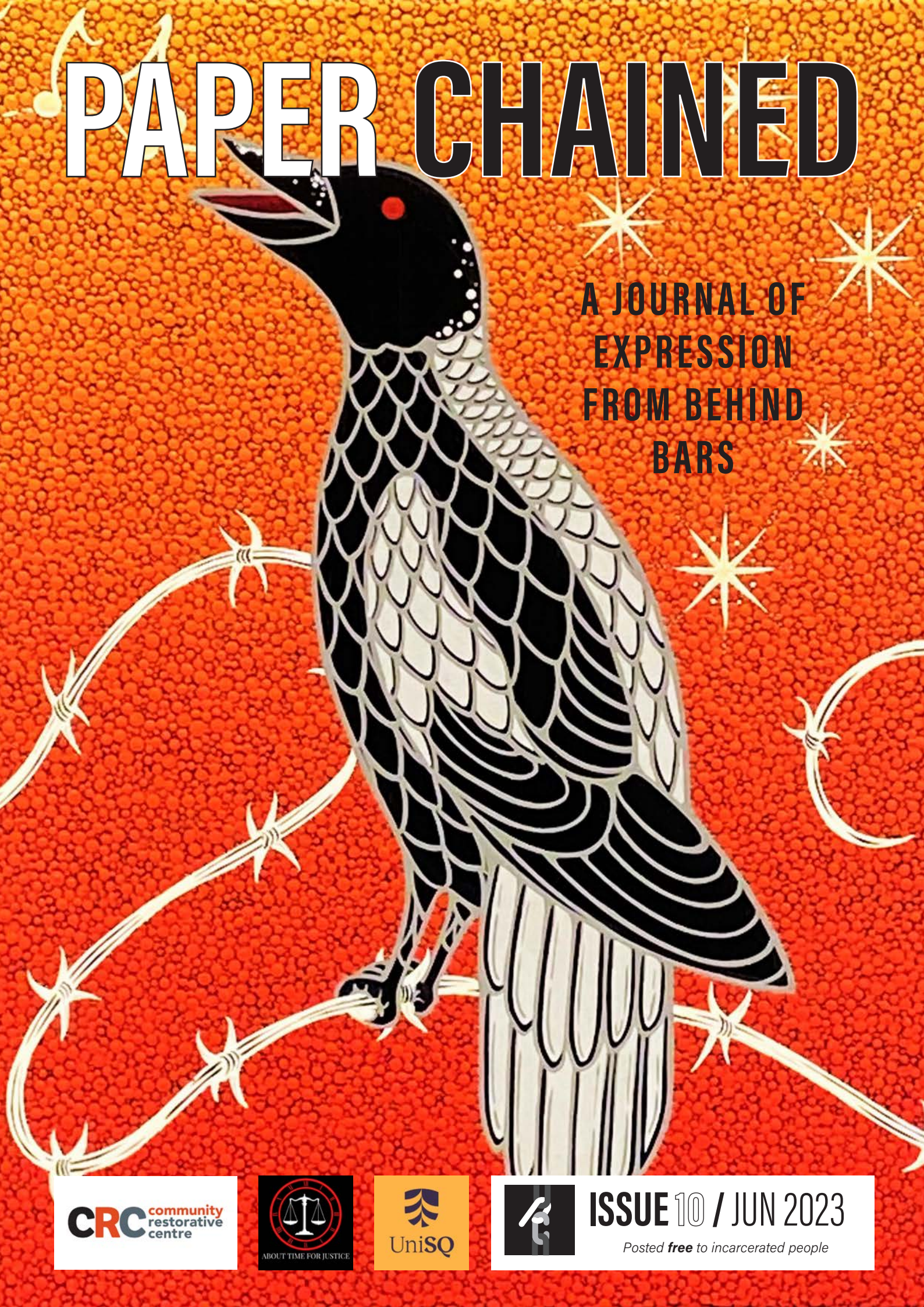


PAPER CHAINED

A JOURNAL OF
EXPRESSION
FROM BEHIND
BARS



CRC community
restorative
centre

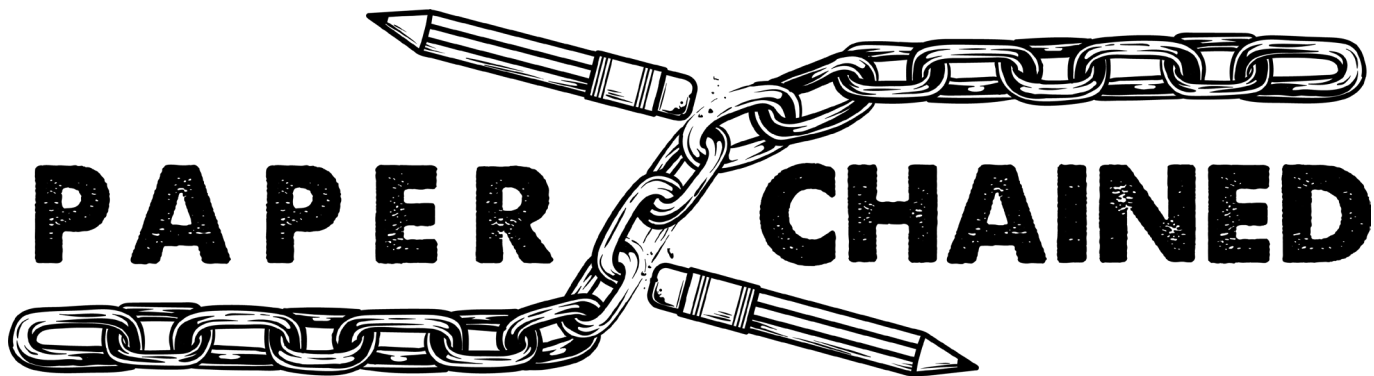



UniSQ



ISSUE 10 / JUN 2023

Posted **free** to incarcerated people



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.



WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE

Paper Chained is a not-for-profit journal posted free to incarcerated people, funded primarily by the Community Restorative Centre. This issue is also made possible through the generous sponsorship of 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 the next edition 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, MIN/ID number, and postal address. 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 presented 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

LETTER WRITING PROGRAM

LETTER WRITING TO PEOPLE IN PRISON

IRL Infoshop Letter Writing to People in Prison is a monthly social get-together, where we write to friends inside. If you would like to be written to by this group please send us a letter to

IRL Infoshop
PO BOX 549
Sunshine
VIC, 3020

with your name, ID number, prison address and a little bit about yourself. Please include interests and anything about you that would be useful for us to know (eg are you LGBTIQ+ and would like to write to someone who is LGBTIQ+).

We are interested in supporting people inside through writing, literature & art and hope to provide solidarity and connection.

On stolen lands of the Wurundjeri & Boon Wurrung Peoples of the Kulin Nation



University of
**Southern
Queensland**

Supporting Incarcerated Students

At UniSQ, we believe everyone should have the opportunity to access higher education. To support our incarcerated students, we've developed a selection of programs that can be studied whilst incarcerated.

We understand that as an incarcerated student your needs are unique and internet restrictions will impact how you are able to study. UniSQ has developed learning materials in an 'offline' format which is available in the Offline Enterprise Platform or the Offline Personal Device. This means you will be able to complete your program without the need for online resources or internet access.

During your studies, 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 if studying a university program is right for you? We've developed a series of workbooks called *Unlocking a Future Career*, which is designed to help you with the decision to study at university and provide support for students soon to be released from a correctional centre. If you would like a copy of these workbooks, please ask your Education Officer.

The programs you can choose from include:

- Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP)
- Associate Degree Business and Commerce
- Certificate of University Studies
- Diploma of University Studies
- Bachelor of General Studies (Management, Journalism and Social Sciences disciplines).

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.

For further information, and to talk about enrolling, please talk to your Education Officer.

ABOUT TIME FOR JUSTICE



Todd and Jacob Little. About Time For Justice founders, former prisoners and survivors of institutional abuse.

About Time For Justice is an Australian family-owned and operated organisation specialising in assisting survivors of historical institutional child abuse and stolen generation members in seeking justice, healing and possible compensation.

Our passion is helping survivors who have been affected by abuse within private and public institutions across Australia. The team from About Time for Justice understands that taking the first steps towards seeking justice can be intimidating, especially for those who have had issues with trusting people, systems or organisations they have been exposed to in the past. Our experienced team, many of who have shared their own story and experience in this area, are trained to eliminate stress and navigate the complex process of approaching and dealing with the most appropriate legal representatives. They are trauma-informed and culturally trained to deal with the most complex stories.

We provide full support to our clients so they know all the options available, taking away the anxiety of having to tell your story to many people and assisting in liaison with legal firms and lawyers to minimise fears of the processes involved in taking legal action. We partner with legal representatives from some of Australia's largest firms, as well as smaller specialised law firms that provide targeted legal advice based on client needs. Our team have the skills to explain what is happening with your matter in simple terms and is available to answer any questions and work flexibly with each survivor based on meeting the best outcome for their individual circumstances.

Call or write to us on the details provided for an obligation-free chat.

About Time For Justice want to pay their respects to the elders of First Nations people, past and present, wherever this magazine is read.



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JAILBREAK

RADIO



Jailbreak Radio airs every week around Australia. In this issue, we're featuring the transcript of the episode hosted by Paper Chained editor Damien Linnane, which aired in February 2022.

If I was to describe myself, I'd say that I'm 6 foot tall, have lots of tattoos, and a red Mohawk. People most often ask me if I'm Indigenous, but I get asked if I'm everything from Lebanese to Latino. My father was half-Maori, half-Chinese. I didn't really have any connection to either culture growing up. I asked him about Maori culture once as a child and he told me he moved to Australia to get away from it, and that was literally the only conversation we ever had about anything Maori.

I'm Damien Linnane, keeping you company wherever you are in the system and getting you through your time. This is Jailbreak, one of the great projects of Sydney's Community Restorative Centre, supporting people post-release in New South Wales, Australia. Koori Radio 93.7 Mondays at 10pm, here with you for the next hour. Some of the story coming up may cause distress and is unsuitable for young audiences. Call the prison's mental health line if something upsets you, or if you're on the outside, call Lifeline Australia: 11 13 14.

I served most of my time at Glen Innes, NSW, where unfortunately we couldn't tune into Jailbreak. It's a bit remote up there and there weren't many stations we could get. The crime I committed didn't go down the way I planned. My partner at the time told me that she had been sexually assaulted. I was incredibly angry. I was just blinded. I was staying up doing head miles. I couldn't think straight. I was ruminating over it all night. It reminded me of my own childhood and how I never got any justice for abuse that happened to me. She hadn't gotten any justice for what happened to her, and I felt this incredible sense that I needed to do something to make it right. I thought that I wouldn't be able to live with the fact that I hadn't done anything about it. Short story is: I went to the home of the man who abused her to assault him, but he wasn't home, so I set fire to his house and it burnt down.

I was 28 when I committed that offence, something that the magistrate described as an act of vigilantism. That was my first conviction. I'd never been in any serious trouble before. I hadn't really had a history of violence, but I'd had a history of violent thoughts. And to be honest, I'm kinda surprised nothing violent had happened before that point. You know, what happened was a long time coming. If it hadn't been him, it would have been someone else a couple of years later, because that's where my mind was at the time. At the time, I realised that I was trying to get revenge via a proxy. I had a lot of anger.



I've always been quiet and a little bit shy, but that's just me, I guess. I tended to keep to myself a lot in prison. I read a lot of books. One of the most motivational and inspiring books I read in prison was *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, the story of someone else who had been in prison and had made the most of their time in there and then had accomplished things after they got out. The reason I'm telling my story today is that I think it's really important to share stories so that we can all learn from each other's experiences and learn that other people may have been through things similar or different, and hear how they got through it. Because you can turn your life around, you can make something of yourself.

As I mentioned, I'm mixed race. I'm actually of Chinese, Maori, and European descent. I definitely missed out on those cultural connections as a child, and it's only as an adult that I've started to make a lot of friends with other Polynesians. There weren't a lot of Pasifika people at the prison I was sent to either, but there



were a lot of Indigenous people who I made friends with. Big shout out to my friend Clari, a Biripi man, who I used to work out with nearly every day.

My parents actually met in prison. My father was at Long Bay in 1984 for burglary and my mother was a welfare officer there. That isn't a great start to a relationship, as I'm sure you can imagine. My father was violent. He grew up in borstals in New Zealand and he'd had a really traumatic childhood himself so didn't know how to relate to a child.

My parent's relationship was quite volatile. When I was three, my mother took me and ran away from him. He found out where we were, and fabricated allegations that my mother had abused me as a manipulative ploy to regain custody. She didn't do anything like that. A court case dragged out for years, a really painful time of my life. I was transferred into my father's care while the allegations were being investigated. He was very paranoid and angry with the world, which made my childhood very difficult. And what made it even more difficult was that I have autism (undiagnosed at the time), so I was finding it really difficult to process everything that was going on.

There was a lot of emotional manipulation in my childhood. There was some physical abuse as well, but it was mostly emotional abuse. And when I was about eight, I was also sexually assaulted by a family friend of my father and stepmother. When I told them about it, they didn't believe me. That's where most of my trauma comes from, from not being believed. As a result, I never got any justice for what happened to me. And then I was on this vicarious crusade to get justice for someone else. And that's what led to my crime.

