

PRISONER EXPRESS

Anthology

of Poetry

Volume 4
Summer 2009



Welcome to the fourth volume of the Prisoner Express poetry anthology. I am mailing this to all who submitted poems for both Vol 4 and Vol 3, as the poems came in at different times during our poetry collection period, and some of you submitted poems for Vol 3 but they arrived after the poems had been selected. We have received many great poems these past months, and a team of student and community volunteers read thru your poetry, and select the entries to be included. We will post the anthology on our website www.prisonerepress.org. Please know our volunteers are choosing what resonates with them. What they choose does not signify what is best, and if you are not chosen for inclusion in this particular anthology, I encourage you to continue to send in your poetry. As we depend on volunteers to type your entries, sometimes poetry comes back to us without the name of the author on the poem. I have searched the paper copies but could not find a couple of the poems and guessed as to who the author was or just wrote author unknown. If you find a poem of yours that is not attributed to you, let me know and I will be sure to correct it in our next newsletter or poetry anthology.

We will begin collecting poetry for Vol 5. In fact any poems received this past month have been assigned to the Vol. 5 collection, and we will begin the process of having volunteers reading and selecting entries for this work. We are also illustrating this anthology with some of the art that has been sent in for inclusion the Fall 09 Prisoner Express Art Show. Please consider sending in any art you might like to have included in the show. Money has grown tight in the free world, and any stamps and donations you can afford to share with the program help defray the cost of our operations.

I appreciate the opportunity to work with you all on expressing your creative side. Please send any feedback that we can use to help design courses and projects that you find meaningful.

Best wishes for a bright tomorrow.

-Gary

"The Thinker"

Author Unknown

There is this statue, a man of stone –
In the midst of a part, its plot sat alone.
With this pose, as if in deep thought –
I wonder, what it is that he sought
There was no theme, any more, then what
the eyes had seen –
So, it leaves one to stretch their own
daydream.
What drew the man to such a pose?
A worry of the world? Or something as
simple as the clothes?
Was it frustration of a matter – maybe
questions of love –
Ponders of friendships – or quotations
from above?
Whatever it was, he's been captured in time

Without the answer yet reaching his mind.
But now, I must be moving on as well –
With no answers, of what story did the
mans pose tell.

A gust of wind brushed across my face –
In that instant, I knew why he was in his
place.

To have one stop, and take in the air –
Maybe to question, also, why he was there.
Not to enjoy that certain place – nor – time

But, to search the thought, and expand
ones mind.
Within your thoughts, you can find yourself

And honestly knowing who you are, is true
wealth.

Maybe, that's what he was doing, while
sitting alone –
When someone came along, and captured
his pose in stone.

"I Picked You a Flower" Marigolds

By: Frank D. Johnson III

There's red, orange and yellow marigolds
Let me tell you how this story unfolds
I walk by these marigolds every single day
They always have something refreshing to
say

I wish, I had time with them to sit and talk
But the guards always shout "less talk –
more walk"

There's an un-written law that says do not
touch

When I see them I think of you, who I love
very much

This garden is where I escape in my dreams
There's no more reality, life isn't what it
seems

I know the trouble that comes when acting
out a thought

I wasn't concerned with getting caught
See, in that cluster of flowers I saw you
Remembering the precious moments we
had, I knew then what to do
I didn't hesitate, I had already picked and
choosed

The orange and yellow ones, with two I
couldn't lose
After grabbing them I ran quickly to my
cell

Lieutenants and sergeants looking for me,
someone had to tell

I hid them under my mattress in a dirty
shirt

They asked me to consent to a locker and
bed search

I didn't want to lie so I had to submit

In my heart you lay, there they could never
get

Handcuffed then marched to segregated
solitude

Twenty days in lock up for violating prison
rules

I know that our love possess unlimited
powers

I have no regrets for picking you two
beautiful flowers

I hope you truly enjoyed this story I've told
Remember it everytime you see an orange
and yellow marigold

"The Senses of Love; [Revealings]" Peter K. Holmes

To see you,
Reveals the eternal beauty that is love.
To touch you,
Reveals the softness – the tenderness that is
love.

To smell you,
Reveals the sweet enticing aroma that is
love.

To hear your voice,
Reveals the captivating and delicate music
that is love.

To kiss you,
Reveals the desire and passion that is love
But; without you,
The heart that is love reveals only
loneliness,
Only sadness and despair – you are love

"Through These Years" Robert W. Price

Even though the miles between us are so
long;

Your sweet voice and precious memories
are where they belong...

Deep in the center of my heart is the place
I speak of;

They will remain there, always, along with
your love...

I know a lot of good times between us are
lost;

If I could, I'd change that, regardless of the
cost...

You've been there for me thought it all;
Picking up the pieces when I took a painful
fall...

The appreciation.....I can't even find the
words to say;

My mind so clouded like a dark rainy day...
I try my best to think of thankful things to
do;

But just come up empty, with a simple
"Thank You"...

I sometimes pray that this will be enough;
 Never forgetting I made your life quite
 rough...
 Please forgive me for the things I do and
 have done;
 Sometimes choosing the wrong ways to
 have a little fun...
 These things I do, are not to cause you pain
 or shame;
 And you must know your not the one to
 blame...
 Do remember this, my years left, a lot or
 just a few;
 It's from my heart mom, when I say "I
 LOVE YOU"...

"Dreams"
Terry Ellis

As nighttime is falling I look towards a
 dream.
 An image of you is such a beautiful thing.
 I fall into slumber and your vision appears.
 There you are standing with eyes full of
 tears.
 We walk and I hug you with a gentle
 embrace.
 Your tears are resolved and a bright smile
 in there place.
 The just when I'm about to hug you again.
 I awake from my dream and realize where I
 really am.
 I'm locked in a cell I almost forgot.
 It seemed so real it left me with this
 thought.
 If you believe in your dreams you are going
 to find.
 Dreams are a reality of your subconscious
 mind.
 So don't you ever think I'm gone forever.
 Because tonight I'll sleep and bring us
 together.

Untitled
Edward Dwight Chapin

I crawled on my belly
 To the gates of Hell
 I reached forth my hand
 And rang the bell
 The gate swung open
 With a terrible clatter
 Out stepped the Devil
 He said: "What's the matter?"
 Life up on Earth
 Is so terrible and blue
 Can I come in and live with you?
 Society is so horrible
 It makes me so sad
 Living up there
 Is really that bad
 Crime in the cities

Pollution in the air
 People are terrible
 They just do not care
 The cops take control
 Of everything we do
 There's nowhere to hide
 That's why I came to you
 The Devil shook his head
 With a great big grin
 He opened the door
 And welcomed me in

"High Clouds"
Thomas R. Lundehl

High clouds
 That shine bright
 Make me happy
 Sunsets beautiful
 And dreadlocks nappy
 Take a second, and forget
 My gaze on Him is set
 As I step
 Out of the boat
 And walk upon the water
 The Father He smiles
 At my wonder
 Atoms split asunder
 In the shiny glory
 Of a sealess world
 I take my rest
 In the high clouds
 The dust of
 His feet.

"An Appeal"
Leslie S. Amison

Our basic crime is no crime at all.
 Mental illness is only a break down
 Of the biochemical levitation
 That keeps us on good terms and working
 With our fellow men and women.

But, we are demeaned for not carrying
 The torch of normality.
 And even those who are normal
 Are often labeled grossly:
 A Jesus complex because of a beard.
 A homosexual because of long hair.
 Seldom are our personal mythologies
 considered.
 Seldom do psychiatrists even speak with the
 patient.
 Too often psychiatrists shoot from the hip.
 Seldom does the Public Defender even
 speak with the client.
 Seldom are hearing in the back room
 anything more
 Than kangaroo fantasia done to Star
 Chamber

Pablum and psychiatric(k) flap.
 Too often drug overdoses are substituted
 for humane social interaction.

When can the mentally disabled see justice
 Under the USA Constitution?
 Neither mandatory jury hearing nor
 accurate records.
 America is too often darkness.
 The public does not even realize we are less
 dangerous
 Than the average citizen, especially on
 proper medication.

Why not show a USA son or daughter
 some light?

Why not peel away the indifference
 That so often murders a mentally disabled
 individual's spirit

"Ma, I'm Sorry"
Dedicated to D. Horton
Tomieko N. Davis

The list of the wrongs is so long,
 Not even sure where to begin,
 These words could be put into song,
 It still would add up to great sin.

No mother should have to endure
 Or try to cope with all the pain.
 In your mind, ill be just as pure,
 Into your arms, I was first lain.

Spent many a night up weeping,
 Then, was only thinking of me.
 Not even worried with sleeping
 Nor what my ways would bring to me.

I know this is so hard for you,
 Worked long and hard for me to thrive.
 Now am forced to wear only blue,
 Some act as if I'm not alive.

All the people I tried to please
 Have vanished and abandoned me.
 Plagued like I have a bad disease,
 Their goal now, far from me to flee.

Not long ago, we were like one,
 Times were so good, all were around.
 I see now, as bright as the sun,
 No hands reach down, I'm on the ground

Pray I could do it all over,
 Would heed all that you taught to me.
 Crystal clear now that I'm sober,
 Hear, I now, in my mind, your plea.

I'm sorry are the words that play,
 So sad they're all I can promise.
 Over and over, all the day,
 Right now I know its all amiss.

