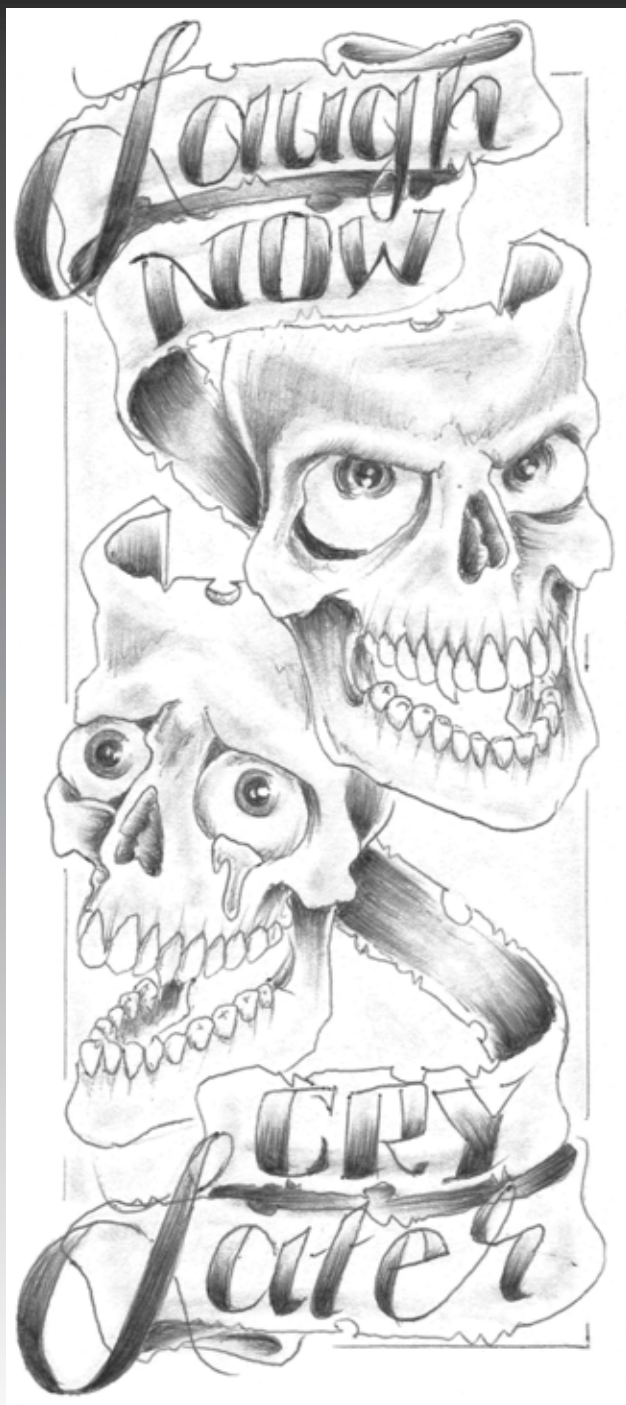


Words of Fire

issue 9, spring 2017



writings by and for
people in prison

published by
Prison Books
Collective
Publishing and
Distribution

Words of Fire is a collection of writing and artwork by people in prison. It is published by Prison Books Collective Publishing and Distribution.

We welcome submissions of short essays and opinion pieces (500 words max), poetry, and art work from people in prison. Note: submissions may be edited for clarity and length. We will not publish works that are racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise target specific groups of people.

Words of Fire only exists with your support! We'd like to thank everyone who submitted work featured in this issue.