I remember as a child feeling like I was walking on egg shells all the time. My father was very paranoid about everything. After visits with my mother, he'd want to question me about everything that happened. He was looking for more ammunition to use against her in court. And so I got to the point where I would dread having access visits with my mother. Not because I didn't want to see her, but because I knew how my father would try and turn me against her. He tried to convince me she actually had abused me, and that he'd rescued me from her, but that was all bullshit.

I tried to keep to myself as much as possible. I just stayed in my room a lot to stay away from them. I'm a very quiet and introverted person now, and I sometimes wonder how much of that was nurture. How much I instinctively learned by trying to stay away from this trauma I was experiencing. I remember

being afraid of my father and stepmother for several reasons. There was no comfort nor support. I was afraid of them physically and emotionally. I left their household when I was 13. I pretty much ran away. Life didn't get too much better after that. I went to live with my mother but she'd had a bit of a breakdown since then, and so life with her was a little better, but not much. It was kind of like going out of the fire only to go into the frying pan.

I remember not long after I moved back with my mother, we were at a supermarket and she went to pay for the groceries. My mother's very forgetful, she loses everything constantly. And we got to the checkout and she didn't have her wallet and she just broke down and started crying in the middle of the checkout and everyone turned to look. It was this huge scene, like the whole supermarket stopped to watch. I had to act as a parent a lot, and I had to go and sit her down and try to search for her wallet. My mother was always borrowing money off her parents and friends. Pretty much my whole childhood. She had very unstable employment. When I was sixteen, I started to get Youth Allowance because my mother was below the poverty line. To stay in school, I used to get \$80 a week, which didn't go very far. My mother had to sign the forms and she couldn't even do that. I'd give her the forms and she'd just look at them and she'd be very confused. My Youth Allowance payment got cut once because I couldn't convince my mother to fill it out. There was very little in the way of opportunities. I was the only student in my class who didn't go on our school exchange trip.

I really struggled during high school for a lot of reasons. There was no support at home. I was still dealing with the trauma from living with my father. My autism was still undiagnosed. My teachers were always confused by me. They all said things like, "Damien, you're intelligent. Why do you do so badly in class?" My father and stepmother had always told me that I just had an attitude problem. My autism makes me very sensitive to sound and I simply cannot learn in a class-room environment. I can hear pens writing, chattering, and when there's a lot of noise around me, I can't focus, and so I could never hear what the teacher was saying. My father and step-mother had convinced me that it was all in my head and I just had a bad attitude. So that's what I believed too.

My father also started dying of cancer when I was in the HSC. I passed the HSC, but only barely. And I remember my science teacher in high school was really confused. He said "Damien, you're one of my brightest students and you failed everything." Not only was there no support at home, my mother was very depressed and she'd kind of walk around the house ranting about how angry she was. I couldn't really study at home. It was just a horrible environment.

My mother was very financially unstable, so we moved around a lot. I changed schools in Year 9 to move back with her, then I had to change schools again in Year 10 when she found some temporary work, and then at the end of Year 10 when that ran out, we moved again. So I actually went to four high schools. I found it really difficult to form attachments, and having autism didn't help. It took me a long time to settle into new places and typically, by the time I settled in, it was time to move to a new school. I probably became more introverted than I wanted to be and just read a lot and played video games and kept to myself.

It wasn't until I was arrested that I realised, on several levels, that something was wrong. A lot of things were wrong because

there wasn't a lot of affection in my childhood. I moved out of home at eighteen from my mother's place, and I actually moved in with a girlfriend very quickly. Like ridiculously quickly. I was a very attached partner, and I'd go head first into relationships. And I didn't realise at the time that, you know, I'd never had any affection growing up. So I was trying to compensate and I was going head first into these relationships, being attached and co-dependent in an unhealthy way. I'd want to hang around with my partner 100% of the time, and I wouldn't want to let them out of my sight. I'd be like, don't leave me, you know, I need you here.

I've been engaged four times, compensating for this lack of affection. I'd settle into a relationship and then think, "Oh, this is perfect. Let's be together forever." And then it's not until months later when you start having some problems and realise you might not actually be that well-suited for one another. It took me a long time to realise that I had a really unhealthy attitude to relationships. I had a friend who actually described me once as a serial monogamist. As soon as I broke up with a girlfriend, I had to find another one as quickly as possible because I did not want to be alone. Being alone reminded me of my childhood. This went on for ten years, from the age of like 18 to 28.

I always thought something was different with me though. When I was 23, I was married briefly. My then-wife and I saw a couple's counsellor because things weren't working out. I don't know what I said exactly that set the counsellor off, but at one point she stopped me said, "Damien, has anyone ever told you that you have autism?" And I said, "To be honest, I don't really have a good understanding of what that even is." And she told me to go home and look up Asperger's or High-Functioning Autism and have a bit of a read. Later that evening, I read the Wikipedia article and thought, "Oh my God, this explains my whole life why I've had such a hard time in the classroom environment."

I booked in with a specialist and over a course of several sessions, she confirmed the Autism diagnosis. Which was really important for me, since my father and stepmother had told me for years that I was basically just an idiot. But then I realised there was actually a reason for why I didn't fit in, and why everybody else is a little bit different from me. I knew why people often found it hard to understand me and why I found it hard to understand them. It's not my attitude and it's not from a lack of trying. So the diagnosis had some immediate impacts on my self-esteem. Once I knew more about the condition, I was able to put things in place to recognise my limitations and offset them a bit.

I find it very difficult to read between the lines. So I often actually go out of my way to just clarify things to people, asking, "Did you mean this in this way?" And I feel like sometimes that annoys people a little bit, but it also annoys me if I completely misinterpret what they say. One trait of autism is "black or white" or "all or nothing" thinking. I tend to associate some things as totally good and some as totally bad, and I've had to unlearn that habit. For example, my father and stepmother drank heavily, and I completely rebounded off that. I was completely against drugs and alcohol, to the point where it was actually quite extreme. When I was in my late teens, people would be like "Hey man, would you like a beer?" And I'd arc up at them: "Drugs are despicable. Don't you push your fucking grog on

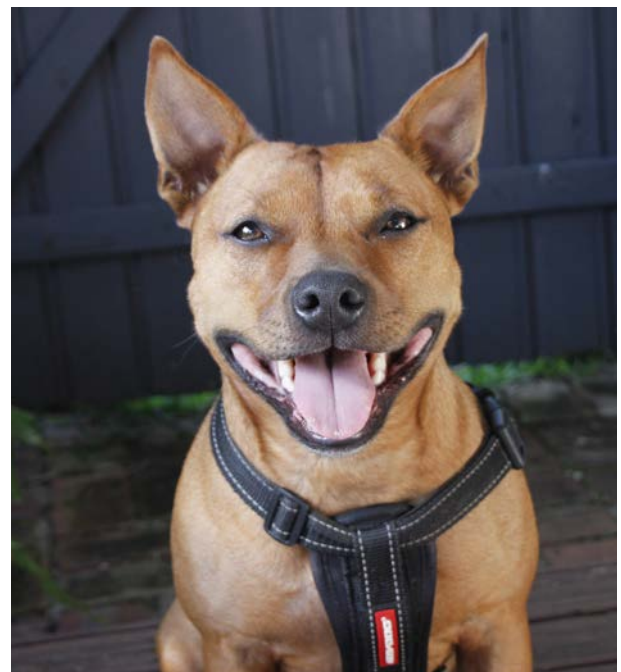
me!" And they'd say, "Hey, I was just trying to be friendly." And so I didn't actually drink at all for a very long time, which wasn't a bad idea in itself, but I'm much happier with my relationship with alcohol now, which is the sense that I can have a glass of wine with dinner without getting angry at all.

As for drugs, it was never something I was really into. I tried pot when I was fourteen. I didn't really think much of it. I remember when I was 19 years old a friend gave me an ecstasy tablet without asking me if I wanted it. I said thank you, and then I waited till she left and I threw it in the garbage. Probation and Parole actually gave me a drug and alcohol risk rating of zero. I was in Armidale at the time and they said I was the first person to ever get a risk rating that low.

After I started to get therapy, my relationships became healthier. There have been ups and downs for sure. I think there always is. But I've become better at both communicating and recognising when a sexual relationship is no longer healthy for both people. My two best friends now are actually ex-girlfriends. We both reached a point where we realised we still wanted to be part of each-others' lives, but we were better off as friends than lovers.

I live in a share house in Newcastle here on Awabakal land now, with two flatmates and my dog, who I'd say is one of my best friends for sure. He's a boy but his name is Isabelle, which gets shortened to Izzy. That was the name he came with. I got him re-homed from a friend. They had four dogs so they were looking to re-home one of them and I got him when he was about two. He's a Staffy cross. There's some Dingo and Kelpie in there as well but he looks like a Staffy. He's a bundle of energy. He's very needy. He's a giant sook. He needs so much attention. He reminds me in a way of me, in his need for constant affection. And he has a little bit of anxiety. He's lying on my bed behind me right now, living his best life. He's a really wonderful dog and I'm looking forward to spending a lot more time with him in the years to come.

On the day I was arrested, I kind of knew it was coming. The



Izzy, the official mascot of Paper Chained.

walls were closing in. I'd broken up with my partner, the one who had told me she'd been sexually assaulted, over something unrelated. Part of my motivation for committing the crimes was just getting the guy who assaulted her out of town. I wanted him gone because I thought I'd be happy if I didn't have to think about him anymore. And when he didn't leave town, I went around to his new residence. I slashed the tires of the car there and left a threatening note. It pretty much said, "By the way, if it wasn't clear already, it's time for you to leave town."

I was at work when I was arrested. I was working full-time as wardman at a public hospital. I'd got a call from this detective who said he wanted to talk to me about a car that had its tires slashed. I thought that was very weird because I was thinking, "Why do you wanna talk to me about that? Wasn't the fire a more serious crime?" Anyway, the detective was very casual and said, "Oh you're at work, are you still at the hospital?" I said I was. He asked what ward I worked in, and I said I was in Surgical. "Alright," he said, "well, no worries. If you could come in and make a statement after you finish work we'd really appreciate that." I thought "Okay, maybe I'll just go in and play dumb. That'll look less suspicious than refusing to talk."

The police turned up at my work half an hour later, at which point it became apparent they didn't want me to come in and make a statement. They were only calling me to figure out where I was so they could come and arrest me. So I was arrested at work. They didn't make a scene out of it. They didn't put me in handcuffs. But you know, it was embarrassing, and all my co-workers were looking at me wondering what was going on. And the police just told me what they were there to arrest me for and we got in the elevator. The detective said, "We don't have to put you in handcuffs do we? Are you going to try and run away?" And I said to him, "Well, I don't think running away would improve my situation." And he looked a bit taken back at how honest that was.

I couldn't imagine anything worse than a life on the run. You know, I already have anxiety. I would rather be in prison than be on the run, looking over your shoulder all the time. I can imagine what that's like because I had the feeling that the walls were closing in, which was bad enough. But knowing that

people were definitely looking for me? That would have driven me insane.

At the time, I was probably mostly worried about how long I was going to spend in prison, and how much that was going to affect my life. I thought I was going to get a much harsher sentence than I did. I was sentenced to two years, with a non-parole period of ten months. I was on bail for a while and I had already started getting therapy, I talked to someone about all my childhood trauma before I was even arrested. I remember saying to my therapist, "Is there something wrong with me? I'm actually a little bit excited to go to prison, but I'm pretty sure I'll get over that quickly." Part of me was genuinely fascinated. It felt surreal. When I first went in, it didn't feel like I was in prison, it felt like I was participating in a reality TV program. I wasn't panicking when I went in. There was some panicking later, but I when I first went in, I was actually just interested in the experience.

I was mildly worried about some things, though. I worried that I'd be put in a cell with some stand-over thug. I went into my first cell and there was this old guy with a big smile on his face. Just a warm smile, very friendly. And we had a really great chat. It was good just to bond with another person and we shared our stories. He'd gotten ten months as well and had only gotten in two weeks earlier.

I started prison in Tamworth, then I was classified to Glen Innes. But for some reason, the most efficient way for the guards to get me to Glen Innes was to send me to Saint Heliers for three days and then to Cessnock for a couple of weeks before I could finally get the transport truck to Glen Innes. I remember talking to my friends on the phone. They assumed that being moved around so much must have been really frustrating. But it was actually keeping things really interesting. I felt as though I was on the NSW State prison tour, because every prison was a little bit different. And so I was actually quite amused. I thought, "Oh, I wonder what the next one is going to look like?"

As soon as I started talking to other people in prison, they'd ask, "What are you doing here? You're a clean skin. What did you do? Fraud?" They were asking, "How are you coping with

JAILBREAK BROADCASTING TIMES AND STATIONS

Broadcast Area	Radio Station	Broadcast Schedule
Sydney	Koori Radio 93.7 FM	Mondays 10 PM, Sundays 11 PM
Melbourne	3CR 885 AM	Fridays 10.30 AM
Canberra	2XX 98.3 FM	Wednesdays 10 AM
Broken Hill	2 DRY FM	Mondays 9 PM
Bathurst, Orange and the Central West	92.3 FM & 94.7 FM	Thursdays 10 PM
Nowra Bay & Basin	92.7FM	Saturdays 9.30 PM
Kempsey	TANK FM	Fridays 11.30 PM
Castlemaine	94.9 MAIN FM	Sundays 11 PM
On Demand	2SER	Podcasts

this?" I'd just finished a university degree a few weeks before I went in. They would say, "Oh, you just you came from uni to prison, how are you coping?" To which I would point out that I'd been in the military for five years.

