small chair attached to the floor. Every day you have 20 hours of questions. Some days I think it was more than 20 hours, but I don't know because they took my watch. You don't know what the day is, nor the time of day. You don't know whether it is morning or night. You are kept in a small room that is exactly two metres by one metre. When I slept, my legs were against the door and my head was near the small place to go to the toilet. I don't know if I was sleeping one hour or five, because after one week, there is no [concept of] time. I finished the interrogation and they sent me to my room, and I slept immediately.

When you are being interrogated, there are at least three people speaking at you. One of them will shout, one will be speaking in a good way, one is trying to beat you. They shout very bad words. They threaten to rape you and do things to your family. They told me that they would arrest



*One of Mohanned's original drawings made in prison.*

my family, they told me they would arrest my wife and then my daughter would be out on the street. After ten days they showed me a video with no sound of my wife being interrogated as well, in the same place I am in. The interrogation centre is two or three floors underground. It is the same interrogation centre the British were using until 1948.

After 10 or 12 days, I was more or less destroyed physically. They tried to take me back from the office back to isolation, but I fell down and became unconscious. I woke up in hospital, I still don't know how long I was there for, then they took me back to interrogation in the same place.

After a few days, you really want to know how much time is going by, so I found a solution to this. During interrogation I would ask them to release my hands so I could drink water. They released one hand, and I put my fingers in the water. I put three drops of water on the table, and I start to count to see how long it takes the water to disappear. Eventually I find out that a drop of water a certain size will take one-and-a-half hours to disappear, so this is how I count how many hours I am in interrogation for. I do this when I am sleeping too. I put drops of water in the cell, and most of the time when they wake me up, the drop of water that takes 20 minutes to dry is still there, so this is how I found

out that they were only letting me sleep for around 10 minutes sometimes. Sometimes the soldiers would find out I was doing this and they would punish me, or they would not give me more water to drink.

I was in interrogation for 60 days. The food was very bad. I weighed 65 kilos when I went in; when I came out I weighed 45 kilos. They only took me from my cell, to the office for interrogation, and every 10 days to have a shower for five or ten minutes. But they didn't give me new clothes. They also always blindfolded me when taking me from the cell to the interrogation office or the showers. I never saw anything when I was walking between these places. This was during COVID, and sometimes when I was blindfolded they would stick the swab in my nose to test me, but they would never tell me first. Sometimes people would also come to my isolation cell and say "We will help you if you tell us what you know, we are a prisoner just like you", but they are fakes. They are part of the interrogation.

After a month and a half I started to have back problems from being chained to the chair in the interrogation. They refused to give me medication for the pain. They said, "If you speak with us, if you tell us everything, we will take you to the hospital and give you what you want, but if you stay not speaking, we will not give you anything." I still have pain in my back all the time.

Eventually they sent me from the interrogation centre to a normal jail, which was Ofer Prison in the West Bank. I was put in a room with eight other people. I started trying to find out news about my family, I started trying to meet with a lawyer about my case.

#### ***Were you able to make any art once you got to Ofer?***

I made some art, but for the first year, only one kind. The International Red Cross gave us dominoes when they visited us. Prisoners took the dominoes and sanded them back by rubbing them against the ground, to make them very soft. Once both sides were polished back, they gave them to me, and I would do small drawings on them to turn them into pendants for necklaces. Normally I would just make these in black and red, because it is hard to get other colours. We do not have coloured pencils in the adult prison. In the children's section of the prison, they are allowed to have colouring pencils. The red I got was smuggled to me from a boy in that section of the prison.

The pendants are gifts for family, wives and children. There are many steps to making this art. We cover the dominoes with a kind of plastic cover that we get from water bottles. We have a lot of time to make decorations in jail. The beads on these necklaces that look like wood, but they are actually olive seeds. The other decoration you see is the flint wheels from lighters. We aren't allowed art materials in prison but they do let us have lighters for smoking.

I also made some drawings which I smuggled out of the jail in a secret way. I can't tell you how because this method still works and prisoners still use it now. I did around 20 drawings on paper, which I got in different ways since we



*Necklaces Mohammed's made for his family in prison.*

are not allowed to have paper for drawing. If prisoners are going to court, most of the time the judge will give them a piece of paper at the end related to the hearing. When prisoners come back from court they cut the white paper and give me any blank sections, which I use for drawings. I was doing special drawings for my daughter, about how to learn letters and numbers, and how to learn the names of animals. Once I was able to make a portrait drawing of my daughter that was blue, because I was able to get a blue pencil.

#### ***Did you make any other kinds of art?***

I made paintings on t-shirts with bleach. Each month the Israelis gave every room half a cup of bleach for cleaning. We are not allowed to have colourful clothes in prison, only black, brown and grey. I would take black shirts and I would paint on it with the bleach. After a while the t-shirt turns white where you paint it. This is the kind of art I do, and all the time we are trying to find a way to make sculptures or drawings. But most of the time when we do something, and the soldiers find it during the searches of the rooms, they take it with them. They do searches every day.

#### ***What are you doing with your art now?***

Just a few months ago I finished a diploma in art therapy. I am taking this art therapy to help fix things from the time I spent in jail, because I have some problems from being in jail. They are not big problems for me, but I live with my family and sometimes I make them very afraid of me. So, I'm trying to do some kind of meditation or therapy.



This kind of thing is not common here. People are too afraid to say "I want to see a psychologist."

***It's exactly the same in Australia. People are afraid to say they need help here too.***

So, I'm taking this art therapy diploma, because my study is art, and I spoke to my doctor and they said, "If you're afraid about something, or if you think about something all the time, it's better to do something about it." Because I told him that I want to try to do something to vent about what I experienced in the prison. "Don't think about it all the time," he said, "Just do it. Bring the colours and everything, and start to do any arts to express the feelings of when you are in the jail." And this is how I want to spend my days. I make sketches, a different kind of sketch, and I'm trying to finish the first step to make a painting about the life of the jail. This is what I do. In the near future, I will try to do an exhibition about the prison life. Most of the time when I make art though I have to send it outside my house, because at any moment the soldiers might come in to my home and destroy everything again.



Artworks Mohannad has made as part of his therapy



Art by Preston, Brisbane Youth Detention Centre  
Approval has been obtained from Brisbane Youth  
Detention Centre to share this artwork

# LIFE, LOVE, BEAUTY, PHILOSOPHY, ART, NATURE, SCIENCE, DIVINITY AND MORE

BY ALEX FREEBURN

Some of the most beautiful and awe-inspiring art I've ever seen was that of the French art movement L'Art brut. The French artist Jean Dubuffet originally coined the term 'Art brut,' or 'Raw art,' also known as 'Outsider art.' Art brut started in the 1920s and was largely created by psychiatric patients. To me this shows that we all have the potential for greatness no matter how seemingly damaged or divergent. Likewise there was once a man who invented weapons of war, running an arms company making and selling weapons that killed countless people. That man in his old age looked back on how he'd spent his life and so deeply regretted his actions that in his will he instructed that an award should be made to encourage people to aspire for higher and better things. That man's name was Alfred Nobel and the award he came up with was the Nobel Peace Prize, which to this day is the highest award for human excellence.

Throughout history and in our present day there are countless stories like this. The point is that one should not judge others or oneself too hastily or harshly, as life and people are complicated. We are all capable of madness, wickedness, change, greatness and so much more, and just as a good person in a moment of madness can do awful things, even those whom make terrible mistakes can go on to do great things. Shakespeare in his play *As You Like It*, wrote: "All the worlds a stage / And the men and women merely players / They have their exits and their entrances / And one man in his time plays many parts / His acts being seven ages..." In other words, we all play many roles in our lives. The human psyche is not a simple thing, but rather a complex and dynamic, ever changing and evolving tapestry involving many threads of many colours, and "good" and "bad" and "beauty" are all subjective concepts. As the saying goes, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder".

