

Compassion

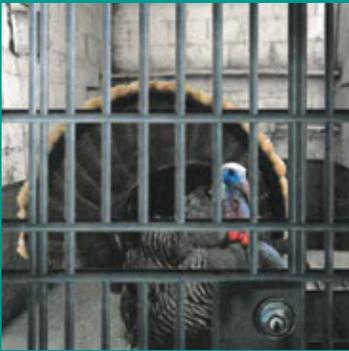
Written by Death-Row Prisoners

HELPING PRISONERS ON DEATH ROW LIVE CONNECTED AND FRUITFUL LIVES

140 W. South Boundary Street | Perrysburg, OH 43551

November 2020 | Vol. 25 | Issue 117 (Bi-monthly)

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



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www.compassionondeathrow.net

Why Do I Care?

Whether guilty or innocent, or somewhere in between, how do we find life under a penalty of death? Has all hope escaped us because of this sentence?



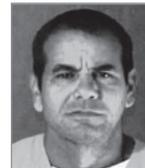
"Don't give up," many have said, yet how to push on these walls, I implore?

24 hours a day inside a concrete tomb is enough to challenge the worth of life's journey.

The walls confine more than a mere human existence, so what happens with the journey we're birthed into?

Every experience shapes us yet how we respond helps also to define us. Though solitary confinement is shaped to prevent us from moving forward, it's how we respond that provides us a new direction – we get a choice: We get to choose our attitudes.

This journey, or what we choose to do with it, affects others with positivity or negativity. Whether guilty or innocent, how we respond will either push people away or inspire them to follow. After all, it's never too late to care. So which will you be: a dark cautionary tale, or shining example?



John Falk, Jr.
Texas Death Row
Livingston, TX

ENLIGHTENMENT A Haiku – September 2015

My gazing inward,
Affecting my outward views,
Healing not blaming



Kurt Michaels
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA



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.

SEND ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO:

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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. Anything death row prisoners write may jeopardize their future appeals. This may limit the scope of their expressions.

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

EDITORIAL:

In Your Lane



In the cafeteria one day my friend stood next in line at the water coolers, which were on a steel table about six feet in front of him. I was next behind my bulky friend. The man at the cooler finished filling his cup, then slowly backed up: one step, two steps, three steps, bump – right into my friend.

My friend growled, “You need to watch where the f— you’re going!” After we sat down with our drinks, I asked him, “Why did you just stand there when that guy was backing up?”

“I was in my lane! He needs to watch where he’s going.”

“But you saw him coming! You had plenty of time to sidestep him or even to make a noise to let him know you were back there... You could’ve avoided the collision and confrontation!”

“I was in the right,” he stubbornly maintained, obviously feeling a little betrayed by my interrogation. I was supposed to be on his side.

A scenario popped into my mind. I saw my friend driving down the road; and in the other lane, coming right at him, was a drunk driver. I described it to my friend and said, “Now, you’re in your lane. You’re in the right. But danger’s fast approaching. Do you:

A.) Claim your rights, and crash head on into the drunk driver? – OR –

B.) Pull over and let him pass, dodging the collision?”

At that, a light seemed to flip on behind his anger.

Although the message served an immediate purpose, I’ve carried that principle with me ever since: Sometimes other people are driving drunk and headed right for us; and while there is a time to stand your ground and claim your rights, there’s also a time to simply pull over and let the trouble pass.

We’ve got to pick our battles. Every hill’s not worth dying on. In one of my Bible study groups, we were taught that the definition of meekness is, “the ability for God’s people to negotiate among others without causing friction.” Meekness isn’t weakness. Rather, meekness is a characteristic of discernment and wisdom. “A wise man sees trouble afar off, and turns aside.” Why let trouble crash right into us when we could easily avoid it?



George Wilkerson
Editor
North Carolina Death Row
Raleigh, NC

Letter to the Editor:

Jesus Very Good Amen

Contemplative Meditation. Had a wonderful experience tonight! I sat down on the bed, turned on meditative music; forced, with gentleness, the intellect to descend into the heart. When attention was firmly in the soul, I started to be aware of the Breath and prayed two words, "Lord Jesus." 80 minutes passed and very few thoughts rose up except the repeating of "Lord Jesus." Then even the name of Jesus disappeared, and darkness lit up my heart like a midday sun. I could see with inner vision; purity of soul where Christ dwelled.