Prison is so much easier than being in the Army. There are obviously differences. In prison, you can't go home on weekends. You don't have a mobile phone and other things, but when I was in the army I would go out on duty for six weeks at a time, playing war games and I would literally be sleeping in the dirt, no mattress, using my backpack as a pillow, no electricity, no showers, and with people screaming all the time. There's a lot of toxic masculinity in the Army. After coming out of that environment and going into prison, I wasn't afraid of prison in terms of its harshness. What I struggled with in prison was that I couldn't get any education in there. They only had a forklift licence and a chainsaw certificate at Glen Innes. There's also no therapy in prison, and I couldn't see a psychologist. I was really afraid of the lack of things to do. One of the reasons I've been so busy all my life is because the busier I stay, the less I have to think about my childhood.

Before being arrested, I was working full time at the hospital, and part time for the military. I was doing a lot of work finishing my degree at university. I was volunteering for St. John's Ambulance. I was also running a very small business. I've always been a frenetic, busy person and then I went into prison and there was nothing to do. And so that's when I started panicking. I worried that I'd be doing head miles for 10 months. I don't want to live in my head. I needed something to do, so shortly after going in, I started writing a book, which has since been published. It's called *Scarred* and I wrote the entire thing in prison. It took me five months. After I'd finished that, I taught myself to draw.

Very few of my friends had been involved in the criminal justice system. My father had been in prison. But he died fifteen years ago and he never talked about it to me. So I had no idea what to expect. People always ask, "What were the other people like in prison?" And I tell them, "Honestly, they were the best and the worst people I've met in my entire life! I came across some incredible human beings in there. I made some really good friendships. I met a lot of people who had committed a crime only because they were put in a situation that could have happened to anyone. There was a really mixed bag of different people. I found a good group of friends in prison, people who were also like me who tried to focus on the positives. I mostly kept to myself, but formed some pretty strong bonds in there with some very good people and some very good staff as well. The education department was really supportive and helped me with writing the book a bit too, which was great.

I wasn't really aware that there were people my age in Australia that don't know how to read. And then I went into prison and I realised, "Oh my God, there's a lot of them and they're all in here. Their childhoods were even worse than mine. They had even less opportunities." It didn't take me long to figure out that prison just collects everyone who's fallen through the cracks. It's where people end up if they didn't get the right support. And obviously, if you didn't get support as a child and never learned literacy skills, then you're going to have a hard time finding employment. So it's no wonder that so many end up in places like this.

That realisation was confronting at first. Another confronting

reality was coming across people who had become completely used to prison. People would come in and say, "Oh, this is gonna be mad! I'm gonna get off the grog! I'm gonna work out for six months and get fit!" To which I'd think, "You're happy to be back in prison? Wow, what must your life be like on the outside then?" I definitely didn't want to go in there. I made the most of it, but I didn't want to be there. I actually heard someone who came back in say, "I've come home." Some people were just so used to coming in and out that it became completely normal.

But the most shocking thing about prison was the lack of mental health treatment. There are a lot of people with undiagnosed mental health conditions in prison, which should have been taken into consideration for their sentencing. The prison psychologist told me that her job was just to assess whether people were suicidal or dangerous. She freely admitted that there was no therapy for inmates. How can that be the case? If anything, people in here need therapy more than those on the outside. How can adequate mental health not be a priority? When I was sentenced, my lawyer said that he thought it would be really helpful for my sentencing to hire a forensic psychiatrist, which I did. It cost me \$1,200, but the magistrate accepted that report. I got a two-year sentence, which meant that I should have been given a non-parole period of 18 months. But since the magistrate had found special circumstances, she reduced it to 10 months.

What about all those who can't afford a forensic psychiatrist? I had \$1,200 in the bank. I'm pretty sure a lot of the people who go into prison don't have that. I read my forensic report and found it really eye-opening. My father tried to convince me that certain forms of abuse were real when they weren't, and then wouldn't believe me when other forms of abuse were all too real. And my forensic psychiatrist theorised that this was one of the reasons why my thought patterns were all over the shop. Reading those lines, I realised, "Holy crap, no wonder I'm a little bit messed up." Reading someone else's opinion on what I had endured and how it had affected my life, I felt seen and understood.

I kind of half joke about this, but it's also true that I paid \$1,200 to get out of prison eight months sooner, via the forensic psychiatrist report. It's still absurd to me that a sentence can be so influenced by how much money you have. Our justice system is really failing people. Prison has a lot of potential. We could be trying to address the causes of offending, including by diagnosing people and making sure they get the right support, which would help them and also society at the same time. Instead, I feel like we're just warehousing people, then eventually releasing them with the exact same problems they came in with.

It wasn't until I started therapy that things started to get better. I started to think about things in very different ways. I definitely see it as a positive time in my life. I'd been depressed. I was in these co-dependent relationships. I was trying to numb the pain, not with drugs, but by just keeping myself busy. Busy, busy, busy. If I work 16 hours a day and then collapse out of exhaustion, I don't have to think about what happened to me as a child. That was my heroin. Then one day I realised, "Okay, I just burnt a house down, you know, most people don't do that. I think I need to talk to someone." And that sounds a little bit silly now. You might think, "Wasn't that obvious?" Well, no, at the time it wasn't.

Then I went into prison and realised that life is 10% what happens to you and 90% of how you react. I feel like I had to hit rock bottom before I could get better as a person, and I feel like I made the most of prison and got everything I could out of it.

I remember the day I was released. That last hour in prison seemed to be longer than the last week. One of my best friends came to pick me up. I stayed with her for a couple of days and she drove me to Newcastle, where I still live. I remember that everyone in prison said to me that once I was out, I'd never wear green again. My friend, she brought me my favourite green jacket and I actually just put it straight on. I didn't care. I still have that jacket. It's still my favourite jacket.

I started getting a toothache about ten weeks before I got released and the nurse said, "Look, I can put you on the waiting list to see the dentist, but it's a lot longer than ten weeks, so you're not going to see anyone." And I said, "Would you be able to call my outside dentist to make an appointment for the day I get out because I'm in pain?" The last morning I was in prison, all my friends were asking, "So what are you going to do first when you get out? Are you going to the bottle shop or the brothel?" And I said, "Actually I'm going to the dentist." And everyone looked at me like I was the world's biggest dork.

I went from the dentist appointment to the courthouse. I went into the courthouse and said, "Can I pay my court fines?" And the lady behind the counter said, "Yeah sure." And then she started typing at her computer. She looked at her computer and then at me and then at the computer again. "Did you just get out today?" she asked. "I don't think anyone's ever come to pay their court fines the day they got out before." I wanted to just kind of put everything behind me as soon as possible. And I wanted to have as little baggage from prison as possible. These probably aren't the things people typically do after being released, but that's how I spent my first day out of prison.

I'm very happy now. I work as a research assistant in the Criminology Department at the University of Sydney. I'm doing a Ph.D. in law. I host my own podcast on the prison system. It's called *Broken Chains*. I've got two art exhibitions on at the moment, and I've actually got one coming up in San Francisco for a book I illustrated called *This Is Ear Hustle*. And this is all from stuff I taught myself in prison

Being on Jailbreak today, it's been a really interesting experience. This is the first time I've done a talk actually aimed at people in prison, which is very different. It's been really great. I think it's really important to try and still feel connected to people both inside and outside of prison. I really see a huge need for projects like Jailbreak in prison. To let people know they've got a voice and they've got a program that caters specifically to them because so few people know what we're going through in there. They've got a skewed idea from TV shows and popular culture. And of course the media blowing everything out of proportion. Even though some of the staff in prison are well meaning, even they don't know what it's like on the other side of the fence. And it's really great to have people who do understand and who recognise that we have a need to be heard and a need for programs. That's what Jailbreak is about and that's what *Paper Chained* is about. They're services run by people who have lived experience and are made specifically for people in prison.

If you've got a story to share as well, I really encourage you to reach out Jailbreak. They're always looking for new guests and

would love to hear from you.

If you're in jail and you're listening to this right now, my message to you is to use the time as best as you can. Try and get something out of it, even if that's just quitting smoking or getting fit. I never thought I could draw. I'd never drawn anything in my life since I was a child, and now I've illustrated a book for Penguin Random House. And that was all just because I sat down and practiced. There's two ways to look at it. You can just do head miles or you can accept that this is an opportunity that you might not get anywhere else, to focus on yourself and find a way to do something constructive. Find a creative outlet and just work on it.

Jailbreak would not be possible without people like you and me reaching out, listening in, sharing stories, supporting each other, feeling more understood, hopefully less alone, and more connected to loved ones. This episode of Jailbreak was produced by Kate Pinnock and myself, Damien Linnane, on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people at Sydney's 2SER First Nations people of the Eora nation. Thanks for listening everyone. Don't forget to smile and we'll see you next time.



Part of Damien's 2022 art exhibition at the San Francisco Public Library.

GETTING IN TOUCH

Inmates can write to:
Jailbreak, 2SER PO Box 123 Broadway NSW 2007

Welfare and Family can also email:
jailbreak@2ser.com

ART AND WRITING CONTRIBUTIONS

THE SWIFT CLIPPERS

In times long ago
As their fires burnt low
The old sailors sat round with their stories
And talked of the days
And the old sailing ways
Reliving bold times and past glories

The clippers they rode
The waves with their load
As they plied the tea-routes from China
They were sleek and fast
In their yards built to last
No other craft was ever made finer

They fought wind and snow
As around the horn they did go
Braving icebergs and waves gigantic
And the lucky ones crossed
Over the seas thrown and tossed
As the Pacific became the Atlantic

For speed records they flew
Across oceans of blue
And through the seas determined to fail them
In the doldrums they floundered
In the Sargasso Sea foundered
And waters where only the brave would sail them

And they trod stranger shores
All for the cargo their cause
As their goods where unloaded and distributed
And the honours they earned
Through the lessons they'd learned
To a world new to them as attributed

But the years rushed on by
No more clippers would ply
The oceans that saw white sails streaming
Black smoke filled the skies
Where the albatross flies
As they changed from sailing to steaming

The clippers captains and crews
Have now all paid their dues
Their lives lived for a future uncertain

While the sweethearts and wives
Of the men who'd lost lives
Over empty coffins they drape a black curtain

But the death-knell had sounded
No more continents rounded
The Swift Clippers have now had their day
As firewood they perished
Or as a museum pieces cherished
Those times now seem so far away.



Art and writing by DeWitt



Art by Keith

WALK

Over sixty-thousand years old,
I walk amongst them, the spirits, the souls of the old ones
I call for guidance for the young ones, new to this world
Trapped here, my mind can still roam over ancient lands,
my Dreaming

I've withdrawn to the water
To watch my people live on
On a road less walked by many who fear what they do
not know

Damage, dispossession, loss, consequence,
Vilified by those who fear what they do not know
The sins of those who carry the darkness
cannot be absolved

I accept the gift and the curse bestowed on me
Drawing wisdom from those who have passed on
It is the price I pay for being who I am today
And so I walk

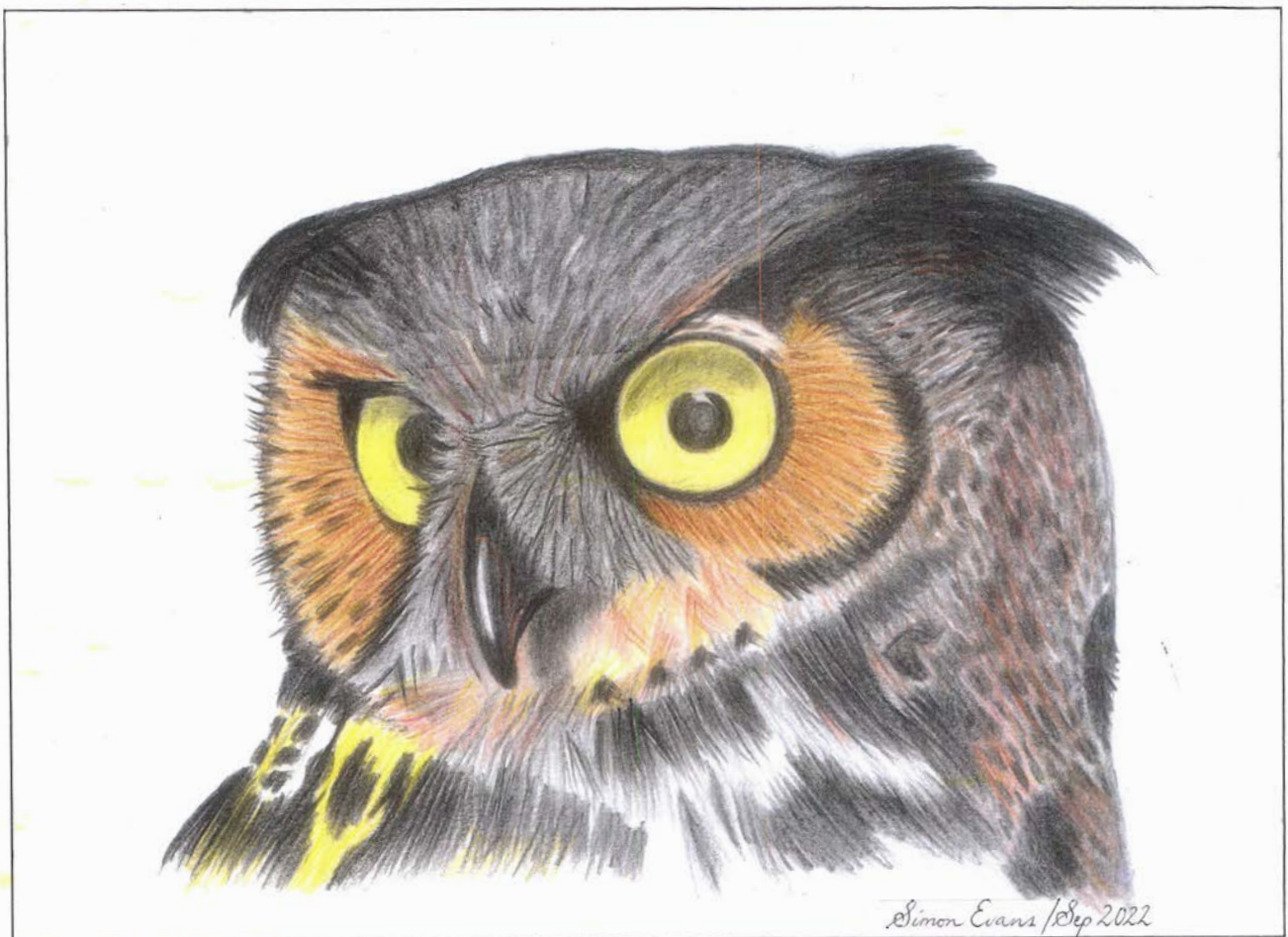
I walk on
You ask me how I can still walk
Come,
Walk with me
I'll show you how