There is a Japanese practice called Kintsugi where a damaged or broken item such as an ornamental vase is repaired, but unlike in typical restorative practice there isn't an attempt to hide the damage. In fact, the cracks are joined with a lacquer that is then highlighted with precious metals such as gold dust or similar thereby highlighting the cracks. The lacquer traditionally used for Kintsugi is made from the Urushi tree which is a relative to poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac. Like its relatives, it too is poisonous. I find this practice quite philosophical in itself; in the sense that poison and gold are sometimes intermixed, and that even something that has destructive potential can also have creative and restorative and healing potential. There are many examples like this,

such as the plant commonly known as Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa Belladonna*), the latter part of its Latin/botanical name translates to "beautiful woman" because in early times it was sometimes used as a kind of cosmetic. Women would take a little of it to dilate their pupils making them look dreamy-eyed. It also contains alkaloids; drugs used medically to treat a variety of ailments, drugs which in larger doses are psychedelic and also potentially fatal. So in one plant you have the potential for beauty, medicine, healing, mind-expansion and death, all contained in a seemingly meek weed-like little plant with little black berries and cute little white flowers. Such is life with all its nuances, in that things are rarely black and white but rather countless shades of grey, along with the entire spectrum of colour imaginable and many unimaginable, and so too is the inner workings of humankind.

Kintsugi is a physical expression of the Japanese philosophy *mushin*, which is often translated as 'no mind,' but carries connotations of fully existing in the moment, as well as of non-attachment and of equanimity amid changing conditions. Kintsugi also shares some similarities with the Japanese philosophy of *wabi-sabi*, which is centred around an embracing of the flawed, imperfect, impermanent and incomplete. When an item is restored via Kintsugi, the final recreated item often becomes more beautiful than the original, in that its flaws and the healing/restorative process adds to the beauty. I believe this too can be the case with people. Sometimes it's our imperfections that make us who we are—rather than detracting from our beauty, they instead add to it.

Another example of this is the pearl. At the heart of every pearl is an inclusion such as a grain of sand and without it, the pearl would not have come to exist. And if you were simply to judge superficially the value of the shell containing a pearl on its exterior you may wrongfully conclude that it's of little value. As they say: 'You can't judge a book by its cover.' If you want to truly understand anything or anyone you must take the time to look within (ourselves included), and if you don't then you may just miss out on all of life's beautiful pearls. Oscar Wilde once said: 'The greatest of all vices is superficiality.' Maybe there's something to that.

Like the pearl it's often the inclusions or flaws of a gem that make it what it is. Many multicoloured gems owe their ability to appear different colours to inclusions. The rarest and most coveted sapphires are those known as 'star-sapphires,' so called because of asterism which is the way the light reflects from them giving the look of a star. There are countless examples like this. In Romeo and



Juliet, Shakespeare wrote: 'That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.' And I don't doubt that, but to me a rose without its thorns just wouldn't be a rose. And further imagine if all flowers were exactly the same, with the same colour, same shape, and same perfume. Think how boring and mundane they would be. It's the diversity and individuality of things that make them what they are, flaws and imperfections included.

Likewise, it's sometimes our trials and tribulations that bring out the best in us, just as it's a combination of time and pressure that create a diamond, or fire that activates the germination and growth of the Australian Mountain Ash seed, which grows to become the greatest of trees.

The point I'm trying to make here is to not necessarily be ashamed of your mistakes or flaws, but rather embrace them, as they are a part of what makes you. It's only the unevolved that will judge you hastily and harshly on your flaws, as we all have our own. Marilyn Monroe once famously said; "If you don't love me at my worst, then you don't deserve me at my best."

Those that truly love you will love you, flaws and all, and if you are to truly love yourself, then so should you. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't attempt self-betterment, of course we should. However, such a process of introspection and growth is not merely "make-up". I've never known a woman more beautiful than without make-up, raw, real and true.

There's an age old-proverb that goes: "Love sees no flaws". And I believe this to be very true, but there's a flip side to that coin, which is that love will be the first to tell you of your flaws. Your real flaws as she/he/they perceive them, but when this is done in the spirit of love, that is not simply in a spirit of criticism but rather one of constructive-criticism. Many writers on the subject of soulmates theorise that this is a fundamental purpose of a soulmate, to be their soulmate's teacher and vice versa, to be a mirror in which one can see and face ones own real inner flaws aiding in mutual growth.

Whether or not you believe in soulmates, those with whom you are closest have the greatest influence on your thoughts, feeling and behaviour, and as such have the greatest potential to help you grow, and so I say to waste little time on those that don't love and support you, and cherish those that do. Sadly, those closest to you also have the greatest potential to hurt you.

However, this fact shouldn't ever discourage you from intimacy, as to truly live and grow we have to be prepared to push ourselves at least a little out of our comfort zones, to take risks and be prepared to occasionally get hurt. This is all a part of life and often too how we grow. There's an important proverb on this idea too: 'Love like you've never been hurt before'.

That also doesn't mean to disregard all of your previous life lessons, it simply means to go into each new experience and relationship with an open heart and mind, giving it a fair chance and allowing yourself to be at least somewhat

vulnerable, because if you close yourself off to the possibilities of new experiences, then the possibility of new experiences will be closed off to you. It has been said that beauty is a mixture of strength and vulnerability. To allow yourself to take chances and to be vulnerable takes both confidence and strength, and that is beautiful.

Circling back to the story of the Australian Mountain Ash tree, there have been Mountain Ash trees recorded at over 100m tall. It grows to become one of the largest trees on Earth, yet it begins its life as a tiny seed, as small as most any other. This just goes to show that great things often have humble beginnings. The universe itself may have began from nothingness or a singularity (an infinity dense point) or even just a couple of ultra-tiny particles colliding in a vast space of nothingness.

If you ever doubt your brilliance, take a moment to consider that the universe is made up of many galaxies. At the heart of each galaxy is a black hole, within each galaxy is many solar systems, and at the heart of each system is that system's star, with its planets revolving around it and moons revolving around its planets. This tells us that at the heart of things is both darkness and light (duality) and that all of this complexity is reflected in us. To see this, picture the atoms of your body, each of which is made up of positive, negative and neutral energy. At each atom's core is an energy-made nucleus/centre (protons and neutrons) with other tiny particles of energy (electrons) revolving around it, just as the planets orbit their star and the moons orbit their planet. Just as the ancient hermetic philosophies teach us: "As above so below".

In black star sapphires, both their colour and their star/asterism is caused by the same mineral, Hematite. The source of their darkness and light is the same, again showing the duality of things. Then consider that every atom in your body was first forged in the heart of a star, that we and everything around us is essentially made of stardust, and that this is not simply an analogy but a scientific fact. Extending from this fact that when each of us passes on, our energy is not destroyed but instead is recycled and transformed into other things of beauty, your body will be taken up by the earth and transformed into that of flowers and gems and Mountain Ash trees and on and on ad infinitum. We are divine and part of what may well be an eternal system. The universe is surely unfolding as it should, so I say embrace it all without (or in spite of) fear and do your best to live your best life in love, happiness and acceptance.