Soon these fences will be knocked down,
Believe, and don't give up on me.
These lost days will again be found,
We'll rejoice! How great life will be!

"Prison Is"
Tomieko N. Davis

Prison is something different to each of us.
Like the changing colors of the setting sun,
Its impact differs from one to another.
It is up to you to paint your own picture.

Prison is home for those with a life
sentence,
Nothing to look forward to but these
fences
Most have given up, for all hope has been
lost.
When they take their last breath, their time
will be served.

Prison is a vacation spot for drug fiends,
Ate up, resembling shells of their former
selves,
Given food, clothes, and a place to lay their
heads.
Their work awaits them as soon as they go
home.

Prison is a haunted house for so many.
Memories play vividly in our minds
Invading dreams and all waking moments,
Seen on the face of the one with the blank
stare.

Prison is a playground, just like being
home,
Hang all day with friends or play cards in
the park.
Family is here, "brothers," "cousins," and
"mothers,"
Prison kin – no blood shared between them
at all.

Prison is a stop sign, a time to reflect
On your past mistakes and how to do
better.
Ignorance has brought you to this place this
time,
But stupidity will bring you back again

Prison is my ringing bell, loud and so clear.
There is a greater plan for me; it's so near.
It's time to study and gain understanding.
There's so much for me to do when I'm
released.

"Picture Perfect"

Roger Vasquez

If I could, I would paint a perfect picture
You and Me the perfect mixture
To be with you, it's like being in the sky –
If I could have you I'd probably break
down and cry
I used to dream for someone like you
But it was only a fantasy
But when I met you it turn into reality
You show me dream really come true
From the first time I laid eyes on you
Sometimes I get lonely
Only in search for a hug with two things in
mind
Freedom and the woman I love.

Untitled
Ross Bonilla

The shackled flesh hangs heavy from the
bones of this sinner
And we weep for the stigmata children
Bloodied with the kiss of God
Listening to the calling
The wasted barren head space that only the
wicked perceive
Bowing low to the silent gods that once
held sway over man
The ancient leaf crumbled to yellow dust
Breathing the mélange of illusions
We dream of lovers
Folded upon each other
Lethargically the willow men cure their
offspring by the flame
Pulling the nectared sap from their tear
filled eyes
Slowly the manger cracks
Frayed by the passage of the owl
We surrender our love to the dark
An offering to appease the wicked
Praying that somewhere it will be returned
magnified
In hope that we have not become the vain
child that throws their pearls before the
swine
Curled in the webbed corner we slice the
heart from the center
Bleeding the last liquid love that runs red
Head cradled by the maggot we slumber
Dreaming of the last taste of flesh, the last
feel of teeth
The last sensation that you were once mine
to hold
Filtered, her voice slips through the
thoughts that bind me
Hooked on her tongue she pulls me
Closer and closer we become
Only to be separated again

"Amends"
Brandon Lee Garvin

Back down memory lane, again and again...
Too fast to stop, to slow to begin
Slow pain remaining, it's not the end
Gotta choose who are your foes and who
are your friends
Where'd it all take you too, what road then?
Why did they send you for dividends in the
Penn?
And who gives a damn about memories to
lend?
What kind of blend amends this cold
hearted sin?
Want me to ask you this again and again?
I said, "How the hell do we make amends?"

"No Title"
Brandon Lee Garvin

An intricate syndicate of minds hell sent.
Carved on a cameo of a memory I once
knew
Independent yet delicate are these times
well spent
Like a vision of freedom, which is
experienced by a few

"Cruise Control"
Brandon Lee Garvin

When the time comes for you to open that
gate
It's "goodbye and farewell" to those who
hate
Got a breath of fresh air... damn, finally
there
The day flies by with no time to spare
Welcome back to the place you were once
before
But do it right this time – hard to the core
Family and friends stand tall and they're
down for you
A grown up son or daughter sayin, "I sure
did miss you."
It seems like eternity since you last seen this
place
Responsibilities and priorities all up in your
face
Cruizin' in the ride, jammin' to the new cd's
Arm hangin' out the window, hair blowin'
in the breeze
Kinda' stressful, but excited, at the same
time confused
Like a lil' kid again, so dame happy and
amused
Takes awhile to get used to, I been there...
I know
Just take it as it comes though – slow and
on "Cruise-Control"

“The History of the Universe Lies in the Children”

Dr. Richard Sunday Ifill

Somebody needs to “love them”
They are the cream of the planet earth
The CHILDREN that is...
They are God’s greatest gift to us
They represent our “FUTURE”
If they perish...
Our future,
Will enter into a dark age...
The SUN may not shine
And the MOON may not cast it’s glow...
But the children represent our future
They are our passport to create...
Everlasting history.
If “we” do not love them NOW
We may not get another chance to love them...
TOMORROW!
See the children standing there,
Don’t be blind...
Look at them from the corners of your mind...
See them “glowing with the sunlight?”
They are the real PYRAMIDS.
The KEY into tomorrow.
We determine how they will bud...
We determine whether they will become:
Dr. King, Malcolm, Garvey, Rosa Parks,
The Queen Mother Moore or Corretta.
They are our E equals MC2
Our Plat’s Apollo Creeds, Marley’s and
Billy Holiday’s and Miles Davis’.
These little one’s are our Christ’s...
Our Buddha’s and Muhammad’s...
The one’s our there, standing with –
Tears as big as raindrops...
Because we are neglecting them.
Didn’t someone teach you that through the children...
We live “forever?”...
Therefore, love them and hate them
because no one...
Taught them
To see them, is to understand them.
Because the children will create tomorrow’s history...

We create today’s history,
We create our future...

Ah, but the children are our seeds of tomorrow’s growing tree.
Therefore, we must be careful how we plant our seeds,
Least they get caught between the thorns and...

Come back to “sting us” in the spring.
Or they can spring up with the sunshine,
Like EVER GREEN TREES...
Bearing good fruit all year around.
Cast them not to the grown,

Least the pages of our history...
Becomes shadows written in the ground...
That will fade away with time

“I Changed For You”

“CHILDREN...”

You are the essence of my life,
The spirits moving within my soul,
My breath of life...
And the “purpose” and “reason...”
For my existence.

You are the seeds of my heart,
And my “life line” into tomorrow.
I could not go on living the way..
I have been, because I realized—
Hat my “actions” and “decisions”
Were hurting your lives.

And destroying your chances...
Not only to grow and mature
Into “Kings and Queens;”
That you all are destined to becoming,
But, they were also destroying. And
disconnecting my “bond”
That a “Father” should have with his children,
All of whom I love very much.

So...

I CHANGED FOR YOU.

I have up my old negative ways,
The bad habits,
Misdeeds, imperfections and wrong doings..

I realized that I had to sacrifice...
These bad images that made me a poor example—

Of a Father, because as a Father,
I came to realize that my “CHILDREN,”
Are supposed to be the most important—
Aspect of everything that I do. I realized
that I had to start setting a better example,
Because without my CHILDREN
Life would have no meaning...

So

I changed for you

CHILDREN.

You are my anima...
And being by anima’s,
You animate my life in such a way—
That I breathe because of you
Your energies motivate me
Your vibes feeds me strength...
And inspired me as a father
To want to change for myself
When I look into your eyes,
I see the “reflections of the universe.”
Like “Sunlight”...

You sustain it...
You made me realize the fact, that if “I failed”...

Your worlds would have shattered like
“Broken Glass”...

So:

I CHANGED FOR YOU

CHILDREN...

Never again will I ever leave you....
To journey through life alone,
Without direction or guidance;
Or without the kind of father—
And role model that inspires you to greatness...

And motivates you to become the best in
and at what ever you do in life.

I promised myself that I would strive to
make your “WILLS”

And destined become a reality...

SO: I CHANGED FOR YOU.

I changed because I realized,
The pain and suffering that I was causing
you,
And because I saw that I was the reason
For your empty thoughts, low self-esteem,
Broken dreams, sadness, nights of tears,
Growing with fears and endless nightmares.

SO:

I took pride in myself...

And in doing so,

I CHANGED FOR YOU.

I knew that one must change so tha this
children

Can become the future leaders of our
civilization;

The doctors, lawyers, judes, governors and
Presidents

That can lead the world into....

Phoenix of Paradise.

For these reasons my children...

“You” can proclaim to the world...

That “your” Father.

Changed for you.

“Beautiful Fall”

Author Unknown

As a gentle wind caresses the sun-kissed
leaves
The birds nonchalantly flit here and there
Beautiful reds, oranges, golds, and
yellows...
Colors so profound pervade the autumn
air.

The leaves rustle, whispering of days to
come
Enchanting those that walk below
Sunlight glints off the upturned foliage
In harmony the leaves wave to and fro.
Though at times we may seem to be caught
up
In the mystery or the magic of it all

We'll always have a deep appreciation
For the beauty known as fall.

"I'm Just a Mouse"
Ricky Pearson

I'm just a mouse trying to find a way
through this labyrinth life searching for the
answers to questions I know not and of
course the cheese. The trappings of this
maze have me in a constant daze, so all I do
is wander and here and there I hope tests of
time that I've withstood up to now, beyond
have prepared me for this rat race that I
continue to run.

A race from start to end with smell my only
clue. I race headlong into walls and now
headlong into you and reality. Screaming,
with a jolt I come to the day of flesh and
blood where skies get blue and gray and
blue again. And though I succumb to this
numbness that I feel I know inside,
That the cheese is getting closer.