You can see your past, you can see the now
And maybe your tomorrow



Art and writing by Zak Grieves

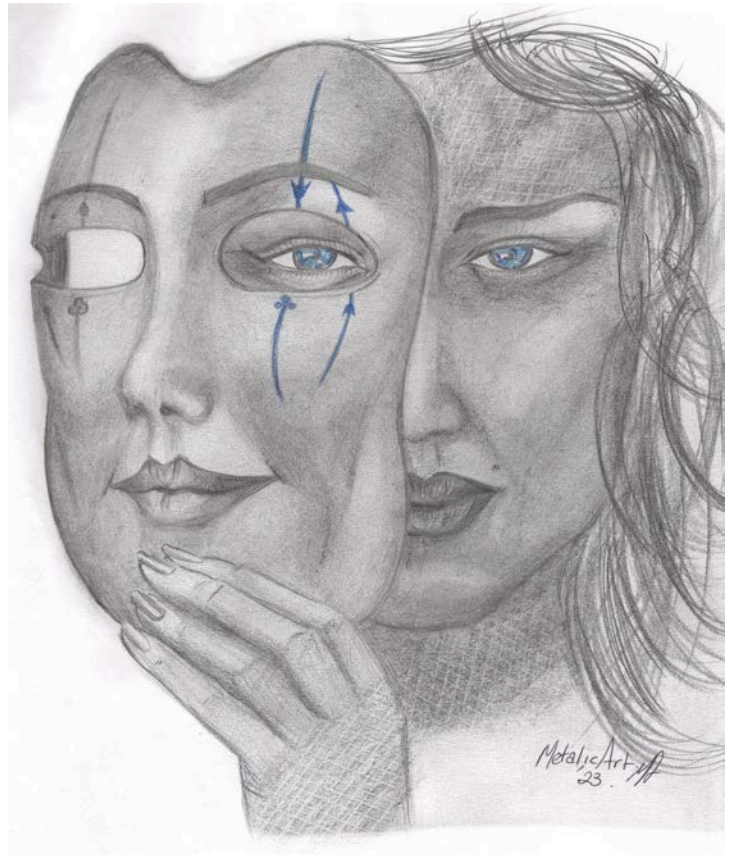




Artwork by Simon Evans. Auckland Prison, Te Piriti Unit (Unit 8), Private Bag 50-124, Auckland 0752, New Zealand



Art by Nigel Gillard



Art by MetalicArt23



Art by Ojore McKinnon



Art by Jayde Farrell

RAW MATERIAL

So much can be created out of raw material
Especially when the quality of the product is imperial
You can craft it in your own mold
A unique creation in which you have rights to hold

The material is raw but you blend it to the right mix
Breaking the components down to their finest fix
The finished product was made from everything organic
In the beginning stages of trial and error you served as
the mechanic

When you bundle raw material up it gets all combusted
and compact
After you release it into the air nature starts to react
Through these various processes one element takes on a
dominant trait
Its own weaker characteristics it begins to annihilate

A writer or a scientist all need raw material to build
That's how a craftsman begins to experiment in their field
From experiment to firsthand experience emerges the
finished product
Once it is complete there's nothing else to deduct

In all the universe's compounds I see a potential creation
Raw material put together comes alive like animation
There is no violation because you are still in harmony with
natural law
Combining the elements of nature using material that is
raw

By Bobby Bostic, USA



Art by Anonymous

WHY AM I THIS WAY?

I'm feeling hopeful (family miss me)
Chilling in green
(No more bottle so I can't be tipsy)
You know me, but do you know yourself?
Most of us can't be here forever
We got a release date
Others doing life, nobody, nobody recovered
These days parliament enforcing decisions,
pre-fabricated
Most of what they say is never completed
So I wonder to myself (Why am I this way?) X3
Mates locked, stress, suppress me,
angry feelings that I'm projecting
Lessons learnt, still it sparks a reaction
See I'm performing on another level
Some days I am feeling a little bit conspicuous
All I want is to be taken serious
So I wonder (Why am I this way?) X3
Everyone here needs to think positive
You can cure your addiction, starts with stopping it
All you need to do is focus with your head down
Get your life back on track, no mucking around
(So I think to myself, why am I like this?) X2

Lyrics by M & Bones



Art by Simon Clay

S. Clay
22
2.8.11

FIRST TIMER'S OPINION

Alcohol was my crutch, my friend, my demon. But after twenty months, the mental call for alcohol has diminished greatly, and as it fades away, the times when it taps me on the shoulder are only in those moments of darkness, the times when those flashes of realisation that the gap between why I'm here and how long it's been since I've seen my children, and the place I once called home has grown. The faint upside is that the light at the end of the tunnel gets just that little bit brighter every day. Every day done is another day gone.

Part of the eye-opening is just how many decent blokes have been separated from their family, their homes, their jobs, their friends, and how biased the 'justice' system is towards incarceration as seemingly the only option. How much extra emotional damage has been done, *is* being done, and will continue to do, is incalculable. Yes, some have committed terrible crimes, and the repeat offenders are too dumb to learn from their reasons why they're incarcerated or are genetically wired to repeat their crimes and can probably never be properly 'rehabilitated.' Sadly, it also seems that public outrages sway, too heavily, on public opinion and therefore the expectations of the justice system to enforce penalties which are over exaggerated in the context of the crime and the people involved.

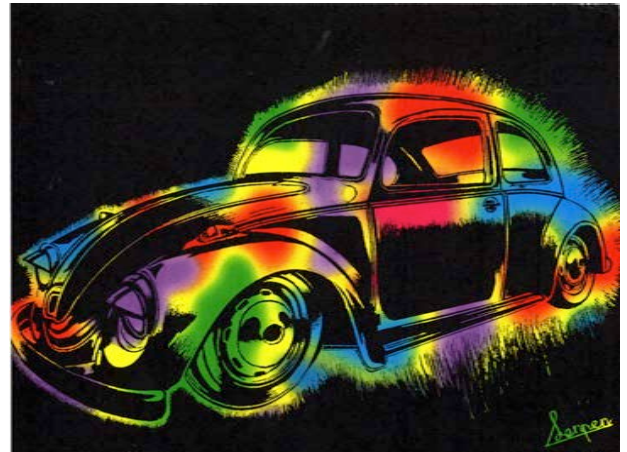
Surely there must be alternatives, better and more efficient alternatives to incarceration. But whilst our governments continue to cut funding to mental health support services, an absurdity in the light of so many studies calling for an increase in funding, the identification of triggers, causes, the unearthing of long suppressed problems will continue to have for too many first timers, men of a mature age that have succumbed to one too many taps on the shoulder, being jailed instead of being given better ways and methods of atoning for their momentary lapse of reason, or their excessive punishment by a system biased and broken.

Being jailed fosters a lack of faith, of trust, in those that in many cases were once seen as fair and just, as doing the right thing by society. It also makes us more apprehensive of the lawmakers and wary of those we once trusted to 'do the right thing.' By being locked up and forced to live in a community filled with bitterness, and in some cases, a bitterness bordering on outright hatred, emotional osmosis occurs and even the most sane and rational and equable cannot help but be "infected" with that bitterness and feel that what they sensed was once right, is no longer. There's a reinforcement, not reduction of the lack of self-worth and self-esteem. Time happens to all living creatures. It is only we humans who believe time away from others with nothing to change behaviour, time away from society, will make us better in society. It's a belief that is wrong and outdated, and sadly, highly unlikely to evolve as society has evolved.

My five cents and GST worth.

Anonymous

ART IN PRISON



I started drawing my daughters Volkswagen and sending it to her and I just got better at it.

Now the other prisoners give me a picture of their cars and I draw them for free. All my drawings are done with Derwent Coloursoft pencils. The black is a gel-pen and the white is too. I use the grid method from 10mm up to 20mm and then use French curves to tidy them up.

Recently I was asked what art does for me as someone who is in prison. It's amazing, relaxing, challenging, fun and gives me a sense of freedom and self-achievement.

That was one of the biggest questions I've been asked in prison because it took me ages to think about the answer. To me, art is one of the best things we can do to take up time. Trust me, we have lots of it.

The prison system does its best by letting us buy our art supplies through the canteen. It also provides a room and occasionally a teacher to help us too.

There aren't too many positives about being in prison, but this is one way that you can experience something relaxing and different, and possibly even discover hidden talent. I couldn't draw or paint at all when I started five years ago but I felt challenged to improve. I was putting in loads of time for very little result until one night I realised that I was having fun and it had taken me to a place outside of here. Now it's a tool I use to relax and have fun and to 'not be in here' for hours at a time.

I wish everyone in prison would have a go at some kind of art or craft.

I've even noticed the change in some of my friends when they're painting, they seem to be so relaxed and happy. After talking to others who make art it seems that we all have similar thoughts about its value.

By 'LenPen'

STI



Art by LenPen



'Strength of a Woman' by Kaidii Ephraums, an artwork inspired by the Sisters for Change program.

MY CROSS

My sentence (11 years); I deserve it
Time away; I need it
These greens; I wear it
Prison life; I'm over it
My children's birth; I missed it
Depression; I ignore it
Anxiety; I suffer it
A smile; I fake it
My age (27); I feel older than it
My past; I'll get over it
The bridge; I've burnt it
Love; I think I've known it
My childhood; I hide it
A future; I want it
Happiness; I crave it
Pride; I've swallowed it
Addiction; I'll beat it
Anger; I fight it
My mind; I've lost it
My freedom; I'll have it
My family; I pray for it

SUCCESSO È LA MIGLIORE VENDETTA (SUCCESS IS THE BEST REVENGE)

When they all look down on you
When they can do no more than judge
When the past is all that rings true
When they say you're incapable of love
Successo è la Migliore vendetta!

If they can never see past the chains
If they can say you're too far gone
If they think you will never change
If they remind you you've been gone too long
Successo è la Migliore vendetta!

Have they forgotten you at your worst?
Have they only loved you at your best?
Have you realised that you need to heal first?
Have you counted how many days are left?
Successo è la Migliore vendetta!

Do you know that under pressure diamonds are made?
In the roughest environments can be found real gold
It's never too late for things to change
Nothing can break you, and you're never too old.
Successo è la Migliore vendetta!

*Poems by Jaxan Khalil Assad O'Reilly, E14512
Brisbane Correctional Centre
Locked Bag 2600, Mt Ommaney, QLD 5074*

I BELIEVE

What do you believe in when you grow up being mentally and/or physically abused? When your own family treats you like trash. Do you believe people are horrible, expecting everyone else to hurt you? Do you start to believe you are trash too? So eventually you feel so alone and angry, you dull the pain with alcohol and/or drugs, lashing out at anyone you see as a threat to your mental health.

What do you believe in when they put you in a cage for doing that? When they say *you're* the dangerous one. Not the people who made you like this. Broken and alone, no one cares now anyway. They just tell you how crap you are. No one tries to help, they just judge you. What do you believe in, now no one believes in you?!

When everyone has given up on you. When society shuns you and looks at you with suspicion. When the major religions demand you spend the rest of your life making amends for the wrongs you did. Only finding forgiveness in death when god judges you and sends you to hell to be punished even more. Hell is where I'm from anyway. Born and raised in hell. It was hard for me to find anything to believe in.

I had to search and search. Searching for something to believe in. Anything really. I was so lost and alone. I needed to find something that made sense. I studied so many books while locked in my uncaring cell. The world was so devoid of empathy and understanding. I studied books on religion, mysteries and myths. Of jealous gods who claimed to be the one true god, setting their followers against each other until only pain and despair remain. I wanted answers, and I wanted hope. So I even tried attending church in prison.

One of the unforeseen problems was that I was trans. At the time, all trans girls got sent to the protection unit of a men's jail. So I went to church in a men's protection prison. Meaning when I got there and I looked around I saw a room full of paedophile priests. Priests who then told me I'm wrong for being trans. I'm wrong. I am. Me? Huh. OK. So no more church after that. I won't be repenting my transgender sins. They can keep their intolerant god.