As the late great comedian and philosopher Bill Hicks often said: "Don't worry, it's all just a ride". He taught that simple and beautiful philosophy while dying of terminal illness at a young age, and I hope that fact helps puts things in perspective for the hard of heart. Likewise if you are ever down I suggest you try this simple practice. Close your eyes and imagine how small you and your problems are when you consider the vastness of the universe and time. Think of the billions of years this universe has gone on for and will continue for and think of how many life

forms have struggled through the near-unfathomable time that has, is, and will continue to pass in this enormous ever expanding universe, which in turn may well be just one of many or even countless universes, and which may well continue eternally. Each of us is just one example of one life form on one planet existing in one fragment of time. We are but a single example of a single life form on a planet containing around 8 billion humans, 130 billion mammals, 428 billion birds, 3.5 trillion fish, 10 quintillion insects and countless other lifeforms such as fungi and bacteria. We all live on one planet among over 700 quintillion planets in our universe, a universe which has existed for over 13.7 billion years and has a radius of over 46 billion light years. When you think like this, suddenly the struggles you are facing don't seem so bad or important. It helps put things in perspective and can also be humbling.

Gratitude is another great practice for shifting your perspective. This can be as simple as thinking about the positives of your existence. Even if you have little more than clean air, food, water, shelter, clothing, warmth, health, and some time to be, you still have a lot to be thankful for as these are precious assets. When you give thanks for what you have, you are entering a positive state of thinking, and that positivity which can build with a snowball-like affect. We all have things to be thankful for, even just having some time to live. A wise friend of mine used to always say: "Your time is the most precious gift you can give someone."

And I believe she was very right in this, because in this life we have on this Earth every day, every night, and each and every moment is a gift. Whatever time we have here is limited. Once spent there's no getting it back, and with every moment comes the chance to do so many things. Often even wonderful things, and sometimes those wonderful things can be as simple as to help another, which may be as simple as to give them a little of your time. True charity is golden and reward of itself. The Buddha once said: "All the happiness in the world comes from seeking the happiness of others and all the suffering in the world comes from seeking ones own happiness."

I believe this may be true and possibly even a deep, profound and ultimate truth, and as such I suggest to give where you can and enjoy the happiness that comes with it. We all have within us the ability to create our own paradigm, we each create our own reality to a large extent through our thoughts and actions, so the moment you consciously shift towards such positivity you are taking control of your life and creating a better life for yourself and the world at large.

Before signing off I'd like to leave you with a final philosophical quote that I personally find one of the most insightful and beautiful: "Look at everything always as though you were seeing it either for the first or last time: Thus is your time on earth filled with glory" – Betty Smith.

I hope this article has helped shift a perspective or two towards a better mode of thinking, feeling and living.

Love Alex.

# TO BE FRANK: THE LIFE OF FRANK THE POET

BY MADISON KELLY, CRIMINOLOGY STUDENT

To be Frank is to be a poet, a shepherd, a gold miner and a voice for convicts. Frank the Poet was born Francis MacNamara in 1810. He was an Irish writer and a convict who was transported to the colony of New South Wales, Australia in 1832. Frank was convicted of larceny, after he smashed a shop window and stolen a piece of cloth. Throughout his time as a convict, he wrote poems, songs, epigrams, petitions and verses.

Frank the Poet struck gold in 1839 when he wrote what is recognised as his magnum opus, "A Convict's Tour to Hell", while working as a shepherd in Stroud. Frank the Poet displayed an extensive knowledge of classical literary allusions and he was thought to have had a good education in English literature. Without any means to print or mass distribute his work, Frank's poems were spread by convicts purely by word of mouth.

His poems and songs appealed to the convicts for the themes of opposition to the system, a rebellious attitude towards authorities, and because the poems were written in a way that expressed the convict's point of view. Wherever convicts gathered, Frank's poetry followed. Convicts would recite his poems and songs around campfires. His work was loved, memorised and orally circulated so well that 19th-century collectors were able to copy down the poems and piece them together.

During Frank's time as a convict, while he entertained other convicts with his poetry, at times he refused to work. He led a successful protest, and escaped while carrying weapons stolen from guards. For these infractions and others he received 650 lashings. Additionally, he spent time in solitary confinement, was put in an ironed gang and sent to the "Treadmill", a horizontal cylinder with steps protruding from it. Prisoners were made to walk up the endless stairway as the drum revolved under their feet, operating a corn-mill fixed at one end.

Despite these acts of rebellion, Frank received a ticket of leave in January 1847, a conditional pardon later that same year, and in July 1849, he received a full pardon. He moved to Melbourne and almost vanished from records. He reappeared on records in 1861 when he made a genealogy report for an innkeeper.

Frank died at age 51 in August 1861. As his work was not recorded during his lifetime, his true identity as Francis MacNamara was only confirmed by researchers in 1979. The ballad "Moreton Bay", otherwise known as "A Convict's Lament" is still sung at some primary schools across Australia and is credited to Frank the Poet.



# A TOUR TO HELL.

(By "FRANK THE POET.")

You prisoners of New South Wales,  
Who frequent watchhouses and gaols  
A story to you I will tell  
'Tis of a convict's tour to hell.

Whose valour had for years been tried  
On the highway before he died  
At length he fell to death a prey  
To him it proved a happy day  
Downwards he bent his course I'm told  
Like one destined for Satan's fold  
And no refreshment would he take  
'Till he approached the Stygian lake  
A tent he then began to fix  
Continuous to the River Styx  
Thinking that no one could molest him  
He leaped when Charon thus addressed him,  
Stranger I say from whence art thou,  
And my own name, pray tell me now,  
Kind sir I come from Sydney gaol  
My name I don't mean to conceal  
And since you seem anxious to know it  
On earth I was called Frank the Poet.  
Are you that person? Charon cried,  
I'll carry you to the other side.  
Five or sixpence I mostly charge  
For the like passage in my barge  
So stranger do not troubled be  
For you shall have a passage free  
Frank seeing no other succour nigh  
With the invitation did comply  
And having a fair wind and tide  
They soon arrived at the other side  
And leaving Charon at the ferry  
Frank went in haste to Purgatory  
And rapping loudly at the gate  
Of Limbo, or the Middle State  
Pope Pius the 7th soon appeared  
With gown, beads, crucifix and beard  
And gazing at the Poet the while  
Accosts him in the following style  
Stranger art thou a friend or foe  
Your business here I fain would know  
Quoth the Poet for Heaven I'm not fitted  
And here I hope to be admitted  
Pius rejoined, vain are your hopes  
This place was made for Priests and Popes  
'Tis a world of our own invention  
But friend I've not the least intention  
To admit such a foolish elf