**Mail submissions to:
Words of Fire
Prison Books Collective
PO Box 625
Carrboro, NC 27510**

Include your name and location on all submissions so we can credit you. Let us know if you **do not** want your name used. We can just use your initials. We also post a copy on our website. Let us know if you want your full name in the online version (otherwise we use initials)

About us: We are a Chapel Hill/Durham, NC-based anti-prison group that sends hundreds of books to people in NC and AL prisons, and zines (booklets about various topics) nationwide each month. We also publish this zine of art and writing by people in prison. <http://prisonbooks.info>

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Front cover image: "Laugh Now Cry Later"
by D.W.
Umatilla, OR

Introduction

Hello Friends and Comrades,

After a break of two and a half years, we **finally** have the 9th issue of Words of Fire, our semi-regular 'zine of writings, drawings, poetry, and news by people in prison. We know many of you have been asking about and eagerly awaiting this next issue. Thanks for your patience!

First of all, we'd like to thank a group of students from the Criminal Justice Awareness and Action student group at UNC Chapel Hill for their hard work typing up and laying out all the submissions for this issue. This 9th issue would not have been possible without their help.

Our collective has undergone some changes in membership and location since our last issue. After 8 great years of being part of Internationalist Books and Community Center, in 2014 we formed our own separate group. Our mailing address has changed from the store to our own PO Box: Prison Books Collective // PO Box 625 // Carrboro, NC 27510. In addition, many long-time members left the group to pursue other interests. In spite of all these changes, we are still going strong and growing in membership (and getting caught up on our prior backlog of book and zine requests). We remain committed to our mission of getting books and zines into the hands of people in prison, and showing all of you that you are not forgotten!

In 2014, our collective stopped sending books to MS (we only send books to NC and AL now), but we are excited that an amazing new group was formed that took over that work (Big House Books).

In news, we're sure many of you know that there has been nationwide push-back against the widespread use of solitary confinement, and a growing awareness of and opposition to our system of mass incarceration. There was also a nationwide prisoner strike in September 2016. And we know that people around the country (both on the inside and the outside) are organizing to fight the prison system.

In solidarity,
Prison Books Collective
Spring 2017

I Can't Breathe: The Eric Garner Story

By M.W.
Butner, NC

Ace Hood told me to hustle hard
But how can I
They have my hood in a chokehold...
WHile their own kind get it in
By the boat load...
Newports hit for 8 dollas a pack
SO i hustle looses to make my money back...
They claim I'm doin it cause
I'm fat and lazy...
31 prison arrests this is
What the system made...
This shit aint right
Po-po arrive on the scene
Over a fight...
They're late. I had already broke it up
But why do I have such bad luck?
Past encounters with Officer A
But Officer B yoked me up
He applied pressure which broke
Me down to my knees
All I could say was
I CANT BREATHE I CANT BREATHE
I CANT BREATHE I CANT BREATHE
I CANT BREATHE I CANT BREATHE
I CANT BREATHE I CANT BREATHE
I CANT BREATHE I CANT BREATHE
I CANT BREATHE I CANT BREATHE

RIP ERIC GARNER



Maya Angelou in pencil
By S.C.G.
Bellefonte, PA

Identity

By R.W., Jr

Faces Changing,
Changing Faces,
Cold as Ice, Frozen Places.

Broken Clock, Time has Stalled.
Awaiting the day my name is Called.

Suppressed tears, so deep within.
Captured Soul, Stolen friend;
My dreams of getting them back again,
Is falling short and growing dim.

If hope has light, please shine on me.
Condemn me not, eternally.
And if it's fit to rescue me, Remove this bondage,
Set me free.

Raging Sea's, I seek your peace.
May your face be all I see;
And when my trials have grown
Complete, I'll clearly see my identity.

Malevolence

By M.J.B.

I'm used 2 all the hatin'
 Cuz it comes with greatness
 & I come from the slumz..... of
 the pavement
 that somebody will come & save
 them.
 Save them from themselves,
 & then save them from the
 wealth
 Cause when you're in great
 health & great wealth
 then you know..... that you gotta
 walk around in stealth,
 because the majority of the
 world's heart is blacker than felt.
 Can't you feel... the cold steel...
 that penetrates the will of the
 hated?
 That is..... if the hatred could
 give looks that could kill,
 but it's hard 2 kill My immortal-
 ity.
 & it's hard 2 spill My blood with
 your abnormality
 because your actions are normal
 2 Me
 Than 2 bow 2 Me
 because I am godlike
 But the average human being
 robs life
 just like the Mobs did 2 jesus
 christ

