



Hey, Boo

The New Year is a powerful time for reflection and renewal. **Looking Back:** The last quarter of 2016 was filled with blessings and accomplishments, thanks in large part to our growing community of angels. My heart sings in gratitude for every single one of you.

Leah and I made great progress over Thanksgiving weekend – you can read about that in her column. I am thrilled to report that I returned from that weekend with a donated printer, which we desperately needed. The bad news is we’re having a technical issue with it – if anyone reading this can help with printer support (or knows someone who can), please do call or email.

Just after Thanksgiving weekend, I had the honor of attending a graduation ceremony at Oregon State Correctional Institution. The ceremony was in honor of a number of GED graduates, in addition to the stellar accomplishment of Martin Lockett on completing his Master’s Degree. Martin earned his own GED



in prison, eventually becoming a GED tutor, and delivered a powerful speech at the event. He is a shining example of rehabilitation and achievement, a frequent contributor to our blog, and a dear friend of mine. Congratulations Martin, we are most inspired by you.

We have also been blessed with some new local volunteers to help process the incoming mail – which is a huge job. Welcome and thank you to Kira, Kymmi, Beth, and Doc – and continued thanks to both Katie and Debbie, who have been so diligent and dedicated with their time and efforts throughout the entire year.

With the help of Jennifer from [Inmates Matter Too](#) (IMT) and some of our own volunteers, we were able to get some birthday cards, and several hundred holiday cards out to prisoners – thank you Ashlee, Sherrie, Michelle, Jennifer, Grace, Ashley, Patricia, Nadia, and Paige for your efforts.

Our website is nearly fully funded now, and we couldn’t be more excited to move forward on that project. In addition to a handful of generous inmates in Washington’s Monroe Correctional Complex, we also received donations from Elizabeth, Howard, Ida, Ashley, IMT, Leo, Jimmie, Donna, Richard, Judy, and Lucid Optics.

We finished out the year with some impressive numbers – including over 11,000 pieces of incoming mail – and over 70 inmates adopted in the last quarter alone.

Looking forward: This issue includes a new feature on the back page called “Inside Voices,” which spotlights the writing of inmates and will cover a wide range of topics. The first piece is from our friend Michael, an inmate in Florida, that we found particularly touching.

A new series for our website will focus the varied rules and violations imposed in prison mailrooms that make it difficult to stay connected with prisoners. About ten percent of our incoming mail is made up of returned mail that has been rejected by a facility. The series begins with [an article written by Rick in Texas](#), which you can read in full on our blog January 3rd. We invite you to share your own stories about mail that has been returned to you or mail that an inmate was not permitted to send – and will be keeping track of every violation in every facility that we know of on our new site to help you avoid inadvertent violations.

As we go to press, we are preparing for an event at Monroe Correctional Complex in Washington on January 11th, called “Increasing Human Capital With Leadership and Communication Skills.” The event is being sponsored by the Twin Speaks Toastmaster’s club, and will feature speeches by several inmates and outside guest speakers in support of corrections reform. Watch for a blog post about that event after the 11th.

To all adopters and newsletter recipients, please [add us to your whitelist](#) so that you don’t miss our emails, including a new monthly “Have You Hugged Your Inmate” message on the third Monday of each month. Finally, I encourage each of you to be vocal in your communities and the social media platforms you use about the importance of criminal justice reform. Like and share our posts, and consider visiting a prisoner at least once in 2017.



Blood, sweat, and magic got us through 2016, and we’ll need a lot more in the coming year.

As always, much love and peace to you.

Melissa

She-EO, Adopt an Inmate
melissabee@adoptaninmate.org



Ripples

by Leah Patterson

A Magical Year!

As is normal with the tapestry that is life, 2016 has been full of ups and downs. A lot has changed for me this year. I've been through some struggles (a great deal of them with myself, as most struggles are), I'm experiencing an empty nest – living alone for the first time in decades, a huge change for me – and a myriad of other pains, disappointments, fears and heartaches. And yet interspersed, there has also been great joy.