Who scarce knows how to bless himself  
Quoth Frank were you mad or insane  
When first you made this world of pain?  
For I can see nought but fire  
A share of which I can't desire  
Here I see weeping wailing gnashing  
And torments of the newest fashion  
Therefore I call you silly elf  
Who made a rod to whip yourself  
And may you like all honest neighbours  
Enjoy the fruit of all your labours  
Frank then bid the Pope farewell  
And hurried to that place called Hell  
And having found the gloomy gate  
Frank rapped aloud to know his fate  
He louder knocked and louder still  
When the Devil came, pray what's your will?  
Alas cried the Poet I've come to dwell  
With you and share your fate in Hell  
Says Satan that can't be, I'm sure  
For I detest and hate the poor  
And none shall in my kingdom stand  
Except the grandees of the land.  
But Frank I think you are going astray  
For convicts never come this way  
But soar to Heaven in droves and legions  
A place so called in the upper regions  
So Frank I think with an empty purse  
You shall go further and fare worse  
Well cried the Poet since 'tis so  
One thing of you I'd like to know  
As I'm at present in no hurry  
Have you one here called Captain Murray?  
Yes Murray is within this place  
Would you said Satan see his face?  
May God forbid that I should view him  
For on board the Phoenix Hulk I knew him  
Who is that Sir in yonder blaze  
Who on fire and brimstone seems to graze?  
'Tis Captain Logan of Moreton Bay  
And Williams who was killed the other day  
He was overseer at Grosse Farm  
And done poor convicts no little harm  
Cook who discovered New South Wales  
And he that first invented gaols  
Are both tied to a fiery stake  
Which stands in yonder boiling lake  
Hark do you hear this dreadful yelling  
It issues from Doctor Wardell's dwelling  
And all those fiery seats and chairs  
Are fitted up for Dukes and Mayors  
And nobles of Judicial orders  
Barristers, Lawyers and Recorders  
Here I beheld legions of traitors  
Hangmen gaolers and flagellators  
Commandants, Constables and Spies  
Informers and Overseers likewise  
In flames of brimstone they were toiling  
And lakes of sulphur round them boiling

Hell did resound with their fierce yelling  
 Alas how dismal was their dwelling  
 Then Major Morriset I espied  
 And Captain Cluney by his side  
 With a fiery belt they were lashed together  
 As tight as soles to upper leather  
 Their situation was most horrid  
 For they were tyrants down at the Norrid  
 Prostrate I beheld a petitioner  
 It was the Company's Commissioner  
 Satan said he my days are ended  
 For many years I've superintended  
 The An. Company's affairs  
 And I punctually paid all arrears  
 Sir should you doubt the hopping Colonel  
 At Carrington you'll find my journal  
 Legibly penned in black and white  
 To prove that my accounts were right  
 And since I've done your will on earth  
 I hope you'll put me in a berth  
 Then I saw old Sergeant Flood  
 In Vulcan's hottest forge he stood  
 He gazed at me his eyes with ire  
 Appeared like burning coals of fire  
 In fiery garments he was arrayed  
 And like an Arabian horse he brayed  
 He on a bloody cutlass leaned  
 And to a lamp-post he was chained  
 He loudly called out for assistance  
 Or begged me to end his existence  
 Cheer up said I be not afraid  
 Remember No. Three Stockade  
 In the course of time you may do well  
 If you behave yourself in Hell  
 Your heart on earth was fraught with malice  
 Which oft drove convicts to the gallows  
 But you'll now atone for all the blood  
 Of prisoners shed by Sergeant Flood.  
 Then I beheld that well known Trapman  
 The Police Runner called Izzy Chapman  
 Here he was standing on his head  
 In a river of melted boiling lead.  
 Alas he cried behold me stranger  
 I've captured many a bold bushranger  
 And for the same I'm suffering here  
 But lo, now yonder snakes draw near  
 On turning round I saw slow worms  
 And snakes of various kinds and forms  
 All entering at his mouth and nose  
 To devour his entrails as I suppose  
 Then turning round to go away  
 Bold Lucifer bade me to stay  
 Saying Frank by no means go man  
 Till you see your old friend Dr Bowman  
 'Yonder he tumbles groans and gnashes  
 He gave you many a thousand lashes  
 And for the same he does bewail  
 For Osker with an iron flail  
 Thrashes him well you may depend  
 And will till the world comes to an end

Just as I spoke a coach and four  
 Came in full post haste to the door  
 And about six feet of mortal sin  
 Without leave or licence trudged in  
 At his arrival three cheers were given  
 Which rend I'm sure the highest Heaven  
 And all the inhabitants of Hell  
 With one consent rang the great bell  
 Which never was heard to sound or ring  
 Since Judas sold our Heavenly King  
 Drums were beating flags were hoisting  
 There never before was such rejoicing  
 Dancing singing joy or mirth  
 In Heaven above or on the earth  
 Straightway to Lucifer I went  
 To know what these rejoicings meant  
 Of sense cried Lucifer I'm deprived  
 Since Governor Darling has arrived  
 With fire and brimstone I've ordained him  
 And Vulcan has already chained him  
 And I'm going to fix an abode  
 For Captain Rossi, he's on the road  
 Frank don't go 'till you see the novice  
 The magistrate from the Police Office  
 Oh said the Poet I'm satisfied  
 To hear that he is to be tied  
 And burned in this world of fire  
 I think 'tis high time to retire  
 And having travelled many days  
 O'er fiery hills and boiling seas  
 At length I found that happy place  
 Where all the woes of mortals cease  
 And rapping loudly at the wicket  
 Cried Peter, where's your certificate  
 Or if you have not one to show  
 Pray who in Heaven do you know?  
 Well I know Brave Donohue  
 Young Troy and Jenkins too  
 And many others whom floggers mangled  
 And lastly were by Jack Ketch strangled  
 Peter, says Jesus, let Frank in  
 For he is thoroughly purged from sin  
 And although in convict's habit dressed  
 Here he shall be a welcome guest  
 Isaiah go with him to Job  
 And put on him a scarlet robe  
 St Paul go to the flock straightway  
 And kill the fatted calf today  
 And go tell Abraham and Abel  
 In Haste now to prepare the table  
 For we shall have a grand repast  
 Since Frank the Poet has come at last  
 Then came Moses and Elias  
 John the Baptist and Mathias  
 With many saints from foreign lands  
 And with the Poet they all join hands  
 Thro' Heaven's Concave their rejoicings range  
 And hymns of praise to God they sang  
 And as they praised his glorious name  
 I woke and found 'twas but a dream.



# SHOULD WE BE EDUCATING OR PUNISHING PRISONERS?

BY LUCAS THOMPSON

*In this essay, Lucas Thompson, an academic at the University of Sydney and the copyeditor of Paper Chained, considers what it means to educate prisoners as an alternative to punishment. This essay is a revised version of an argument that he first published on the ABC's Religion & Ethics website in May 2023.*

There are many good reasons to educate prisoners. We now have ample evidence that education increases the likelihood of future employment, improves mental and physical well-being, reduces rates of substance abuse, and gives prisoners greater autonomy. It also dramatically lowers the likelihood of reoffending, helps to break generational cycles of poverty and incarceration, strengthen communities, and allow for stronger family relationships. Clearly, these benefits are profound, and any one of them should be more than enough in and of itself to justify more educational programs. Such practical—even utilitarian—arguments are often put to policymakers and politicians who have the power to act on them. As they should be. There is a time and a place for these kinds of arguments to be made.

But I want to put forward a slightly different account of why educating prisoners matters. Here's the short version. When we put someone behind bars, we are effectively saying that they are beyond the reach of education. No longer able to be changed and improved through learning, we reach for an extreme solution that we believe will change and improve them by other means. That solution is punishment, which is required only when we deem that the standard tools of education have not worked. This is the underlying logic of incarceration: all other members of society are capable of being educated; prisoners are not. Which means that even small-scale prison education programs challenge a fundamental assumption of our culture. The very idea that civilians of various kinds—university lecturers, volunteers, creative writers, and so on—would give their time and energy to teach prisoners calls this very logic into question. It is a radical way of asserting to prisoners that they are still capable of being educated—it insists that they remain worthy recipients of its benefits. And it asserts these same beliefs to a broader culture that has become habituated and desensitized to the cruel logic behind incarceration. Prison education is thus immensely powerful, not just practically, but symbolically too.