& My pencil throbs in my
 right..... hand
 giving life to the words that I
 write 4 man.....
 & women alike.
 A Modern Day Philosophy
 infused with a young man's pov-
 erty
 & if the world is confused.....
 let Me subdue them with a
 prophecy.
 The world is not used 2 your
 sovereignty
 it is not used 2 your individuality
 so if it will come 4 your residuals
 yeah..... It comes 4 individuals
 that are trying 2 hide & confide
 in themselves
 because the world is dying to ap-
 ply something else.
 Dying 2 Make a contribution,
 but if their solution is not posi-
 tive
 then it is pollution.
 Resulting in fits of confusion
 & it is diluting your self-worth.
 & it may not be right 2 be selfish
 but it Makes no sense 2 Make
 yourself hurt.
 How Much is yourself worth?
 Sometimes it is only right.....
 2 give society a wide berth.

About Friendship in Prison

By D.P.

Townson, MD

Humans are social animals. Yet during our own stints in prison, during hardships of prison life, we often find it difficult to maintain meaningful connections to people around us. Friendship is hard, and different in prison than that in the "free world."

However, only in prison we often learn the meaning of friendship in its vast, most social of means, which offset other costs. For when we are incarcerated, at times of hardship, we intuitively tend to make better choices of with whom we make allegiances, whom to choose as friends.

Human beings are not meant to be alone, they crave companionship and exchange of social experience. Sometimes they need help. In any case, friendship is something more likely to succeed and to be checked against all kind of challenges in hard times than in quiet ones.

Healthy relationships in friendships depend on our skills to recognize values similar to ours, but also on our desire to do so. Where, if not in prison, where we feel lonely so often, such desire may take place?

The lack of something gives birth to our craving for it. It is especially true when we are locked up. In other words, prison presents the ground for the friendships to start, but its up to us whether to start it or not. Of course our desire is important as well as favorable situation. This does not mean that prison is the best place for starting friendships. For sure it is not. At the same time, we often do in prison something we lacked the determination to do "on the streets" - to find a good friend.

Also, as we are mostly sober in prison, we see others and ourselves more realistically. Friendships that we start in prison very fortunately miss such false pretexts as "getting high together" or "do some hussle." It hardly may be considered a self-proclaimed goal- to find a friend by all means. I am sure, though, an average person can find one, especially when out of restraining limits of self-destructive lifestyles many of us lead on the outside.

Be a good friend, and find one too!

Smile

By D.P.
Townson, MD

We all are careless, sometimes,
But storm will come - and here we are:
Depending on the world to shine,
For us to have some shining in the eyes

We understand- or will we later? -
The world depends on us to make.
And simple smile is sometimes
The very thing it needs to take.

Forget-Me-Nots

By D.P.
Townson, MD

Blue forget-me-nots
Drink them like a song.
They will go soon
They're already gone.

Everything for a time
In this shifty world
See this little child?
One day he'll be gone.

Still we do not care-
Sing, and drink, and love.
Everything for a time
Let us be above

The Truth Is

By M.J.B.

They say the truth will set you free
But nah... not me..... I disagree
I say tha truth is a disease
& it could kill you..... like a terminal illness.
Especially when the truth is not the truth at all
& who's 2 say the truth is what you saw
& who knows who was involved
& who knows... you know... you don't have a clue at all
but 'chu act like you do.....
but 'chu never even knew..... The few... Minor details
& gossip is so rude & it's sumthin' you should not do -
unless you're a female.
For the we'll make an exception.
because today my friend... I've had a recollection
AN inception..... That tha truth is not tha truth anymore
& tha youth..... is not tha youth anymore.
They are but yet A vessel
A personification of everything you saw fit.
& what 'chu see is what 'chu get
but what 'chu see is not legit
A minor misconception of a misfit.
Because tha truth is not tha truth anymore
& tha youth..... is not tha youth anymore
The truth is... the youth is....
A reflection of what 'chu did..... it's useless
When it eats away at your tissue like the bite of a brown recluse
does.
& it's all because.....

