

Winter 2016

Adopt an Inmate



Art by Texas inmate F. Gonzales



Much has happened since our first quarterly newsletter in October. Our waiting list has more than *quadrupled*, as has our list of adopters. In

response to these growing pains, we've established a weekly volunteer day (shout out to the Fern Ridge Public Library for being so supportive of our work).



With the help of some very dedicated angels (Katie, Jim, and Lindsey), we are catching up on a significant backlog due to the daily flood of mail, and even got a few hundred Christmas

cards out to inmates, which could not have happened without lots of help (thank you Donna, Andrea and Paisley).



We were very pleased with the [story in our local Fern Ridge Review by Tammy Finwall](#). We've gotten lots of positive feedback on the article and are hearing that there may be a follow-up story, and also that it may be picked up by a larger outlet to reach a wider audience.

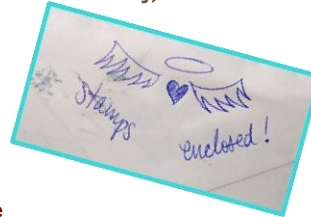


Executive Director of Adopt an Inmate, Melissa Brown dedicates her life to helping other inmates and their families after her brothers incarceration.

I can't begin to express our gratitude for the stamps that arrive in our post office box, from individuals (thank you Donna, Judy & Sonny, Cathy, Pinky, Ruth, Leah; organizations (thank you Nicole @ CT Prison Book Connection); and inmates (thanks to Martin L. in Oregon; and Don J., Eric B., and Shawn B., all in TDCJ). We simply could not continue this work without these generous donations.

Donations are always welcome (click the donate button on our [website](#)), or mail physical stamps to us at

Adopt an Inmate
PO Box 1543
Veneta, OR 97487



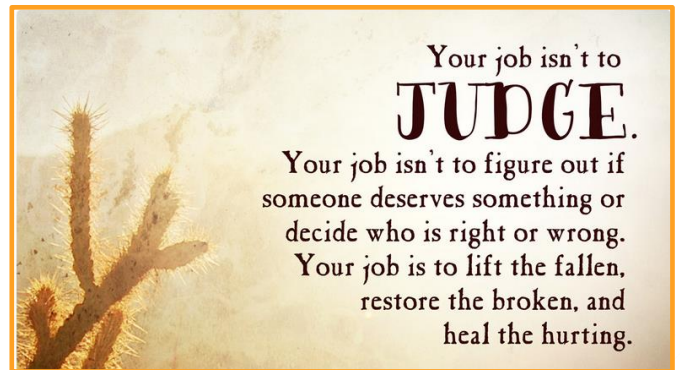
Watch this space, and our social media, for some very exciting news about an event in the planning stages in metropolitan NYC, with Dr. Nancee Bloom from Columbia University.

On a personal note, the new friends and connections I have made since this journey began, along with the friends that have remained loyal and supportive to my family, have been remarkably rich and rewarding. Thank you for being awesome. I look forward to all that is coming in 2016.

Much love and peace,

Melissa

She-EO, Adopt an Inmate
melissabee@adoptaninmatorg



Your job isn't to
JUDGE.

Your job isn't to figure out if someone deserves something or decide who is right or wrong.

Your job is to lift the fallen, restore the broken, and heal the hurting.

Though I have not seen any studies documenting this, I highly suspect that the necessity of letter writing in prison has a significant impact on improving literacy among a great number of prisoners and on encouraging intellectualism among certain members of incarcerated populations. – Ashley Lucas

Art in Prison

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We artists are indestructible; even in a prison, or in a concentration camp, I would be almighty in my own world of art, even if I had to paint my pictures with my wet tongue on the dusty floor of my cell.

