

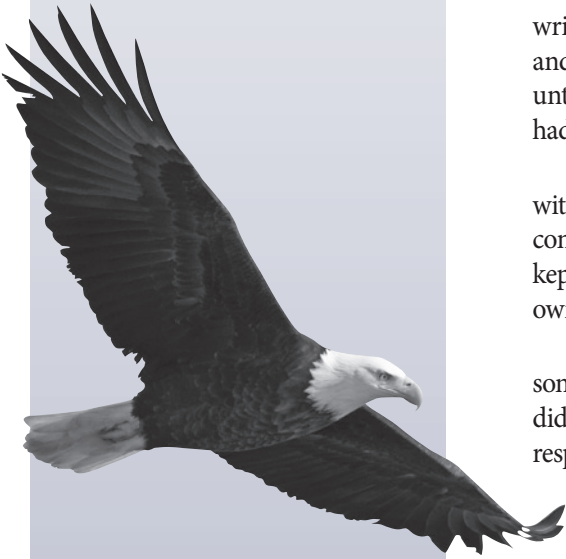
Compassion

Written by Death-Row Prisoners

140 W. South Boundary Street | Perrysburg, OH 43551

November 2013 | Vol. 16 | Issue 73 (Bi-monthly)

*Publishing compassionate
and introspective articles
written by death-row
prisoners.*



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www.compassionondeathrow.net

Letter to Freedom

Dear Freedom,

Right about now I'm one of your least favorite individuals, but I felt it imperative that I write you. Not as a means to further disgrace you, but merely to be totally honest with you and stop being in fruitless denial. I admit I've abused and took you for granted. So much so until it consumed all of my common and God given sense, blinding me from seeing what I had in you.

I allowed myself to lose focus of your unselfish beauty and liberties you tried to share with me. You were so good to me, yet I treated you so badly with my arrogance and complacency. It was downright stupid of me to keep thinking you would wait for me as I kept doing you wrong. Though there were times when you did wait, I was too smart for my own good and chose not to recognize your loyalty.

It pains me to know that I've been so cruel and unusual in unjustly punishing you, someone who had my best interest at heart. You never asked for much in return and I still didn't come through for you. I sit and constantly ask myself, would it have been so hard to respect you? Why didn't I embrace you the way you always embraced me? I should have known better than to ignore the signs of you slowly distancing yourself from me due to my carefree and reckless behavior. Now as I sit here writing you, I declare my realization of cheating myself out of everything you had to offer me.

As a man and with extreme remorse in my heart I just wanted to apologize for neglecting one of the best things that ever happened to me. I also know that chances are slim that I'll ever see you again and I wanted to get these feelings out of my system. When it is all said and done, I'll be spending every passing moment reminiscing about how I found you instead of how I inevitably lost you.

Written with remorse, love and longing,

Antony



Antony Cain
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA

Myself to Blame

I am the master of my life. To decide is mine, whether wrong or right.

I'm given a choice in every situation, the master of each path, of each destination.

Choose wisely, choose wisely, wisdom cries, don't choose wrong! Because, the consequences of poor choosing, can last so long.

Now, I find myself sitting, in one heck of a mess!
A life turned upside down, and full of stress.

I may blame it on the devil, and I may even curse at God. But, most likely it's because of the path I trod.

When I take a look in the mirror, there, I realize and see. All along I am to blame, my own worst enemy.



Duane Allen Short
Ohio Death Row
Chillicothe, OH

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

CONTACT US AT:

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Please Note: Any opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individuals writing them and not of Compassion or other staff members.

Editorial: Overcoming Adversity

Challenges are as much a part of life's terrain as the four seasons. As the alchemists' fire purifies precious metals, so do trials. They also can build character, faith, and test resolve and resiliency. I chose this theme because this is a time and season of adversity in my own life, for close friends, and for our beloved country. Today is the sixth day of another sequester, causing an estimated 800,000 federal workers to be furloughed, further stymieing economic recovery.

Our brave soldiers and my friends face constant dangers and daily threats, passing bombed out craters and sites where their colleague's lives were taken while serving in Afghanistan.

Each of you face your own personal tribulations, and some seemingly hopeless situations; I have been fasting and praying a long time while waiting for your breakthrough.

