

Spring 2017

Adopt an Inmate



*Hey, Boo

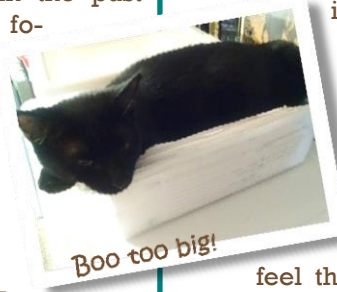
AI has experienced monumental growth and development in the past three months. We've been focused on a few major projects, and have had to put others on hold. Thank

you for being patient - we're wrapping up some major transitions and I promise we'll get to every request.

Much of our work during the first quarter revolved around our website fundraiser and re-design - and we're thrilled to report the recent successful launch. (Sign up to receive new post notifications and subscribe to this newsletter [on the site.](#)) All of our content has been streamlined and updated, and now includes an art gallery which we will be adding to as new submissions are received. Welcome to our newest volunteer Allen Green, who has created photo albums on our Facebook page to display the artwork there also.

We're in the process of moving over all of our data to a new system that will make life a lot easier in the office. (When I say "office," I mean my mom's dining room.) We're already using it to enter new records, and will be finished importing all the earlier data within a week. I have spent countless hours charming Google sheets into doing what we need it to do - and this change will enable us to more efficiently capture and report data, and ultimately speed up the matching process.

Another recent undertaking was our volunteer work weekend in California (see pages 3 & 4). Leah hosted the event in her home, Katie, Kymmi and I drove down from Oregon late Thursday, Rene joined us on Friday morning, and we spent a long weekend tackling the backlog of inmate requests, learning the new system, and working out a few bugs. Our small army of angels all worked to make this event productive, supportive, and fun. We enjoyed perfect weather, ate well, took walks in the orchard, and tried to keep up with Katie's pace (she's an animal, love you Katie!). Ashley and Lily both donated gifts for the volunteers, we had an invited dinner guest on Saturday, followed by a surprise screening (see pages 5 & 6), and finished out the evening outside by the fire. Rick, my incarcerated brother and the founder of AI, was able to call while we were there, express his thanks to the volunteers, and remind us to take care of ourselves, too. Our next event is scheduled for early September - please email if you're interested in joining us.



Some of you may have listened to the [podcast](#) I recently did with our friend, partner, and AI adopter Ashley Asti. She began the conversation by sharing that one of the incarcerated women she writes to had recently attempted suicide - and we discussed the importance of, as Ashley put it, "holding people accountable while leading with compassion and humanity."

What makes this work especially challenging is being constantly aware that people are in crisis. Our hearts really feel this. How much more tragedy? How do you measure the urgency to help against your own mental and physical health? I wish I had a good answer, because I'm not very good at this. Yes, we need to work, but not to the point of exhaustion and burnout. I am making a conscious effort to shift my pace.

Another element is that it is not uncommon for someone to initiate a conversation with "I know you're really busy..." While I appreciate the acknowledgement, it also makes me cringe. I want people to know that I *care*, not that I'm busy.

In all of this, I've learned that a crisis is always an opportunity. At the end of it, something will have become of you. Will we go to the end of our lives complaining and unresolved about what has befallen us? Or will we go through it in a state of grace? We can pick.

May a blessing follow you on your way, and bring you safely home again.

Melissa

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

Baby takes Maui



*Inspired by a touching scene in the movie, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, those two words, 'Hey, Boo,' come at the moment in the movie when Scout (Mary Badham) coaxes the frightened neighborhood recluse Boo Radley (Robert Duvall) from the shadows. That moment, even more than the racial context of the story, conveys the essence of Lee's simple story: The open-hearted encounter of people we find odd or frightening. Our work at AI can be summed up in that same way.

"There are things you do because they feel right & they may make no sense & they may make no money & it may be the real reason we are here: to love each other & to eat each other's cooking & say it was good."