To flesh this idea out a little, it's worth thinking through what we as a culture are signaling by imprisoning those who violate our laws. Consider first how much our culture reveres education. At a historical moment in which belief in all kinds of institutions and traditions is crumbling, we still treat education as a fundamental right for all citizens. We decree that every member of the culture, without exception, must attend school from the age of 5 through to 16, at a bare minimum. We invest enormous amounts of time and money into educating citizens. As well as conferring status and prestige on those who have been highly educated, we offer diverse educational opportunities for citizens of all ages, subsidized by government funds. Clearly, education is one of the things our culture values most highly, as an obvious common good. In theory, at least, the benefits of education are open to all citizens at every stage of life, regardless of age, ability, social status, and so on. Any denial of education, or any suggestion that certain members are no longer susceptible to its transformative potential, would thus be extremely serious.

Yet this is precisely what is being signaled by our current model of incarceration. When we imprison someone for the wrongs they have done, we are effectively throwing up our hands in despair. We are placing our usual assumptions about the power of education—to instruct, to enlarge, to instill virtue—to one side, and saying that here, in this particular case, we have no faith that education would have any impact whatsoever. It is powerless to change or reform—let alone redeem—the wrongdoer. Instead, we must instead reach for a more extreme solution.

In so doing, we give up on the idea that wrongdoers could be educated in a way that would allow them both to comprehend the seriousness of their crime and to make amends for their actions. Or that they could come to see more clearly the forces that led them to commit a particular crime, and how to address those underlying causes. We reject the idea that they could learn to live a different kind of life. The message we send is that we simply do not have the time or the resources to educate wrongdoers, and are not even sure that the most lengthy, costly education would achieve anything worthwhile. At times, we imply that wrongdoers are not worthy of being educated, but in all cases education is being pointedly withheld. Though it is in fact far more expensive to imprison someone than to educate them, our hands are tied. We have no choice but to reach for drastic solutions. Certain crimes, we assume, put those who commit them beyond the reach

of learning. And this is the fundamental reason why they must be sentenced to prison: they are there to suffer, and in suffering to understand what they could not understand in any other way. We will make them learn what they could not absorb by other means.

It's a cruel irony that we often invoke the language of education in our justifications of punishment. She's behind bars to learn a lesson, we say, or He's there to learn that crime doesn't pay. Revealingly, we are often vague about the lessons that are supposedly being learned: He's in prison to learn that actions have consequences; or Locking her up will mean that she learns her lesson; or That'll teach him!

But what lessons, exactly, are being taught? Since most prisoners already acknowledge that they have acted wrongly, what further knowledge will punishment convey? The punishment model of learning is always ambiguous, yet we instinctively draw on educational language, insisting that some crucial form of instruction is taking place. If traditional forms of education are built on the belief that knowledge can be acquired in ways that are relatively easy and painless (even enjoyable!), incarceration suggests that certain things can only be learned the hard way. Our assumption seems to be that for certain people, there are forms of knowledge that can only be acquired through pain and suffering.

Perhaps punishment really does teach certain lessons. We seem to have encoded this intuition in many common expressions: I'll teach him a lesson he won't forget, for instance, and I'll show you what happens when you mess with me. (Are there more menacing, more threatening phrases in the English language?) Punishment often justifies itself by aping the language of education, in ways that are blatantly self-serving, a smokescreen for practices that have nothing to do with true learning. Invoking educational language to justify punishment is a familiar strategy that is nonetheless misleading and disingenuous. The proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing comes to mind.

Because what are the lessons that the prisoner is forced to "learn" over and over again? Shame, for one thing. That they are an object of social contempt, for another. That they are beyond the reach of the standard forms of education, and that they deserve to be humiliated, disgraced, and degraded. Do we as a culture really want to be "teaching" prisoners such lessons? Are there really no other alternative forms of knowledge we could teach instead?

It is telling, too, that certain accounts of parenting operate on the same logic. It's fine to reason with a child and to treat them—up to a point—with respect and equality, but some lessons can only be learned through corporal punishment. If you really want to teach them a lesson they won't forget or show what happens when they misbehave or let them really learn about consequences, you will have to hit them. Or so the theory holds. The standard means of education are, apparently, fine up to a certain point, but when we no

longer have reason to believe that they will be effective, it becomes necessary to "teach" through punishment. The scare quotes here are doubly apt—children, in this model of parenting, are being scared into submission. They are "learning" via punishment. Yet even granting the very dubious premise that certain lessons can be conveyed through corporal punishment, such methods also surely entail unthinkably high costs. The assumption is that while the well-behaved child or the law-abiding citizen can always be educated, and remain capable of learning new thoughts and behaviors, such possibilities are no longer available to the wrongdoer. A stick is needed.

And so we deny education to prisoners and expect them to change solely via punishment. Suffering, deprivation, humiliation, indignity, and exclusion will bring about the desired changes. We seem to believe that these conditions are somehow inherently educational, albeit constituting an extreme form of education. The old logic of the Penitentiary resurfaces here: prisoners are forced into repentance, taught to be penitent, made to be contrite through suffering. It is too late, apparently, for them to be taught in any other way. Part of the pain of incarceration may well be the indignity of being perceived by the legal system, and by extension the rest of the culture, as being no longer amenable to education. How humiliating must it be to be told that one is no longer worthy of education? That one would not—could not—benefit from it? The word *Guilty*, writes the American novelist and essayist Marilynne Robinson, is one that we hear with our whole body. *Ineducable*, though never voiced, may well have similar heft.

But being deemed *ineducable* is not only what lands prisoners behind bars: a lack of education is also part of the punishment itself. Prisoners in Australia cannot pursue online degrees, and have no access to the technologies (tablets, laptops, internet connections) that could easily facilitate learning behind bars. (Some NSW prisoners now have access to tablets that include a built-in "Learning Platform," though it is not clear what educational opportunities are offered.) To make matters worse, even self-guided learning is made difficult. Prison libraries are often poorly stocked, with profoundly limited options, and there are various obstacles to obtaining books from the outside. Moreover, the very fact of incarceration means being deprived of virtually all the experiences and encounters that allow for learning in the real world. There are virtually no spontaneous, unpredictable experiences to prompt reflection and self-knowledge, and very few chances for unexpected encounters with others from different walks of life. The lack of such everyday opportunities for learning and reflection, taken for granted by those of us on the outside, means that prisoners are often trapped within a limited version of themselves. Denied the experiences and interactions that allow humans to grow, they become static and stunted. Seemingly, this is all done by design: the denial of education is total, and takes place on multiple levels.



In *Democratic Vistas*, Walt Whitman warned that separating certain groups of citizens into inferior categories—and ineducable would surely be among them—undermines the democratic project. “Of all dangers to a nation,” he wrote, “there can be no greater one than having certain portions of the people set off from the rest by a line drawn—they not privileged as others, but degraded, humiliated, made of no account.” Thinking along similar lines, the philosopher Stanley Cavell points out that the very existence of prisons is both “a mark of social failure” and “an indictment of society.” If he and Whitman are right, then we need to think seriously about the many dimensions of this failure. Reframing incarceration around the denial of education is one way of beginning this reckoning. Viewing punishment in this way reveals the assumptions that we as a culture are making about wrongdoers, and shows one important—though often overlooked—dimension of imprisonment. It also highlights the power and possibilities of education for those on the inside.