Continued on Page 8

the guardians that were put before the guardians -
 that were put before you... Never knew... Luv..... That's why you do
 the thangz you do -
 because you just don't have a clue... Luv
 but who does..... The truth was _
 this world doesn't luv you... At all.
 IT Loves what 'chu have 2 offer,
 it luv's what 'chu have 2 bring 2 the table
 & when they use that all up you're disabled, you're labeled -
 As a liability.
 & tha truth is.....
 That I don't know the truth at all
 I'm just giving my perception of what I saw
 My opinion about the I..... in dominion
 so don't ask why... when you're descendin'
 open your eyez... cuz they're pretendin'
 & tha truth is.....
 only you are held accountable for what 'chu did
 So whether tha truth lives... or truth lies
 Society only believes in tru Lies
 deceptions that're deeper than tha bluest tides
 Tha Bluest Eyes.....
 Couldn't see through tha deciever
 So if you died they won't cry
 & the truth.....
 Nah it won't come out neither.

Damn "He" Thick

By Peanut
 Sanford, NC

Chrishon's a businessman on the come up with a past he plans on
 leaving behind.

Life's looking good for him, his business is thriving, he's mar-
 ried and dedicated to both his wife and five year old son until he's
 abruptly charged with a crime he had no knowledge of and is sen-
 tenced to ten years in prison.

This is where the strength of his love is tested. Determined to prove
 his innocence and return to his family he reverts back to his old
 life to regain his freedom. After making the right connections he's
 ready but he needs a team.

He aligns himself with a group of men who's counterparts are
 homosexuals. Overlooking that they put the yard on lock. At times
 Chrishon questions his teammates lifestyles unaware that he too
 will find himself in the strangest love triangle imagined when one
 day "Bubblicious", a transsexual transfers in with his eyes set on
 him.

With Bubblicious in pursuit of his affection and his wife by his
 side he finds himself torn as he finds himself seriously involved
 with Bubblicious and in love with his wife with determination to
 be there for his son. The time comes when he's forced to make the
 biggest decision of his life, will he go home with his wife and young
 son, or start a new life with Bubblicious?

Certain Uncertainties

By R.W., Jr.

Uncertainty lies before me, Except the
Certain trials ahead.
If there is a Road,
It's filled with pain and sorrow.
If there's not,
I'm left with no tomorrow.

So I'm at the crossroads of certain uncertainties;
Depressive as it all Seems.
The uncertainty beyond my last breath
gives hope to be found in the Sorrows of
Tomorrow; Least I lose the Capacity to dream.

Least I lose the capacity to breathe.
Least I lose the life to strive for.
Least I die with no one to die for.
Least I refuse to travel to certain uncertainties.
Least I refuse to travel again.

Whats certain is the road to uncertainties
Follows the path toward my end.

Interior Silence

By D.S.
Bellefonte, PA

Another dream found and lost
Even a lust for love couldn't keep the cost.
Thrown against the ceiling and shattered
Rained down in shards of diamond scattered.
Still, yet still, reflected the darkness I've tried to escape
Swelling like a storm flooding paradise's cape.
Drenched in tears and hurt and pain for years
Has caused me not to be able to see clear
To steer, to veer right or left, for dear live
Wading and waiting for the ocean's next crest.
This sea of nothingness full of emptiness-soundless
To where I can't develop a buttress, protecting thoughts surmount-
ed
None so fine to straighten my crown found wanted
I become unwound like a party streamer-lifeless
For my soul took off to tell God, all is lost, that love
Is evaporated from being watered down.
Ic an't even yell to remind myself, I am man
Seeking completion by one or many a woman
My mortal Garden of Eden, to flow through like, the Pison [ask
about this]
But for now, just darkness, just pain, interior silence.