As you enter into strife with the arrogant, don't fret or be overcome by evil. Christ in you is salvation. Be mindful of your purpose; do the will of God. He would have you at peace, looking and waiting for the opportunity to share the gifts of the Spirit. If men talk harshly, manifest dislike; speak nasty words, what of it? Speak encouragement; lift up the down trodden, help the weary find relief. You were blessed to be a blessing. You are loved so that you can love. You are dead to the world; reborn into the Lord. Victorious man, prison is not your dwelling place. The Holy Spirit would say: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter the Kingdom prepared for you, and keep the name of Jesus in your heart and on your lips."

Act like a child in your Father's Kingdom. Be like your teacher Jesus. When you venture outside, hold your peace inside. Don't get nervous or excited about worldly experiences. Imitate Christ, be like Him. Listen to the voice you pray to hear. Do good! Forgiveness offers total freedom from sin and guilt. Perfect Christ, eternal life, salvation. Nothing needs changing in reality. Praise God, thank You, Jesus Lord. Walking down Main Street doesn't mean you're free. When you don't care, it doesn't matter. Love is no suggestion but a command. Fires need fuel to burn. Bad ideas keep troubles blazing. Don't think an evil thought twice. Let it go, this too shall pass.

Best Regards,



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

Calls Never Answered

I think we can all relate to being stressed out or upset by phone calls—or the lack of one. You wait and wait for a phone to use, and then when you get it you just want to check on those you love, miss, and care about. But when you call, they don't answer!

Your mind starts playing tricks on you: "They don't care about me;" "They don't have time for me;" "She must've found somebody new..." But the fact is nobody answered the call.

People send us their number, saying, "Call any time!" So you call that first time and nobody answered. You don't stress, figuring maybe they were busy. So you try again later that day, then the next day, various times on various days—and the calls are never answered! You think, "Why you gonna send me your number, then ignore my call? And why you put money on the phone account if you're not gonna answer!" So you keep calling, every day, knowing there's a day-off from work in there somewhere, so there's no excuse. You call with hope to hear their voice, you dial the numbers, you put in your pin number, you listen to the rings, just to hear the rings, just to hear their voice—but your calls are never answered!

Now you're stressed, upset, worried, and growing a complex: Not only are the calls never answered, but you've received no letters in weeks. Then there's this virus going around killing people, and your mind is running wild, and you're using all your outside connections to call them, to get a-hold of your people, the ones you love so dearly. . .

But guess again, their calls are never answered either.



Jasmine Paul Sanchez
Nevada Correctional Institute
Ely, NV

Responding to Feedback

I get feedback all the time regarding articles, poems, short stories, and humor I write. Sometimes a story might jog someone's memory and remind them of a long forgotten happening. Thus some offer their appreciation or acknowledgment. Others who disagreed with the article sometimes provide a different perspective than the one I presented. Some of the feedback can be lavish with praise, while others have a "get it off my chest" type feel. Still others are nasty attacks, but thankfully those are rare.

As I pondered the different responses, I thought about what is it that makes a person write... Interestingly, it appears the writer shares similarities with the person who demonstrates on the street because they want to make their voice heard: They believe they have a message that others should hear. I find that these folks are usually totally sold on their message and will not be easily swayed—sometimes to the point of being block-headed and stubborn, including me, since I too have convictions, principles and ideals that I will not lay aside. But, I am flexible enough to consider common sense alternatives that do not violate the personal boundaries I have in place.

One difference between writing and demonstrating is that writing provides no visual clues except the images created in the reader's mind. And the more the reader reads the more they feel they know the writer. A mental image of the author's looks and personality will form, but I have discovered that most times that image looks nothing like the reality. Thus misinterpretations and misunderstandings ensue in the form of criticisms.

The question is, how should the writer respond? Assuming I don't ignore the person should I find fault, set someone straight, or gently try to provide clarity to the subject? Hopefully it is to provide encouragement!

Perhaps the most important question of all is: What is my agenda? Answering that question may alter what and how we write with the purpose of encouragement, even while we may be in disagreement; it will likely come across much more genial in nature and will tend to be more readily accepted.