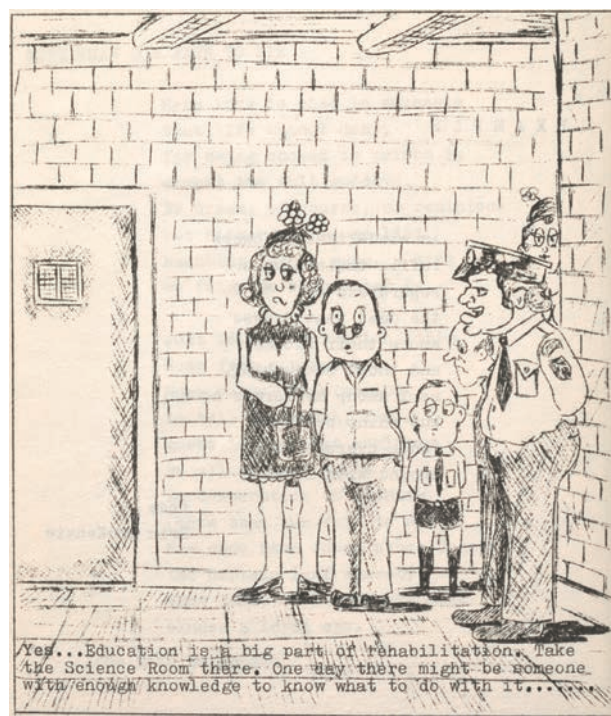
As I see it, is in many cases a meaningful alternative to punishment. The American historian Elizabeth Hinton has called for prisons to look far more like universities, wondering why the state doesn’t reallocate spending in the service of education rather than mere punishment. (One study by the RAND corporation suggests that for every dollar spent on education, the US government saves five dollars on the costs associated with recidivism). We already have some real-world examples of what such a transformation would look like. The Ford Foundation reports that the Bard Prison Initiative—in which prisoners study for a Bard College degree while incarcerated—results in just 2 percent of graduates returning to prison, while 75 percent find employment in their first month after release. These astonishing results affirm the ways in which education can empower prisoners and restore dignity. There is no reason why these successes could not be replicated elsewhere.

Such an alternative entails a very different picture of what motivates change. Given the well-documented problems associated with incarceration, we clearly need creative alternatives, and new ways of thinking about how to reform and rehabilitate those who commit crimes. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, Socrates famously claims that the worst thing that can happen to a human soul is to commit a wrong that goes unpunished, a view that stems from his conviction that it is better to suffer than to perpetrate injustice. He is right on both counts, I think, but his account of proper punishment as a “deliverance from injustice” is a long way from our culture’s understanding. (And of course, many if not all of those on the inside are themselves both victims and perpetrators of different kinds of injustice.) Socrates’ view leaves room for thinking of education as a means by which transformation, redemption, and “deliverance” can be achieved. This is because another of his fundamental convictions is that the root cause of wrongdoing, injustice, and crime is always ignorance—a failure of knowledge, not of insufficient will or a hopelessly flawed character.

Outside of this alternative to the prison system itself, it is also crucial to expand education options for those who are already incarcerated. Education is crucial for prisoners themselves because it affirms an inherent dignity that has not been erased by whatever choices and circumstances that have caused them to run afoul of the law. And prison education is crucial to the wider culture for the powerful claim it implicitly makes: prisoners are not beyond the reach of education, and are by no means impervious to the moral, civic, and humanist force of learning. They too are capable of changing and being elevated through ideas, knowledge, wisdom.

Political and moral philosophers have pointed out that the entire democratic enterprise is based on a commitment to debate, reason, ethical persuasion—in short, to talking with others, and going to great lengths to maintain lines of communication. In a democracy, one can never say to another citizen, “I have nothing more to say to you.” Democracy demands an ongoing conversation between members of a political community, and can be silenced only in the most extreme circumstances.

As I see it, we can also never say that we have nothing more to teach one another, or to learn from one another. The promise and hope and transformative power of education must always be extended.



*'Yes ... Education is a big part of rehabilitation. Take the Science Room there. One day there might be someone with enough knowledge to know what to do with it .....*

*Comic originally published in Freeway, the magazine of Cessnock Correctional Centre, NSW. Issue 9, 1975.*

# BANK ROBBERY FOR BEGINNERS

In 2005, Australian 19-year-olds Anthony Prince and Luke Carroll stole US \$132,000 (AUD \$202,000) from a bank in Colorado. They were labelled “Dumb and Dumber” by the US media, as their plan was so incompetent they were identified within minutes. Among other painful mistakes, they robbed a bank where they were regular customers and while they did conceal their faces, their Australian accents were instantly recognised. They also left their name tags on from the local sporting store where they both were employed on a working holiday. After going on a brief spending spree, they then attempted to buy one-way plane tickets to Mexico in cash, but not before tipping their taxi driver \$20,000. Prince was sentenced to four and a half years, while Carroll, who also assaulted a teller, received five years. Both were deported back to Australia at the end of their sentences.

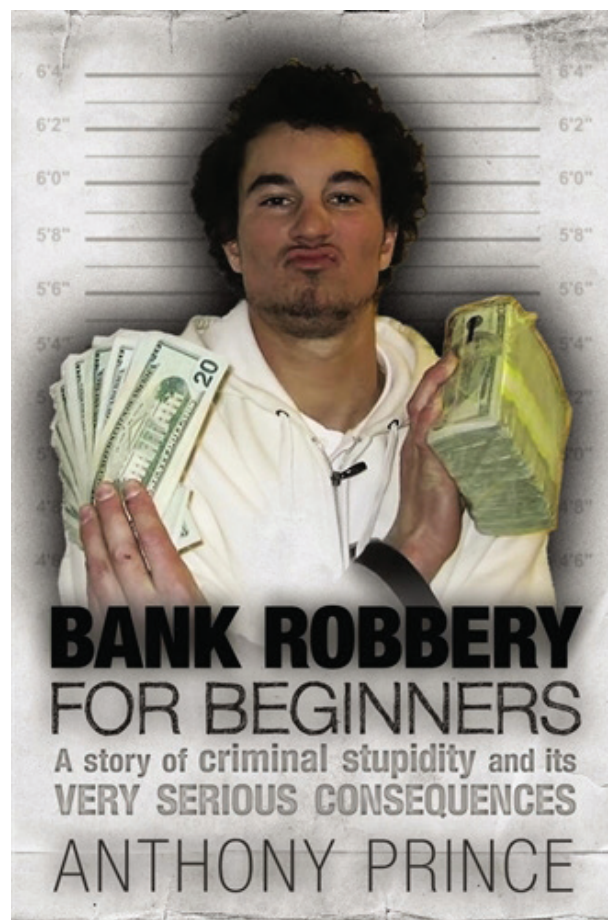
Criminology student Giselle Coates interviews Anthony Prince for this issue of *Paper Chained*, about prison and his book, *Bank Robbery for Beginners*.

***Was there anything similar to Paper Chained while you were incarcerated in Colorado?***

I don't recall anything like that in the prisons I was in. There was just the basic library that you could go to if you wanted to access any of the law or legal volumes, encyclopedias and all that basic stuff. You could definitely get magazines or subscriptions to magazines sent to you, but there's nothing I can recall in terms of anything similar to *Paper Chained* that was dedicated to inmates. But if something similar were to have come my way, I definitely would have utilised it. It seems like a really good initiative for inmates and I can definitely see it being beneficial. Especially because inmates are always looking for something to do and engage in, and looking for other stories to help get perspective on their situation and also just feel less alone in their whole experience. It seems like a great resource, and I would have felt privileged if I were able to access it while incarcerated.

***Did you participate in any education in prison? What was available to you in there?***

I wrote a diary for myself, starting from very early on through my whole time in prison. That was what I chose to do with my time and it basically became my book, it gave me the content I needed to write about to share my experience, alongside a short-story writing course that helped develop my writing skills. I did my Bachelor of Business in prison via correspondence, so that took up the majority of my time. There were some courses offered within the prison, but I wasn't too interested in them anyways. Basic education,



catching you up to a Year 9 level. If you really wanted to educate yourself, you could, but you really had to push hard to get that opportunity, and you had to have support from the outside, like having your family sending you your textbooks or paying for your course registration.