A few months later I read a book of folktales, or forgotten gods. Gods replaced by other jealous gods that couldn't tolerate any other gods or their ways of life. Gods no one believes in anymore. The book mentioned a goddess of outcasts and scoundrels. And I laughed and thought I'm a scoundrel AND an outcast! No one believes in me anymore either, so I totally qualify for this goddess!

Now it may sound silly to believe in a forgotten god no one else believes in. But no one believes in me either. I think a forgotten god is more believable than society giving me a second chance at a normal life. So I will believe that out there somewhere is a god of outcasts who is no longer worshipped because society hates all us outcasts. And I will feel less alone.

By Stacey Stokes, Victoria

THE DIDGY RIDGE RALLY

Past the Great Dividing Range
And further on outback
Was the little town of Didgy Ridge
At the end of the Wallaby Track

It made headlines in the papers
And was on the telly as well
For the Didgy Ridge Rally was ready to go
Sometimes known as the rally from hell

As the drivers turned up they all eyed the cup
That was filled to the brim with cash
And each one thought it a battle well fought
To win the thousand-mile dash

But when the starter's flag fell no-one could tell
Which way to go for the clouds of smoke
With cars left and right the spectators took flight
And hid in the pub where they wouldn't choke

The roads were rough, but the drivers were tough
And just a little bit on this side of mad
In cars hot as saunas they straightened out the corners
And on the flats gave it all that they had

The going was heavy but Dan's old Chevy
Kept ploughing on through the dust
And bits would fall off when the engine would cough
Not to mention its fair share of rust

With everyone aboard Jim's hotted-up Ford
Shot off like a rocket on speed
Blowing smoke like a train it handled the strain
Its exhaust note making ears bleed

But Bill and his mate hit homestead gate
While taking a shortcut through the scrub
They blew all four tires starting numerous fires
And ended up back at the pub

There'd never been anything like it
As the cars raced through the bush
There were vehicles nothing but chassis'
And some they had to push

Others had lost some running gear
While others had to be towed
And the road-trains were jack-knifing left and right
For all the oil-slicks left on the road

Each survivor kept pace they were all in the first place
Side by side in a line a mile wide
You should 'a seen 'em couldn't fit a tally-ho between 'em
It was a wonder so far no-one had died

When the end was in sight it was a hell of a fight
As they all jockeyed to finish first place
But then the cop in town flagged them all down
And waved the breathalyser in their face

Pandemonium reigned the race started again
But this time they were all in reverse
They headed for the backwoods all heading backward
But not before giving the copper a curse

The race didn't finish nor do legends diminish
And it's talked about still to this day
But now and again some survivor staggers in
Who hits the pub then never goes away

The RSL Club and the Didgy Ridge Pub
These days the cup they take turns to guard
But over the years some of the cash disappears
With the excuse nowadays times are hard

And believe it or not you might even get shot
If when in town you mention the race
Some will look at you queer then stare into their beer
And say you must be thinking of some other place.

By Dewitt



'Home' by Sharon

White walls full of stains
Grey doors, I'm going insane
Vanishing toilet paper
I'm 2-Up with a masturbator
Seemingly endless days, and fights in showers
Banged up in cells for many hours
At work serving meals and cleaning tables
We've got a problem, we are missing ladles
Masks up and back to your station
Don't make this a violent situation
If fights start, alarms will ring
Then watch as they clear the wing
Back we go behind the doors
Screws running, emptying floors
They brag, they took a kid down
They bashed him, they went to town
The poor guy never had a choice
All he wanted was a voice
Off to the block he goes
And as the whole prison knows
That place has its own time zone
Never-ending boring days
The only relief
Lozzie smoke haze
Boss thinks we are just a number on a computer
It's time we refused to let them mute us

Untitled poem by Gary, South Australia

BIPOLAR AND ALL

A SONG BY KATIE AND DILWYNIA LADIES

C *G*
1. Dealing with what I feel for you / Is something that can't be taught

Am *Fmaj7*

Describing what I feel for you / As words just fall so far short

C *G*

Hard to find the words for what / I'm trying to convey

Am *Fmaj7*

I guess I'm just in love with you / Is what I'm trying to say

G

I love everything about you

Am7 *G*

I love what some might call / Your perfect imperfection

F *C* *F* *C* *F* *Fm* *C*

CH: Bipolar and all/ Bipolar and all / Bipolar, Bipolar and all

C *G*

2. This I hope you understand / This I hope you know

Am *Fmaj7*

Like a red red rose my love for you / Continues to grow

Am *Em*

I was never a believer / A skeptic through and through

G *NC*

All those things I heard from others /

F *C* *F* *C* *F* *Fm* *C*

I thought were untrue/ I thought were untrue / I thought I thought were untrue

C *G*

3. It wasn't love at first sight / But as close as it gets

Am *Fmaj7*

Didn't want to admit it / That time that we first met

G *Am7*

I knew I loved you then / And I wouldn't let it show

G

But it's hard to hide it now

F *C* *F* *C* *F* *Fm* *C*

CH: As my feelings grow / As my feelings grow / As my feelings, as my feelings grow

C *G*

4. Every time I see your face / I'm taken to a place

Am *Fmaj7*

Where hopes and dreams come true / I promise to love you

G *Am7*

You're a gift from high above / Sent for me to cherish

F *C* *F* *C* *F* *Fmaj7* *Fm*

Sent here for me to love / Sent here for me to love / Sent here, Sente here sent he-e-e-re

C

For me to love

YOUR IMAGINATION IS YOUR FREEDOM



BY DWAYNE ANTOJADO

When I was in prison, I would spend countless hours thinking about what my life would look like outside prison—idealising every aspect, reflecting on all my happy memories, missing the very people that have shaped, influenced and inspired me. I would then it all together, imagining myself in a world full of bliss, contentment and success. But as I sit here at two in the morning, juggling work, study, research and advocacy, I've forgotten what it was like to dream. I've lost the ability to envision that happy version of myself. It's funny—I'm now finally free but I'm not happy. I'm concerned about the date that never responded to my text, scared that I will never meet the expectation I set myself to achieve, and burnt-out from the constant struggles life has thrown at me.

Reality has set in, and the ebbs and flow of life has overtaken my daily dreaming, I am pre-occupied with figuring out how to make life for people in prison better, more humane, easier and less traumatic that I have forgotten to take time for myself, to see myself outside the definition of what I do. I write in academic journals, magazines, books and other publications. I speak on radio, television and podcasts about my journey from prison to a lived-experience researcher, advocate, and academic. I have filled up my diary with the concerns and worries of other people. I have defined myself through my work—the criminal justice system—that I have gone against the grain of the very message I am trying to proliferate, that of seeing people as more than their criminal histories. Now, I sit in darkness before my computer screen wondering how I got here. I'm asking myself, Who am I? Who is Dwayne? What makes me happy? Questions that I simply cannot answer despite the deeply reflective and self-reflexive work I engage with day in and day out.

I feel as though I have been so focused on everything else but me that I've lost my own sense of who I am as a person. I'm scared that I'll return back to that lost person who ended in prison, that person who committed those crimes to be seen, not because I wanted attention but because I was lost. I so desperately wanted to know who I was, to feel as though I had control of my own faculties.

But despite all my success in my career—speaking at conferences and industry events all over the world, only eighteen months out of prison, I'm back to square one. I'm back to the drawing board trying to figure out who I am, at my core, beyond the definitions of how other people see and perceive me to be. It's a strange feeling of having everything but at the same time having nothing.

Now it might seem strange that I'm complaining about my life as a free man, while many of you who read this have no choice but only to imagine what the world looks like because for whatever reason you're captured behind walls, shielded from society. I appreciate and I can empathise with these sentiments you may espouse, and I don't want to diminish the melancholy, degradation and deprivation you are experiencing. I am conscious that despite all my personal struggles, I at least have the freedom to sit here at two in the morning and express how I am feeling through words. But as someone who has experienced prison, left prison, entered a career in the criminal justice system, lived and breathed advocacy, I want to impart my experience in the hope that it will help you, when you eventually make the journey from prison to community.

Appreciate your ability and the time you have to use your imagination. To see no boundaries beyond what you can think, and to live and bask in the happiness of your own thoughts. When you leave prison, this abundance of time to spend on the unending and unlimited thoughts will become a distant fragment of your memory. You will be consumed by the harsh realities of needing to fend and provide for yourself, and perhaps even sometimes your family. You won't have as much time to reflect, to be in the constant period of imaginative freedom. These are the thoughts that will help you in your darkest times, to remind you that although your situation right now is not ideal, you still have goals, objectives and missions you wish to achieve. That no matter how difficult and vexing your situation may be, there is a shining beacon of hope at the end of the tunnel.

Know that there are people experiencing the very pains you are going through, that this moment will pass and that you will rise stronger, better, and wiser. These experiences make us the person that we are today, they build resilience, confidence and perseverance. The prison experience takes a lot from us, but there is a shared bond and camaraderie that we will all eternally share. The prison experience can also remind us of our unique and humanistic tool—our ability to imagine and innovate, and to become intrepid and brave humans against the context of constant flux and adversity. In times of troubles in the outside world, it is good to be reminded of the journey that you went through and survived, which got you out into the world. Be reminded of your struggles and the way in which you conquered them. Be reminded that you're only human and allow yourself to feel whatever it is that you're feeling.

LIFE SENTENCES OR IPP

BY KENJUAN CONGO JR

Imprisonment for Public Protection is also referred to as an IPP Sentence. In the past I discussed how said sentences are a possible alternative to life sentences in the United States. After open dialogue an overwhelming majority of us still do not fully support Imprisonment for Public Protection, even as a possible alternative to life sentences in America.

One problem with IPP, is that this alternative can still be used as a de-facto life sentence. Dealing with prejudicial parole boards, prisoners are at a disadvantage as they face preset biases. Findings from the Association of Paroling Authorities International (APAI) details how parole boards focus heavily on the crime in deliberating the parole decision. This ultimately puts those with severe offenses at a distinct advantage. It results in a bias that persists in spite of one hundred lifers being released in Maryland in 2012. According to the Justice Policy Institutes, as of 2016, not a single one had been convicted of a new felony. Due to the parole system, even with IPP sentences those who are no longer dangerous could still remain in the system indefinitely. A possible response to the nefarious parole system is to forbid parole decisions based exclusively on the crime of conviction, which undoubtedly have a negative influence on parole rulings. Parole decisions should be based primarily on risk assessment to public safety. To replace life sentences with IPP one should thoroughly examine the parole and potential release processes.

Considering current parole issues, an IPP sentence could be used as coercion, similar to how the threat of the death penalty and/or life sentence is used by prosecutors. A case is that of Amelia Bird. Amelia was sentenced to two life sentences for second degree murder. At age sixteen, Amelia confided in her boyfriend that she had been physically abused by her brother and father. While Amelia slept, her boyfriend broke into the home, and shot both of Amelia's parents, killing her mother and wounding her father. Amelia agreed to a plea bargain from prosecutors to avoid the threat of a death sentence. Coercion is a common practice in the United States so-called criminal justice system, and with IPP this trend could continue.

It is very clear that IPP could be used as intimidation in a similar manner as life sentences and the death penalty. Sadly, Amelia is not the only person, nor is America the only country. After being given an IPP Sentence in the United Kingdom, Luke Duxbury published their story in Issue 6 of *Paper Chained*. Luke had no definite release date, but their first parole hearing was set at two years. Eleven-and-a-half years and six parole hearings later, Luke remained imprisoned. Despite being a model prisoner,



peer mentor, and having the support of family along with a parole recommendation, Luke remained trapped in a relentless system. Sadly, Luke Duxbury and Amelia Bird are by no means the exception.

Replacing life sentences with IPP in the United States would raise the same concerns as in the United Kingdom. Knowing that defendants would still have to wrestle with this organized machine, prosecutors retain the ability to wield tools of coercion as in the case of Amelia Bird and many others. A device that is supposed to be used for public safety has the potential to be misused for threat, force, and intimidation. Sentences have left thousands stuck in this pervasive system in the United Kingdom. It is problematic when interrelated with the system as a whole, and cannot be considered a viable alternative to the life sentence in the United States.

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MY FREEDOM

WRITING AND POETRY BY LUKE DUXBURY

My freedom from IPP was finally granted, and on the 14th December 2022, I wheeled out of the main gates in my wheelchair. Not exactly the way I expected to be leaving prison—in a wheelchair—but I was finally free. After twelve years of incarceration I was extremely nervous. A two-hour journey down south to an approved premises in Reading was my first real experience of freedom. I was very lucky to be picked up at the gates by a charity who kindly drove me all the way to my new digs.

I would be spending the next twelve weeks at the approved premises, where I would be expected to attend probation, and join courses on self-esteem, substance misuse, yoga as well as completing any other group work that would be required. My first few days I felt like I had been dropped into an alien environment where technology had taken over everyone's lives. Sitting in the communal living rooms trying to make new friends was hard, but made even harder since everyone sat there on their phones without really engaging in normal conversation. I soon discovered, though, that this was a 'normal' thing and that people weren't just being antisocial with me, but were like that with everyone. This soon became a habit I adopted. Very depressing!

Life in the Big Wide World has been quite interesting and difficult at times too. Finding housing was the most stressful experience. City councils are so bogged down with so many applications for housing that to get onto a council list is next to impossible. I met so many women who were due to leave the approved premises who had to declare themselves homeless and be put in emergency accommodation. It's a sad state of affairs, but a very real problem over here. Almost four months on I am thriving. I'm learning so much about how society conducts itself now. In prison, despite having a TV, it was easy to forget what real life is like.