Do I count?
Am I superficial?
Are you?
Worries consume
Eat and eat and eat
And tweak
And cry.
I want to live,
But then again,
Do I?

"A Letter Never Sent"
Charles Marques

What's up bro. Long story short, I need to
use your address for parole and if I had
your phone# that would be great. I hate to
bother you but my date is coming up and
it's getting late. If you don't mind please let
me know. I'd really love to hear from the
kids and you too bro. It seems like I rarely
know where you're at. At least I think you
are having a ball. I ain't mad about it just
missing you all. Listen I understand about
moving at the speed of life and all the back
biting and strife. I also understand
everything I was missing 'cause behind
these walls I have had the time to reflect on
how I was broken and tripping. Maybe I
was wise or just plain lucky either way it
worked out and it's kinda funny. How this
sight was gained at such a low price where
others have grasped it with a much higher
sacrifice. One thing's for sure, there's
always time for reflection when you're

alone, it's quiet, you ask yourself hard
questions. I find myself seeking solitude
more and more as time goes on. Not that I
haven't come to peace within my
environment. In fact I have made a few
good friends in which I count myself
blessed. Solid peckerwoods who will stand
with me through any test. For them, I pray
only the best knowing they have to stay.
They encourage me to change my wicked
ways one at a time, while thanking "God"
all I got was a dime. Five years a young
man had to burn five more a mature adult
he will return. All my dreams and plans
must come to fruit. Before all, I am an old
outlaw chasing crystal loot, turning fortunes
on one more proof. Surviving trails and
drink from hidden wells. Beating back
death from the Greeks' grave. I prevail as a
gypsy street knave dancing through this
crazy maze. Like butterflies in a sudden
downpour, I am caught by the surprise in
your eyes at recognition of intelligence.
Then saying under your breath who the hell
is this unrepentant fool. Just what am I
supposed to do? Maybe live and love 'em
like some Jesus bones and a muppet. Yes,
no, maybe? This ain't sesame street. I am
living proof you got to lump shit and hump
it like a dog in heat. I would sooner get
between a lion and his meat than between a
player and his treat. Something sweet like
Ashes and Red wine or Gems
superimposed over satin spread mattresses.
Callin' all you freaky actresses. I'm back
mackin' a heart attack waiting to happen.
Strapping young blade with a fortune to
make. How many more lines will it take?
Live free, fast and with a sense of
compassion. It's a grass roots happening!

"The Message"
Brian Roberts

What separates us is not our skin
What we have or where we've been
What oppresses me oppresses you,
It is to each other we must be true

We are torn apart by society, lashed at with
fists.
What is missing is kindness, a brotherly
kiss.
This is a world subject to ruin
Hateful words and weapons. What are we
doing?
We have all in our lives prejudged someone
Labeled a book by the cover

Prejudice is a choice, ignorance and fault.
Why must we pay the price so easily
bought?
The choice to hate goes deeper than
generalizations.
Let's stop the tearing down time for new
creations!
Do not justify oppression,
We must learn that all things are connected.
Society has branded itself with a racist mind
Children are taught to hate, not to be kind

We do not live with spies, crackers, niggers
and chinks
Can't you see we are in this together? Please
stop and think.
We are all the same, my blood too stains
red.
We need to awake the soul from the dead.
Remember the message of the mountain
top
It doesn't matter what others think,
There's only one colour, or together we
sink.
Through love we may just one day succeed
One blood, one God, that's all we need

"Stuck"
Brian Roberts

I've entered a world of sorrow and hate
Because long ago I made a mistake.
I sit alone, watch life pass me by.
It all started with a little white line

Walls surround my every move
A golden life, turned to blue.
A letter, a visit, that's all I ask
Laughter, a smile, a thing of the past.

There's no place to be myself
No corner, no hole. No damn help
Every day I'm told to walk a straight line
The road ahead, a tough one to climb

Play the game of appealing your case
But deep down you know there's no damn
way
Some coffee, a rip, a little canteen
The power of persuasion, that's all you
need

A world built on bricks of despair
Separation by design, that much is clear
I walk the track, around and around
Searching for peace to block out the sounds

A hole, a ditch, stuck like chuck
Pray for a ladder, or just a little luck
Some give in, change their name to missy

The pacmans of the system, each day a new
sissy

Food so bad, tasteless and raw
I force it down, no money for the store
Maybe someday it will all get better
I hope so, cause I'm stuck here forever!

"In the Beginning"
Johnathan Thompson

In the beginning God said "Let there be
light," then he punished me
He said my life would be full of drama,
surrounded by death and the penitentiary
Plagued with a disease to be the darkness
and bring harm to others
So I disrespected my father and turned a
deaf ear to my mother

From the start I was put here to be a
nobody
But I'm built with fire in my heart, I came
here a somebody
From the beginning I was told I was worth
nothing
But with my head held high, I turned my
nothing into something

In the Beginning God said "Let there be an
arch to divide heaven and water".
Then dropped me off in the desert – a
lifeless place where I turned darker
So they called me black meaning I was
hostile and stained,
And I'm treated as such. That's why I'm
filled with hate and pain

In the beginning God said "Let there be
grass and seeds for fruit trees"
Then in spite brought forth a different
grass that harms my community
But who am I to ask God about the grass
or its seeds?
My judgment stayed cloudy from the
smoke of the strange weeds

In the beginning God made stars to bring
light to the dark
So I smile because I was thought of from
the very start
Knowing that I was on God's mind in the
beginning when he first made seasons
Tells me that I was part of the plan to uplift
myself from the Demons

In memory of my mother
Anner Lee Thompson
11-19-50 – R.I.P. 1950 – 2001

"My Black Heart"
Johnathan Thompson

Go ahead and laugh, I see it in you
You wanna see me fail
But I stand strong on my own
I'm a strong black male!

So real
You would think I'm made of gold
Out of my suffering
Came the strongest soul!

So deep is my heart
Yet it's a scarred place,
Beating at rapid speed
Unable to catch so don't give chase!

I know no such thing as defeat
For I am born to use my mind,
My heart is the sun after the rain
A black man born to shine!

Beating hard for those of my community
Leading brothers from the darkness
With my head held high
I give you my black heart!

To those who wonder...

"Truth by this Species of Property"
Marcus Bailey

We're locked up, doing time for things we
didn't do
We're locked away, for things that certainly
aren't true

It was self-defense I swear to God, it's how
I felt
The life of a slave was too much weight for
my belt

See I was raised by the system, even trained
by the system

Now I'm being blamed for their living
It's kind of ironic,
That this illness I have is chronic
Centuries of desensitized brains,
Government developed pains
Slave mentalities instilled from the date of
our births,
Leading us to believe that we've chosen our
worths

But it's all a mirage a psychological barrage,
meant for distraction
To lead our attentions away from their
actions

Which are the same as ours,
Made legal by their state and federal laws
Just let me explain

We all have choices but who do we blame
It's an obvious matter!

Just look at the patterns
A sensei teaches his pupil what he knows,
But holds back just enough to keep in
control

Then a teacher or coach teaches their
students strategies, on how to defeat their
enemies

Before long, it's not only learned
But a part of you're anatomy instinctively
served

Psychological breeding in its purest form
Passed on and on to generations born
Leaving them with no option to think

Destined from the start to sink
Mentally locked away doing time behind
untruth

Past down making innocents pay
Giving them internal time to do
And that is the truth, but this species of
property

"Lessons"
Like you, I grew up doing most anything I
wanted

Even when family and friends became
dubious or daunted
Physical harms now hurt like those in my
mind and it's jaunted
Sometimes it's alright at others to get foggy
and haunted

Even still I do my best to stay focused
doing what's right
Sometimes 'Cepted like when my mind
battles giving me fight
I see and hear phantoms attacking from
darkness and light
I duck, punch, and run still they find me
and inflict great plight

So I try over and often to keep on truckin'
like ya'll would
It gets very tiring though like my mind's out
choppin' wood

Few days I'm elated when all is well and
things are good
But on most I get miffed cause it
S bad or not as it should

Some folk just don't get it they think you
act as you've been taught
I know that ain't true else victims behind
would number naught
Yet I'll not lay it down now see over all I've
always fought
One new help I'm learning to ply love n
truth as I ought

Oh life has its rules which ain't always writ'
just ask some crooks
Ain't no harder followin' those in the tomes
of two books

Mustard-grain-size faith is needed you can't
see it by looks

It shows out by whose laws you keep and
prayin' by the nooks
Now I pray all to seek truth n love to soar
high like birds

Cause when we don't we stink yep you
guessed it just as fresh turds
I hope these runes feed all well like mackin
biscuits and curds
Here follows lesson and trysts with justice
the old j word

Sittin' here for a foggy crime doin' time
some justice
And I'll get leave whens-day say so the
state's from of just- is
My God Yahweh will know when I've
atoned enough for just-as
I pray I'm changed in the twinklin' worth of
his just-us

"Vapor Trails"
**Patricia Barker and Kenneth
Humphries**

Heaven and Hell are upside down!
As men lie dying on the godless ground
The shy is on fire—Death's angels in flight
As tracer rounds and vapor trails
Perpetually fill the mirrored nightmare sky
(They were written by Puff the Magic
Dragon
And screaming phantoms as they fly)
Teah, red smoke brought 'em in this time
And we're all glad to see them
We don't pray to them (instead of God) for
no reason