Much of that joy has been through my work with and for AI. Since my family is now scattered across the country, I have extra time on my hands and get to use it pouring the excess of love in my heart into this organization – into all of you – in doing that, I receive an abundance of joy. Just knowing I have helped countless people not feel so alone this year fills my heart to overflowing; each thank you note and letter fills me with even more love to send.

In the last newsletter, I told you of my visit to Oregon in September. It was so wonderful being there with Missy, contributing to the cause in very real and tangible ways. I brought many projects home with me and since being there I spend most evenings each week working on one project or another. It is so gratifying to be able to make a difference in the lives of others; so satisfying that it doesn't feel like work.

Thanksgiving weekend was absolutely magical! Getting to spend time with Missy is such a blessing (I love you, Missy!). She came down and we spent four days responding to survey requests and working on various other tasks; it is nothing less than phenomenal how well we work together – we got so

much done! In between working, blessings rained down daily, not the least of which was a donation totaling over \$1200 from my dear friend Howard; may the source of all that is shine a glowing light on his life. Our hope is to make our time together a quarterly event!

For the past five days, I have been visiting my Mom and daughter. Christmas Eve, Mom drove me to Gatesville, Texas – a two to four hour trip, depending on who was driving, me or her ... lol. Sadly, I was not able to visit my adoptee Daphne due to TDCJ's ridiculous rule of only one visit per weekend. The good news is, she did get a visit with her family. I did, however, get to visit with my adoptee Marcia for the first time. After all the letters we have exchanged over the past year, she has become one of my dearest friends, and our visit was like two separated sisters reuniting. We shared stories, we laughed and got teary-eyed, and I bought her snack after snack – she probably went into a sugar coma the minute I departed! I love you, Marcia, thank you for letting me visit!

Last, but certainly not least, there is Michael. We started writing each other last year as well and have forged a bond that I don't have the ability to express with words. Part of my magical Thanksgiving was a special anniversary gift from him. Though it doesn't begin to compare to that gift, I was blessed to get to assist him with placing a phone call to his son on Christmas day; it filled my heart with joy to hear the smile in his voice when they were done talking. I love you, Michael, thank you for being such a blessing in my life.

What an amazing year it has been! A special thank you and blessings to every angel who has requested an adoptee, to every inmate who has written and to all the supporters current and future who are or will be contributing to make this endeavor a success. I look forward to 2017!

All my love to each and every one of you.

All my love to each and every one of you.



Leah, aka Dove

"What Missy has started is as big as AA, and when AI's wings are fully grown and it takes flight, it will soar." Michael H., FL

Resources For Inmates

The Sun magazine offers free subscriptions to prisoners and free or reduced rates to readers who have fallen on hard times. To request a complimentary subscription for yourself or someone else, [send an email](#) or write:

The Sun

Attn: Molly House, Circulation & Events Manager
107 North Roberson Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Lion's Roar magazine (formerly Shambhala Sun) will send free subscriptions to inmates who write requesting them:

Lion's Roar Subscription

P.O. Box 469095
Escondido, CA 92046-9095 USA

Wise Communications offers a home-study training program for certification in chemical dependency counseling. If you know an inmate interested in becoming certified, you can view and order their courses from the website, or call toll free: 1-866-221-3191.

The Salvation Army Missing Persons program is a unique international social service. Its purpose is to help facilitate successful reunions between family members who have lost contact with each other. All inquiries should be directed to the Missing Persons/Family Tracing office nearest to your place of residence.