I seem to have less time to myself these days, but I do try to set aside some time for myself to reflect on what I am doing and where my head is at, but it's just not that easy. I will eventually get used to life on the outside, but it is still a long road for me. What with my physical disability and the difficulty of learning to navigate all the obstacles, both physically and mentally, my life has a very different outlook to what I was originally expecting. Don't be discouraged, though, by the pitfalls that are easy to fall into. We all have our challenges no matter who we are.

It's all about baby steps and taking things slowly. Learning that we can't do everything all at once. Life is hard, but I try to remind myself that I am not the only person who struggles—we all do and that reminder makes me feel a little less alone. Never feel discouraged for too long—allow yourself to have bad days, then start again with a new sunrise.

I hope that this article will be a reminder that prison is not the end of the road, even upon release. We all have the ability to become great at whatever we put our minds to. Just be kind to yourself and don't judge yourself too harshly. Kind regards and much respect to you all.

THESE ARE THE DAYS

Ten weeks of freedom
These are the days
No more locked doors,
No more jingling of keys
These are the days
When I can make my own choices
These are the days I can be myself
Living independently in a place I can call my own
Is worth more than platinum or gold
Learning to structure my days has been quite tough
However, I have achieved much more
Than I ever thought I would.

Soon moving on from my 12 weeks here
I delve into a whole new way of living
Supported accommodation is where I'll start
With assessments over the coming months
To determine a flat of my own
These are the days
Where I find myself
And learn what I am capable of
Going by how well I've done so far
I know in my heart
I will become something great
Friends and acquaintances are there along the way
You learn who is genuine
And who were just there for the ride
For those of you who couldn't care less
I say to you
These are the days
When I thrive and you fail
No longer under your spell or influence
I find making my choices easier
Being assertive
Being true
I have found respect from others
I have found respect for myself
These are the days
That matter to me.

The past is the past
Here and now
Is what is important
Yes
Lessons have been learnt
Mistakes have been made
But life is a classroom
Study essential
Yet putting into practice
All that has been learned
Has come easier than I ever expected
These are my days
These are my goals
These are my dreams
And all will come to pass.

DIARY OF AN INCARCERATED CARTOONIST

Paper Chained editor Damien Linnane interviews John E. Sacks, creator of the comic *Diary of an incarcerated Cartoonist*, a regular feature in our magazine.

So how did your comic come about? Were you ever incarcerated yourself?

Yeah, but only for 45 minutes! I'm retired now, but I was in the military for twenty years. The year before I retired, I was going to court over adjusting my child support. This was in Oklahoma, and I didn't know much about court. I got a court date on a little postcard, but they moved the date to another month, and they didn't tell me. Apparently, I was supposed to call the court house to find out if the date changed, but nobody even told me that.

Anyway, after I missed court the cops came to the Air Force base to arrest me. They had to wait for me at the front gate since they weren't allowed to enter the base. They took me to jail, but 45 minutes later my wife came in and bailed me out. I was joking around, telling her about how hard my time had been, and that I now had street cred for being inside, and she said "You're so full of it. You know, Paris Hilton did more time than you did."

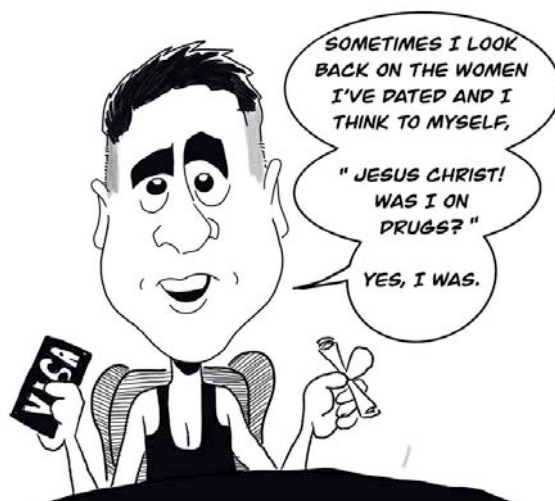
But my older brother did three years for DUI. He moved around a lot, and he never wanted to talk about his experiences there. But I would try to learn about prison by reading and watching documentaries. And I always talked to my brother. He liked to draw when he was in there. One time I said to him that if I was locked up, I would probably do cartoons about what I saw inside. I've always drawn cartoons. Years ago I used to get hired to draw caricatures for parties. Anyway, one day I just started drawing the first *Diary of an Incarcerated Cartoonist* comic on my notepad, I made a funny brochure about coming to prison to take a break from life, "Sleep in our luxurious suites. Eat exotic foods." The ideas have just kept coming to me since then.

I assumed you'd been in prison a long time, because you have a great understanding of issues in custody.

There's a prison documentary here called *Lockup*. They go into prisons and interview people. What I didn't learn from my brother I just picked up from documentaries. I was so into those shows. One episode showed prisoners making jail meals, using crushed corn chips to make a crust and things like that. I ended up making a whole prison meal based on what I'd seen for my mom. She loved it!

Tell me about your pen name, John E. Sacks.

It's a play on the term 'Johnny Sack', which is US prison



slang term for a paper lunch bag that contains a couple sandwiches, a piece of fruit and maybe a milk or juice. They give them to prisoners when they're in lock-down, and that's all they get for the whole day. After the third day, prunes replace the fruit because of the constipation problems occurring after eating these for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Did you have a plan in mind for the comic when you started it, and has it received much attention in the US?

I just wanted to tell stories. Nothing sequential, just whatever came to mind that day. Mostly I just share it on Instagram, @john_e_sacks. A while back I submitted a comic to a prison newspaper here in Texas. They ended up printing it.

What else do you do now that you're retired?

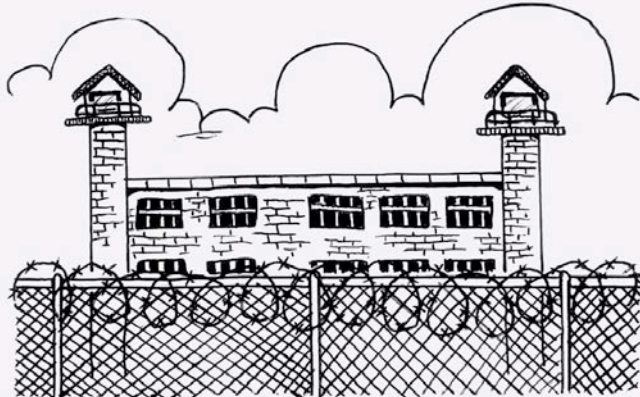
I did one year of civil service after retirement, but I didn't want to do that anymore. So I told my spouse at the time, 'You know what? I'm going to be like that guy in *American Beauty*. I'm going to work at a place like McDonald's. Have a job where I just work. I don't have to supervise anybody. I don't have to worry. I just work! Where she worked at there was a family-owned restaurant in the basement and they hired me and I ended up working for them for about a year and a half. But the building was owned by a company that ended up moving out. So when they moved out, the restaurant went out of business. And after that I was like, "You know what, I don't need to work anymore."

Mostly I'm just enjoying retirement now. I really haven't done much other drawing since I've moved to Texas, the only time I do is when my friends get together and we go to Hooters. I do caricature drawings of the waitresses and give them to them, just for fun. I did one of the Manager too. He's a big bearded guy and I drew him with the Hooters outfit and its got him with a plate in one hand and a beer in the other and saying 'I'm going to show these girls how it's done!' He loved it, he hung it up in his office.

Well our readers love your comics too, so keep them coming! Thanks for talking to us today.

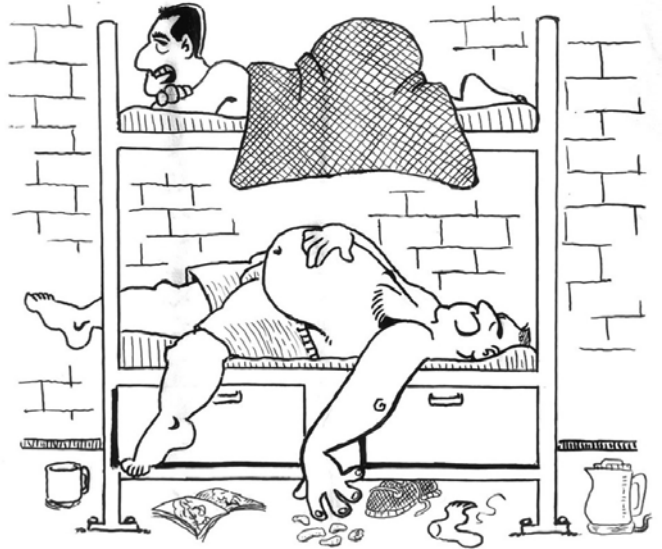
NEED A BREAK FROM LIFE?

THEN MAYBE A VISIT TO ONE OF OUR *TDCJ UNITS IS JUST WHAT YOU NEED.



*TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

SLEEP IN OUR LUXURIOUS SUITES



EAT EXOTIC FOOD



TDCJ

COME FOR A VACATION, STAY UNTIL...

YOU
MAKE YOUR
PENANCE

MAKE
PAROLE

OR
DISCHARGE
YOUR SENTENCE



GOURMET GAOL PIZZA

A RECIPE BY ABDUL HASAN (BAIJEJAN)

Ingredients

½ can mushrooms
1 can capsicum
1 whole tomato (from cold dinner)
4 cheese sticks
Gaol cheese slices (as much as you can get)
1 can chicken
½ can Italian peeled tomatoes
6 olives
Eggplant
Powdered garlic, salt, mixed herbs, chili
BBQ sauce
Butter
9 slices white bread
1 egg
½ cup milk



Equipment

Sandwich maker, foil lid from jail meal, plastic knife/fork



Step 1: Dice capsicum, tomato, mushroom and olives



Step 2: Slice whatever cheese you have available



Step 3: Slice and dice chicken



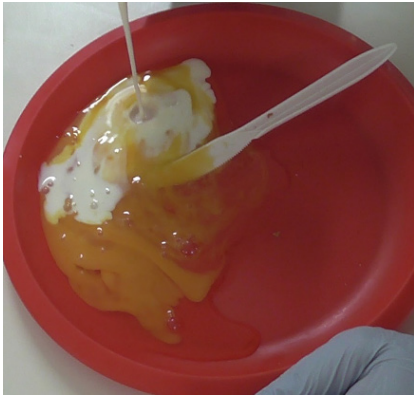
Step 4: Crush canned tomatoes and add salt and garlic to taste



Step 5: Cut crusts off bread and cut three pieces of bread in half



Step 6: Grease sandwich maker with butter



Step 7: Beat egg and milk together with a fork



Step 8: Dip bread in and coat one side. Place wet side down onto sandwich maker. Each layer will take three full size pieces of bread and three half slices.



Step 9: Tip remaining egg/milk onto first layer of bread. Repeat Step 8 to make two more layers of bread on top.



Step 10: Spread chopped tomatoes over the top layer of bread and sprinkle with mixed herbs



Step 11: Add chopped tomato, capsicum and mushroom, then season with garlic and salt



Step 12: Add chicken, then olives, followed by eggplant and cheese. Season with garlic and chili.



Step 13: Coat with BBQ sauce



Step 14: Roll up jail dinner foil and use to hold sandwich maker open



Step 15: Cook for 25 minutes. Remove foil, allow to cool, slice and enjoy!

AUSTRALIAN GUNSLINGER

BY SOKON

Part two of the story of Angus Watson, following the debut of this ongoing series in Issue 9.

"Are you the fellow that shot my mate Durcan?" I lowered my head so as to hide my eyes with the brim of my hat, and without moving my head looked to my left, where the voice had come from. "Well, are ya?" Asked the man, raising his voice. The index finger on my right hand was already touching the hard grip of my gun, it was instinct, and my little finger was twitching. "According to some towns folk, I missed-" I replied. "That's not what I hear." He said.

I turned my head to where the voice was coming from, my little finger still twitching. We were only a few meters apart and I could see his right hand ready for the draw. I was side on to him so I had further to swing to get a good shot if I had to. The odds were against me, I had to buy some time.

"Fella, I don't want any trouble, I just want to find some place to lay my head for the night." I said as I slowly started turning toward him. "You asked for trouble when you shot my mate." He said. "Maybe your mate should learn to control himself when he's drinking." I said. I was now facing him, my little finger still twitching. "You don't know who your messing with, you need to learn a lesson yourself." He said. My eyes were locked on his, waiting for the give-away sign. "Are you going to....." I didn't get to finish my sentence when I saw his shoulder flinch, the give-away sign. Bang! Before I thought about it I had drawn my gun and shot. He fell backwards and landed on the ground, blood gushing from his chest, his gun laying on the ground next to him. I holstered my gun. "Thanks for the lesson." I said as I walked away.

Two gun fights in the space of a couple of hours, I was tempted to get my horse and ride out of this crazy town. I decided not to, I needed a bath and a good night's sleep, and Thiver's bar was holding half a bottle of whisky for me. My eyes drifted to the hotel sign up the street and I started walking toward it.

When I got to the hotel I could hear a piano being played and a mix of voices. The sun had gone down and the town had switched

from day mode to night mode. Inside the hotel was a mix of people drinking and laughing. To the right was three tables with some men and women sitting at them having a good time. Behind them was an old man playing the piano. To the left were a few tables, one with people playing black-jack and the other two with people playing poker. Directly ahead on the opposite side of the room was the bar with a large, well dressed woman standing behind it.