Fuck, man, another soldier just fell
Well, what's left of him
And you have the audacity to tell me
That life has, oh, "real, heart felt meaning?"
Well, let me introduce you to something
Look over there—LOOK! He's not
moving
DEAD! Tell that man about your emotions
and feelings

There's a man running—he has but one
arm
From the stump his life's blood is gushing
He falls, too, in this field of the dead
There's no way of getting it out of my head
Echoing screams (MEDIC!) insanities
madness
In each man's face an emptying sadness
As dismembered humanity attacks us
Marines
But we dig-in, build foxholes, keep semper
fli-ing
Do our best to keep breathing, not dying
'Cause a soldier fights for freedom
It's how we make our living
Where blood and bombs are the norm
And making peace by way of killing

Becomes just another job we're paid to be
doing

Napalm, flashing in the jungle at night
A man has to stand and fight
Never will I forget that smell
I know the smell is the same in Hell

"Hummingbirds and Runningbears"
Kenneth Humphries

Listening to the birds singing, she begins
humming,
As I sit at her feet, under this big o'
cottonwood tree,
Waiting for another story that recounts
history

Her every word carved in stone to me (the
child I used to be)

She's looking older than these Ozark
Mountain hills
Wrinkles as deep as this holler we live in
Brown eyes twinkling, contrasting against
her long grey hair
That's flowing—sometimes braided—all
the way down her back

Now she's reaching for her cigarettes, her
red lighter,
For year's she's only smoked one brand
(her favorite) Vantage,
I worry for her—she smokes too much—I
couldn't bear

But she tells me not to be silly (and shakes
her head)

She'll die of something much grander than
cancer

She (my grandmother) named me yanu'adisi
(Running Bear)

She said my two year old legs were always
running EVERYWHERE!

Much like these forty-two year old tears, as
I remember her

"Granny, Granny, the little people are
hiding in your house!"

"Runningbear, are you sure? In my house?
Really? But how?"

"This morning I awoke and heard them
talking! About me!" giggling,

"Well, they are my friends of the Tsalagi,
you little halfbreed," smiling

And another time

"Grandma, I brought you a picture, it's me,
your runningbear, in the army..."

Sighing, rewinding lost time, "My favorite
grandson" reminiscing, fading, drifting

I lean down and kiss her on the cheek, dark
and leathery, hickory smoke smelling
sanctuary

She takes me in her arms, hugging me –
how much time's left? I'm scared and
wondering.

And another...

In the middle of the night, coming in from
out of own, unexpectedly

Knocking on her door, waking her up,
patiently, "Who's out there?"

"It's your wandering grandson, I got a
surprise," door opens slowly but wide

"Who's this pretty girl with you?"

"Grandmother, she's, well, meet my wife."

Another

"What ya doing out here on the back
porch, lovely lady?" alone, but animated,
pretty

"Oh just watching the hummingbirds fly
around the feeder... They're so busy!"

"Well, um... I was fixing to sight – in my
30-30. We're going deer hunting this
morning"

"Sit and watch the hummingbirds with me
a minute, son—They're trying to tell us
something."

And finally

Another knocking in the middle of the
night—my door this time.. "Grandma's
gone"

She'd lost a leg, then the other – death
taking her piece by piece- my brave kolanu

We buried her under another big
cottonwood tree – oaks and cottonwoods
as faras the eye can see

I hung a hummingbird feeder from a low
limb, I couldn't stop crying... "gv-ge-yu-hi
e-li-si."

"My"
Cristobal Garcia

My drink

Will offend you

My hand

Feeling for some

My God

Will forsake you

My my my

Voice is the lion

That screams for attention

My words are the bullets that kill

The silence

My exploitation

My instability
 My tendency
 My my my
 My high
 Intimidates you
 My eyes
 Pierce through
 My demons
 Chase after
 Every pill
 My my my
 Cry of thunder
 Trembles dwn like fire
 My perpetual view
 Sees you for who
 You pretend to be
 My thoughts
 Provoke
 Subconsciously
 My smoke
 Keeps you awake at night
 MY!

**“Silent Screaming”
 Clifford M. Nowell**

An ensemble of emotions,
 Rage throughout a young mind,
 Warped by incestuous acts,
 Illegally and insidiously obtained,
 By coaxing or intimidation.
 Neglected of parental passion,
 Cravin’ encouragement and approval,
 Inviting acceptance of immorality.
 Sadly taught sexual transgressions,
 Are physical equations of love.
 Invitations of lustful congresses
 Are readily extended, bringing
 Future harm, invisible dangers.
 Psychogenic states go unnoticed,
 Sexual improprieties deemed normal,
 Gender lines drawn, then crossed,
 As physical aggressions prosper.
 Denial of sexual access,
 Shock, stun, flabbergast, angers,
 Introducing series of self rejections,
 Accompanied by imagined verbal slurs,
 Accompanied by imagined verbal slurs,
 Destroying a fragile confidence.
 Imagined looks of contempt,
 Degrade thoughts of self-esteem,
 Igniting anti-social behaviors.
 Confusion, fear: clearly in view.
 Needs, wants: out of reach.
 Desperate yearning invades wrecked
 psychs,
 While early learning reverts/diverge,
 Upon unsuspecting youthful victims,
 Needful of tender loving acceptance,
 Silently screaming for rescue
 Will they ever be heard?

**“Baptized”
 Anwar Tapia**

Born in Mexico
 Land of corn: staple of the poor
 Empty bowels cryin’ out for more
 Baptized, in the murky cold waters
 Of the Rio Grande Rapids

Living in the bleak shadows of America
 Land of abundance
 And obese stomachs
 Striving, searching, hungry
 For the sweet American pie

Instead we eat
 Of the grapes of wrath
 And toil all day
 In sour low pay jobs
 Then hunted down and pushed back
 To our native cornland.
 Empty bowels cryin’ out again
 Re-baptized, in the murky cold waters
 Of the Rio Bravo rapids

**“The Name of the Game”
 Dana Crawford**

Mama always said that when you play with
 fire, you’re bound to get burnt
 And if you’re chasing tail they’ll be a lesson
 learnt

So many times lust has led us along its trail
 At the end there was always this awful smell
 I used to wonder if the devil could’ve
 drawn a conclusion

Found love in a woman named Mary Clare
 to be a better solution
 I used to run with a man named Big Bank
 Hank

His best friend was Dollar Bill who loved
 to smoke dank
 Now Mr. Dollar Bill was known as a cold-
 hearted brutha

Some even say he was a greedy mothafucka
 Heard he once stole a man’s woman and
 left him for broke
 Took his car, skipped town and left behind
 a rail of smoke

Now we all know how Ol’ Cane killed
 Abel,
 Seen Mr. Crack Pipe lying on the living
 room table

And if you think that’s cold
 Look at the graveyard, its filled with the
 young and old

They say the good die young
 And when other people’s business hit town,
 it’s best to play deaf and dumb
 Jack Daniel shot 7up for coke
 Read in the paper that it all happened in
 Pensacola

Russian roulette shot craps with Smith and
 Wesson
 It took many many years before he learned
 his lesson
 Miss Kitty was pretty pretty until her health
 started to fade
 Then word hit town that Richard gave her
 AIDS
 They had a daughter named Lexus who
 survived the test
 As beautiful as she was she was a big ol’
 mess
 Crazy how she failed to put herself in check
 Married a man named Lincoln that died
 with her in a nasty auto wreck
 Ummmm...ugh! Yeah, I’ll say the same
 But that’s the way it is, that’s the name of
 the game

**“Untitled”
 Jeremy Biddle**

My feelings and thoughts are evil and fiery
 I’m afraid to express them, they might
 ignite me
 I feel like Satan has me in a choke hold
 Lord here is my hand please take ahold
 Lord pull me out of this black hole
 Just like the scriptures foretold, I turned
 away now demons possess my soul
 I’m about to have a breakdown, I’m losing
 control
 I’m in a battle with Satan, it’s spiritual
 warfare
 I’m reaching and does anyone care
 Lord are you going to help me or are you
 just going to sit there and stare
 Even in my dreams the demons are there
 Get behind me satan there is no room for
 you here
 Dear Lord Jesus, I need you, you’re the
 only cure
 Without you these demons are going to
 drag my soul to hell for sure

**“Riding her Wind”
 Jackie R. Sollars**

I sat high watching the mightiest storm.
 An’ you O’ King upon your throne.
 Spoke thou a word into this hurricane,
 Givest thou Rita the Power of Pain.
 In every spark of her furious fingers.
 Tell-tale images of what doth linger,
 Beyond the stone and iron wall
 What still stood in the ragin howl.
 Was there thunder beyond her scream?
 Through the window the rain doth sting.
 Concrete wall, a foot thick began buckling,
 As if only the puppeteer’s accordion.
 For hours the world shook in her wrath.
 Noted I remnants in each magnificent flash.