Be encouraged! Keep praying and obeying! Your breakthrough is nearer than you think. Sometimes doors that appear closed are waiting for us to walk through. Other times one door must close before the next door opens. Whether it is the end of an appeal(s), for sooner or later this thing must be finally resolved, or perhaps the loss of a job, end of a relationship, or entering in to eternal life through the portal of bodily death. Perhaps it is facing the daunting challenge of starting life anew without a loved one that has transitioned.

Often times it's scary, dark and painful! You may have to cry sometimes. But tears are a gift to release pain. Pain is a gift to humble us to pour our hearts out to God. Faith is the only key that will unlock that seemingly closed door.

In Rev 3' Jesus said "I have the key of David. I open and no man can shut. I shut and no man can open. I have set before you an open door. I know your works." Pressing ahead through adversity is an act of grace.

This virtue is so poignantly expressed in worshiping with two Brothers, Hill and Holsey whose appeals are exhausted, yet press ahead with such peace, quiet strength and unwavering faith.

Bro. Holsey has blessed this issue with his powerful reflection on death in "Moment of Thoughts." I too, as well as all who love me, are also facing a very difficult challenge, as I just learned today my final appeal was also rejected. Never wanting to forget the

perennial anguish the victims' loved ones suffer either. Another very important assist to overcoming adversity is the gift of presence. Something we can all be.

In times of distress, familiar faces with compassionate hearts or with a gentle touch can offer immeasurable

strength and comfort. Jesus wept with, and comforted Mary and Martha and arrived four days late, yet was on time to raise Lazarus.

As for me, in addition to Grace and power of presence, when I feel over burdened by life, I choose prayer and reading testimonials of others who overcame my same challenges, or that speak directly to my issues of tremendous help. They are like water and sunlight to a withered plant.

Regardless of who or where you are, the fierce winds of adversity will test every foundation. Don't ever count yourself out, nor limit God. He specializes in the impossible, nor allow tomorrow's fear to rob today's joy. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." – Lam. 3:22-23

*It is of the Lord's mercies
that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not.*

*They are new every morning:
great is thy faithfulness.*

— Lamentations 3:22-23



Marcus Wellons
Co-Editor
Georgia Death Row
Jackson, GA

Letters to the Editor:

In The Name of Jesus Christ

Grand Father created a fantastic make believe monster man named Ug, who dwelled in a dangerous environment with crocodiles, alligators and a twenty foot long fat python snake. The swamp man wanted to be beautiful, but disliked his negative side. Ug saw his body's reflection in the murky water, and grumped silently. He continued finding fault, condemning, criticizing, complaining; attacking objects of attention with pre-conceived judgmental notions. Peace was not found in changing appearances. "I hate life. Reality is awful. I want it to be different. Can harsh conditions be avoided?" The immature thinker sloshed through knee deep waters; splashing loudly with each

step. Rain fell from dark nebulous storm clouds directly over head. A pesky inch long antagonizing mosquito landed on the tip of his nose, and bit down hard. He cursed the weather, lamenting his suffering; judging life as not worth living. The un-enlightened dude limped about with two sore feet; in the shade of the bug infested vegetation; completely unaware of the hungry crocodile, concealed behind a fallen tree, watching every move he made. An alligator sank underwater and swam toward his submerged feet and legs. Ug should have and could have placed attention on what was truly beneficial but instead focused upon dislikes, difficulties and despair. Suddenly, the

inner voice within his sub-conscious mind, projected out a spontaneous alert: "Danger! Run! Move! The python snake was ready to strike at his foot. The crocodile and alligator opened up their mouths, determined to have him for lunch. Ug quickly dropped the anxiety in his mind, and escaped secure and safe. He awakened from his dream, and heard: Let it go until it's gone. Why cling on to what must pass? Mind is free to change at last. Holy Spirit eclipsing fear! Enjoy liberty, Praise God in captivity.