***Australia has so-called “profiting from crime” laws. Did you come across any issues with your book?***

That was something I was aware of, and since the book was non-fiction, we knew that could cost me something, and put me in the cross-hairs with the Department in charge of monitoring that. But no one actually chased me up about it. Even the publisher, Macmillan, didn't bring it forward as an issue. We had discussions about it, and we set up a “trust fund” to put the profits into just in case they came after us, like there were layers of protection. But I had no troubles with it, not from the government or any corporations. Maybe on Facebook, a few people may have said some things like “Oh that's proceeds from crime”, and stuff like that but no governing body chased me for it.



Maybe because I came on TV and was remorseful, I never really talked it up or had bravado or boasted about it, and was more shameful and embarrassed about everything. I think that may have worked in my favour.

***Did you find any programs in prison particularly helpful? What do you think would have been the most beneficial programs that prisons could offer?***

You know, they just have like basic information in the library and the people who worked there weren't teachers and they weren't that knowledgeable. They were kind of just there doing their job. If there was an actual sort of department within the jail that was dedicated to education, rehabilitation, and then offering, giving the inmates easier access to get into degrees and to study courses that would actually give them solid benefits when they got out, that would be a huge help. They should actually have a small school or TAFE in every jail.

Most people go in there and they just come straight out and do the same thing. That makes you pretty resentful of the whole system, if you're just in there and you're not getting the opportunity to make yourself better. How is it actually helping people by just locking them all up? It's just taking years off people's lives, wasting time, then they just get into gang activity and they fucking end up back in with whatever they do. You really gotta push hard and have some support from the outside world if you really want to make something of that time. I was pretty grateful to have my family that was funding me with money. They'd send me textbooks from Australia so the postage would be fucking crazy, but if they were to tailor more jails and more of those rehabilitation avenues, I think it'd be awesome. I think you'd have less people going back into the system, and have a way higher success rate of people leaving and staying out. It's just a cycle. It doesn't really change.

It can be really bad in there. I've got a mate in an Australian jail in NSW, and he's a little bit bipolar and he really should be in like a mental ward but he's been in the general population and he's having like four fights a day with all these eyes on him just because he can't read the room properly. So, he'll just start doing some weird stuff in the line up to the food hall and then next thing he's just like punching on with someone. It's just like a brutal zone. It can be really gnarly in there but if you kind of can read the room and you just keep your head down, you can get through there pretty well.

In hindsight, it was pretty brutal every day just not being able to be with your family. But I found that there was a whole world in there. There was an economy there, lots of interesting people you could learn from. Lots of free time to train and read stuff and learn. It was bad but you make the most of a shitty situation. Also as an Aussie I was a bit of a novelty over there.

***What challenges did you face transitioning back into society?***

There were challenges for sure. I had to really try and adapt back in and change my lingo, change my dress code and stuff. I think I've had like a wild ride since I've been out. I had a raging drug addiction five years ago. I think there was a lot there to unpack and I probably should have maybe seen someone to speak to them about it, but I tried to just kind of decompress everything. I just dealt with it my own way. I'm feeling a lot more stable now, I only did four years so I think like for the people that do five to ten years and stuff, they've got a huge amount of decompressing to do. But it feels like it just all went so fast and it continues to just go so fast. It seems so long ago but when I do stop and really think about what it was like just each day, the grind, waking up with doors slamming and keys jangling, you can never be at ease with no peace. It's obviously not a nice place but then also there is a lot of good stuff that's in there too, so many interesting people, so many smart people, and a lot of good time to self-reflect. You know, I think that these days with phones and all the technology, just everything that we have, no one sits down and self-reflects and just meditates. There's plenty of free time for that in there.

***What advice would you give to someone in prison?***

I think just learn to read the room. You don't have to go in there and be a macho person because you might end up getting yourself hurt. Everyone else in there has gone through the same tough time that you're going through. No one wants to be in there, so just keep your head down, but obviously you've also got to respect yourself. If someone's trying to pick on you or bully you, you've got to stand your ground whether verbally or physically. Just try to use the time to better yourself, so many people just dwell on the fact that they're in there and they just can't really see the positives in it. Just find the positives in any situation and just use them to your advantage and train, educate, and learn from other people.

***What part of your time in prison do you think aided in your rehabilitation?***

The shock of being caught and being arrested and going through that whole hectic process of court and sentencing and then going into the jail was definitely a massive wake-up call. I was definitely remorseful from the moment that I did it. I knew it was wrong, but I was just sort of caught up in this fucking habit of really not listening to what I knew was right. I think that going to jail can definitely help to rehabilitate you because it can scare the shit out of you, and I definitely thought it was necessary for me, given the scale of what I did. If they just let me go with a slap on my wrist, I don't know if I would have felt the full impact of it all. It's kind of necessary in a way to lock people up, but they really need to provide as many tools as possible for prisoners to educate themselves, so that they come out better people. Rather than just throw them all in a fucking concrete box and just hoping they come out the other side better.

# MARE'S TAIL

BY KYLE ZAMMIT

The sky. The greatest canvas. And every day, and every hour, in every moment, it's painted anew.

Blue. A blue backdrop, and God was blotching it with cotton balls, the daubings of a sponge that he was blending with his thumbs. These clouds, these fluffs, he puffs and they swirled in a rush, and God with his brush shredded some into strands, into the wavy hair of a mare and mare's tail. And the mare, the horse, she opened her eyes, and with her first breath she cried, "Hello world!"

And the world was a cool wind on which she sailed far, far above the land, and the mare saw that it was good. She smiled and said, "What a wonderful world!"

"Hey, old cunt." The old man looked down from the sky. "You awake?" The youth was smirking at him, tap, tap, tapping away at a fan of cards on the steel table.

"He's back", exclaimed the guy to the left. "Fucking thought he was dead!" yelled the man to the right. At that, the youth mimed a heart attack and the man was laughing even as the guy muttered, "Goin' back to hospital".

"Goin' back to hospital!" The man echoed with a roar, and the three of them were guffawing, slapping the metal tabletop with hollow *Bong! Bong! Bongs!*

The old man grumbled.

The youth cleared his throat, "Nah, but actually are we doin' the magic trick or what?" As the hysterics died down he asked the old man, "What card did you pick?" The youth smirked. "Do you remember? Were you payin' attention?" To the left, there was a whisper of "Alzheimer's", and the man snorted.

The youth tutted and said with sudden pity, "Nah but actually he shouldn't even be in jail, he's too old."

"Should be in the Kevin Waller unit," the man said.

"Kevin Waller's full."

"Kevin Waller's always full."

*Ding Ding Ding Ding!* "Unit two. Greenlane. Two, two, zero, nine, eight, five. Greenlane, to the front gate". *Ding!*

"That's you old mate," the guy said, and Mister Greenlane nodded as he gritted his teeth and pushed his arthritic hands against the table, his arms quaking, his knees creaking as the old man stood to a stoop with a gasp.

Mr. Greenlane's ears were ringing and his lungs were burning as he shimmy-shuffled off towards the officer, keyring in hand, waiting beyond the front gate. It was a cage of bolt and padlock festooned with razor wire, crowned with bars to bar the heavens, the mouth, the anus of the yard.