The parapet roof breached by waves
 finding escape.
 The seams in ever wall washed and gave
 way.
 The cell's filled as if a river being forged,
 Under and around crashgates flowed this
 deluge.
 Each tier a Great Water fall full of life.
 Two Great Falls, ten and twenty feet high.
 The poor fools below scrambled for higher
 ground.
 Within this tomb, as in a ship were they
 thrown.
 Waves washing their feet away.
 Suddenly the Fool's did pray.
 "Pray ye cowards of nature's fury!
 Cleanse thyself of every iniquity!
 Prepare thyself to meet the Maker o
 Man.
 Thy wretched souls caught up in this
 storm.:
 Grown men without futures cry out in fear.
 "O" how in end-times we wretches doth
 care.
 When caught in such storms we see,
 Our own petty mortality.
 Come at me ye Great God of man.
 Collect thy bounty the Great "I am".
 For I fear not man nor thy storm,
 Fear I not the days that will or will not
 come.
 For after thy wrath I'll stand tall once again
 Dancing with Rita and riding her wind.

"The Picture of the Poet in Prison"
"Unknown"

The poet, sick, and with chest half bare
 Tramples his manuscript in his dark stall,
 Gazing with terror at the yawning stair
 Down which his spirit must finally fall

Intoxicating laughs which fills his prison
 Invite him to the strange and absurd
 With ugly shapes around him have arisen
 Both doubt and terror, multiform and
 blurred

This genius cooped in an unhealthy hovel
 Those cries, grimaces, ghosts that squirm
 and grovel
 Whirling around him, mocking as they call

This dreamer whom these horrors rouse
 with screams,
 They are your emblem, soul of misty
 dreams,
 Round whom the real erects its stifling wall.

"Nexus"
J. Wilson

Like a half-seen trail in a sunny forest,
 Beneath a
 Canopy of leaves, barely
 Traveled by, in light golden tinted green.
 Always twisting and turning,
 In some
 Places rougher than others,
 And never in sight an end,
 For the trail always goes on,
 Ever with
 A new wonder around every bend

In a minute, minute particle
 Of time.

Never give up hope for a bright tomorrow,
 See a
 Faerie around every corner,
 Not a monster in every shadow, filled
 With these dark, strange thoughts.
 Sprout wings of gossamer and fly high
 enough
 To look
 Into the face of a god.
 Let your thoughts run deep
 Like trees whom put down deep roots,

Until they reach the
 Nexus of the dream catcher

Color bleeds back into vision,
 Slowly, as if the world
 Would break around if not careful.
 Freed from ice, set loose like
 A bird of the air,
 Time has been paid

"Untitled"
Jason Moreno

I don't want to be consumed by the
 primitive attitude that prelates American
 culture and convinces boys at a young age
 that the three most important things in the
 world are, "Money, Sex, and Power".

I want to be a positive attitude about life. I
 want to learn more about the world and
 less about the streets, more about romance
 and less about sex. I want to ask for
 directions.

I want to go to church not because I'm
 dragged there, but because I want to feel
 free to get 'on my knees and say long
 prayers' and I want to do it and be more of
 a man, not less of one.

Maybe that's why I imagined myself crying?
 I've finally reached a maturity level that will
 allow me to go against the grain, live
 outside of society's definition limits, be a
 modern man.

Or... Maybe it was just an abrasion that has
 never happened before and will never
 happen again. I sure hope not, because the
 emotional release I experienced in my mind
 felt too good to keep bottled up inside of
 me. But only time – and tears will tell how
 my story ends

"Life"
Tim Hampton

Sense of warmth desires of love
 Moments captured on a picture with
 laughter above
 Experience today the pain and sorrow
 Goin' to sleep at night, knowin' there's a
 better tomorrow

View the departin' death as love ones
 While celebrating the birth of young guns
 Witnessing the first things and lendin' to
 their strings
 As we watch them sleep at night, hoping
 they're having pleasant dreams

Seein' them mature as they grow old
 Givin' them encouragement so they could
 become bolder
 So sitting back and reminiscing is quite nice
 But we all should remember this is just a
 cycle we call life

"A Play on Words"
David Freestone

These are but scraps of written
 expression—from pages of a few;

Meanings vary with locution – which may
 be strange—not new.

Their comprehension – without form –
 would be difficult indeed;

Yet words are signs of our ideas and often
 not in need.

We long for symbols excelling all others,
 And perfect syllabication;

For without parts, and parse, and mood,
 there can be no punctuation!

With that in mind, I'll end this verse, yet
not with an apology,

But with 'ado!' a noun of course, bursting
with phonology.

"Driveby"
Gary Jimenez

Prodigal characters
Raised and praised in the street
Stealing and beating those they meet
Street corners set borders—
Hence crime and graffiti rhyme
That play and prey our time

A Rival company comes cruising
Freddy and his friends expected no feuds
But death claimed one of those dudes.
Sadness and woe visit friends and family—
In the streets and all who hear
Grief embarks stories of fear.

Apologies do not stay the hate
Nor is revenge ever too late.

"The Mighty Humble"
Francisco J. Lopez

I stood on the sand and gazed out
at the mighty ocean. So powerful,
mysterious, an untamed rogue—that
appeared arrogant!

As if in a trance, I held my breath
(hypnotized) unable to move as it
approached me, and just when I was sure it
would swallow me whole, I stared I was
sure it would swallow me whole, I stared in
awe as it bowed before me and kissed my
feet!

Beside myself at this show of
humbleness from the mighty waters, I felt
the tears rushing to sting my eyes...

...So I wept, I wept like a child
and allowed my tears to mingle with the
mighty sea, so that it would carry a tiny part
of me in its hear 'til eternity—

As I shall never forget it's a
humble kiss...

"A Letter"
Darrell

You can never know what a letter can mean
Until you've been where I've been and seen
what I've seen
I'm in a place behind concrete walls
Where nobody visits and nobody calls
Everyday and every night is a living hell
So I keep myself confined to my little cell

All my dreams are filled with my greatest
fears
Only to wake up and find 'm still here
The only time I come out is for mail each
day
But when they get to me, "nothing for you"
they say
With my head hung low, I head back to my
cell
Because once again I was not called for
mail
A simple letter of encouragement, a letter
of love
So please take a few minutes to write a
small letter
It may seem nothing to you but it will make
me feel better
Ti know someone cared to take time out of
their day
To sit down and write a note and send it
my way
You can never know what a letter can mean
Until you've been where I've been
And seen what I've seen

"Captive Audience"
Charlie Harbert

Don't tell me about judicial system
And the white house massing some
worthless bill.
I don't want to hear about the death
penalty
Or the next person they're about to kill
Don't ask if I'm going to vote for
A Republican or Democrat.
No more about Sept. 11th
Or the ongoing war in Iraq.
Don't bother me about Israel and Palestine
Trying to kill each other whenever they can.
I don't want to hear about North Korea
Or nuclear reactors in Iran
Forget about China and Russia
Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden
America has so many enemies
Who knows what's about to happen
But who cares about this or the economy
And the millions of dollars being spent,
And just for the record so you will know
I don't give a damn who's the next
president

"A Silly Poem to Pass the Times"
James Lee Beasley

Please forgive if it rhymes
I like to eat Pecan Pies
Let my mind wander
Through the skies,
I have no fear of belief in Death
I try to enjoy every Breath
Pease forgive me for my silly rhymes,

I was just trying to pass the times

"What is Poetry?"
Johntnwell Johnson

What is poetry? Poetry is me. In my true
essence a
Being of 360 knowledge; knowledge of
pleasure and pain, knowledge of
Love as well as hate; Every poet should
know their place,
Because poetry can make one smile and
another cry; poetry is an universal language
used by every nationality in many different
forms, some poetry is used to life an ill-
hearted spirit;
Some poetry is used to express love,
thanks, and
Some is used to simply express an
individual's emotions
So I'll ask again, what is poetry? Poetry is
Me, you, and everyone around us because
everyone contributes to
Poetry one way or another through our
emotions;
Everyone's emotions inspires an individual
to write a poem about
Love, pain, life, thanks, mistakes, and
sorrows
How would we all be if there were no such
thing as poetry?

"Quagmire Dreams"
Gerald B Prisock

Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
Tearing the soul asunder
Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
Roaring through the night like thunder

Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
Chilling you to the bone
Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
They never leave you alone

Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
Into your psyche they creep
Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
Out of our skin you'll leap

Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
Into the dawn's early gleaming
Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
WAKE UP! Terrified! Screaming!

Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
Follow you into the day
Quagmire dreams, life sucking things
Nothing can keep them at bay.

**“To My Woman’s”
Reginald West**

After awhile you learn the subtle difference
between holding a hand and chaining a
soul, and you learn that love doesn’t mean
leaning, and company doesn’t always mean
security.

And you begin to learn that kisses aren’t
contracts, and presents aren’t promises, and
you begin to accept your defeats with your
head up and your eye’s ahead with grace of
a woman, not the grief of a child, and you
learn to build all your roads on today
because tomorrow grounds is to certain for
plans and futures have a way of falling
down mid-flight.

After awhile you learn that even sunshine
burns if you get too much, so you plant
your own garden and decorate your own
soul instead of waiting for someone to
bring you flowers.

And you learn that you really can endure,
you really are strong, you really do have
have worth, and you learn, and you learn
with every goodbye, you learn.

“Motivation and Inspiration”

To all my brothers and sisters still trapped
behind bars but not yet lost in the struggle:
I want all of you’s who’s reading this right
now to know that there is one thing that I
won’t let the system keep doing to me and
that is continue to run my life.

If something controls your emotions, the it
controls your attitude, then if that same
thing controls our attitude, it controls your
actions as well.
But most of all, if your actions are
controlled by someone other than you, then
so is your destiny!
Try to remember one thing in life if
nothing at all;
Tough times don’t last but tough people do

**“Broken Boy”
Reginald West**

As a broken boy I go through life with only
myself to please. I wake each morning just
to see how lonely my life is, cause the
world has turned a blind eye to me.