If you live in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, or Wyoming, contact:

The Salvation Army Western Territory

180 E. Ocean Boulevard
P.O. Box 22646 11th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802-5646
Telephone: (800) 698-7728 or (562) 491-8321
E-mail: missing.persons@usw.salvationarmy.org
www.usw.salvationarmy.org

If you live in Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Virginia, West Virginia, or Wisconsin, contact:

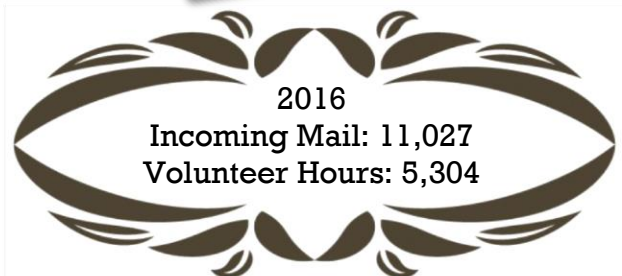
The Salvation Army Eastern Territory

440 West Nyack Road
PO Box 635
West Nyack, NY 10994-0635
Telephone: (800) 315-7699 or (845) 620-7200
E-mail: MissingPersons@use.salvationarmy.org
www.use.salvationarmy.org

Meet Boo, a new addition to the AI Family. She helps in the office.



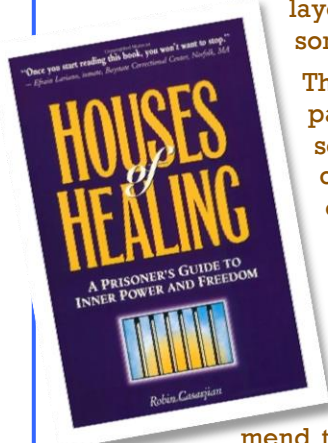
December Donations



Books

Most facilities require that books for inmates be sent directly from the bookseller (Amazon is always safe). If you're thinking of sending a book this month, consider one of the following:

Houses of Healing is a remarkable guide on how one can truly delve deeply within themselves to peel back the many layers and discover why they are who they are and how they can begin to emerge into the person they know they can become.



This book's author has created and taught a well-known program within prison walls for over the past two decades. Through this program, countless inmates have come to discover their true selves, inner passions, and potential by first confronting the pain and turmoil they suffered as a child and slowly but surely learning how to work through it. You might be thinking this could only happen with a therapist right there to walk you through such a tumultuous journey -- I thought the same. However, Carvajal composed this book to act as a surrogate counselor, walking with you every arduous step of the way, ultimately leading you to a place of healing and self-discovery.

Houses of Healing is a highly respected and recommended book by those who have a stake in correctional rehabilitation (i.e. educators, counselors, support group facilitators), namely inmates looking to take their lives in a new direction. If there were one book I could recommend to anyone in prison who is looking to understand why they may have made a series of bad choices (without realizing it) that landed them in prison, is tired of living that way and wishes to change, this would be that book. Give it a try: you won't be sorry you did.

See the [full review by Martin Lockett](#), OSCI, Salem, OR, on our January 3rd blog post

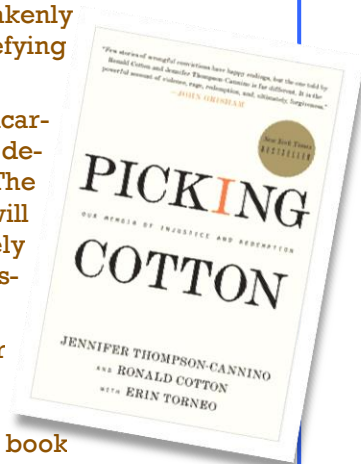
** Note: This book was permanently banned by TDCJ for all inmates.*

Picking Cotton by Jennifer Thompson-Cannino & Ronald Cotton. You cannot help but feel the pain that Jennifer Thompson-Cannino endured until she was able to identify and release the hatred she mistakenly held for Ronald Cotton, nor do you have to guess what it feels like to experience a death-defying sexual assault as she pours her heart all over these pages.

Ronald Cotton's resilience is equaled only by his tenacity and determination. Throughout his incarceration, he adjusts to untold upheavals and inconsistencies of a prison system that is not designed to actually make the citizens and society safer, stronger, and more compassionate. The story of his prison stint is probably kinder than it should have been, but again shows his own will and desire not to feed the monstrosity that did little to help him find justice, and ultimately peace, forgiveness and compassion for the people who don't know the negative draw our system of crime and punishment has on us all.