- Brian Andreas



Ripples

by Leah Patterson

Five Peas in a Clam

How is it possible the first quarter of 2017 is over already! I know it isn't just me that feels time is proceeding faster and faster as the days fly by; it must be because so many wonderful things have been happening.

There is always SO much to do, but we had to set many things aside for a bit in order to get the website launched. I think it is absolutely amazing! It was almost all Missy (with the help of the wonderful people at Ruby Porter) and I think she did a magnificent job. Be sure to let her know if you think so too! Also, don't forget to let your adoptees know about submitting book reviews, art and letters; submission guidelines can be found on the website.

Once the website was launched our focus became designing a database to make our matching efforts easier. We've still got a ways to go with this project, but it is so exciting to say goodbye to the agony of the Google sheets! It will increase productivity immeasurably and make it so much easier for our wonderful volunteers to help log the mountains of mail that come in every week.

Speaking of volunteers; last weekend was our 3rd AI work weekend, and what a weekend it was. This one was ultra special because we were joined by three magnificent volunteers! We worked and talked and

ate (oh! Be sure to ask Missy for her chicken/cranberry sauce quesadilla recipe – they were deeeelicious!).

Being in the presence of these amazing women, who are incredibly talented, intelligent and whose hearts are so big and full of love, was a true blessing. We talked and talked... truly meaningful conversations around the work table (and around the fire pit on Saturday night!), and we got lots of work done! There is something about the palpable energy during these weekends and it was magnified by the additional helping hands. Ideas were flowing, improvements were made to the database; it didn't feel at all like work, it was a soul vacation. The icing on the cake was all the mail we dropped in the mailbox on Sunday afternoon – over 570 pieces of mail out to inmates across the country.

Five peas in a clam, you ask? That's what you get when you put five amazing introverts together with hearts full of love and a worthy purpose. I miss you all so much and can't wait till next time!

I will be working on the database diligently for the next few weeks and hope it's in perfect shape before I go on vacation. Oops, no spoilers today, you'll have to wait for the next issue ☺.

Love, Love, Love to all!



~Leah aka Dove

P.S. Thanks to Rene for the awesome title ☺



AI Worker Bee Weekend Spring 2017

The backlog!



L to R: Rene, Leah, Kymmi, Katie



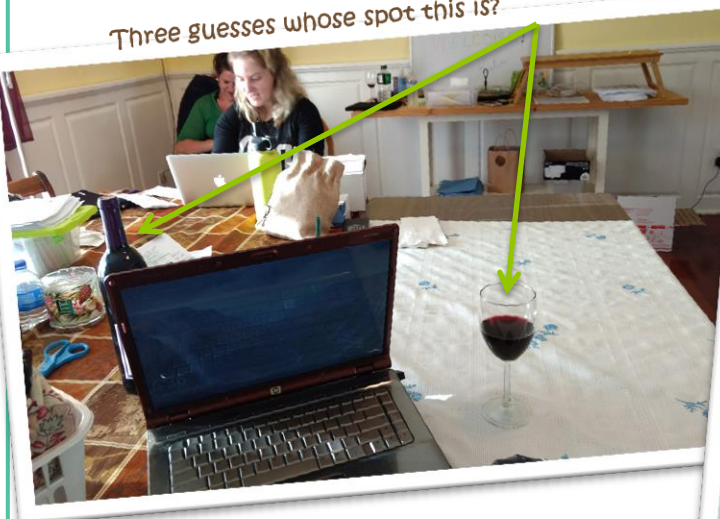
Breakfast burritos



Our view



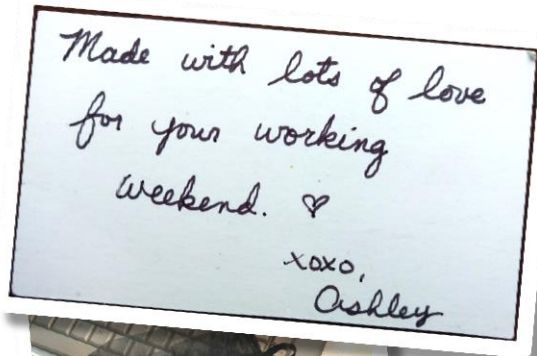
Three guesses whose spot this is?