Wishing everyday for the friendship I crave,
but always getting pushed away by those I
meet.

Never feeling loved, never feeling brave, I
let the loneliness inside me become defeat.

Life is passing me by never giving me the
chance to redeem because the world only
cares to see the path of a broken boy.

The world is stuck in my yesterday, never
looking to see my tomorrow.

Always those around me seem coy to show
their feeling of sorrow for a boy who may
never have their tomorrow.

Greed fills their eyes. Forgetting those in
need and refusing to hear a broken boy’s
cries.

Too caught up in pride and embarrassed to
do me a good deed for fear of retribution
and criticism from the rest of the world

**“Enamor”
Reginald West**

Afar, and beyond where the pale moon
arises,
Midnight is slaved to its silent death.
For thou hast come again... again and
forever more has come.
Transpiring before the elusive soul quite
humbled and much in revive.
And where into dost hollowed eyes rest in
dappling shadows of golden sun and gallant
cries and squawk the blue carpet horizon in
liberal song.
This be my good fellas
Where in valleys low, the valve dusk cloaks
purple mountains
Steeps and the rivers stream quiets trickle
the pebble sand flours although the tick
tock hours.
And where through the vast and gloom
dost black ravens take in flighting trails
whispers of such sweet rapture dance along
the knitted pine where fields of empty
untilled inner entwines fields of splended
green dabbled in silvery dew.

**Untitled
Frank White**

In the state of California
They say 3 strikes you’re out
And if you don’t know what this means
Let me explain what the games about

Now strikes are known as felonies
Ad they can cause some strife
With (2) you’re going to prison
With (3) you’re going for life
This law will break up families
And uncover society’s fears
The streets will fill with blood
And little children’s tears
I say the streets will fill with blood
With this law you choose
A (2) strike criminal facing life
Has nothing left to lose
And if you ever been to prison
I’m sure you would understand
That a man without his freedom
Is like a man without his hands
And what about all the children
And the parents they have lost?
Suicide and welfare lines
Are just a fragment of the cost
And how about all the prisons
Filled beyond their max
It’s those that voted for this law
The government will tax
This law was passed in ignorance
By the people of this state
I pray to god it is corrected
Before it is too late

**“The Things You Do”
James E. Rogers Jr.**

It’s not the things you do, Dear, it’s the
things you leave undone.
That gives a bitter heartache at the setting
of the sun, the tender words unspoken the
letters you did not write, the flower you
might have sent, Dear, its your frightening
ghost at night, the stone you might have
lifted out of your brothers way,
The bits of heartfelt counsel you were
hurried too much to say, the loving touch
of your hand, Dear, your gentle charming
tone, that you had no time or thought for
with troubles enough of your own, these
little acts of kindness so easily out of mind,
these chances to be angels which even
humans find, they come to nights of silence
to take away the grief, when hope is faint
and feeble and a drought has stopped
belief, for life is all too short dear and
sorrow is all too great, to allow or slow
compassion that waits until too late, its not
the things you do, Dear, it’s the things you
leave undone, that gives a bitter heartache
at the setting of the Sun.

Soldier
Jos Duffer

Engaged in a fearsome battle for freedom... Everywhere I turn I see the enemy... I can hear the cavalry, but I do not see them... Continuous mortar blasts, gunshots, screams of terror and pain... I stalk my victims like a lion in the jungles, fighting instinctively for my survival... Bullets fly by, blood rains from the sky, I have to walk over the dead and the soon to be just to move forward... Still inching forward for a goal I'm not even sure of anymore... I hear people barking orders, guns drawn yet again, pins pulled from grenades, bodies soaring through the air, blood still raining... The noise has subsided, but the killing is persistent... One side has almost been defeated, a company of many constricted into only a few... No more guns we are forced to personally attack someone that is attacking us... Crying out to someone, anyone, to stop the blood from raining; it is only misting now... I feel the coldness of something inside me... I feel the warmth of my life ease down my legs... Blackness replaces the horrific visions of the events of the past days... Finally dead I no longer have to fight, but someone else already has reservations to take the place of the fallen... As I face judgment, I still can't quite remember what exactly it was I was fighting for... Still, I have to pay the price for my unrealized transgressions... I guess I was fighting in the wrong war, for the wrong army...

"Nature Calls"
Bryan Webster

Once upon the morning light,
She yawns,
Stretching a milky smooth neck,
Craning,
Hunting a dew glazed sun dial,
With sleepy eyes,
A silken cloth draped over ivory shoulders,
Shivering,
Golden hair lying languidly,
Softly swaying,
Upon toes so nimble dashing,
Across the Cold Roman mosaic splendor,
Quickly stepping off the well counted paces,
Goose flesh,
A chilled morning waltz,
She glides,
As nature screams it's unavoidable song,
Heaven merely a hushed sigh away,
Welcome to a soft new day,

My lovely sunrise dancer.

"The Revolutionary Warrior"
Shawn Houston

Revolutionary warriors at the head of a mass movement.
With iced out minds, bent on improvement.
Looking through the glass clearly; with out eyes on the government.
We have elevated our game & stamped out disillusionment.
We need a troop for this battalion; cause it's going down like Armageddon.
So shake the shackles of deception and jump on the bandwagon.
Sign up at education station located in the east.
Come sup with us at our table and marvel at the feast.
We got I-story, (our story), Religion, economics & Politics.
We teach the ins and outs of business, the trades and the tricks.
Import/ Export- International Trade:
That's the business baby;
We hi-jacking the game, who cares if it sounds shady.
Making moves like a chessmaster, politician, or business tycoon.
Anything steps in the way best believe it's doomed.
We revolutionaries have no sympathy and zero tolerance.
You can talk and backbite all you want; just don't cross that fence.
Our lives are dedicated to this struggle:
And recapturing empires that was once ours.
We won't stop till we reach the top.
We must by all means rise up out of the quagmire!

"Mortals We"
Dr. Boyce Lee Gowan II

What is this I witness thee
What is this I'm forced to see

It renders grief to mortals we
A plight of death calling many it be

What is this I witness thee
What is this I'm forced to see

As frigid as the glacier to the heart it be
Sweltering mortals there many be
Numerous decades counting they'll be

What is this plight I'm forced to see
Whose grip is feared by thee and me

Mightier then the kings own plume it be
Behind his castle wall nay safely be

Where fiery tongues there many be
Spilling lies of thee and me

What is this I witness thee
Bringing useless cries of shame for all that be

Which sets its teeth in the young of we
In their hearts of innocents they be
Taught to hate their lesson be

What is this plight we're forced to see
To pass between all men that be

Tis but a mortal soul astray
Tis what I witness thee

Tis thy own inhumanity
Tis thy own plight I witness thee

"The Sea"
Dr. Boyce Lee Gowan II

The naked waves sing
Of lands of great beauty past
To this their last shore

"Never/Never Again"
Dean Chacker

The sound of Autumn leaves crunching
underfoot
The smell of a hot soft pretzel
A dog being walked
A cat sitting serenely
The bustle of a store at holiday time
Having real money
A quart of milk
Not leaving the table hungry
A morning paper in the morning
Real orange juice
Calling someone when I want to
A computer
Sleeping in a real bed
A real job
Making my own decisions all the time
Going to a ballgame
McDonalds
Owning a ferret
A commode in a different room
No razor wire
Never having to wear cocoa brown again
Maybe falling in love
Going to a real library
Sitting under a tree
Visiting my mother's grave
Surf 'n turf
Seeing the ocean

Staying home or going out
 Starting a car on a cold winter's morn
 Looking out without obstruction
 A hot cup of coffee
 Playing with a puppy
 Seeing my mom
 My sister
 Peace and quiet
 Mowing the lawn
 Blue jeans
 Pockets
 A belt
 A long hot shower
 Saying I'm sorry face to face
 Seeing my final resting place
 Sending an E-Mail
 Surfing the net
 Trading stock
 Volunteering
 Sitting in a real chair
 Having a "Rolling Rock"
 Eating shredded wheat
 A closet
 A pizza
 A decent haircut
 A real razor
 A shirt that fits
 A campfire
 Stone ground mustard
 Being out past nine
 Locking my own doors
 A real doctor
 Warm in winter/cool in summer
 A coin collection
 Opening my own mail
 Crème soda
 The smell of a Zippo lighter
 Watching squirrels
 Flowers in a field
 An ATM
 A thick fluffy towel
 A warm coat in winter
 Real silverware
 A china plate
 Cooking
 Making real friends
 Real carpet
 A window that opens
 Being able to be me
 FREEDOM

"The Darkness and Me"
Mike Thompson

A cold emptiness has taken hold of my
 soul,
 Casting me to a dimension that's never
 been told.
 This is the vast darkness that I call home,
 It's a place where pain will leave me alone.
 This is the only place I can truly be Free,

Because where I am, nothing can hurt me.
 Exiled to this realm until my demise,
 God laughs at me while Satan tells lies.
 My world is different than any others
 known,
 It's a place where I'm destined to live all
 alone.
 The cold emptiness soothes my spirit,
 But if you were here, I know you would
 Fear it.
 Cradling me in its cold nothingness I feel
 safe and secure,
 Compared to this place Hell seems so pure.
 There are no cars or trains passing by,
 No one walking by just to say "Hi".
 There are no stars or flashy lights to see,
 I'm all alone, just the darkness and me.

