



HUMANITY'S

Love

Collective
HUMAN
ONE-NESS

FREE

SPIRITUALITY

SOUL
CONNECTIONS

TO: VOICES THROUGH THE WALLS
198 College Hill Road
Clinton, NY 13323

February 17, 2010

FR: JIMMY B. WILLIAMSON
P.B.S.P. d34288
P.O. Box 7500-d4/107
Crescent City, CALIF 95532

RE: SUBMISSION OF ESSAY/STORY: REDISCOVERING HUMANITY'S VOICE Through
The Walls of DARKNESS

Dear V.T.T.W., NEW YEAR SALUTATIONS

NOTE TO THE READER

When i first received this call for Essays/Stories i paused and deeply contemplated this thought of: 'WHAT COULD I SHARE from my Life's Journey (thus far of forty + years~ which had began as a child born in the mid west (Oklahoma), raised in Leavenworth Kansas, where i came face-to-face with the darkness of american racism, prejudices, discrimination and bigotry during the desegregation social experiment era (following the Nation's landmark Supreme Court case called 'Brown versus Topeka Board of Education), leading to my natural rebellion and coming into direct conflict with the institutions, systems, laws and Conditioning that i later refer to as the "americanization" process: All of which, has contributed to this journey into the largest prison Industrial Complex nation-state in the world? What exactly could i offer toward a 'Better Understanding of Prisons Place in Society' that would enable a voice of the VOICELESS (which Ralph Ellison so eloquently described as "Invisible" people**) to 'Become part of a public dialogue about this prison system, its culture and the environ of Today's Facilities, etc.' After twenty-plus years of voiceless efforts, here i go again:

**PELICAN BAY STATE PRISON
SECURITY HOUSING UNIT**

RE-DISCOVERING HUMANITY'S VOICE Through The Walls of Darkness

I have noticed that for some strange reason, many people will reach a certain point in their lives, where they become worried about what will their 'individual' legacy be that they leave behind. Then they set about (often rushing) trying to piece together some collage of what they want their life 'story' to project. And for those in the upper class strata of the social order arrangement, they can even utilize their finances and powerful influences (to pay and persuade) to have their legacies manufactured via rewriting history, and

** Ellison, R. is the author of "INVISIBLE MAN!"

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changing (revising) the record of what actually occurred, such selfish individualism raises serious questions about the bigger picture of what this Human journey that our species have come to refer to as "Humanity's collective Life". What about the destinies of an entire Peoples' future? What about the future of all Humanity? Its natural evolutionary process spiraling upward toward genuine "Advanced" civilizations? What about our connections ~ relations as living ~ social Beings, interconnected to other life existence in this world and beyond (Universe)? Questions that must focus upon a primary fact: What about the future of Humanity's children? Because without them, there will be no human future!

There is no clearer example of just how serious these matters of collective human concern can be seen than in the United States of America, where nearly two million people - men, women and youth/children are locked up with its massive Prison Industrial Complex (P.I.C). The most Human Beings in bondage since the period of Euro-America's Chattel Slavery era known as the "Atlantic Slave Trade".

i am one of this (often silenced) imprisoned population. But this story is much larger than the "individual". It's about us all as a human collective. Because we must connect our individual self to the larger human consciousness (aka collective consciousness) to allow our inner selves to open up ~ perceive ~ receive truths thru the universal spectrum of collective connections ~ relations that connects us all here on this planet and the entire living world around us. Only then can we see beyond the small window that the "self" is locked inside, and broaden our horizon - our world view and outlook on life to be receptive to some advanced civilized thought processing ~ ideas ~ theories ~ and new Millennium paradigms.

Some readers may ask, "Where does such understanding of this 'Collective Consciousness' originate? and/or 'How do someone locked away in the abyss of America's PIC discover-reach such a mind-spirit state? To respond to the first question, I would first say that I'm not expert on any such matters raised herein and can only share with you what state of inner Being (and Be-coming) that my personal life journey has brought me to at this stage-time and space. This brings us to the second question, which I can answer in such a way that it may hopefully shine more insight into that first query.

For me, I learned such important Human and social essential when I embarked upon this Truth-seeking journey (that has been ongoing for twenty-one years now), learning knowledge of self which enabled me to re-discover my humanity and affirm my dignity and heritage. All of which, coalesced to elevate my consciousness, spirituality, etc. in connection with the higher collective Human consciousness. Please understand that you do not have to go to prison to lose your humanity and/or gain your connection with our broader universal states of consciousness as human and social Beings. There are many on the outside that do not have their humanity to lose. As such, going to prison should never be equated with the loss of humanity. I, for instance, had lost mines (or got disconnected) long before getting locked up.

It does not occur over nite, but rather manifest from an accumulation of self-negating/destructive factors (both external and internal) that is introduced into our lives at any given time (usually when we're most susceptible and/or vulnerable to negative influences).

Somewhere during my late Teenage years, while in High School, i began to go from experimental and recreational getting high on Marijuana to more addictive drug use/abuse. This occurred at a time in my personal life where i began rebelling, due to being separated from my mother-Queen (Betty Jean) and not knowing if i ever was going to see her again. Internally i was suffering, frustrated, confused, angry and lost with little knowledge of how to deal with it all. With no way of knowing how to constructively communicate/express myself and assert an understandable meaning to what was happening in my life, i rebelled. Began skipping classes, fighting, getting kicked out of school, fighting, stealing, partying, getting high and feeling distant from those caring, helpful folks in and around my life, who could have helped me had i only knew how to open up ~ communicate and seek their help.

But i didn't know nothing but that i was hurting deep inside for reasons that i could not comprehend. And eventually i began losing what little grip on my life that i had left. Drawn to the Streets and lured by the trappings of what we call the "FAST Life's-style" (ie, Fast Money, Fast Cars, Women, Parties, DRUGS, etc. And before i knew it, i was heading out-of-control down that one-way Road of self-destruction (adversely affecting, harming other innocent lives along the way) that usually ends with drug poisoning (addiction) and/or imprisonment and/or death (mentally-spiritually or physically). Somewhere along this trip, i became disconnected and lost my Humanity.

We, men and women, everywhere err and make mistakes, for we are only human and not infallably "perfect." Children and Youth should not even be considered as Adults, because they have yet to complete the natural human~social growth~maturation~developmental processes to qualify for treatment as "Adult" humans. And i've learned from life and others' stories that we all suffer, to some degree, from what a good friend described as "the power of fear and loneliness". Whether a person out there in the streets or in a prison, shouldn't the Human~social Community at large, as fellow human beings allow us to keep a decent amount of dignity so our humanity grows and not diminish and decay. This is especially so for those of us kept buried in solitary confinement dungeons like California's Corcoran and Pelican Bay SHM.

When i was ushered into america's P.I.C. i saw the toll that this beast of a system~warehousing humans exacts upon the countless of men, women and youth that it sank its inhamane, degrading and debilitating fangs into. i first saw it at Folsom prison in the mid-Eighties, then elsewhere over the course of the next two decades. There are so many people walking around in zombie-like states, with all their life-energy drained from them. When you look at their eyes there is only a blank stare on their face. The flame of life appeared doused out. They just shuffled along from their cells to sick call (or someplace) and back. It appears that they had given up on life and they were just going along the prison's "programming" regimen like lifeless robots in hollow human shells waiting to physically perish. Their minds and spirits appeared already dead. These are the "broken" spirit guys. i decided right then and there that i was not going to become one of these broken spirits. So some changes must be effected, beginning with me.

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Just as Michael Jackson's message in his song "Human Nature" encourages, I TOOK "A LOOK IN THE MIRROR" AND MADE "A CHANGE," because first and foremost you can't change nothing without changing yourself first, which begins in the mind. Then I can help effect real changes around me, to off-set the negative, destructive inhumanity that this man-made beastly PIC system and its institutions of repression and social control have manifested and exacted upon those imprisoned in it and our families, relatives, communities, society.

I sought out and welcomed educational, scientific, artistic, spiritual-enrichment, social-cultural, etc. literature, information from other truth-seekers, both outside and in here. You soon learn that there was another kind of men in here besides those "broken" ones, and they too had recognized the need for change, re-discover their humanity, affirm their dignity and heritage. Just as Malcolm X underwent mental transformation to open his mind to the larger collective consciousness that Humanity offers. Those men of truth-seeking consciousness effects positive human and social change of criminal, slave and/or gangster mindsets within themselves, others and the unjust, violable conditions, practices, etc. around them, by any means necessary.

A good, intelligent friend once described prison as a huge, intimidating and frightening stressor. And while some imprisoned individuals may have the capacity to shy away from activities that might rob or take from their humanity, it's more easily said than done. Mainly because the degradation, dehumanization, etc. is so prevalent throughout the entire PIC system that it became engrained in its customs, culture, etc. Its institutionalized

It is certainly not assisted or encouraged by the prison authorities, or the majority of imprisoned-persons. Here in the State of California, the government (via Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger) passed a law to include the word "REHABILITATION" to the government's state prison agency - "California Department of Corrections 'AND REHABILITATION'". That was five years ago in 2005 and the majority of us inside and outside CDCr still have not seen any honest efforts by these governmental officials to define and demonstrate what they mean by "Rehabilitation."

So we are left to find the way and means to discover and/or maintain our humanity on our own and with whatever outside support that we can find available.

Surviving or at least passing through these influence to becoming whole on the other side will be much easier and more likely if the imprisoned-person has a firm and unshakable support system outside the prison with friends, family and/or the community. (See Example Support Program below)

A person who err, make the costly mistake(s) that lands him and her within the PIC is (and remains) first and foremost a human being. We all were born of a mother that I am going to blindly say loved them (at least enough to birth us into this world). We are all from a family of sorts, and some of us may or may not have people in that family that still love and care for them. You see if you ask "What is a prisoner," we must also include in this mix the family and friends of this imprisoned-person (aka "prisoner"). These family and friends essentially become prisoners too. Families are treated differently by society, families spend small fortunes on phone bills from their loved ones in prison, larger fortunes on travel if they can afford it, to go see their

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family member in prison. For instance, I have unfortunately seen my family twice in the quarter of century that I've been in here, simply because of distance and poverty. I have not seen my mother-queen yet and now that she's dying of cancer, maybe too late. All I have is those twelve years we share together when I was a child!

Of course, families have to be present at home to take our phone calls, or even to meet the mailman, so please don't think it's exaggerating to say that families become prisoners too. In here, you lose 'so-called friends,' and can even lose some family members.

If we, as a human civilization, can all agree that all imprisoned-persons are in fact human beings, then the outside world Human collective and the prison authorities (being employed by your tax-paying dollars) must regard and respect these imprisoned men, women and youth as human beings. And understand that these imprisoned humans are capable of thought, emotion, pain, suffering, faith, religion or spirituality, remorse and rehabilitation. We all, at least, deserve the opportunity of becoming better as human beings. As a friend once asked, Isn't that what prisons are for, to rehabilitate the guilty so they can rejoin society as a productive member? The families and loved ones of all imprisoned-persons also deserves at least the respect that you would give any other person.

We, as a human civilization, must be mindful that to many people, an imprisoned-person is a mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, grand parent, friend, significant other, etc. They are someone you know, care about, love, and someone that has been and/or is a substantial part of your lives.

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When i was born the youngest of three siblings, i received overwhelming love, care, attention, sheltering, etc. from both my parents' sides of the Family - Extended Family. My main painful childhood memories was: the domestic violence that my father exacted upon my mother-queen, who struggled with the disease of Alcoholism; the disappearance of my (elder) brother Earnest Jr. who i never got a chance to get to know personally; the temporary incarceration of my brother, then my Father Ernest Sr. and my sister Donrita, who was like my second mother and protective sibling friend. Leaving only me and my mother-queen, who tried to secure a home for us, only to find us in a worse situation with an insecure, abusive guy named Early Stanford. i still cringe at those memories of me, as a ten year child sitting outside their bedroom door, hearing her screams, as that brute's fists pounded against my mother's beautiful face and flesh. Yet all i knew to do was cry out, beat on the door and wait for what i knew would be my turn, once the door opened and the brute can out to see me standing there. i accepted his strikes and shoves, as i made my way in to be by her side, handing her a towel to wipe away the blood. Years later when i rebelled, gave up on life, i was already in prison.

Prison is cold, Prison is sterile of any color outside of the depressing, Prison is lonely. Prison is unforgiving. Prison is frightening, Prison is angry, Prison is loveless, Prison is violent. Prison is dominance over the weak. Prison is looking over your shoulder. Prison is 20-plus hours a day spent in a small cell the size of your bathroom (for the average outside apartment). Prison is no privacy around your toilet. Prison is being separated from the love of your family. Prison is expensive collect phone calls that your family pay for. Prison is a family visit that only lasts a few minutes and is behind glass. Prison is leaving your significant other and kids behind.

(Continuation of "Rediscover Humanity's Voice...")

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I recall reading somewhere a while back that prisons projects contrasting realities. Prison is hoping with all your hoping with all your heart that you will receive mail today. Prison is insufficient, tasteless food. Prison is worrying that your significant other may find another while you are incarcerated. Prison is worrying that your children may forget or disown you. Prison is watching relationships that you once had, fade. Prison is frustration with no positive and constructive outlet. Prison is living with deep hurt and pain inside. Prison is crying yourself to sleep without sound so that no one knows you are crying. Prison is beating the system to survive. Prison is becoming the person and doing the things that you never thought yourself capable of being or doing. Prison is remorse. Prison is regret. Prison is shutting down your brain to the reality of existence and dreaming of a better place. Prison is seeing things that you never wanted to see. Prison is abuse. Prison is rape. Prison is game. Prison is competing for minute prison resources. Prison is sub-cultural group relations. Prison is emotional break down. Prison is stripping the individual of any feelings of worth. Prison is about authority exercised by the system over the prisoner. Prison is about rules and regulations that change daily and without warning or explanation. Prison is about dominating our fallen angels to a point of submission. Prison is a subculture and way of life that is sometimes worse than the original crime. Prison is a world of its own with tolerances exercised on both sides of the system—the authority and the prisoner. Prison is about goods and services that are prohibited—contraband, supply and demand, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, violence, etc. In a society such as the United States of America that purports to be a "free" society, its prisons are an atrocity and an insult to anyone with intelligence if you think that this PIC addresses a need or approaches a solution to reduce recidivism.

Prisons are microcosms of their outside production but magnified ten-fold. This is why when a story is told in the media, it appears and sounds like its happening inside another world than the one right here in the USA. Prisons is what prison is, but we, as advancing civilized Humans, must be objective to recognize first and foremost that imprisoned-persons are people. Men, women and youth/children in prison are human beings. In this society, the government says that punishment (and even death) is a necessary part of your freedom. If that was so, then is punishment best served by this current system? We just recent witnessed (during the Bush era) the truth about this government's punishment and death penalty treatments of human beings innocent of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Patriot ACT, etc. Countless of lives have been uprooted, destroyed and left in ruins. Where were the Humanity in these U.S. government officials? There was none, only inhumanity under the auspices of retribution and punishment. All done in the name of "The People." So to is this continuing act of filling up and warehousing Humans - men, women and children/youth into the largest prison system in the whole world also being done in your name.

How this beast of a system is utilized-operated and how the imprisoned is treated/punished and does their sentence raise fundamental concerns for any society aspiring toward advanced civilization principles of Humanity. What do these imprisoned women, men and children/youth need to be (re) educated/habilitated, healed, uplifted and returned to a natural course of human and social development? All of which, facilitates a successful social re-entry and prevents recidivism.

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We must advocate emotional health and human-social development. The imprisoned women men and children/youth, who make up the United States' Prison populations need to build and maintain emotional health. You stunt this part of the imprisoned-persons' human-social Being, when you incarcerate them, Prisoners need to establish and maintain healthy contact with their loved ones. Imprisoned-persons need to count on that contact, as it is the only emotional contact we will experience while incarcerated. Remember that one day these imprisoned-persons are going to be released and if you have deprived these individuals with rational and emotional contact how will we cope when we come out? What kind of stress does this present to loved ones and society? Strong emotional health is one of the most fundamental needs of a human being next to food and water. Emotional health keeps us balanced and functioning in a reasonable way. Lock someone up and starve her or him of a basic instinctual need and what happens? Human beings are social animals-life forms and we need contact. We need love. We need emotional ties and feelings. If prisoners need any one right, it is to have greater access to our loved ones, whether through letters, phone and/or personal visits. Even if Prison authorities record the calls, video monitor the visit, (as they already does here at Pelican Bay state Prison SHU), or post a guard on every imprisoned-person in the visiting room - just allow greater contact to build and maintain these critical relationships with loved ones. (see Poem, entitled: "A MEASURE OF EXISTENCE", below). This need is enhanced for those held in solitary confinement for decades.

And I witnessed this emotional need during the passing of my loved ones - Grandmother Queen's Davetta West, Onita Bonner, MY

Father Ernest Williamson (Soon Mother Queen Betty Jean Carr-Stanford), The latter of whom was last reported in the Duncan, OK Memorial Hospital's intensive Care on her last breath.* She is the primary reason that I come before you today, as a 'Changed' Human Being, A new Man of proud African Heritage, ethics, Morality and Spirituality. It was that tragic childhood experience that moms endured and our involuntary separation when I was twelve, which we had no idea would result in us never seeing one another again (except on photographs), that motivated me to seek out the true causes of such tragic life realities surrounding what occurred to her, our family, etc. This opened me up to much more, as I sought out, discovered and learned the various multi-disciplinary studies, sciences, arts, etc. necessary for me to change, reciprocate and positively contribute in the enlightening, uplifting, healing, uniting, building, connecting, empowering and developing of others, in the spirit of Humanity's calling upon us all—imprisoned and outside—to aspire toward genuine ideas, principles and human-social practices of advancing civilizations.

Next in line and need are programs of education, life counseling, skill training, self-healing/improvement, spiritual enrichment, human-social connecting/uniting/upliftment/healing/building/empowering us collectively, restoring Humanity back to our correct course of Collective-Conscious Human-Social species aspiring as Advanced Civilization(s). We, imprisoned-persons, need to be challenged intellectually and physically while serving time. These challenges will develop skills that if present in the first place, may have kept us out of prison. Some of these programs that I've been blessed to participate and learn from are:

- A & E DAVIS SPIRITUAL COUNSELING PROGRAM, 11207 PARKSCAPE DR., RIVERSIDE CA 92505
- ADOPT-A-BROTHER SELF/COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, CONTACT COORDINATOR: ASHLEY GREGORY AT 1448 6th, street, Oakland, ca 94612, or gregory a 4 @ gmail . com

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or Lindsey Herbert, Attn: Prison Outreach Programs, 660 Barrows Hall #2572
University of Berkeley, Berkeley, Ca 94720-2572

or Sasha Marini (Attn: A-A-B Community Self Help Prog.)
or Bar None Collective, P.O. Box 1, Arcata Ca 95518

(Write and learn more about the Life Line Programs offered)

In closing, I would like to thank all of you there at Voices Through the Walls for both your commendable initiation of this important endeavor and for blessing this human being with the opportunity to share my changed and growing heart and soul through the inked expressions on this paper. I leave you with the following poem:

* A MEASURE OF EXISTENCE *
BY JAMES B.

Three Life Lines is all that you get,
The only proof that you exist.

Kept in the abyss for many years
Everyone seems to have disappeared.

My 90-year old Grandmother, a true Black Pearl,
She is my umbilical cord to the outside world.

She has grown too old to visit me here,
A valued life line I once held dear.

I am not allowed to use the phone,
My second life line is now gone.

Envelopes and writing paper is my last life-line,
The only connection between her world and mine.
A measure of existence while doing time.

There are thousands of prisoners who have lost their lifeline,
Their measure of existence has faded with time.

Oblivion is all that is left behind,
A tragic reality of being confined.

If you know someone who is doing time,
Show them some love and use a life line.

* Dealing with losing your loved ones while imprisoned is one

internally difficult challenging times for so many of us. Especially for those buried in Solitary Confinement for decades without contact visits or phone calls home, except for Family Emergencies only. And that's only for a few minutes.

Just recently on Saturday, January 16th, the guards came to my cell and took me down to their office for such an Emergency Phone Call. So there I was inside this small space with guards all around me (one of them held the phone receiver up to my ear), while I tried to share a very personal, emotional moment with my dying mother queen. We exchanged our "Love You's", which I marveled at her efforts to muster up enough strength to speak up loud enough at times so I could hear her voice, before it faded away. (The Cancer that spread from her lungs to her chest causing her terminal illness, adversely affected her breathing). Then I re-assured her that I would continue to work on improving myself to be the best man that I can learn to become and continue her work with helping the rest of our family (especially the youngest children) get to know and learn how important family, extended family (community) and Humanity truly means." The guard (holding the phone) hand started shaking, so he told me to cut it short, which I eventually brought the call to an end. They returned me to the cell assigned to me, where I laid on my bunk and cried (my first time in over a decade). Then suddenly I remembered that my mother-queen always told us to be positive and count our blessings to have been afforded this blessed opportunity to share our borrowed time here on Earth together. So I got up, wiped away my tears and celebrated the love that this beautiful Human Being placed in my Heart & Spirit, so that I can now, as a mature spiritual being share it with you all.