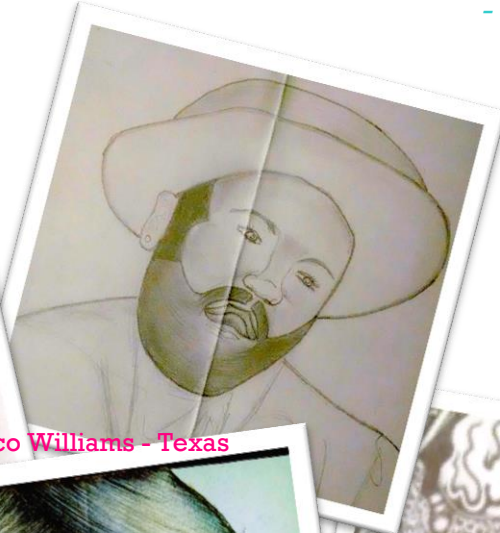
- Pablo Picasso



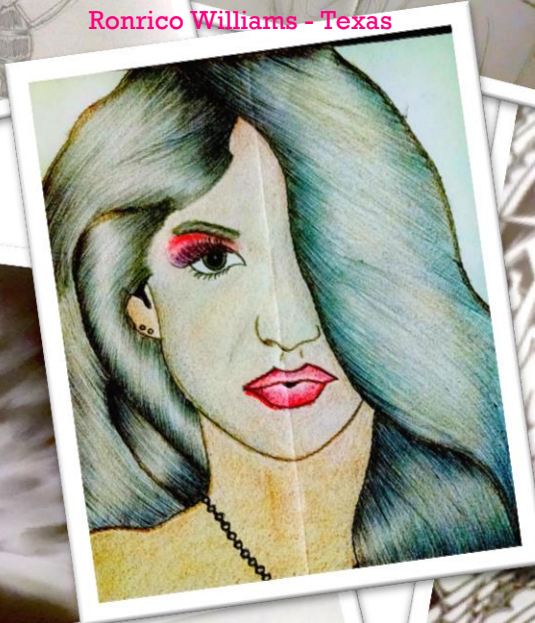
Terry Kay Bender, Texas



Ronrico Williams - Texas



J. Pfeifer, Texas



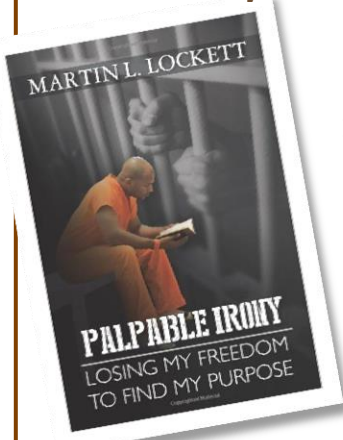
J. E. Forbes, Pennsylvania



Brian Collins, Indiana

Book Recommendations

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:

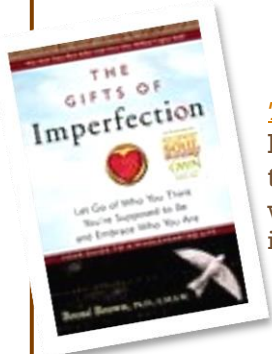
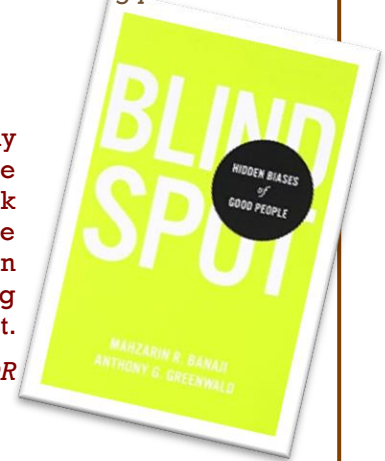


In *Palpable Irony: Losing My Freedom to Find my Purpose*, Martin Lockett describes his journey from a shy, awkward young boy to a young man who falls in with some pretty rough characters just at that pivotal time when he's coming into his own as an individual. The narrative - not only is it brutally honest, but also very well-written - makes one realize just how thin is that line between social failure and success.

See the [full review](#) by Rick Fisk, TDCJ, Dalhart, TX, on our December 14 blog post.

Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People by Mahzarin R. Banaji - This book was profoundly informational and intriguing as it revealed in a very relatable way how we ALL are prone to developing and maintaining biases against other people. Blindspot is a seminal book in the field of psychology and challenges us all to examine and confront our own innate and learned prejudices--albeit unconscious. This is a must read for anyone interested in self discovery and self enhancement because we can only begin to work on overcoming our shortcomings if we are first aware they exist.

Review by Martin Lockett, Oregon State Correctional Institution, Salem, OR



The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You Are and Embrace Who You Are - Brené Brown, a leading expert on shame, authenticity, and belonging, shares ten guideposts on the power of Wholehearted living—a way of engaging with the world from a place of worthiness. Brown's work is important for anyone who struggles with shame and imperfection. (Amazon Review)

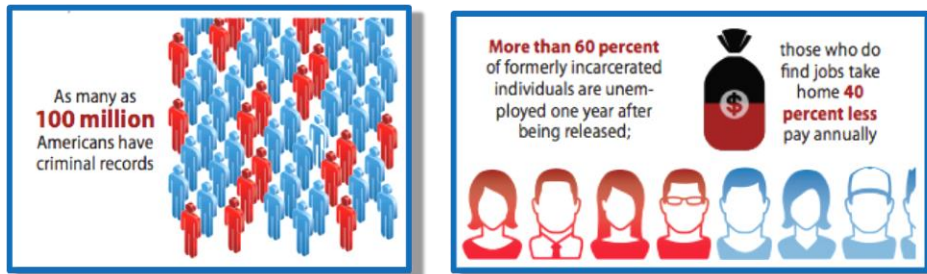
Martin's Top 10 Books (in no particular order)