"My Thoughts on Paper"
Jeremy G. Samuels

I write my thoughts on paper so someday I
 can
 Re read them later.
 I write my thoughts to that others may read
 them too
 Maybe someday I will find that person who
 feels
 The same way I do.
 Have you ever felt so empty you question
 everything,
 What does this all matter, what does this all
 mean?
 No one really has the answers its all just
 one
 Big Guess. I write my thoughts on paper so
 I
 Don't have to waste my breath.
 You can ask your preacher maybe your
 Mom or Dad
 None of them will have the answers man
 that's
 Fricken sad.
 So who do you ask if these people don't
 have a clue?
 You cant ask me that's why I'm asking You!

"No Silence"
Michael C. McCoy

Silence to me is Dear,
 Late at night, when all is clear,
 Blessed silence comes to me,
 For a fleeting moment...
 I forget I'm here, but...

Always echoes in the night,
 Some tiny thing disturbs the quiet...
 Heavy steps, keys jangle; sudden light
 shining,
 Into your eyes, always reminding,
 No Peace for me – it is Forbidden!
 Blessed silence... Always hidden,
 No one hears my lonely screams,
 The ears of others only hear, it seems...
 Silence....
 Silence is forbidden me,
 As long as I'm all alone,
 Yet surrounded by so many others
 Who long for...
 Silence.

"Pain"
Starkim

Pain, reminds me that I'm still living,
 SLAIN, are innocent children and women.
 Assaulted economically and I promised me
 that...
 One day I'll be free.
 Walking with my shadow, singing to my
 heart beat.
 But Pain keeps me here,
 The rain means a storm is near, I could
 hear the thundering and lightning.
 Thought frightening, the electric bolts are a
 sight to see.
 I long for a life that's free, traveling with
 my eyes closed guided by my senses.
 I'm traveling back and forth because m
 path was lost, and my past had cost me
 everything, my rights, my chances in life.
 So I gathered all the things that mattered.
 For strength and motivation as the older
 nation left without leaving the blueprint.
 I became a nuisance and mimicked the
 movements of the bad guy,
 Or am I,
 Functioning in something, designed, for me
 to do time.
 From sentences to expenses, it doesn't
 really add up.
 Some say bad luck,
 While I say consequences of that fast buck.
 Pain is these numbers following my name
 as if I'm an item.
 If your just like them,
 What's your motive?
 Hatred?
 Wealth?
 Power?
 Domination?
 Control?
 What's the ramifications?

Untitled
Mike McCoy

Sinister faces, dark unknown places
Self-righteous judges, decide what my fate
is
Unknowing, uncaring, Truth does not
matter
Locked up in Prison – Gone is my laughter
Crimes I've committed, of this, I'm guilty
Locked in this moment, don't know even
what will be
Free in a month? In a day? In a year?
Locked up forever? Am I to die here?
This day today my body lies dormant
My only respite a dream – for a moment
A moment of freedom, glimpsed in a
dream
Gone once again, when I wake! Do I
scream?
Scream at these people, unjust fucking
keepers
Who sit in their courtrooms reading their
papers
These papers our lives reduced into pages
One day soon we may give in to our rages!
Anger and disgust at how we've been
treated
Straight out bullshit, how "Justice" is meted
Chop off an arm or a leg or just kill me
Mental anguish is not knowing what will be
Life's not a joke or a toy to be played with
By people who know me only as writing on
pages
Written by others, not a clue what is right
Our hearts are become filled with hate dark
as night
So people if ever you sit as "Authority"
Look at the faces, the pages before thee
Not living their lives free, but locked up in
cages
Soon they'll be free – prepare for their
rages!
This rage is a cancer, eating alive
With nothing to lose, what's living?
What's dying?

"Within these Walls"
Israel Vasquez

Within these walls,
One can come to realize
Life's greatest treasures,
And that time outside them flies.
Your own pitfall's are laid bare,
Before your very eyes.
Solitude awakens understanding,
Your not the only one that cries.
Families are tests...stretched,
And sometimes eventually love dies.

Within these walls,
Ones' will can sink in sand.

Desperation can perish hope,
To meet all of life's demands.
One's heart can rot and fester,
Revenge... seems sweet and grand.
Coldness seeps into the soul,
And hatreds fire fans.
Thus when someone offers help,
One can no longer see the hand.

Within these walls,
Honor comes by distorted light.
Reluctance is frowned upon,
When it comes down to a fight.
One hides behind their numbers,
The weak falls to the might.
Deafness is a virtue,
As well as loss of tongue and sight.
There's levels to respect,
And to what's wrong or right.

Within these walls,
One learns of ways to kill.
To disappear off paper,
Or bend one to your will.
What is not taught comes to be,
The most important of all skills.
Patience and understanding,
That you must climb your own hill.
That there will always be,
...hope... out there still.

Within these walls,
Is not contained all of reality.
That mostly everyone forgets this,
Is sad beyond degree.
Sadder still are those,
Whom their own past life flees.
So blind are they with pain inside,
And broken down to see.
That even within these walls,
...they were always free.

Do They Really Want To Know
Chief J. Ramos and BJ

Do They Want To Know
Of the misery and strife
That two or three times
You thought of taking a life?

Raised in the system
The game is nothing new;
Toe-to-toe with the best,
The lies all good to.

You used to say,
"They can't stop the clock!"
but neither can you
now that your old bones
are ticking too.

Do they want to know
That you will never walk out,

Or that they really don't know you
Or what your about?
That's okay,
Neither do you
Lost in the game
Until you are through.

Do they want to know
Your now comfortable here?
Your heart is made of stone,
Never a tear.
You don't count days now,
You count by the year.

Do they want to know
This is your future,
Present and past?
This is the only thing
You can count on to last...

"Home and Family"
Michael C. McCoy

Happiness was ours and shall be again
The day I leave this place of shared
showers
Coming back to our little house; Paid for!
Paid for with Sweat, Blood and money! But
ours!

Homeward heading to you and our trailer
Kitties, Cold Cereal, rad and flowers
Late night bedroom, bowl of Captain
Crunch
Together Julie – I wish to share hours.

Strange Shadows, noises creak in the night
Halloween Ghost hangs – guarding our
front yard
Squeezing you tight Julie, comforts my
heart
Matters not that I act so tough, or so hard!

My home, my family – I will abide there
together again; I come! Never fear!

Dawn
Roger B. Smith

Dawn breaks as twilight fades.
The day comes forth like a crimson bolt
across the sky.
Hints of Gold thrust forward, as a magenta
shadow withers.
A Golden hue brings a respite from the
dread of night,
Where fears once ruled, and terror abode.
A time to stow the fears of night and start
the day anew.
A reprieve to all, as light abounds and peace
returns.
All is well again, until...
The angst of DUSK.

Ame de boue (Soul of Mud)
Roger B. Smith

Mired down with a soul of mud,
struggling through a life of toil.
I have become one with a soul of mud,
A man with a hole where one's heart once
lay.
A soul of mud, empty and void, black as
the night.
Tension and dread builds each day, with
nary a tear
left to spill.
My life has become empty and forlorn,
along with a soul
that is rent and torn.
Intravenously intertwined within the mire
of dismay.
Nothing left but an Ame de boue.

Salinas Rides
John E. Christ

A man long held down
Struggled against injustice
Words as his weapons

Poetry flows out
In rivers of well-tuned verse
Cutting paths of truth

Some men forge chains
Holding back all human rights
A true travesty

Words cut the steel bonds
Carving away foul restraints
Light dispels the night

Bold activist gone
His words remain to guide us
We inherit hope

(The prison-poet and
Chicano/Indian/Human rights activist Raul
Salinas died in Austin last February at age
73. This is a tribute to his memory.)

I Have Not Wings
William H. Davis Jr.

It's ironic how the birds flock here.

How the ultimate symbol of freedom
would so infest such a place of
confinement...

As if the birds coming and going were
some sort of poetic justice.

A constant and poignant remind of just
how much we have lost in our freedom.

Freedom, the thing all God's creatures have
in common.

The thing man pursues so constantly.

The thing we all now do not have.

The thing these birds most represent as
they fly about.

Their wings give them such freedom.

I long to fly free with them...

But I have not wings.

The Earth Will Turn
William H. Davis Jr.

New life conceived
A child will learn
Man will grow
The earth will turn.

The moon eclipses
And the sunset will burn
The seasons change
And the earth will turn.

Young men wonder
While old men yearn
Time will pass on
And the earth will turn.

You live your life in longing
And death is what you earn
The cycle continues
And the earth will turn.

Humans have so many cares
But it is really of no concern
Whatever happens on it
The earth will always turn.

Sand Castle
William H. Davis Jr.

I saw a young child building
A sand castle by the sea;
So committed to his work
That he took no note of me.

His dedication to his task
Was a wonder to the eye

Bit by bit, the castle formed
As the pile of sand grew high.

I marveled at this child I saw
The word he had at hand
It was as if he saw his future
In a million grains of sand.

And then he looked upon it
before his work he stood
his pride did show, for the finished work
and indeed, the work was good.

Then I heard his mother call
And in a moment he was gone
But tomorrow another child will come
And the building will continue on.

The Coming Storm
William H. Davis Jr.