Charles Henry Diller
Assistant Editor of
Outside Communication
Dallas State
Correctional Institution
Dallas, PA

Heralds of Compassion

I can't even begin to imagine what you are going through. I want to give you some words of encouragement. God knows everyone's heart, and He wants to use us, to bring light to those who think there is no light at the end of the tunnel. I am that light for each and every one of you today. I want you to know what God said in His Word. (Ez 33:11) "As I live; says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his evil way and live". I know what the court system says but I want you to know what His Word says: (Pro.21:1) "the King's heart – the court system – is in the hands of the Lord; like rivers of water, God turns it wherever He wishes."

God does not want anyone to perish. He wants everyone to be saved. I was once in the same boat that you are in. God gave me another chance. I am writing to each of you who receive Compassion's newsletter. God wants everyone of you to repent now so that you can live, and carry His words to others; like yourself, and encourage them to repent, and turn completely to Him. I ask each one of you to open your heart up to God, and repent of anything that you may have said, done or even thought of that would cause you to feel separated from His Love. (Act 3.17-19) "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshment may come from the presence of the Lord." I pray that God looks on the sentences of the court system, and grants each one of you, His Servants, boldness to stand strong, and speak His word with great faith. I pray that God will do for you what He did for me. (Ez 26:36) "I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you." God bless each and every one of you. Keep up the good work. Keep God first, and everything else will fall into place.

Herman Starks
Hays State Prison
Trion, GA

Watching God Work

I'm presently serving a state sentence in a county facility due to overcrowding within the California Department of Corrections. I will be here many, many months yet.

I received your name and address from Willow Creek Community Church in the Chicago area and I'm writing today as I'd like to be added to your mailing list.

Jesus is my Lord and Savior and although I wouldn't choose to be here, I find this time productive and purposeful in both my spiritual growth and sharing and studying with others. Watching God work and seeing a spiritual focus develop in the lives of others is awesome.

I look forward to your publication! Thanks for your ministry.

Dale Hall
Amador County Jail
Jackson, CA

Editors Note: Upon request from non death row prisoners we try to send limited Compassion subscriptions at no charge for as long as we are financially able.

VICTIMS VOICE

God Utilizes Our Sins To Draw Us Closer



Marietta Jaeger Lane
Three Forks, MT

Hello all of you good folks!

The last few issues of Compassion have been so well written, and full of truth and wisdom we all need to grasp – inside or outside the wall! My husband, Bob, and I go into Montana State Prison once a month with a team – 1-1/2 hours with guys on low side security and 1-1/2 hours with high side guys. As in and with

Compassion, we are all always impressed and gifted by the men there, coming into who God created them to be!

Interesting, isn't it, how God utilizes our sins to draw us closer to God's self. Most of the fellows would have never discovered how gifted and skilled they are in the "arts," were it not for their time behind bars.

I really appreciate the writers for Compassion, for sharing their wisdom and talents with us out here. I often need to be reminded myself, about what they have to say!

Also, did you hear that Ron Paul has come out publicly against the death penalty? Trust that will be helpful when next we abolitionists go up against our "hang 'em high" legislators. Blessings on all.

Editors Note: Marietta's 7 year old daughter, Susie, was kidnapped and murdered while they were on a family vacation.

I Am the Maker of My Footprints

What kind of foot prints are you leaving in your wake? Who's following in them and where are these prints of yours leading? Think carefully before you answer.

During yard recreation I asked my cousin and fellow prisoner, Jimmy, what's been his experience having his nephew Jamun confined to the same prison as he. With a heavy heart he responded. It pained me seeing him come walking through that sally port gate, knowing he was following in the footsteps of mine and his dad's. The grief in his voice did not go unnoticed by my ears; the anguish of his heart was felt in a way he will never forget.

Increasingly, more than ever, prisons are the places where more family reunions are taking place; two and three generations of family behind bars serving time. This type of tragedy, destructive cycle, has especially been damaging in many African American families and it doesn't appear to be letting up.

Sometime after having the conversation with Jimmy, as if someone upstairs wanted me to know for myself of this ordeal, my younger cousin Jaman was moved in to the cell block with me. We began frequenting

yard recreation where we would talk, and where I disclosed the conversation to him, the conversation his Uncle Jimmy and I had before his departure. Not surprising, he told me of how the crime went down for which he was incarcerated... I couldn't help but see the familiarity between some of my crimes and his. I felt overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and conviction.