I have to hold onto the very ideals embodied by Ronald Cotton and Jennifer Thompson in order to empower myself and not promulgate my own brand of misgivings about "the system" that would only serve to perpetuate what this book works so hard to dispel with the perspective of two first hand accounts, and simply say, "I pray for the people who have decided to keep this book out of the hands of prisoners."

Michael Henderson, FL.



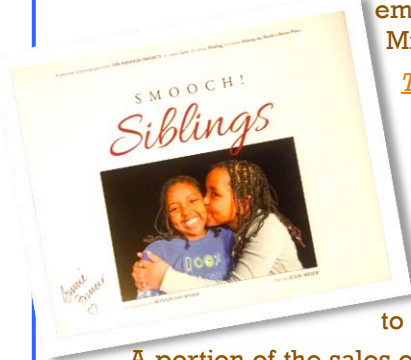
AI was gifted with an autographed copy of this delightful book by photographer Bonnie Fournier. Julie Meier, an emerging writer involved with restorative justice activities and currently incarcerated in Minnesota, contributed to the project as a volunteer.

The Smooch! Project is a long-term, large-scale, family-friendly effort to collect 10,000 photographs from around the world of people demonstrating their affection for someone they love with a poignantly simple gesture – a smooch on the cheek. *Smooch! Siblings* is the first book in what the author hopes to be an ongoing series.

Both *The Smooch! Project* and *Adopt an Inmate* were inspired by the love between siblings, and grew into a larger effort with the help of many caring volunteers.

Thank you to Bonnie & Julie, to all the siblings who agreed to be photographed, and to everyone involved in the project.

A portion of the sales of this book will be donated to the Restorative Justice program at the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Shakopee. AI will offer copies on our website soon – please check back often.



2017 Holidays & Observances Jan-March



Jan 1 - Sunday	Hanukkah/Chanukah - Final Day
Jan 1 - Sunday	New Year's Day
Jan 6 - Friday	Epiphany
Jan 7 - Saturday	Orthodox Christmas Day
Jan 14 - Saturday	Orthodox New Year
Jan 16 - Monday	Martin Luther King Day
Jan 28 - Saturday	Chinese New Year
Feb 2 - Thursday	Groundhog Day
Feb 3 - Friday	National Wear Red Day
Feb 7 - Tuesday	National Send a Letter to a Friend Day
Feb 12 - Sunday	Lincoln's Birthday
Feb 14 - Tuesday	Valentine's Day
Feb 20 - Monday	Presidents' Day - Washington's Birthday
Feb 28 - Tuesday	Mardi Gras
Mar 1 - Wednesday	Ash Wednesday
Mar 2 - Thursday	Read Across America Day
Mar 3 - Friday	Employee Appreciation Day
Mar 11 - Saturday	Purim
Mar 12 - Sunday	Daylight Saving Time - begins
Mar 13 - Monday	Holi

Resolve to send more cards and letters in 2017! Click [here](#) and enter your email address to receive a snail mail starter kit with four printable cards and a snail mail supply checklist from smallstuff-counts.com. (Check facility rules before sending any embellishments on cards.)



“

I believe that the measure of my soul is my capacity to love imperfect people.

- Joseph Grenny

Art in Prison

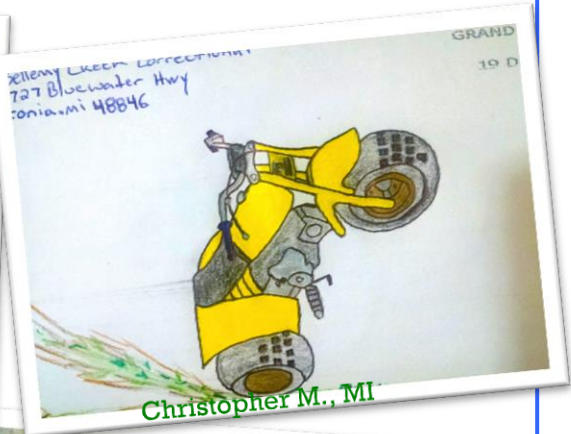
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Do you know what makes the prison disappear? Every deep, genuine affection. Being friends, being brothers, loving, that is what opens the prison, with supreme power, by some magic force.