Had I seen the coming storm
I would have sought a place to hide
The forecast spoke of coming storms,
But these warnings I denied

I refused to see the changing,
Because I am a stubborn man
And now the storm has caught me out
I must take shelter where I can

I shelter with the lonely
As the rain falls from my eyes
I feel the lightning strike my hear as I recall
her lies

Thunder pounds inside my chest
As I long for the love we had
now she is gone and I am alone,
so I shelter with the sad

All the broken hearted fools
Who like me, are left in pain
Remembering a time when life was good,
Before it began to rain

I stand here in hopeless wonder
How long can this storm last?
It seems there is no end in sight
As my mind relives the past

And so the sky, it finally cleared
and for me the rain is gone
but many are not so lucky
for them the storm goes on

Now I am in love again
The sun, it shines so bright
I love her and she loves me
Not a single cloud in sight

And what is that the forecast says,
The threat of a coming storm?
I stand here with her laughing
As I watch the tempest form.

Your wants
By The Fallen King

You want us to have self worth, so you
destroy our self esteem.
You want us to be responsible, so you take
away all responsibilities.
You want us to be part of our communities
You want us to be positive and constructive
You want us to be nonviolent, but violence
is all around us.
You want us to be kind and loving, yet you
subject us to hatred and cruelty.
You want us to quit being tough guys, so
you put us where the tough guy is
respected.
You want us to quit hanging around losers,
so you put all the losers under one roof.
You want us to quit exploiting you – so you
put us where we can practice exploiting one
another.
You want us to take control of our lives,
own our own problems, and quite being a
parasite.
So you make us totally depended on you!

Mother of Mine, Missed
Daniel Enriquez

Mesmerized by the best of memories that
you have left behind for me,
Offering the most of security that your
judgments could foresee,
Tender touches at your fingertips like satin
on silky gloves,
Humble hugs with gracious love as gentle
as the feathers of turtle doves.
Empathy had no boundaries when it came
straight from my birth's start,
Radiating within the brightest lights, that
warmth from within your heart,

Obedience was the main obstacle to tackle,
but I was ornery occasionally,
Forgetting about the wrongs I had, you still
took time to forgive me.

Making the best out of this melancholy,
drowning the pensive reflection of such
gloom,
Intuition instantly manifests itself,
reminding me that I will see you very soon,
Nothing and no on can ever amount to the
nourishment you shared with me,
Evolution would only exist on earth if you
were reincarnated physically.

My world is incomplete this mother's day
like metamorphosis without butterflies,
Interrupting the stages of growth, for life,
the monarch's journey she never glides,
Seizing my every opportunity that knocks,
to soar the tranquil winds of serenity,
Subduing the single simpers of mine, the
endless sagas of silent lucidity.
Echoes of edifications whisper,
encouragement on the whims that whisk,
Dedicating a tribute to a mother of mine,
letting you know you are truly missed.

Lost
Brian Roberts

No peace, no tenderness.
Contemplation of life's reality – seeking
escape.
Surroundings filling my heart with anguish.
A search for rest only liberty can yield.

Stuck
Brian Roberts

I've entered a world of sorrow and hate
Because long ago I made a mistake.
I sit alone, watch life pass me by.
It all started with a little white line.

Walls surround my every move
A golden life, turned to blue.
A letter, a visit, that's all I ask
Laughter, a smile, a thing of the past.

There's no place to be by myself
No corner, no hole, no damn help.
Everyday I'm told to walk a straight line.
The road ahead, a tough one to blim.

Play the game of appealing your case
But deep down you know there's no damn
way.
Some coffee, a rip, a little canteen
The power of persuasion, that's all you
need.

A world build on brick of despair
Separation by design, that much is clear.
I walk the track, around and around.
Searching for peace to block out the
sounds.

A hole, a ditch, stuck like chuck.
Pray for a ladder, or just a little luck.
Some give in, change their name to missy.
The pacmans of the system, each day a new
sissy.

Food so bad, tasteless and raw
I force it down, no money for the store.
Maybe someday it will all get better

I hope so, cause I'm stuck here forever!

"Let's Go and Vote"
William Chaplar

Reds do it, blues do it.
Those who watch the evening news do it.
They do it. Why shouldn't we?
Girls who lie out in the sun do it.
Nerds who don't have any fun do it.
Let's do it. It's meant to be.
Folks in retirement homes do it,
So do students in their teens.
Some NASCAR fans even may do it,
They're just not sure what it means.
The guys who work at the docks do it.
Even one or two Red Sox do it.
Let's do it. I'll make a note.
The shrinks who cite Sigmund Freud do it
With personalities that split.
Folks suffering from hemorrhoids do it
So long as they don't have to sit.
Hookers out walking the streets do it.
English teachers quoting keats do it.
They do it. Let's do it too.
Cadets in school at the Point do it
Glaucoma patients smoking joints do it.
Let's do it, just me and you!
Obstetric nurses and docs do it
While they're telling you to "PUSH!"
The Dixie Chicks, between mocks, do it,
But you can bet it's not for Bush.
Most of the troops overseas do it
Those who speak of birds and bees do it.
Let's do it. Let's go and vote.
Blacks do it. Whites do it.
Even Donald Rumsfeld might do it.
Let's do it. I'll get my coat.
P. Diddy and 50-Cent do it,
Then sing about it in a rap.
Some members of Parliament do it
When they're not busy slinging crap.
Judges who sit on the bench do it.
Rumor has it that the French do it.
Let's do it. Let's do it now!
Chris Rock and Bill Cosby both do it.
Immigrants who took the oath do it.
Let's do it. I'll show you how.
Professors in coats of tweed do it.
Even people who can't read do it.
Let's do it. Let's go and vote!

"There's an Old Proverb..."
William Chaplar

There's an old proverb that goes, "Hence,
Never argue with one with no sense.
For even those thought to be smart
Wont be able to tell you apart."

There's another proverb that goes, "Hence,
When on your life's path you commence,

No matter how young or how old,
Better is it to get wisdom than gold.”

Still another old proverb goes, “Hence,
The glory of the young is their strength-
But of those who are older, it’s said
That their beauty lies in their gray head.”

Yet another old proverb goes “Hence,
To a person of intelligence,
One reprimand serves more to school
Than a hundred stripes do for a fool.

And another proverb that goes, “Hence,
Simple minds enjoy simple events.
And in the same light, there’s a rule
That knowledge is scorned by the fool.”

And one more proverb that goes, “Hence,
There are two fairly certain events.
To his vomit, a dog will return.
And, for folly, a fool always yearns.”

“Desolation Under Beauty” Michael C. McCoy

Outside my window, Greenswards are
 flowing,
Int tall fences, halogen lights glowing
 Barbed-wire rolls top the galvanized
 fencing,
Army tent standing; medical patients
 resting.
Towers looming, armed keepers there
 dooming,
 Anyone thinking freely of zooming,
Over the fences, far away from these
 buildings,
Adrenaline flowing, desperate actions so
 thrilling.
Keepers of men waiting eager for killing!
A shot in the back! There greatest ambition,
 For convicts not living up to societies
 conditions,
 Their answer to crimes committed by
 people,
Refusing life under the great Mormon
 steeple.
Hypocrites all! These lowlife guards;
 wardens!
Guarding the greenswards, Satan’s own
 gardens,
These gardens are desolate, dried-up, dead
 landscapes,
Death is their goal – the only real true
 escape,
From this morally bankrupt corrupted
 environment,
Run by sick, pestulant, perverted higher-
 ups,
All claiming they do the word of society,

One day they will pay! For their self-
righteous – piety!

“No Visit Today” Michael McCoy

No visit today, God only knows why
Inside my cell I wanted to die
My life’s been destroyed, all taken away
I contemplated this fact all this lonely day

Taken away from all that I love
Removed from the world for things that
were done
Seventeen years gone – so long ago
When will they even let past mistakes go?

I hope you are well, safe and secure
Never to feel life behind these steel doors
I’d wish this fate on no one; you see
Not you; not even my worse enemy

So closing this poem I’d like you to know
I think of your love daily, wherever I go
My world is so small, each day the same
You are my true love, I pray this you
remain.

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Prisoner Express promotes rehabilitation by providing information, education and opportunities for creative self expression to incarcerated individuals throughout the United States.

Anthology free to prisoners. All others please contact Prisoner Express for rates. All proceeds are used to fund programming

The Durland Alternatives Library, which finds Prisoner Express, is a project partner of the CRESP Center for Transformative Action. Additional Support comes from the Cornell Public Service Center.

About the CRESP Center for Transformative Action

Our Mission

We are an alliance of individuals and organizations inspired by principles of nonviolence and committed to bold action for justice, sustainability, and peace. Our Center supports change makers with the tools to build thriving, inclusive communities that work for everyone. We serve our member organizations, the public, and Cornell University by offering educational programs and strategic organizational resources.

About Transformative Action

Transformative Action is a model for social change rooted in the principles of nonviolence. It realizes a positive, just and inclusive vision by seeking to expose injustice, transform adversaries into allies, and evolve anger into goodwill. Authentic yet compassionate communication is a foundational skill. Our goal is to train and equip our member organizations and others committed to social change with the most effective strategies and experiences for engaging this empowering approach.

Our Project Partners

Alternative Media and Information

The Durland Alternatives Library
Positive News
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Simplicity and Sustainability

Simple Living America
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Economic Justice

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