The challenge I see in all of this, is that whatever we are doing, whether it be in writing, parenting, or interacting on a social level, our "audience" will give feedback, sometimes positive, sometimes

negative. But it's up to us how we respond to it. If I'm always defensive and quick to duke it out nobody will want to connect with me. If I'm always in agreement I seem to stand for nothing and nobody will respect me. But if I am honest and sincere, and offer a good dose of appreciation and affirmation, I am much more likely to be given an ear in those moments when I do need to stand firm against what I believe to be wrong.

Writing is a way of sharing a message that can reach multiple generations. Therefore, I encourage everyone to keep writing. Keep those articles, short stories, poems and humorous things flowing. Don't let negative feedback stop you from writing or contributing to causes. To those who read my published words, keep your feedback coming! I welcome it, and although I don't get to provide many with a response, be assured that I do read each and every bit of feedback—each one is valuable to me.



John Robinson
Kansas Death Row
El Dorado, Kansas

VICTIMS VOICE Sisters Find Meaning in Activism



Jeanne Bishop &
Jennifer Bishop-Jenkins



Richard & Nancy Bishop Langert

Jennifer and Jeanne Bishop's younger sister Nancy was three months' pregnant when she and her husband, Richard Langert, were shot and killed in their Illinois home in 1990.

The sisters are active opponents of the death penalty. Jeanne is a member of the Advisory Board of the Northwestern University Center on Wrongful Convictions and has spoken against the death penalty in several states and in Ireland and France. Jennifer serves on the board of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and has addressed state legislative committees and the Illinois Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment.

Of the murders they write; "Our Sister's last act as she was dying was to write a message of love in her own blood. We can't imagine making the death penalty of another human being her memorial."

For more information visit: www.mvfh.org

Original Art Work for Scholarships



Untitled

By Kevin Marinelli
Pennsylvania Death Row
Collegeville, PA

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COMPASSION READERS: To date \$58,088.72 has been awarded in college scholarships to family members for murder victims. Make a purchase of their artwork. To view available selections, view Art for Scholarship in the past issues at www.compassionondeathrow.net. Call 419-874-1333 and ask for Compassion office to verify availability.

Legal Notes / Perspective

From the start I realized the importance of my objective is too great to not do due diligence. Many (lawyers or otherwise) will tell you about one legal precedent or another leaving you with the impression it applies equally to you. However, they've read it from their perspective but nobody knows your case as well as you do. So, when someone tells you about Strickland ineffectiveness standards you must read it for yourself; an inaccurate/half understanding will not suffice. Whenever

I'm told about anything that might apply to my case I say, "Where did you get that?" If I don't get a citation from a case rule or law journal, I'll have to research it myself 'cause I'm not taking anybody's word for it. Sorry guys, but the best of us can be mistaken, even yours truly.



Kevin Marinelli
Pennsylvania Death Row
Collegeville, PA

Going Home, AKA Holy Dove

Holy dove from up above
Come down and perch on me,
Let me feel that burning fire.
Make me your homing tree.
Turn the night into the light
To show me what you see.
Raise me up on gentle wings
So I can fly so free.
Sear my flesh, make me afresh
Then douse me in the sea.
Annealed, tempered like a bell.
Strike me and hear me ring.
Burn my soul so I will know
What I am 'sposed to be,
Melt the chains that bind my soul
And blind my eyes to thee.
Take me home so I can roam
Here to there, instantly.
Sit among the holy ones
Who are all one with we.



Richard Hirschfield
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA

Compassion Is...

Caring
Obeying
Mentoring
Pleasure
Angelic
Salvation
Service
Insuring
Openness
Nurturing

And so
much more!



William Morgan Herring
North Carolina Death Row
Raleigh, NC

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Just a Note of Gratitude for Those Who Stayed the Course!