An apology was in order. I figured this to be a good start to getting back on the right track.

This destructive cycle cannot be allowed to remain as is. So I am choosing to change it from malevolency to benevolency.

I am pleased to announce promising results are already flourishing! Jamun knows he also holds influence over his younger siblings, thus has a responsibility. Furthermore, he has decided to annul his affiliation to the gangster life and follow me as I endeavor to establish an anti-gang movement. A non-profit



organization I'm calling N.O.G. "Neutral of Gangs" initiative.

I am indeed the maker of my footprints. They mustn't be made with recklessness and foolishness, but with boldness and confidence for those who walk behind me, who walk behind them, do and will depend upon the examples I leave behind in my wake.

Kenneth Williams
Jamun Simmons
Arkansas Death Row
Grady, AR

Prejudged Prejudice

I was profiled for wearin' a hoody and the color of my skin.

Yet, underneath this hoody, you fail to see the man within.

You view me as a criminal, or some kind of a thug.

Yet, in your mind of pre-determination, what gave you the right to judge?

To profile a man, because of the clothes he wears, or the nationality of his race, makes people weak-minded and shallow, and surely is a sad disgrace.

Does life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, not apply to a man like me?

Is not such entitled to walk freely about, as a part of our society?

Too many ugly things have happened, because of people who think like this.

So much has gone on for way too long, as an Intelligent race it's high-time we quit!

We're all flesh and blood; need to graduate, to a higher mentality plateau.

Stop seeing things through tainted eyes, and let the poison of discrimination go.

Haven't we all seen this way too

much, from generation to generation?

Yet, things will never get better

or never change, if we don't have

the determination.



Duane Allen Short
Ohio Death Row
Chillicothe, OH

The Last Call

Allow me to tell you a story of sadness and grief...

Twas the night before Jesus came and all through the house, not a person was praying, not one in the house.

Our Bibles were laid on the shelf without care, in hopes that Jesus would not come here.

The children were dressed to crawl into bed, not once ever kneeling or bowing their heads...

And mom in her rocker with baby on her lap, was watching the late show while I took a nap.

When out in the east there arose such a clatter I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash, tore open shutters and threw up the sash.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear, but angels proclaiming that Jesus was here. With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray, I knew in a moment that this must be THE DAY!!

The light of his face made me cover my head; it was Jesus returning, just as He had said.

And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth, I cried when I saw Him, in spite of myself.

In the Book of life which He held in His hands, was written the name of every saved woman, child and man. He spoke not a word as He searched for my name, when He said, "It's not here," my head hung in shame. The people whose names had been written with Love, He gathered together to take to His Father above. With those who were ready, He rose without a sound, while all the rest were left standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late. I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.

I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight, Oh! If only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this story the meaning is very clear; the coming of Jesus is drawing dear;

There's only one life and when the last call comes, We'll find that the Bible is true after all.



Richard W. Rhodes
Florida Death Row
Raiford, FL



Untitled Original
by



Anthony LaMarca
Florida Death Row
Raiford, FL

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If you or someone you know is a U.S. citizen and is either attending or planning on attending a college or university (academic or religious) as a student and had a family member murdered, please submit an application.

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Ask for Compassion's office

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Death Row Prisoners Please Write To Help Youth!

Compassion is gathering essays written by death row prisoners on words of advice on how juvenile offenders can best avoid going back into prison. Recidivism rates are very high among youth and your words of encouragement and wisdom may save a young person from having to reenter the prison system. This book, like "Today's Choices Affect Tomorrow's Dreams," will be sent without charge to at-risk youth in juvenile detention facilities throughout the United States. Send your submission to:

New Book Compassion

140 W. South Boundary
Perrysburg, OH 43551

To Our Readers:

Anything death-row prisoners write may jeopardize their future appeals. Knowledge of these facts may limit the scope of a prisoner's expressions.

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

We Can Change, Too

During an interview on CSPAN 2 (Book TV) a college professor hit the nail on the head when she said, "Society has been convinced that prisoners are the only people on the face of the earth who can't change." A "life" or "death" sentence is, in essence, saying the same thing. (Denying "good time" credit is essentially saying "we don't care if you do change.") Time changes everyone and everything. Even the pyramids have suffered from the constant wear of sandstorms, and Niagara Falls from waters erosive powers. Prisoners will do much the same thing.

At times, people wonder who are those truly sorry for their crimes, which ones just had a hard life that sent them astray, or were caught in desperate circumstances; and who are the deliberately mean, cruel, vicious criminals. Erosion reveals what is inside, under the surface. Prison will reveal a person's true character over time. This is why some people become better or worse in prison. Time gives us the opportunity to reflect on our past, observe our present, and plan our future. Over time, the cumulative effect of one's situation causes a desire for better circumstances. At first everything in prison is new, but it soon gets old and you become dissatisfied, realizing that this is not the environment you want to be in. Well, change it!

As the saying goes, "it's better to light a candle than curse the dark". We have to see the need for positive change in our lives. Only then will we be motivated to do something. To change yourself is to change every situation.

Do you want to be the same person in 20 or 30 years that you were as a teenager? I see old men who have been down since they were kids but haven't emotionally, mentally or spiritually matured, while they have grey hair, bald, bent and broken bodies. There's few things sadder than seeing a 50-plus year old child. Maturity is growth, and growth is change.

Change can be frightening; but it can also be your friend. The time of prison coupled with the power of change will reveal the true self. Once the outer layers of the world's trauma erode away, the tender core is exposed.

To better yourself is difficult no matter who you are or where you are, but particularly so in prison. There are too many negative forces beyond your control. Everything seems to conspire against you. It's a slow journey, changing what's inside, that has been programmed and reinforced for decades. With persistent determination we can all change to become the people we want to be. No matter what society may think, don't allow anyone to convince you that somebody can't change; in prison or out. Personal transformation is done for oneself not others. Be you, for you have to live with yourself, every minute of every day.

Commit to change, because it's worth it; and it's real.



Kevin Marinelli
Pennsylvania Death Row
Waynesburg, PA



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140 W. South Boundary St. | Perrysburg, OH 43551



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

**PRISONERS OF DEATH ROW
YOUR ASSISTANCE WILL BE APPRECIATED**

Suggestions and Guidelines

- ▶ Write about an experience that had an effect on you.
- ▶ Write about how to minimize hate in a diverse prison environment.
- ▶ Write about what you can do to be a better person.
- ▶ Write a poem to share with Compassion readers.
- ▶ Write in a way that will give your audience an informed understanding.
- ▶ Avoid writing about your individual case.
- ▶ Avoid arguing against the death penalty.
- ▶ Your article does not have to be religious in nature.
- ▶ Try to limit your article to 400 words or less.
- ▶ If possible, enclose a photo of yourself.

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A Warriors Sojourn

Out of the solitude that blankets me,
Dense as a London fog in May,
I thank the One True God
For my unconquerable soul.

In the cruel grasp of circumstance
I have not flinched nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the needle,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and will find me unafraid.

It matters not how far the walk,
How charged with punishments the days
God is the Master of my fate:
I am the Captain of my soul.



Tai Chin Preyor
Texas Death Row
Livingston, TX

Moment of Thoughts

Death, so many threats, faces, personalities, shadows, and daggers... And so I wonder how surprised one should be when the essence of death serves notice against their living? Am I? As though someone special? Absolutely not! For I am a man that recognizes truth pulled from inevitable roots. And while such uprooted truth may be bitter upon the taste buds of knowing, at least appetite of knowledge is fed spiritual truth toward healthy understanding, rather than being special somehow exempts one being obsessed although over indulged in such foolish thinking... And how foolish is a man to believe himself exempt from that of inevitability. Especially when vast tombstones from birth to aged, begs to differ... Oh how the currents of a man's thoughts toss him from one objective unto another concept. For solace, sometimes a man must permit himself to fall within his inner ocean, to sink himself to the depths of his heart, to see his life beating, to see lava of his life-flow flowing through the channels of his quaking veins... And while a man cannot sojourn beyond oxygen's permission at least he knows for an hourglass grain moment, the inevitable has not registered mourning across tombstone's countenance... Is that solace?

Maybe or maybe no. But it is though
for me, another moment of thoughts.



Robert Wayne Holsey
Georgia Death Row
Jackson, GA