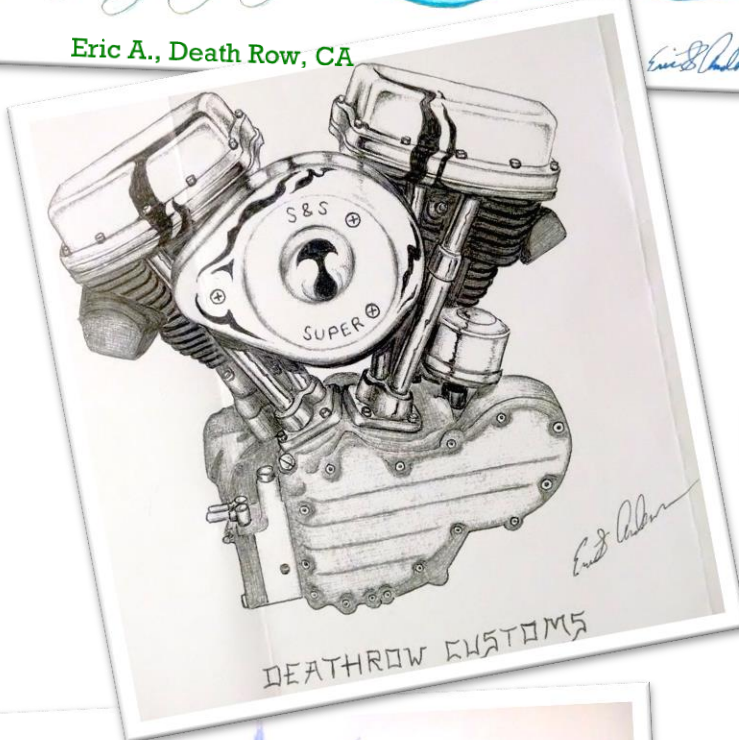
- Vincent Van Gogh



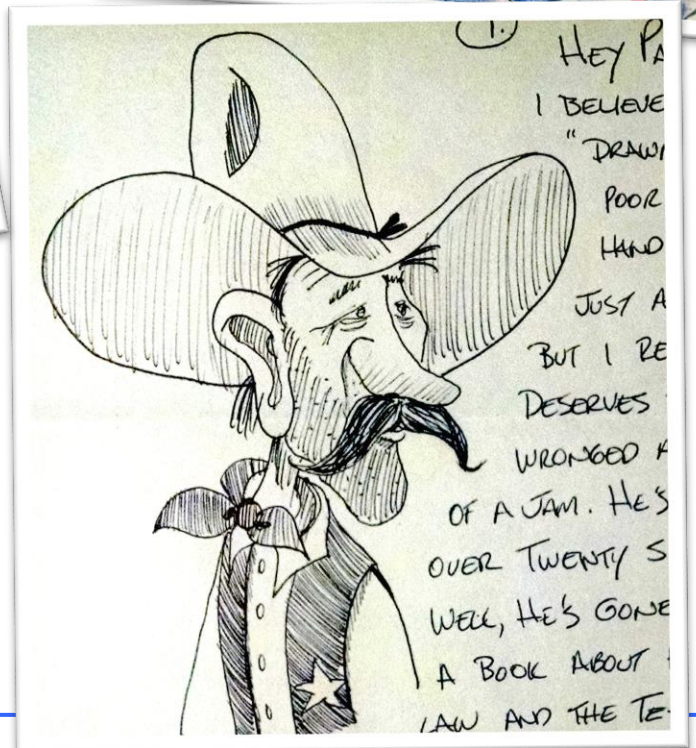
Eric A., Death Row, CA



Christopher M., MI



DEATHROW CUSTOMS



Hey Pa
I BELIEVE
"DRAWN
POOR
HAND
JUST A
BUT I RE
DESERVES
WRONGED K
OF A JAM. HE'S
OVER TWENTY S
WELL, HE'S GONE
A BOOK ABOUT
LAW AND THE TE