Katie never stops



AI Worker Bee Weekend Spring 2017



2017 YTD
Incoming Mail: 2910
Volunteer Hours: 1736



Notes From the Director

by Sarah Underwood Saviano

One of the most thrilling aspects of working in the theatre for me is wrestling with the concept of theatricality and what it means to create a theatrical moment. I had the pleasure this last week of working with some young actors, hurriedly as we did, in preparation for the volunteer event for Adopt an Inmate. Using letters from inmates as fodder, we began a very early exploration of the text, just seeing where the words would take us. Though we are in the very inception of this project, it is clear that there is a profound 'something' here and we look forward to a much deeper exploration in the near future.

Playwright Neil LaBute wrote an introduction to his play *Autobahn* titled *The Pleasures of Limitation*. In it he states:

"Actors sitting onstage with nothing but a script, a rudimentary set, and minimal lighting, communing with the audience while pushing all the right buttons - that is a sight that I personally never tire of, no matter how many times I see it."

Not to bore you with a lecture, but suffice to say that when I teach the concept of theatricality, I emphasize that it is not just out of an economic necessity in the theatre that we create a 'something' out of 'nothing', but it

is because of the *gift* that is derived from a seeming limitation.

I could not help but feel that it is a metaphor for the incarcerated individuals who may feel that they are nothing — experiencing nothingness, making no difference — that so much *something* is gifted to us. So with a cam-camera, a stool, a door, and some letters, we tried to give voice to these men and women.



With the help of acting and film students Ping Sirisuttivoranun, Wayne Broadway, Donge Tucker, Patrick Tabari, and Aliyah Smith, we put a short trailer together. We hope this serves as an inspiration for the volunteers who've given endlessly to this effort.

This is just the beginning.



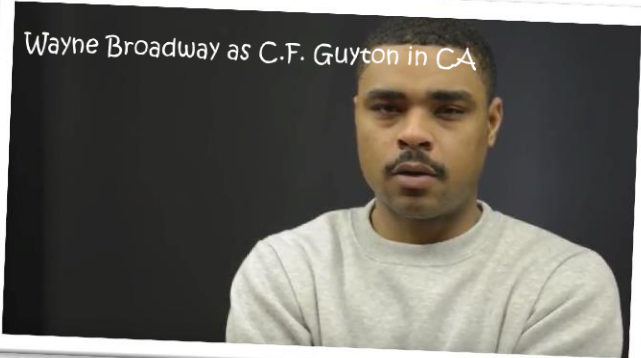
"In my youth, violence became my enemy ... photography, writing, music, and film are the weapons used against it."

- Gordon Parks, photographer, musician, writer, and film director

Letters From Prison

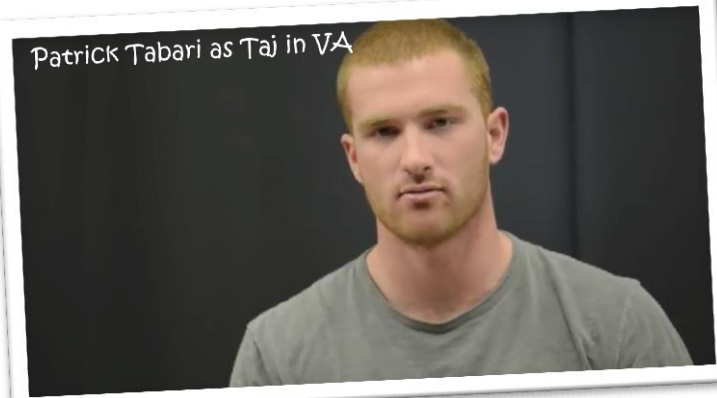
To watch the full 16+ minute trailer – click [here](#).

Wayne Broadway as C.F. Guyton in CA



My momma, with her courage and devotion, is the mighty strength of a thousand seas.