No need to try and tell me that you haven't done anything to warrant my deepest of gratitude. You can try and convince me that you've done nothing extraordinary to earn my unwavering belief and trust in you; but while I appreciate your humility, I appreciate more your unrelenting loyalty through protracted trials and tribulations of years gone by during challenges when the BOP had executions planned. Yes I am so deeply grateful for your steadfast loyalty and friendship when times turned grey and hope started to fade away, you strengthened me to fight another day.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart, for your steadfastness and loyalty in my life, Liz,

as well as all of those who are so diligently and benevolently fighting on my behalf at ARC. Thanks also to my dear friends, James and Shari, and many many others – who have stayed the course. My deepest gratitude for all who support my family and me. Through such dire trials and tribulations: my dear friends in the UK: Penny, Pat and Hilary, as well as my dear and long time friends Judy, Dave and family, Seigen and Cookie. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

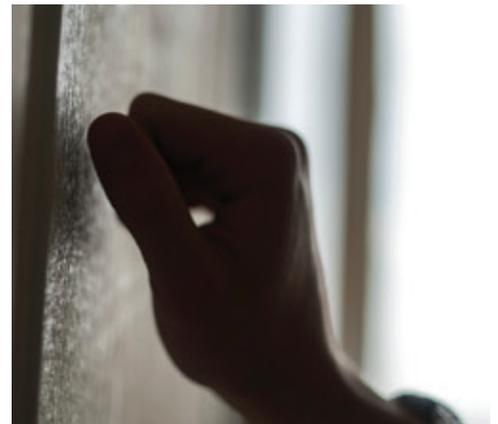


Wesley Purkey
Federal Death Row
Terra Haute, IN

Editor's Note: Wesley Purkey was executed in July 2020. May he rest in peace. His last years were devoted to spreading compassion, for which many are grateful.

When Destiny Knocks...

When destiny knocks at our
Inquiring soul
And fate bares its vision
At once we realize we've
Lost control
And the ability to make decisions...
The things we do, we have no clue,
Of why we take this action,
Though terror lurks, and our friends disperse,
We still seek self-satisfaction.
This need is greed I must concede,
Like a drug I can't do without,
Heroin, crack, coke, and meth,
Has nothing on this addiction's clout.



Marcus Robinson
North Carolina Death Row
Raleigh, NC

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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**

7 Suggestions and Guidelines

1. Write about an experience that impacted you.
2. It doesn't have to be religious. Here are some themes: anger, apathy, beauty, betrayal, boredom, change, complacency, courage, fear, friendship, growing older, jealousy, pride, purpose, vices, and wisdom.
3. Use sensory details – the smell, who said what, its color, how cold it felt. Sensory details connect your experience to your readers.
4. There's no need to use big words when a simpler one suffices: leave your ego at the door with your case: this isn't the place for either one.
5. Look for ways to unify; help; and solve problems.
6. Be authentic. Be yourself. No one's perfect.
7. Try to limit it to 400 words or less, and if possible enclose a photo of yourself.

As there are numerous submissions it may take up to eight months for selected articles to be published.

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My Day/My Life

On a dreary morning
I raise my head
Not alive but
Not yet dead

What is life,
What's its purpose,
Where to find it,
Will it ever surface?

Living in this limbo
Only life to mourn
Between life & death
Wishing I'd never been born

No end in sight
Days without light
No way to take flight
Existing in this perpetual night

Kevin Marinelli
Pennsylvania Death Row
Collegeville, PA



ARCHIPELAGOS

Islands of strung pearls
Safe harbors during rough seas.
Where I find myself.

Kurt Michaels
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA

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Why Worry...

Worry is the cause of many of the world's problems and it can be a warning sign that God is not first in your life at this point in time.

A day of worrying is more exhausting than a day of hard work.

Nothing wastes more energy than worrying, it's a total waste of time and it's useless.

Worrying can damage your health. It can raise your blood pressure, cause depression, increase your stress levels and give you sleepless nights. It can be a slow killer.

There is no pill you can take to stop worrying. No Seminar Book or CD will stop your worrying. The answer is to put God in control of your life. Trust Him, trust tomorrow to God.

Don't cross bridges until you reach them.
Don't open your umbrella until it starts raining.

Hand everything to God, yourself, your problems, plans and health, everything, surrender and abandon yourself to Him.

Surrender your Family to Him. Your future is in God's hands; thus, you are in safe hands.

Trust Him and all will be well.
Easier said than done.

It may take time, but it works.



Al Cunningham
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA