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PS Will Answer All letters... I have
A 2 year sentence for forgery.

RE: Essay - Special to New York Times / APWA

(About 900 Words)

Finding Purpose in Jail House Science

By Michael J. McCarthy

Recently, in the Denver County Jail, I almost went to blows with two men seriously trying to convince me that the world is flat. These men weren't mentally-ill or uneducated either. They were like a lot of people nowadays: displaced.

With next to no books to read in our 64-man pod, nightly discussions such as these are common.

James was a combat army veteran who served a tour in Afghanistan. He was charged with stalking his girlfriend after she left him. Richard was a homeless laborer who lived-out of his truck and had a hankering for selling drugs to supplement his income. [I changed both of their names for the sake of privacy]. I'm a writer, with a lengthy property crime history charged with escape for cutting-off a wailing ankle monitor on parole.

"So, what happens when a person gets to the edge," I asked.

James answered, "They will run into a tall ice wall."

"And the sun revolves around our flat Earth you believe?"

"That's right, the system is heliocentric."

James had drawn Richard an exquisite intricate map: "A Flat Earth Map," and thoroughly succeeded in convincing Richard of its validity.

"All of this is validated by the Bible, the Koran, and even NASA," claimed James.

"You've talked to NASA," I inquired, "or read about this on some conspiracy theory website?"

"James is a lot smarter than you, McCarthy, and a lot more convincing."

Richard is a brute of a guy, who looks like a Russian soldier. He generally is on edge. However, he was deeply moved by the generous gift of the "Flat Earth Map." So, I was treading on thin ice. I attempted to shift the conversation to more neutral grounds.

"Have either of you guys heard of the church burning Bruno at the stake?"

"Who the F... is Bruno?" Asked Richard.

James commented, "The heliocentric perspective makes a lot of sense to me, if we aren't the center of everything we are just a speck of dust all alone in the universe."

"That my friend may be the most intelligent thing you said this whole conversation. That's exactly what we are (a speck of dust), but that doesn't make us less valuable than anything or anywhere else in the galaxy."

I was beginning to understand the dynamics behind James thinking. Having gone to war, having lost his girlfriend, being in jail, he needed something, anything he could grasp to give purpose to it all. I decided to test my theory.

"When did you come to believe the earth was flat?"

"Last year."

This coincided with James return from Afghanistan and his problems with his girlfriend.

As things got more difficult throughout the year; James no longer believed that stars were distant suns. He no longer believed that man ever walked on the moon. Furthermore, he believed that the sun was only a mere 3000 miles from the Earth. And he questioned gravity and weightlessness in outer-space.

James cover-up of the realities of life were a way to mask his loneliness and pain. We all desire to feel wanted. So, James created his own special world. How was I any different? I wasn't. For James, plopping himself in the center of the universe was consoling medicine.

Due to skyrocketing housing costs and wage stagnation the majority of America's middle-class feel displaced. They are just one missed paycheck away from a financial crisis. Many folks are supplementing their incomes by selling drugs or some other illegal activity.

The judicial system is swallowing-up ordinary citizens that are not criminals per se; whom are forced to deviate from the law to make ends meet. Families are being tossed-out into the streets thorough gentrification programs. The poor go hungry. Sick folks are dying. Children in inner cities live in fear and misery.

In the name of protecting free speech more laws are produced to curtail freedom of expression. A police state is being created before our eyes to force compliance with all the new laws.

"Being only 3000 miles from the sun, wouldn't we burn-up, or be sucked-in by its gravitational pull?"

"Gravity doesn't exist. Ancient mariners used the 3000 mile distance in their calculations to determine their exact location with their sextants."

"And there they are," I said.

"Exactly."

"Okay...all righty then..."

"I should punch you right in the mouth. McCarthy you haven't provided a stitch-of-evidence supporting your viewpoint," threatened Richard ready to fight. I thought better of explaining how if the sun revolved around a flat surface it would be the same time everywhere (and of course that's not the case). I felt it was more important to honor what solace James' garnered from his beliefs.

"Okay fellas, I'm sold, the earth is flat."

They both jumped-up and high-fived one another.

"Can I get one of those maps?" I asked James.

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Hi! Feel free to write me At:

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I'm An incarcerated writer And photographer,

Facebook friend search: Michael McCarthy - Denver that's me
in the Gold Blazer, tie, And Black Derby... Photos are public share...
lots of cool pics of Denver places And events.

You can also write me by Tablet - email

Go to www.ConnectNetwork.com click "All" Colorado Facilities

Michael McCarthy - DOC# 106515 or www.jpax.com by jpay
Mail And you can attach photos...

If you are A writer or researcher... I'm very knowledgeable of the
state of affairs in prisons throughout the country... I'll answer
all inquiries. If you would just like to correspond I'll do that
too. Thanks for reading my column.

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M. J. McCarthy