1800s Reservation of Africa Migration in Songhay Empire
By S.C.G.
Bellefonte, PA

In Vain

By M.W.
Butner, NC

After all the protesting,
Shouting and wailing around
town
U entered their establishment
And sat down
Ordering a drink
And Resting your feet
Frustrated over Mike Brown
Lying in the street
What you all are doing
Is righteous an I respect your
minds
But did U think about
Who you were spending ur
money with
When U made them signs
My daughter seen the Protesters
And fell in love wit shorty boots
I refuse to purchase Timberlands
Because Darren Wilson chose to
shoot
They refuse to recognize evidence
And pursue the Case B
They even follow you around in
Macy
You witness what Walmart done
to Tracy [Morgan]
Yet U continue to spend money

At these places
While consciously knowin they
are racists
Damaging Property
This must STOP
No more Homemade cocktails
And Throwing rocks
If U want their attention
Then We must boycott
Those who choose not
That's a shame
It only means
Renisha McBride, Jesus "Chey"
Huenia, Ezell Ford, Omar
Arneco, John Gnawono, Eric
Ganner, Tamir Rices, and Mike
Brown
DIED IN VAIN

Can't Be Fixed, Unless First Broken

By W.A.W.
Fayetteville, NC

This may seem like, someone working on material parts;
assuming, it could be an engine, when it's coils begins to sparks.
Or maybe a sliding door that continually fall off its hinge;
always hating the fact, that you have to fix it—time and time again.
Can I challenge you to look at this phrase, in a different illustration;
let's look at the parts in one's life and see how, we can replace them.
Starting with the thoughts and intentions of the heart, that are cruel;
causing your brain to send to your body, negative emotions, in aways
of attitudes.
Not only that but also changing the way of situations, when dealing
with other's [ask about this];
leaving, either one of the two with a feeling, of not caring, which one
suffers.
Don't know about you but I'm tired of the statistics being [illegible],
in every lives;
my wish, is that everyone can consult in God and in his love—abide!
I maybe asking too much of Him (God) but hey, God knows every-
one inner parts;
He (God) knew the ending of their life, before it even began to start.
Futhermore, I just want someone to realize & understand, in the
theme of my notion;
that it's not just parts, but a person, that "Can't Be Fixed, Unless First
Broken!"

Streets of Spring

By D.P.
Townson, MD

People are moving along those streets
Seemingly in disorder
Spring is coming. Another spring...
I'm in lock up up. Law and order?

Well we are all in need for some.
Strange for you, my brother,
Spring is coming, for me not to smell,
To not see, to not bother

Soul Searching

By CL.M.

Traveling down this road of regret & searching
for redemption. Shuffling through my past
transgressions I fall deeper in self contemplation.
void of this concept of self-worth I die as I
live. So I dig deeper in this catacomb but it
deceives. I desperately try to laugh off this constant
agony. But I fall deeper & deeper into this
abyss of self-pity. So I erase my sense of
self to become void of emotions. For now I
live without hope to divulge in just self
devotion.

Revolutionary Rebirth

By R.M.
Raleigh, NC

Revolutionary existence is non-existence
what we once strive for, we are no more
gone with the militia minded warriors
who were Bred to Be Generals
to lead the fleet of evolution
now we have Been cast out as mere
imbeciles with no morals in life
the life that was once uplifted as Almighty
has Been on a constant decline of a suffering Body
we were once praised for our military actions
now we are denounced as nothing more than gangBanging hood-
lums
a community that once loved us for our
good deeds, protection, elderly and youth assistance
has now disowned us like a fatherless or motherless child
in order to regain our societies trust
we must regroup and find what was once us
for we are the alpha males and females of the universe
the reigning appearance of Almighty Trinity
for when the time comes and we are placed Back
in our community's good graces
we will show that we are worthy to the many faces
for we are revolutionary soldiers in the mental and
physical ways of life and we stand together united
as Brother's and sister's ready to fight as one
for the cause of manking
so it's either they gave us freedom
or we advocate justice...