Teddy D., TX

AI Fast Facts

- Our inmates are located in a total of 660 different facilities across the country!
- We never collect fees from inmates or their families for our services
- We have no paid staff members - all our work is freely offered by caring volunteers
- We receive up to 300+ letters each week

Felony Disenfranchisement

See this report from The Sentencing Project: [Six Million Lost Voters](#), presenting key findings as of the November 2016 election, including:

- As of 2016, an estimated 6.1 million people are disenfranchised due to a felony conviction, a figure that has escalated dramatically in recent decades as the population under criminal justice supervision has increased. There were an estimated 1.17 million people disenfranchised in 1976, 3.34 million in 1996, and 5.85 million in 2010.
- Less than one-fourth of this population is currently incarcerated, meaning that about 4.7 million adults who live, work, and pay taxes in their communities are banned from voting.
- Of this total, over one million are African Americans who have completed their sentences.



AI is looking for help with the following:

- Staples or Amazon gift cards for office supplies
(see our [Amazon wishlist](#) for items we always need)
- Volunteers to send birthday and holiday cards to prisoners
- Book reviews from inmates
- Artwork from inmates
- Volunteers from each state to maintain facility and DOC information
- Translating our inmate survey into other languages (Word format)
- Adopters who speak and write Spanish
- Adopters of all faiths (Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, etc.)
- Service men and women to write to inmate veterans
- Handmade items by inmates for our online store
- Local (Eugene, OR area) volunteers to help with office tasks
- *We always need stamps!*

Send submissions and donations to:

Adopt an Inmate
PO Box 1543
Veneta, OR 97487

Or email: donate@adoptainmate.org

Inside Voices



Who Can Help?

The most remarkable part of being locked up is not the lack of remorse and compassion from prisoners, but the level of humanness of these so-called hardened criminals.

A man came to me the other day because, he said, I was a father and he didn't know what to do about his family. They still didn't know he was in jail where he's been for two months. He was brimming with tears over the mess he found himself in when he was arrested.

Mostly, I get to help men understand the complexities of the legal system. Something just about everyone in jail has a very hard time with, but on those all-too-many occasions when God sends someone my way who needs a pat on the shoulder, a kind word, or some affirmation that this event does not define who they are and that they mustn't let it consume them, I am thankful I was the one who God allowed to be there for them. Even here, imprisoned.

Families these days take on so many different forms and this one was no exception. He is not with his son's mom anymore in the conventional sense, but her other two kids call him Dad, as he has been active in their lives as well. This man had been away for two months and hadn't spoken or written to his family because of the tremendous amount of shame and self-deprecation he was experiencing. He was hoping to find some solace and encouragement by reaching out to the only people on earth who cared, and letting them know where he is. This would require some diplomacy - a delicate balance between total disclosure and compassionate honesty. I knew his struggle all too well.

I'm still trying to help him make sense of the legal system, but two days later he told me he got out not just one letter, but four: one to the mother of his child and one each to all three children. While he described the tremendous weight that had been lifted from his shoulders, the tears welled in my eyes. There hasn't been an answer yet and I pray that whatever answer comes, confirms how important it is that we humans reach out to the family we have in the eyes of God.

That family includes the entire human race.

Michael Henderson, Florida

Note: I am at the county jail currently fighting against a fundamentally unfair process.



Fiat justitia ruat cælum - "Let justice be done though the heavens fall."