The old man slowly tottered by bench after bench of people, sullen, sedentary, as if they were waiting for the bus, they were waiting to die. Above each of them there was a pigeon roosting on the eaves, and as Greenlane eyed them, he grew lightheaded, he was breathing through a straw, the birds were an oil painting in the rain, all brick and feathers blurring, everything spinning, running, stretching, he was retching, his chest, his chest, falling, fading off to –

Silence. The sound of his own breathing. Even. Steady. The old man opened his eyes. The officer was gone.

Greenlane turned around. The steel table was deserted. The benches were vacant. The yard was empty except for the pigeons up on the eaves. They were all cocking their heads at him. Left eye, right eye, left eye, right eye.

The world was engulfed by a red shadow. *COOoou! HOOoou!* chirruped the pigeons, their wings all aflutter.

The old man looked to the morning sun to see it had become a crimson lamp. *OOOoou!* and the birds were all in flight, flap clap, flap clap against the red day, turning to orange night.

Greenlane was transfixed. The lamp of the sky beckoned. Its brilliance, it was brilliance. It was rotating. Orange shifted to yellow, glinting off the razor wire. Yellow melted to green, the concrete all now glowing. Green faded to blue, the lamp was eating up the sky. Blue gave way to purple, everything was purple, and the old man had to crane his neck to see, his mouth was agape to see a balloon. A great hot air balloon. The strip of purple turned aside and reality returned to red. At that, the craft sank silently, all the while projecting a wheel of rainbow upon the yard that collapsed inward to meet the balloon as it alighted.

Greenlane looked at it. He took it all in. The wicker basket with its bundles of weight bags tied to the sides. The oil burner with its glittering flame that sent all the colours dancing. The envelope, luminous and looming over him.

The old man took a deep breath and shuffled forward. First hobbling, then loping, then striding, jogging, running, he was sprinting as he vaulted into the cradle. He looked up to see a dangling rope, he pulled it and the burner burped with a flash of heat and a *FWOOSH* of hot air that roiled up into the balloon, beginning to lift it up, the wicker basket going *Eeek* and *Creak*.

Greenlane leaned over the side and pulled apart a knot. *Thud*, went a bag of sand against the concrete. *Thud, thud, thud, FWOOOOSH! eeeEEK!* and he lifted off, rising above the walls, clearing all the razor wire, he was looking down upon the prison, the purgatory, and it was so small now, just a jumble of grey in a sea of green and blue.



It was a bright new day, and all the young man's troubles were so far away. The wind tussled his hair, it fluttered his shirt, it pushed him on to new lands, to any place he wished. My God, he was free!

"YEEAAHHHH!" Greenlane shouted, "WOOOOHA HA HA!" he howled his soul into the air.

"Hahahaha! You're so loud little fly!" laughed a voice on the wind.

The young man's eyes went wide and he looked this way and that, utterly flummoxed, until he realised that the clouds were smiling at him. He blinked, and he blurted, "I'm not a fly, I'm a person."

"Little Fly! Ahahaha! Catch me if you can, little fly!" and the massive mare stretched out her legs, and they acted as sails. She steadily picked up speed, floating, flying on ahead, her cirrus hair streaming out behind her.

Greenlane watched her go. He rubbed his face. He shook his head. He stared out at the horizon, and then he stifled a laugh. He smiled. Something long forgotten swelled within him. It spread to every extremity. It filled him up until he was about to burst. He grabbed the edge of the wicker basket. He breathed in, leaned out and he cried, "Hello world, what a wonderful world!"

The young man pulled on the rope and the burner went *FWOOSH!*

And he chased the mare's tail.

# FINDING A HOME: VACRO

BY DWAYNE ANTOJADO

Home. We search for it, long for it, ache for the solace it promises. But home is not defined by walls, nor by the furniture we place within them. A chair, a bed, a table—these do not create the essence of a home. It is not just a roof shielding us from the weather, nor simply a space we claim as ours. Home is a feeling. It is safety, warmth, and belonging. It is where we are free to be ourselves, unguarded, empowered, and understood. For those of us who leave prison, the need for home extends far beyond the physical. We yearn for an affective space, an atmosphere where our existence matters, where we can nurture our potential, a place that welcomes us as though it was incomplete without us.

Yet when we return to the outside world, we are often met with cold indifference. Our professional 'homes' are seldom considered. We are expected to enter the labour market, to survive, to move on. But the shadow of criminalisation excludes us from meaningful opportunities. We work to make ends meet. Employment becomes a necessity, not a

calling. But now, with the rise of a vibrant lived-experience community, our voices are finally being heard. Our experiences, once silenced, are recognised as expertise.

Still, I have witnessed the painful commodification of this expertise. Organisations and institutions may claim to champion lived experience, but too often they exploit it, using it as a badge to stay relevant or to secure funding. It is a tool for promotion, a way to exploit the vulnerability of those who have lived through the system. Our voices are amplified, sure, but only when it serves their purposes.

I write this not out of obligation, but out of a deep recognition of how rare it is, for those of us who have been imprisoned, to find a place where we feel safe, respected, and truly cared for in the professional world. Vacro gave me that gift. It became my home. And for those of you leaving prison, hoping to join the lived experience community, finding such a home is crucial. It is essential to find a place where you can be your true self, where your story can be told, and where your expertise is valued—knowing that somewhere out there, someone is looking out for you and your best interests.

In a true professional home, your colleagues reach out, not to use you, but to check in, to ask how you're doing and to see how they can help. They support your dreams and aspirations, not for their gain, but because they care. This is vital, especially when many of us have never had the chance to be seen as equals in our professional lives. Prison strips away the last vestiges of confidence, reducing us to numbers, tasks to be managed, not because anyone wants to, but because we are just another box to tick.

If the criminal justice sector truly seeks answers from us, if they look to us to fill in the gaps, then we need that home. A place to return to when things go wrong, where failure does not mean shame but a learning curve. A place that offers mentorship, that teaches us the skills we may not find elsewhere. A place where, when we attend the next conference, we see our colleagues and know that we are exactly where we belong. We can hold our heads high, assured that when things don't go to plan, they will be there—not out of duty, but out of a desire to see us succeed. And when things go right, they'll be there too, to embrace us, to say, "You did it." Not because it's their job, but because it's their passion, reflected in their smiles, their applause a genuine symbol of pride in our achievement.

Lived-experience work is not easy. It wears on you. Reliving our pasts, especially those tied to prison, takes its toll. Our stories start to feel worn, and we are reminded, time and time again, of where we came from. That is why finding a home is all the more important. I am grateful for the home I've found, and I hope you find yours too. Thank you Vacro.

*Vacro is a not-for-profit organisation that supports Victorian adults involved in the criminal justice system and their families through a range of services and projects. Their programs are voluntary and are driven by an individual's own desire to change. Learn more at [www.vacro.org.au](http://www.vacro.org.au).*

# IN THE NEXT ISSUE

ISSUE 17 DUE FOR RELEASE IN MARCH 2025



## OLD ADELAIDE GAOL

We visit Old Adelaide Gaol, which closed in 1988 and now operates as a tourist attraction, and share some photos of the murals painted in cells.



## HENRY AKANO

Read about the art journey of Henry Akano, currently incarcerated in Victoria, who is also our cover artist for the next issue.



## INTERVIEW WITH HUGO GONZALES

We speak to Hugo, a former president of Success Stories, a program run by prisoners at California's CTF Prison.



More art by Mohanned Al Azzeh, made at Ofer prison.

## WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE NEXT ISSUE?

IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS ON WHAT  
YOU'D LIKE TO SEE IN PAPER CHAINED  
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