Demonstrate ...

By W.A.W.
Fayetteville, NC

We are told, to lead others, by the way of our actions;
hoping in life, that they will be able to match them.
Although, we are not perfect ourselves;
but strive to be it, through the spirit that dwells.
Within us, from the promise God has made;
that life, lived in righteousness, will be o'kay.
If you haven't noticed, we live in a world, that loves to stereo-type;
watching, seeking, and searching individuals, with all their might.
That's why it's good, to not stagger, but stay in a straight line;
even when the pressure's [ask about this] of this world, puts you in
a horrible bind.
Because someone is watching, waiting, just to see you fall;
ready to tell everyone, how you fell, and couldn't stand back up—at
all.
So it's best to live the same way Jesus did, each and everyday;
for those, who are watching you, wouldn't have nothing negative to
say.
About you because when the difficulties came, you keep up, a clean
slate;
all due, to the fact, God has placed in you, a willingness to
Demonstrate!

Greed

By M.J.B.
Maury, NC

Green & White
paper that folds and creases.
sign on the dotted line & your soul releases.
Silver & brown pieces...
leave i'm bound 2 precincts
jingling round in your pockets
every single round deployz like rocketz
you can hear tha sound...
of the war on poverty in the projects.
put your Nose 2 the barrel;
it smells like tha leather of incinerated walletz.
Renovate your knowledge with a treasury seal.
In God we trust;
Even tha righteous get killed.
Greed & Lust
2 Much is Never enough
& Some Are Never clever enough —
2 build up their Mindz.
Ratha kill off tha potential of all tha brilliance they find.
Some people treat envy like it's devine...
& it multiplies like Nickles & Dimes;
Leaving life so fickle from ignorant Minds.
Dismembered, remember...I have dinner sometimes.
& let My thoughts simmer — A holocaust they've entered
A 3rd World hunga, younga & Malnourished

Bounded by oppression
they found you discouraged
& down in tha earth what's that worth of tha ore

Continued on Page 20

ever since My birth I been lookin 4 More
so I can see your pain when it bleeds from your sores
some children's' bellies are sore
but that's not tha reason 4 war
I've seen A history
Where authorities been Misused & abused
I've seen Misery & tha blues, over shoes.
When u turn on tha news, tell Me what do u view?
Where u ride in thru Georgia U can still see tha noose...
that hangs from that tree.
Can U feel tha disease that still hasn't been cured

Oh yeas there's A war
But what do u fight 4
& how do u win wars...when your platoons been crippled
ratha kill u than fill u wid food 4 your Mental
can I lease your Mind...cuz it's just A rental
feast on your kind, cuz your just that simple
u want 2 much....but u don't know how 2 get it
Try 2 take an easy route, but u don't know where you're headed
There's 2 destinations
1...A concrete & steel plantation
or 2...in the depths of dat tomb that'll hug U tight like a Womb
I guess your just doomed, but it's your choice
Man...what some people will do
In tha pursuit of dat Royce*

A Mad Man's Eulogy

By CL.M.

Pain consumes but its meaning eludes. Agony constantly pursues while I seek refuge. For I am deep within this pit of self misery. Falling from the light into this darkness called purgatory. madness takes one as my mind is relentlessly tormented. But I am content with this unrighteous sentence. For its my transgressions that have bound me to this fate. The light flees me and the time for repentance is a little late. My soul is lost & my mind can't seem to be found. It's as if I am wrapped in chains forever bound. But I stand firm head held high full of a fool's pride. And my sanity comes as elusive as the coming of the ocean's tide. So Hope & Faith I know not of their meaning much less of their acceptance. And in deaths embrace I seek not salvation but Remembrance.

The World as We Know It

By D. "Six" B.
Marion, NC

How sad it is, that so few care to quiz, to find out what lies
behind a lying politicians dark and captive eyes.