Patrick Tabari as Taj in VA



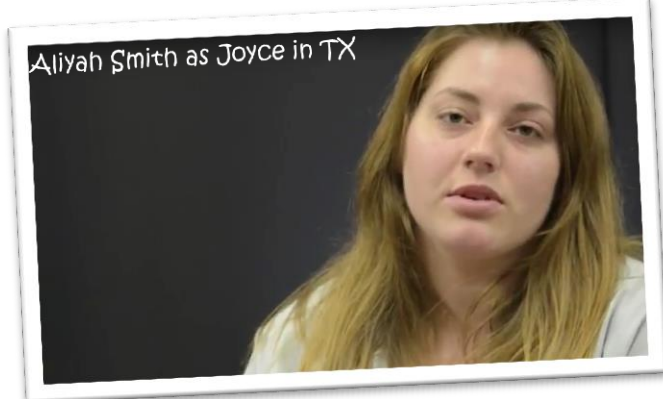
She makes 800-mile round trip, just a single day, for a mere three hours together, and then says, after the initial squeeze, "It's already worth it."

Wayne Broadway as Terry in CA



I can tell you that when you start killing people, you live with those very same people for the rest of your life, by way of your conscience.

Aiyah Smith as Joyce in TX



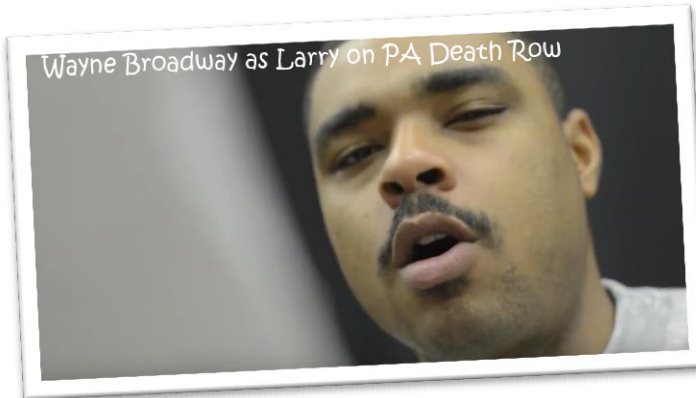
Hate is such a foul feeling. No one chooses to be sick, and it feels horrible. That's how hate and unforgiveness feels. Absolutely horrible.

Dongge Tucker as Andrew in TX



I saw a little rat ...

Wayne Broadway as Larry on PA Death Row



I felt an overwhelming need to smile, as shackles are removed. Freedom to enjoy my confinement. No! Oh my God, a silent scream within.

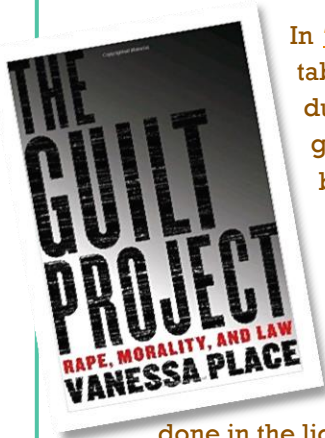
Sarah Underwood Saviano as Christina in TX



The lady said to the officer, "How would you feel if your kids were in here and an officer denied them food?"

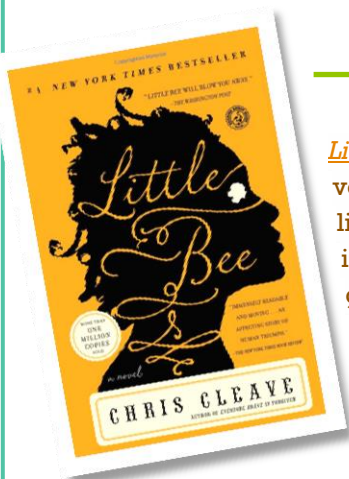
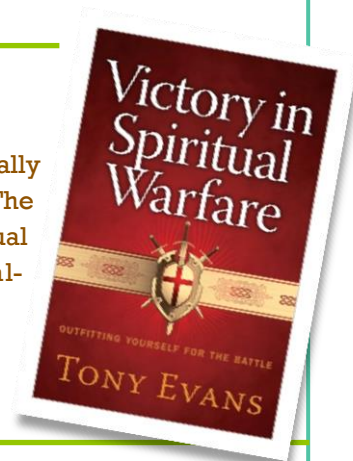
Books

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:



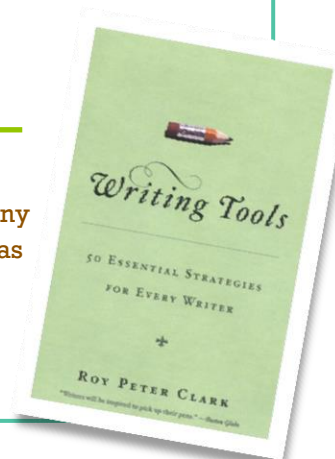
In *The Guilt Project: Rape, Morality, and Law*, Vanessa Place fearlessly challenges America's most taboo area of law: sex offenses. This book vividly recounts cases that she has personally handled during her distinguished and reputable career as a court-appointed appellate attorney for indigent defendants in California. Her experience has given rise to a level of expertise that cannot be rivaled – and should not be ignored. She candidly presents facts in a raw and easily relatable way. At first, the reader may imagine that her tone is derisive and contemptuous of our criminal justice system, but eventually it becomes apparent that she is simply exasperated by a system gone awry. That she remains steadfast in her defense of the seemingly indefensible is commendable beyond words. Vanessa Place is a true champion for the underserved and embodies righteousness in its truest form. This read is for the courageous, and as the author so very eloquently put it: "That which is done in the dark by criminals is bad, but what is done in the light of the law can be worse." *Review by Jacob Ivan Schmitt, Twin Rivers Unit, Monroe, WA.*

Victory in Spiritual Warfare: Outfitting Yourself for the Battle by Tony Evans. This book literally changed my life. It is an entire book dedicated to the exposition of Ephesians Chapter 6: The Whole Armor of God. This is an in-depth battle plan and strategic guide to conduct spiritual warfare. It is beyond value in its knowledge and teaching. This is a must read for anyone dealing with severe difficulty in their lives. *Review by a prisoner in Texas.*



Little Bee by Chris Cleave: This book will make you laugh. This book will make you very, very angry. This book will make you think of something beyond your everyday peaceful little corner of the world. This is perhaps the most well-written book I have encountered in its genre. It puts on open display the depravity of man. It is a stark reminder that the "good guy" doesn't always win. I loved this book. I hated this book. I couldn't put it down. *Review by a prisoner in Texas*

Writing Tools: 55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer by Roy Peter Clark is a MUST HAVE for any aspiring writer. I would have never known how to edit my work without this book. This book has improved my writing exponentially. *Review by a prisoner in Texas.*



2017 Holidays & Observances April-June

Send a card! We love the online service postable.com for convenience. Choose from lots of nice designs or upload your own image, many designs come in flat or folded, some can be personalized and there are no glitter, musical, or pop-up cards so no worries there. Type your note online (choose your font), and schedule the send date. Postable prints, stamps, and mails for you. Send your first card for \$1, with the code ONEDOLLAR.



HOW IT WORKS



Pick a card

They're all really nice and 100% recycled



Type a message

You can type all of your cards on the site



We mail everything

We print, stamp and mail all of your cards for you

- April 2017 -

Apr 4 - Tuesday	Rama Navami	Hindu
Apr 9 - Sunday	Palm Sunday	Christian
Apr 11 - Tuesday	Passover - Starts	Jewish
Apr 14 - Friday	Good Friday	Christian
Apr 16 - Sunday	Easter	Christian
Apr 18 - Tuesday	Passover - Final Day	Jewish
Apr 22 - Saturday	Earth Day	Observance
Apr 24 - Monday	Yom Hashoah	Jewish
Apr 24 - Monday	Isra and Mi'raj	Muslim
Apr 27 - Thursday	Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day	Observance
Apr 28 - Friday	Arbor Day	Observance

- May 2017 -

May 1 - Monday	May Day	Observance
May 4 - Thursday	National Day of Prayer	Observance
May 5 - Friday	Cinco de Mayo	Observance
May 11 - Thursday	Laylat al Bara'at	Muslim
May 14 - Sunday	Mothers' Day	Observance
May 14 - Sunday	Lag BaOmer	Jewish
May 20 - Saturday	Armed Forces Day	Observance
May 22 - Monday	National Maritime Day	Observance
May 25 - Thursday	Ascension Day	Christian
May 27 - Saturday	Ramadan starts	Muslim
May 29 - Monday	Memorial Day	National holiday
May 31 - Wednesday	Shavuot	Jewish

- June 2017 -

Jun 4 - Sunday	Pentecost	Christian
Jun 14 - Wednesday	Flag Day	Observance
Jun 18 - Sunday	Fathers' Day	Observance
Jun 21 - Wednesday	Summer/Winter Solstice	Season
Jun 21 - Wednesday	Laylat al Qadr	Muslim
Jun 25 - Sunday	Rath Yatra	Hindu
Jun 26 - Monday	Eid al-Fitr	Muslim



Check These Out

Cell Block Visions - A collection of inmate artwork, created behind bars, from county jail to death row... the alternative artworld flourishing today in American prisons. Men and women inmates, having no previous training, turn to art for a sense of self-worth, an opportunity to vent rage, a way to find peace. They transcend the cramped space, limited light, and narrow vistas of their prison studios. They triumph over security bans with ingenious resourcefulness - extracting color from shampoo; making paint out of M&Ms; weaving with cigarette wrappers.

Justice Denied - the Magazine for the Wrongly Convicted, publicizes cases of wrongful conviction, and exposes how and why they occur. Print current or back issues from their site.

To submit a story of wrongful conviction, see submission guidelines [online](#), or send your request for an information packet (include a stamp or a self-addressed stamped envelope) to:

Justice Denied
PO Box 66291
Seattle, WA 98166

Prison Creative Arts Project brings those impacted by the justice system and the University of Michigan Community into artistic collaboration for mutual learning and growth. Their 22nd Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners recently wrapped up, which featured 550 works of art by 450 artists, making it one of the largest exhibits of inmate artwork in the nation. Curators selected work from incarcerated artists in 28 prisons in the Michigan Department of Correction system. Visitors were able to purchase most of the art on display, with all proceeds going to the artist. See the online exhibit [here](#). View a list of artwork in the exhibition and sales status [here](#). Their newsletter aims to keep incarcerated artists, writers, and performers in Michigan informed of what the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is doing and how to be involved. Read their latest issue [here](#). If you know someone who would like to receive the newsletter, you can add them to the mailing list [here](#).

ACLU Pocket Constitution of the United States (10-Pack): 11.99.

- 3/12" x 5.5"
- Features the full text of the Constitution, the Amendments, including the Bill of Rights, as well as a Know Your Rights series: What to do if you're stopped by the police.



Reducing Recidivism

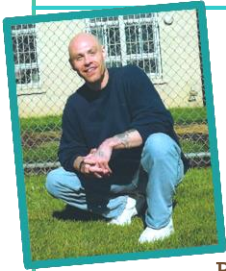
Bryan Stevenson, the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Institute, a nonprofit that, among other things, helps former convicts avoid reincarceration for minor parole violations, believes the idea of incentivizing could be "transformative."



"What if you personalize it?" he asks. "What if individual officers, and administrators, personally benefitted by reducing recidivism rates? If you created the right kind of bonus, something that was really meaningful, it would just be fascinating to see how quickly things would change. Guards would be desperate to get educational facilities, they'd want classes, drug treatment, safe environments. Their interests would align with the prisoners' — they'd care if people came out. They'd care about who shouldn't come out. It would have an impact on how they think about their work, their life. And you — we, taxpayers, the system — wouldn't be spending new money, you'd just reallocate."