"Hi handsome, what are you having?" Asked the woman when I approached the bar. "I'm after a room for the night and a bath." I answered. "That's three bucks for room four up stairs and there's a bath-house next door." She said. I dropped three bucks on the bar and turned to walk away. "Hey handsome, don't you want a drink before you go?" Asked the woman. I could tell she was big on customer service and the friendly smile was a draw card, but I had a bottle of whisky waiting for me. "No thanks, just the room." I said as I headed for the door. "I'll get some clean sheets." She yelled as I left the hotel.

Most of the chairs at Thiver's bar were now taken up by rough looking men, all armed in some way. There were a few scantily dressed women sitting on laps, drinking and laughing. I saw the barman place my bottle of whisky on the bar with a glass and then give me a nod as if to say "This is yours." After grabbing the bottle and glass I sat at the same table I was at earlier and poured myself a drink. A fellow sitting at the table gave me a confused look, then picked up his glass and left.

The main door was opening and closing so often that after a few glasses of whisky I gave up watching it. What a day, I thought as I stared into my glass that was once again empty. While I was trying to make sense of my day a small roll of money dropped onto the table near my glass.

I looked up at a tall man with a scar running down the left side of his face and wearing dark grey clothes. "Is it my birthday?" I

asked as I looked back down at my glass. "I'm Mitch, the Sheriff of Dusty Creek, and that's what I owe you." Said the man. "Did I win a bet?" I asked in the hope to deter further conversation. The Sheriff pulled out a chair, sat down and then answered. "That man you shot dead just down the road was wanted, that's the bounty payment." "Who said I shot him?" I asked. "I saw you shoot him after he drew his gun on you." He answered.

I never complained about being given money, but I was at a loss as to who this wanted person was. "I know most of the wanted but I don't remember seeing that fellow on a poster." I said. "That's because he's not specifically wanted, he's part of a wanted gang. The Chandler gang." Said the Sheriff.

That name hit me like it echoed. As normal, I had ended up in a heap of mud because of somebody else's stupidity, thanks Duncan. The Chandler gang was the most feared gang in Australia, and the most wanted. No one could stand in their way and they always left a trail of destruction behind them. I knew eight bounty hunters that went up against the Chandler gang when there was only the four brothers and were never seen again. Rumour is that the gang fed them to the pigs.

"Word is that the gang has grown." I said, trying to stay cool and composed. "The last count was 32, well, now 31." Said the Sheriff. There was a silent pause then he continued. "I know who you are slinger, but even you aren't quick enough to take on the entire Chandler gang. If I were you, I would get out of town, tonight." "Thanks for the advice sheriff, but I've got business in town." I said. "Well, I hope the business is worth it." Said the sheriff, standing up and walking off, leaving me to consider the chances of surviving the night. I finished off my bottle of whisky and headed for the bath-house.

The whisky had calmed my nerves a little bit but I was still very alert, processing everything as I walked up the street to the bath-house.

In a small town like Dusty Creek word would have spread by now and it wouldn't be long and the Chandler gang would know that they were one man short.

The bath-house was more of a shed than a house, and when I entered I noticed it was a shed without a floor. An Asian woman sitting just inside the door jumped from her chair as if startled. "You want bath?" she asked. I nodded yes and she hurried out the back door with a bucket in hand.

The small shed had three troughs acting as baths with a chair next to each one, in three corners of the shed. In the fourth corner was a fire-place with two large pots of hot water hanging above it. Above the fire-place was a hole in the roof where smoke was trying to escape.

The Asian woman hurried back into the shed with a bucket of cold water and stopped. I pointed to the trough in the far corner and she hurried over and tipped the cold water in the trough. She done the same another two times and then poured the two pots of hot water in.

After throwing a rag in the bath she stretched her hand out. "One dollar." She said, and then after looking down at my crotch, she added, "Two dollar if you want me help you." I gave her one buck and she walked away looking dejected.

While she was out the back refilling the two pots I hung my clothes and gun belt on the chair and slipped into the warm bath. It was so good to finally get a bath, I had waited days for this rare pleasure.

I knew that the man I was hunting was about four days ride ahead of me. The next town was days away, so a traveler would most likely stop here for a bath. "Do you get many customers?" I asked the lady as she settled back into her chair near the door.

"Yes, beery many customer." She answered. "Did you have many customers about four days ago?" "Yes, many man four days ago." "Did you have a black man customer four days ago?" She thought for a moment, looking at the floor, then answered. "No, had

black man customer three days ago. Pay me two dollars, berry happy customer." "Three days ago, that was good to hear, I had gained a day on him." "Did he say where he was heading?" I asked. "No, no. Berry busy being happy customer. No more talk, you wash." I had the feeling as he was still a bit upset about not getting the extra buck.

The front door burst open and two men with guns drawn rushed into the bath-house. I quickly reached for my gun belt but was stopped by a bullet hitting the chair near my hand. The Asian lady ran out of the bath-house screaming.

"It's two bucks for a bath man." I said. "The boss wants to talk to you." Said one of the men.

To be continued.

CHAPTER THREE CONTINUES IN ISSUE 11, DUE FOR RELEASE IN SEPTEMBER 2023



'Sunset' by 'CH'

HANNAH

BY DR JEDIDIAH EVANS

PAPER CHAINED ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Hannah is serving coffee to a line of trendy kids. There are always trendy kids at this café. It's one of those cool, suburban places. Kids who want to live in the Inner West—or, who don't want to live in the Inner West—but enjoy shopping malls, living with their parents, and the clean lawns of the outer suburbs. They like coffee in misshapen ceramic mugs, cold concrete seats, and austere waitstaff who shift between flirty and standoffish depending on your level of cool.

Hannah is cool, or cool-seeming, but she's also uncommonly friendly. I'm standing behind one of the cool ones, who briskly orders and then departs in the middle of a conversation with Hannah. Or rather, she leaves as Hannah starts that kind of polite, small talk you expect from your barista. We share a laugh, one of those "Well-I-guess-some-folks-are-busy" laughs. Hannah's laugh is warm and expresses a form of solidarity shared with people—like me, I want to believe—who feel like politeness is necessary, but who try not to demand it too much from others.

Hannah asks me the question that her previous customer left dangling: "Busy day ahead?"

It's a question that could be insipid if not asked with the kind of warmth Hannah adds to the word "busy," like she assumes that I probably am, and feels the burden of busyness, and hopes that the day is lovelier than anticipated.

"Well, not busy, but a stranger day than normal" I offer in response. I have a habit of oversharing. I'm always adding those leading statements, eager to start up a conversation anywhere I go. And then I tell her why it's strange.

"I'm teaching a prison writing workshop at Parklea Correctional Centre today."

Teaching in a prison is a weird, universal conversation starter. Sometimes, the conversation is terse and uncomfortable. My audience squirms in obvious discomfort when they learn the person in front of them spends time with criminals. Other times, the conversation is warm and illuminating and full of helpful questions and clarifications and—let's be honest—I'm probably always fishing a little for that glint of admiration or interest that fuels my ego in less saintly moments. Which are frequent.

Hannah doesn't look uncomfortable, nor does she take the bait and say the typical, "Oh, how interesting" or "What got you into that?" which are my typical conversational diving platforms. No. Instead she looks sad and suddenly older and serious. It's not a look you expect to see on strangers. It's rare to see on the faces of young and beautiful people—Hannah is young and beautiful, like everyone in the café. It's that look that reminds you that people have lived longer

lives than you in a shorter time. That age and experience are not the same thing, and never have been.

"Oh," she stumbles, "this might be oversharing, but... my brother is actually in Parklea."

And then suddenly I am a doddering, awkward fool who has no good words left, and no kind comfort to share, and nothing that will mend whatever violence and pain lives under those words. What's worse, I know how tough Parklea is—how unlikely it is that Hannah's brother is doing okay, that he is coping, that he is with good people, that he is rehabilitating.

So now I'm the guy who has been inside the place that I learn later Hannah has never been, and while she's pleased to learn that services like mine exist, I foolishly blather to her that my class is a rarity, and that remand prisoners like her brother have little access to services, and that sentencing will help, probably, but how can I really know that? And so I ramble and ramble and realise that teaching writing to a group of men inside a prison doesn't heal whatever hurt Hannah feels.

Why did I lead with my impressive story that I teach prison writing workshops, if all I can say to someone with a brother inside is that he's probably having a hard time, and things might get better, and that I could look him up?—but at that she looks afraid and I stop saying anything at all.

Hannah is warm and kind and she asks for my order, and I get some mushroom thing, and I sit down, and she brings me my food and coffee, and our conversation lingers like an aftershock, and I cannot say what I want to say. Which is this.

I am sorry. I don't understand. I'm scared for your brother. I need to believe that there are ways forward, even for him. But you are doing so well. You are luminous and lovely and whatever pain your family harbours, you exude warmth and light and that's a miracle. You are a miracle.

But instead, I drink my coffee and eat my mushroom thing and try to avoid eye contact with Hannah, because what do you do with that kind of naked vulnerability and pain when you're standing at a counter, ordering coffee?

There were better ways to respond. Truer things to say. All I know is that I shouldn't start conversations with strangers if I'm afraid to stare headlong into the beauty and depravity and hope and hopelessness of their lives.

Hannah isn't afraid. Maybe I still am. Even after all this time.

HAPPY TRAVELLER

Twenty years ago, Marcus Proctor was a sex worker walking the streets of Europe and Los Angeles. Today he's writing and starring in TV shows. Paper Chained Editor Damien Linnane spoke with him about his incredible journey and his recent memoir, 'Happy Traveller'

So where did the idea for your memoir come from?

I travelled about six years. I had a bit of a unique way of seeing the world so I thought I might share some of the crazy adventures. It's kind of amazing that I'm alive.

Where did your travels start?

It was 1999 and I'd just gotten out of a real head-fuck of a relationship that was going nowhere. My sister had left on her own journey the year before, so I was just like, "Maybe I should do that."

I started in England. I went to London and was staying in a gay hostel. The manager there was a recruiter for an online like escort agency. He was like "You want to make some money." And so that's how it started. I had fun adventures for a couple of years, just accumulating amusing stories to email back to friends. I was also a bit of a disco bunny so ecstasy was happening, then finally I went home to get a bit healthier again because I'd lost about a stone. I went back to travelling again and sex work because it's easy money if you don't have a visa. But it was different the second time. The first time I was arranging to meet customers. When I went back, I was working on street corners. It was a lot darker too. I think what drew me back to it was a lot of childhood abuse I'd buried. Like some part of me was trying to tell me something. I was trying to work through trauma.

Working on the streets started in Cork, Ireland, and even though it was a dark time there were still some funny adventures as well. A guy pulled up to me once and we were talking about prices when three gay bashers came towards us and yelled "Faggots!" The guy was about to drive off and just leave me there, so I hung onto his window from the outside of the car and lifted my feet up. He was like 'what are you doing?' and I'm like 'just drive!' He took off with me hanging onto the side of his car. We got away from the gay bashers but then there was a cop car on the other side of the road. I just kept my head right down so the cops couldn't see me. Eventually, he pulled up somewhere so I could let go. I was wanting to still try and close a sale but he just took off straight away with the tires screeching. I had to walk all the way back the same way while avoiding those guys and the cops.

By the time I got to Los Angeles, meth was everywhere. Every second person I picked up would offer it to you. I'd always liked drugs, and I didn't have an addictive personality, but meth was something I could feel getting a hold of me.



I was working on Santa Monica Blvd. But during the day there was a porn theatre, the Pussycat Theatre, and you could sometimes pick up guys there in the car park. I was just walking up and down the lane-way that would connect these gay pubs. There was a guy sitting in his car at one of the pubs, and I was like "You're cute." So I went up and started talking to him, asking him what he was looking for. I offered him a blowjob for \$50, and then he pulled out his badge and told me he was an undercover cop.

I was a bit like 'whoops' but I was also cheeky, saying "What do I have to do to get out of this?" He was pretty cheeky too and grinned at me, so I got in the car and had to give him a free handy to get out of it. I just thought that incident was funny, but it was the cops patrolling the streets at night that could be the problem. It would be like two or three in the morning and they'd be driving up and down. You'd move a couple times, but they'd still recognise you of course. If they stopped, I'd just take off. One time, I jumped a few fences and hid under a parked car for about half an hour. I could see the cop car driving back and forth looking for me, but I had my Walkman so I was happy. I just stayed under there until I thought it was safe to leave, then I'd go home. I

wouldn't work the rest of that night because it was kind of obvious and I didn't have like a different jacket I could wear to disguise myself or anything like that so I'd just slink back to my house.

I never had terrible experiences with the police but the people that I'd talk to or that I'd see regularly on the street would have those stories, as well as black eyes from being locked up in the police cells for the night. They would get gay bashed in there and some cops would turn a blind eye and wouldn't help them. It was mainly transgender sex workers who had that problem, in my experience.

This was around 2004. The world has started to wake up in ways since then, but you can't just erase decades of some peoples feeling towards transgender people, sex workers or queer people in general just being degraded for no reason. There's nothing unnatural about being queer, plus you don't know why sex workers are out there doing that. Some people enjoy it, but others are doing it because of childhood trauma, mental health issues, or drugs.

I mostly kept to myself in prison, I was the quiet guy just reading his book or drawing, and I only got in a couple of arguments. One was with a guy who wouldn't stop talking about how much he hated gay people. I got angry with him and asked why, because I have a lot of LGBT friends. He said it was because he was molested as a child. I had to explain to him that there's a difference between being gay and being a paedophile. He didn't get it at first but I was able to get through to him after a while. My point was that he wasn't trying to be a horrible person, he was just taking out his anger on gay people because he didn't understand.