Rhetoric – so sweet and loving, the people drawn in so
easily,
becoming a part of the collect, so eagerly, and quite blindly.

Sick and twisted desires, cold and murderous agendas,
Power and money set their minds and hearts ablaze with
wild
fires.

Their main objectives, to bend and break us.

Everyday it seems, more and more are helplessly drawn in
by the hypnotic propaganda.

Like some charismatic messiah in an ever growing cult,
The government continues to woo 'em in, successfully they
accomplish
their hidden agenda.

Political lies –some so powerful that they've often severed
family ties.

It like religion has sent so many to an early grave, while
infiltrating the public's mind, their promises riding upon some
delusional wave.

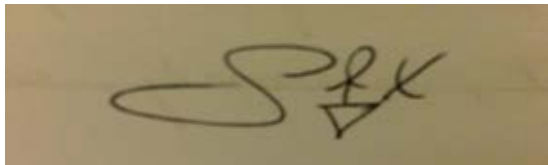
If the people aren't soon awakened, and forced to open
their eyes,

If they don't take time and somehow realize the veiled lies,

If they don't see what lurks within the hearts of their evil
politicians, then we're all doomed at the start,

for the world as we know it,
will surely crumble and fall apart.

Signature Below

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'D. Six B.'.

I am Only a Man

By C. "Cashmoney" D.
Raleigh, NC

My God is forgiving and will never forsake me....

But I am just a man.

Box and cage me to steal the sound of my voice....

But i am just a man.

Hate me and fear me for what you don't understand....

But I am just a man.

My life has a purpose with it so does my pain....

But I am just a man.

I am only a man but my mind makes me more, and my principles
are always unbending.

Outlast...Outrun...my patience are just about out.... Cause I AM
ONLY A MAN!

Cultural Living

By R.M.
Raleigh, NC

As the days get thinner
and nights grow shorter
success is on the horizon
But individuals hate to see
another Black God or Goddess evolve
Been living this lifestyle that most
have called a curse
Been told many times that this course of living
would get me jailed or put in a hearse
never took heed to the words of wisdoms
cause I was young and reckless
Chasing them Benjamins
now I have evolved more in life
and I know my purpose is different
So Im more determine to fight
for a Better you, me, and all those that are later to come
My manifestation for knowledge
has help extend my wisdom
So my understanding of life is a prime given
Its time to stop living on the edge
and give the forthcoming generation
the necessary jewels to succeed
So their lifestyle doesn't end
up like a cultural mess
Because our next generation
is our cultural success.....

Dreamer

By R.J.E.
Tabor City, NC

It is unlike any other day
And I wouldn't like it
Any other way.

Because I'm free, I'm free
Can't you see my face filled with glee?

Watch me spread my wings and fly.
And then dive into the sea
OH what brilliant sights I see.

And among many is a ship.
Let's go and plunder it shall we.

But then I get stung by a bee
And wake up under a tree.
But who can blame me
Because who hates a dreamer
.....
Such as me.

Tha Man

By M.J.B.

Maury NC

Money's tha root
& paper comes from trees
I feel the autumn breeze
I guess tha monies tha leaves
that fall on me
Gotta buy me a rake
find me a bank
buy a bunch of shiny things
'til acquired a fate
of everbodies stalkin'
Everybodies hawkin'
tha disease they brought in
tha Eruly it breedz
Jealousy & Greed
tellin' me it's just me
tha hell wid' me, I'm free
At peace..... wid my mind
Neva cease..... Wid' my grind
My heart beatz..... & I rhyme
In sync..... with the pulse
producingresults
Reducing..... insults
That're ingrained in your cerebral
Loted save me from tha people
that want.... Me to be equal
Equalateral lines
I'm the cataclysmic kind
tangledin my rhymes
Stangling... your mind
dangling From time
The handz on the clock
& dammit they want stop
& dammit I mmuae top...
Whatever you got
Cuz I'm tha Man
Yeah, I'm tha Man
I'm tha man that you're not.

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