**"The only punishment that works is love."
- Alice Walker**



Inside Voices

Greatness Is Elusive by Eric Burnham

Human greatness is not only difficult to achieve, it is also difficult to define. We can all think of famous men and women who reached greatness by positively contributing to the world--Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Margaret Thatcher, Mother Teresa, Corrie Ten Boom, or even Barak Obama. Without a doubt, these were great men and women, but surely some hold Mary, Queen of Scots, Al Capone, Mao Tse-Tung, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Ho Chi Minh, or Osama bin Laden to be great as well. Clearly greatness, by definition, is characterized subjectively to a large degree.

The dictionary defines greatness as someone (or something) remarkable, outstanding in significance or importance, superior in quality or character, distinguished. This definition breeds questions: What makes a person's character significant or distinguished? Significant to whom? Distinguished from whom?

It seems at its heart, human greatness involves risk, adversity, hard work, endurance, and opposition, and there are different categories of greatness. Greatness can be achieved through selfless sacrifice or selfish ruthlessness. Those like Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King used selfless sacrifice in service to others; while Adolf Hitler and Ho Chi Minh used selfish ruthlessness to oppress and destroy others. Yet neither Abraham Lincoln nor Martin Luther King were perfectly good. And neither Adolf Hitler nor Ho Chi Minh were completely evil. Both categories of greatness certainly helped some people; both categories are significant. However, one is distinguished from the other by its mercy. One serves the greater good and consequently, is superior.

Therefore, beneficial greatness is a side effect of seeing beyond oneself; while destructive greatness is the result of self-gratification at all costs. These are two extremes, but they are still the result of free will – great good or great evil is a choice we're all given.

I believe we were all designed for greatness, a greatness distinguished by honor, integrity, and courage, but unfortunately, all will not achieve their full potential. Yet, many do – there are great husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, teachers and caregivers, friends and neighbors all over the world, from all walks of life.

However, there are prisons all over the world too, and those of us incarcerated have hurt others; we have violated the rights of others in our pursuit of self-gratification. Narcissistic entitlement has undermined our natural inclination for empathy, and an exploitative mind-set has hijacked our personalities. And because we have broken the moral and legal codes of society, we are often viewed as constitutionally nefarious, damaged goods, irredeemably rotten to our cores. Our offense defines us, and we can never become great human beings. But I don't believe that.

Human beings are the only creatures who can choose to either fulfill the purpose for which they were designed or not to fulfill it. If we pursue self-gratification, we separate ourselves from our design, and society separates itself from us. But the mistakes of our past need not determine our future. We have been sentenced to a term of confinement as a result of our own behaviors, not anyone else's. We are not the victims of circumstance. We put ourselves in prison. However, all is not lost. Greatness is not out of reach. We certainly have a lot to make up for, and it is our responsibility to do so. Yet, if we use our time wisely, our incarceration can prepare us for the greatness that has eluded us.

If greatness involves overcoming adversity, the incarcerated must overcome not only the draining and corrosive environment of prison culture, but the mistakes of the past as well. If greatness involves sacrifice, the incarcerated must sacrifice even the relative safety of personal identity in pursuit of rehabilitation. If greatness involves honesty and integrity, the incarcerated must admit failure to self, family, and community, acknowledging that others were harmed in pursuit of self-gratification. If greatness involves endurance, hard work, and perseverance in the face of opposition, the incarcerated must keep pursuing change as the world continues to define them by the worst thing they have ever done. If greatness involves courage, the incarcerated must summon the courage to become the individuals they were designed to be even after they have strayed so far off track. If greatness involves redemption, the incarcerated must earn it.

Prison is a ripe environment for achieving greatness, but it will not be easy. Not all incarcerated men and women will apprehend the greatness for which they were designed. In fact, few will even try to become any different than they have always been, but greatness can be achieved. And some will achieve it. However, no one will bestow it as a gift. The achievement of human greatness, whether in prison or out, comes down to how one answers a few simple questions: For whom do you live your life? When your life is over, what will be said of you? What words will describe your story? If you are the most important character in the story of your life, the shine of greatness will remain elusive.