I had a friend like that. He was molested as a kid and his way of getting through that was to abuse gay people. And I said the same thing, you know, paedophiles are everywhere across the board. Female, male, gay, straight. But he actually already understood that, and he admitted that he was just taking his anger out on gay people.

Were you the victim of any violence yourself while you were working?

I had to talk myself out of getting shot point blank in the face by a client. He pulled up and we were arguing over prices and he finally agreed to mine and we went back to his house in South LA. We finished the deed and I was getting dressed and he put money for his original price next to me, gave me a menacing look and walked away. I was like, "Remember what we agreed on mate?" We started arguing and he went to his drawer and took out a gun and stuck it in my face. I said "Look, I can bring my man around and get the money, do you want me to do that?" I didn't even have a man, but he said, "Do you really think I give a fuck about your man?" And I was like, "No, but you know, this is a business transaction, right? And I want my money."

He ended up giving it to me. I was really calm; you build up a lot of walls in that arena. You could just do anything and I wouldn't react. And then he was like "I'll take you back to your spot. You know, I'm a man of my word." I'm like, "Whatever." We got in the car he said, "You're too good for this sort of life. Why are you doing this?" And I'm thinking, "Oh my God, you're not Oprah. Just drop me off thanks."

I just got out and I went home and just for a second it hit me that the experience could have really ended up badly. That it could happen to anyone on the streets. A lot of them could just be killed and never be seen again. This is just how dark the world can be and it's an interesting paradox, because I felt at home on the streets at night. Because you at least know what you're dealing with. In daytime, people wear masks all the time, and there's also a freedom out there when you're doing the streets like that. But the things that are out there, and the way people live their lives, it's just insane.

There was another time where this guy took me to do whatever with him and a friend, but they stopped in South LA, and robbed me at gunpoint. One guy asked for my shoes. And I'm like "I'm not giving you my shoes. I'm not walking fucking barefoot." And he's like, "Okay, well, just give me your wallet and phone." I gave him that and eventually took off and hid under a car again. I was there for like 40 minutes because he was just driving up and down the street looking for me. I thought he'd finally stopped but then he reappeared again ten minutes later, and that was around that time that I was like, "I really should stop doing this."

How long did you work the streets for?

About six years, on and off. I think the final straw was an experience I had with a guy who offered me pot. We went into an alley and he tried to rob me. He had his hand in his pocket and he told me he had a gun pointing at me, but I told him it was so obvious that it was just his finger. He had a go at me but I pushed him out of the way and ran out onto the road. There was a car coming towards me and I jumped in front and yelled for help but the guy just drove off. I could understand, because it was LA and he was probably worried he'd get shot. Anyway, the guy ended up barrelling me over and had me on the ground. I was punching him but he got me in a choke-hold and I could feel myself passing out so I was just like. "Fuck it," and I gave him the money. Five minutes later, I was blowing someone else, trying to earn the money back that I'd lost, and I started to dry retch. I managed to keep going but that was the point where I realised it wasn't funny anymore.

I think when you're taking drugs but also just living a dodgy life, it can do something to your soul where you kind of cross into a dark place. And even if you come back from it, there's a darkness that you might not be able to shake off.

What are you doing with most of your time now?

Writing and acting. My past acting credits include being on an episode of *Queer As Folk* after the casting director saw me in a gay bar in Toronto. I'm currently working on writing three shows. An Aussie drama (*Elliot's Creek*), a UK dark comedy (*Heaven Can Wait*) and a US comedy (*Mikey*). It's hardcore getting a show up and running. I've placed myself in the lead role for all three because I haven't gone through hell for no reason, and I'm promoting my memoir as well.

Is there good money in writing TV shows?

Once you sell the fucking thing, yeah (*Laughs*).

You can keep up with what Marcus is doing via his Linktree: www.linktr.ee/TheRealMarcusProctor

BOOM GATE GALLERY

ART FOR SALE

Boom Gate Gallery is the only gallery in NSW solely dedicated to the promotion, exhibition, and sale of inmate art. The gallery is located outside the security boom gates at Long Bay Correctional Complex, allowing members of the general public to enter the gallery without entering the gaol. Visitors can view paintings, sculptures, hand-painted clap sticks, and didgeridoos, as well as videos showing inmate artists discussing the making and meaning behind their practice.

The gallery displays the work of current Long Bay inmates, and former prisoners from all over Australia. Inmates currently at other Correctional Centres can have their work displayed on the gallery web-page. Prices are arrived at through collaboration between the artist and gallery staff. 75% of the sale price goes back to the inmate, which they use to buy more art materials or send home to their family, while the rest covers gallery fees.

Members of the general public can purchase in-person in the gallery, or via their website and Instagram page.

© @boomgategallery

www.boomgategallery.dcj.nsw.gov.au/



Two headed Tikis

By Kaluseti

\$300 each

300 x 100 x 80mm, Hebel block carving



9 Wing maxo

By Tony

\$400

400 x 500mm, Acrylic on canvas



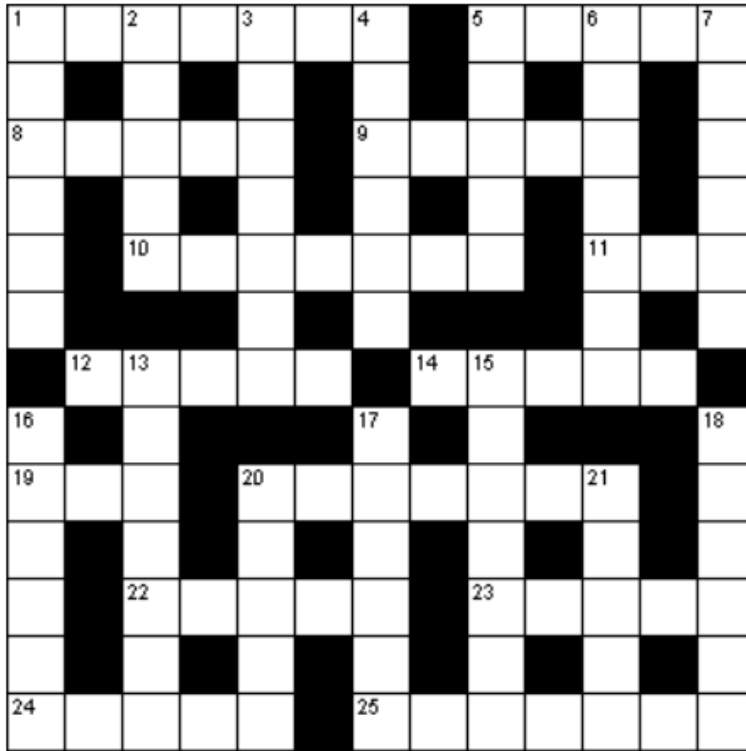
My Dreamtime totem #1

By Jai

\$2000

800 x 800mm, Acrylic on canvas

CROSSWORD



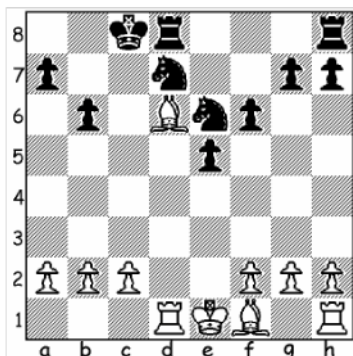
Across

1. Restricted (7)
5. Perils (5)
8. Detection device (5)
9. Villain (5)
10. The sheltered side (7)
11. Flightless bird of Australia (3)
12. Chasm (5)
14. Complies (5)
19. Prohibit (3)
20. Diplomatic (7)
22. Nimble (5)
23. Light beam (5)
24. Reside (5)
25. Boring (7)

Down

1. Food store (6)
2. Decoration (5)
3. Goals (7)
4. Fin (6)
5. Stiff (5)
6. Stage set (7)
7. Repress (6)
13. Dressing (7)
15. Perplexed (7)
16. Overseas (6)
17. Dialect (6)
18. Tusked marine mammal (6)
20. Test (5)
21. Lariat (5)

CHESS

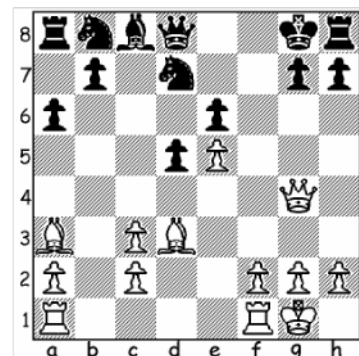


Mate in One Move- White to Move:

1. _____

Get the nominated colour to a position of checkmate in only one move.

Answers on page 40.



Mate in One Move- White to Move:

1. _____

SHOUT-OUTS

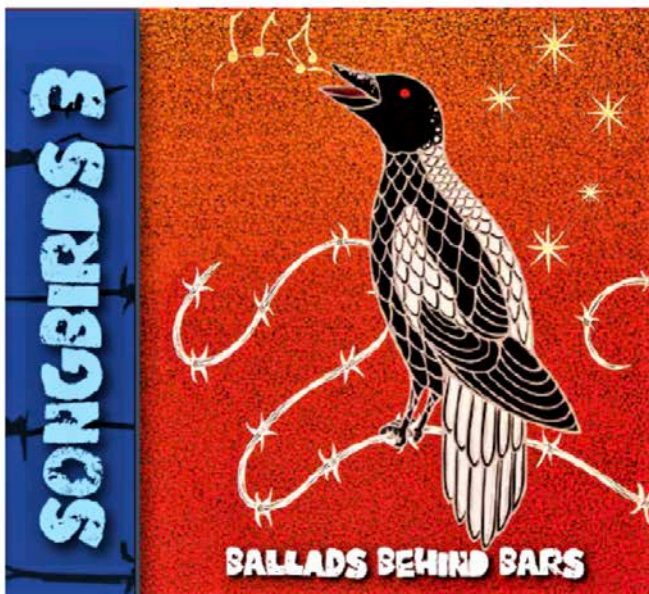


If you'd like to give a shout-out to a friend or family, send it to us!
We will not print ID numbers or overly personal information.

"Shout out to all the DTC family all over QLD, Remember every day gone is a day closer to home and no matter how far or how long we are apart there is no amount of time or distance that will break us.
FAMILY IS FOREVER.
100% OR NOTHING!
LOVE FROM
RAIDII

Big shout out to all the women at MNCCC and CLACC XOXO KMCD ♡ BP4EVA
Beth

SONGBIRDS



Songbirds 3 is available now

Find it on Bandcamp!
<https://songbirds.bandcamp.com/>

The Songbirds Project facilitates song-writing, theatre and arts workshops in NSW prisons. All music from Songbirds 3 was written and recorded by persons in custody. Money from every download purchase goes back into the Songbirds program.

Special thanks to the Songbirds program for sharing the incredible artwork of 'Tiny' for our cover art.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

ISSUE 11 DUE FOR RELEASE IN SEPTEMBER 2023



HISTORY OF PRISON NEWSLETTERS: THE GRADUATE

We interview former prisoner and author Ray Mooney about his time as editor of *The Graduate*, a magazine at Pentridge Prison, Victoria, in 1973.



NINTH INTERNATIONAL CURE CONFERENCE

Editor Damien Linnane writes about travelling to Nairobi, Kenya to speak at and report on the Cure Conference, a prison reform event held by Pan Africa Cure.

"Where's Duncan?" I asked. "I let him go this morning." Answered itch.
"Are you nuts?" I snapped. "He's part of a gang that wants me dead and you just let him walk out the door?" Itch shrugged his shoulders.
"He's only here for disturbing the peace, I had no reason to hold him."
"We don't have time for you to blow your nose Angus." Interrupted itch.
"Dry your eyes. I hear that the gang has 31 members and at least 10 of them are hardened gunslingers." "28." Said itch. "Angus has killed 3 since he made it down." "Couldnt wait for backup?" asked itch sarcastically. "I didnt plan on killing anyone, I just wanted a bath." I answered.
"Itch turned his attention to a plan. "I know where they are but thanks to you Angus we may not have to chase them, I think they will be coming here." "Sure itch, I dont mind being bait." I said with a sarcastic tone.
"I dont want anything to happen in down, I have to protect the down's people." Said itch. "Fair enough." Said itch. "So we wait Angus up in a hut out of down."
"I was about to argue the point of being bait, but we all want in..."

AUSTRALIAN GUNSLINGER PT 3

Continue the adventures of Australian Gunslinger Angus in part three of this ongoing exclusive story written by 'Sokon', a NSW prisoner.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

L	I	M	I	T	E	D	R	I	S	K	S
A	E	A	O	I	C	U					
R	A	D	A	R	R	O	G	U	E	B	
D	A	G	S	I	N	D					
E	L	E	E	W	A	R	D	E	M	U	
R	T	L	R	E							
A	B	Y	S	S	O	B	E	Y	S		
A	A	A	A	A	A	W					
B	A	N	T	A	C	T	F	U	L	A	
R	D	R	C	F	A	L					
O	A	G	I	L	E	L	A	S	E	R	
A	G	A	N	E	S	U					
D	W	E	L	L	T	E	D	I	O	U	S

CHESS ANSWERS

Bishop to A6
Queen to E6

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE NEXT ISSUE?

IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS ON WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO SEE IN PAPER CHAINED, PLEASE REACH OUT AND LET US KNOW!

Post suggestions to:
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