- 1) You're Smarter Than You Think (Seymour Epstein)
- 2) Child of God (Lolita Files)
- 3) Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America (Nathan McCall)
- 4) Quiet Strength (Tony Dungy)
- 5) Blindspot (Mahzarin R. Banaji)
- 6) The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates (Wes Moore)
- 7) Uncle Tom's Cabin (Harriet Beecher Stowe)
- 8) Code of the Street (Elijah Anderson)
- 9) The Shack (Wm. Paul Young)
- 10) How to Get Out of Your Own Way (Tyrese Gibson)



Americans With Criminal Records

According to the Sentencing Project, one in three US adults has been arrested by age 23. As a result, between 70 million and 100 million—or as many as one in three Americans—have some type of criminal record.



For more stats, see this [PDF](#) from Half in Ten and The Sentencing Project.

Gift Idea - Photobook

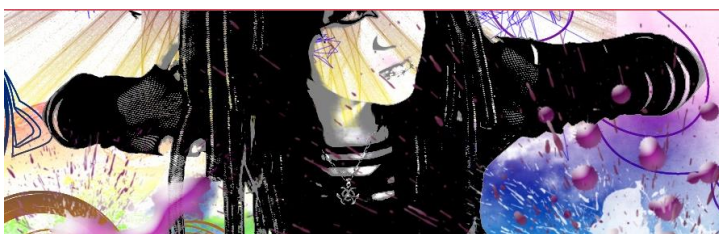


As you know, mail rules for inmates are pretty rigid, which makes gift-giving very limited. If your incarcerated loved one is allowed both pictures and books, chances are he or she can also receive a photobook that you design and create using your own pictures. There are a number of options for this service – including [Shutterfly](#), [Blurb](#), [Mixbook](#), and [MyPublisher](#) (includes a price check tool that allows you to check the price as you build your book), and even [Walgreens](#).

Most of these apps allow you to edit the photos for quality and red-eye, etc., right in the book, and many have coupons for first time customers. Once you have designed your photobook, it can be shipped directly to the address you specify, usually within a few days.

THE COSMIC SPIRIT

FOR THE INCARCERATED WOMAN LOOKING TO TRANSCEND



The Cosmic Spirit is a free, monthly self-help publication for incarcerated women. It includes inspirational quotes, articles, yoga (for the cell), meditations, art, affirmations, word search puzzles, and more. Click on any issue in the [archives](#) section to view and print the PDF (follow the blog to receive an email when each new issue is available), which can be mailed to any incarcerated woman.



May 4 – 6, 2016
Dallas, Texas



Art by TDCJ inmate Christine White



My Side of the Wall

by Connie Bergstrom

From time to time we all find ourselves in a sticky situation. If you are incarcerated it is particularly challenging because you do not have the free world resources available to you. If you have family that can help it is a great relief to know someone is on your side.

When trying to resolve conflicts involving your loved one within the prison system:

1. **GATHER** your facts - *who what where when & why*. Document the names of people involved, and their contact information, what happened with as much detail as possible, the time and date, and the location. Also have copies of any paperwork your loved one has already completed, and notes about who he or she has talked to.
2. **INVESTIGATE**. Network with other people in your situation and ask their opinions; use the Internet to find organizations, your state senators, and other officials involved in inmate advocacy and criminal justice.
3. **WRITE DOWN** your talking points. When you make calls its easy to lose track of what you are saying. Department officials and office workers may divert your attention to something else, but your notes in front of you will keep you on task. Write down their response after each question. Consider downloading an app that will record your phone calls so that you can refer back to the conversation.
4. **BE POSITIVE**. Don't lose your cool. Yelling does not get you anywhere, and in fact it will make officials shut down on you. Do use a tone that lets them know you mean business.
5. **STAY ORGANIZED**. Keep detailed notes and all documentation relating to the situation, including every phone conversation and with whom you spoke. Send

everything certified with a return receipt. Make and keep copies of everything, and never send original documents. I use manila envelopes and label everything so that it's easy to find later.

6. **INFORM** your loved one as soon as possible as things progress. Send him or her copies of everything you receive on the matter – you are their first (and sometimes only) means of getting answers.

7. **LISTEN** to your loved one. If your loved one tells you to stop fighting the battle - stop. Sometimes involvement from loved ones can result in repercussions, and retaliation by officers and staff. Don't make enemies for your loved one.

8. **GIVE YOURSELF A DAY OFF**. You can burn out easily when fighting for your loved one. Taking a mental break when needed will help keep you focused.

When problems arise it takes both strength and extreme patience to find a solution.

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