

OLD BLOOM



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Hey lovelies! Welcome to the second edition of our publication, Old Bloom. We're really excited to be able to continue this publication that is written by and for women, transwomen and gender non-conforming prisoners. Let's start with an update:

First, we must say that our operation is especially small-scale and low budget. We wish that we could answer every single letter but alas, it has been a challenging year and we are realizing that our capacity is just not yet there. The print shop (P&L Printing, a union worker-owned cooperative) that printed our first editions shut down because of a lack of business. They were donating a lot of printing services to us for free, so now we are trying to figure out other low cost options. Additionally, we now only have two people in our group because others have moved on to different projects. We hope to grow, but in the meantime we want to be transparent and let you all know that at this time we can only produce 1-2 publications per year. Please do send in your submissions - writing and art - and subscription requests at any time!

Second, we have to apologize to anyone who recently had a letter returned to them. Our post box closed temporarily without notice and the post office sent back mail. We were under the impression that our post office box was paid for through an 18-month period, but unfortunately it was 12 months. We have since resolved this issue and are trying to regularly communicate with the post office so that this situation never happens again. We regret not receiving and being unable to read letters and submissions because of this, so

please do not hesitate to send them back.

The people working on this project have been working on prisoner-related issues for a long time. Some of us do work with political prisoners, some of us facilitate workshops with prisoners, and some of us are affiliated and write with trans and genderqueer prisoners. What we all share is this: a fierceness, an intensity, and a passion for abolishing the prison system and supporting prisoners along the way.

We started this project with a couple of goals: first, we didn't notice too many publications that focused exclusively on women, transwomen, or gender non-conforming prisoners. We want to acknowledge Black and Pink and the outstanding work that they have done over the years in elevating the voices of LGBTQ and Trans prisoners and providing such a crucial penpal resource. Major love!

We want to highlight this population of femme prisoners and their

vulnerabilities and resistance to the prison state, to

Art: Dalia Shevin
colonization, to misogyny and transmisogyny, and their general thoughts on life. Therefore, we ask if you are a cis-man who subscribes to this publication that you hold off on sending your contributions for now. We have a "resource" section for other publications that you can send your writings or artwork to instead!

Also, we sadly do not have the capacities or resources that Black and Pink has at this point and we cannot offer penpal services.

We want this publication to facilitate a conversation between people in prison and people on the outside. You'll frequently see a mixture of

articles from prisoners and nonprisoners, because we want to normalize communications and have intentional dialogue in a publication that can be broadly disseminated to "inside" readers and "outside" readers!

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This is a political publication. What we mean is that there will be pieces in our publication that address current social trends and politics. We want to make sure that personal pieces and poetry are included too. We believe that every life is political. We can't escape the political forces that shape our lives based on our gender,

our skin color, our class background, or our physical and mental abilities. It shapes our psyche and the way we approach the world. Therefore, the personal is political and the political is personal.

Another note about politics: We are an explicitly antiauthoritarian publication.

That means that we are opposed to power being used to oppress people or to silence them. The writers for *unstoppable!* might identify with one (or more) of many political identities, but what we hopefully can all agree on is that we do not want our lives ruled by power-hungry authority figures or stifling, oppressive institutions. We love

personal empowerment and power-together.

If you have any questions, feel free to give us a shout. Subscription info and address included later in this edition.

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SUBMISSIONS FROM THE INSIDE

Hi everyone! It's me, Jessica Anne.

Well, here is that must read story I promised. For those of you that might be reading *unstoppable!* for the first time, my name is Jessica Anne Guillotte.

Today, I would like to take the time to talk about labels. I would like to start out by saying that some labels are helpful. However, there are more harmful ones.

Labeling has been around since the beginning of time, most of these labels have been and still are very harmful. Those are the labels I want to talk about. These labels that I am referring to, are as follows. These are the labels that people have labeled us, and continue to label us today. They are also the labels that we continue to use and label ourselves and others with today. Here they are. What labels am I referring to? I am referring to the labels that we use and others use to identify ourselves and the world! Labels like black, white, gay, lesbian, bisexual, TG, etc.

Let's start with the label TG. Why should that label be hung on us? Why should we hang that label on ourselves? I/you are a person that believes/feels that you are a male, or female, and are presenting as such. What gives anyone the right to say, who or what you/we are? So why aren't you just a female, girl, women? Or a male, boy, man, if you're presenting as such.

Further, if you are a female that wants to be in a relationship with another female, why not just say that? Again, the same goes for a man that wants to be with a man, and of course, this applies to those who enjoy being with both sexes. No one has the right to label you, or to decide that you are a faggot, a freak,

a queer, gay, bisexual, lesbian, TG! Or anything else. We should all stop and think about this, if we do not stop labeling ourselves, and stop accepting the labels that others keep putting on us, then people/society will continue thinking that this is ok to continue doing and if that continues to happen, then, they will never

start looking at us, or accepting us as human and as who we are and say we are.

I for one, am as far as I am concerned, as much a naturally born female, girl, woman, as my (cis) sisters are. I will never look at myself as less. Now, mind you, these are just my personal views and beliefs. I do not look at myself as TG. I look at myself as I described myself above.

It may surprise most people to learn, that the reason the incarceration rate is so high for those of us that are locked up, is because as children and adults, it is because of low self-esteem. It's time to rise above adversity, rise above the hurt, to rise above the pain and shame of who we are! Why? Because, there is no shame in who you/we are, unless you/we allow there to be.

First and foremost, I want everyone to know that it's not our/your fault, the way we/you were born, the way we/you are wired, you/we have nothing to be ashamed of! The people who label and judge us should be ashamed. We should all celebrate ourselves and who we are! We should no longer be silenced, or allow others to define us. We should be who we are, without labels, we should say it loud! And, we should always hold our heads up high! We should stand tall and proud! Be who you are, not the person someone decides you are.

Lots of Love to everyone
From Jessica Anne MA

Hello once again, it's me. Jessica Anne. Today, I want to take the time to reply to, and talk about, a very special submission that appeared in the winter 2016 addition of *unstoppable!* magazine on page (10).

First, let me say, every article in this edition, touched my heart. However, the article on page 10, titled my change, written by Levi Thibault, brought me to tears....

I want to share some words of wisdom with all trans people who are locked up, and who might read this in the free world.

First, let me say this. The author of the article *My Change*, is right about the fact that being "trans" isn't a trend. And, it's not a choice that you make one morning by simply waking up and saying you want to be "trans" - it's actually a sense that a person is trapped in the body of the opposite sex. It's being born this way.

I want to take this topic further. Suicide is never the answer, no matter how deep the psychological pain. Why? Because, there are always people in the world who love you, and care about you. Plus, if you kill yourself, you don't get to stand up and be counted.

Further, taking your own life, is never the only option you have. There is always someone, somewhere, whom when you can't



walk another step, they will carry you. There is always someone out there somewhere that is willing to listen and willing to help. You will be surprised at just how many hands you will find reaching out.

I thought about what it would be like if I took my life, then I stopped and thought about what that would do to my now dearly departed mom and dad. Once my dad passed, I thought about it again and what it would do to my dear

sweet mom who was hoping and praying I would come home. Then, when she passed about a year ago, I thought about what it would do to my 3 sisters, my nieces and nephews, and all my TG sisters and brothers out there that have continuously given their love and support to me, as well as all my Cis sisters out there.

Why did I do all this thinking and why do I think about reasons for not ending my life? Because, you see, when you/we, think about

ending it all, we would not only be hurting ourselves, we would be hurting someone, somewhere who does care about us, who does love us. Even if we do not know about it quite yet.

And yes, together we can and will all make a difference, and we will. My next article, if it is chosen to be published is a guaranteed must read.

Lots of Love,
Jessica Anne MA

Dear Unstoppable!

Thanks for the premier issue of Unstoppable! Winter 2016. I particularly liked "prison solidarity news," and "Why we need solidarity between cis-women and transwomen" by the Amazing Fucking Rainbow Clan!

I represent a trans-feminine faction in the men's facilities called Loyal Queen Revolutionaries, which stands on loyalty to our sisters in the struggle, queer and trans liberation, and revolutionary actions for self-defense against homophobic/transmisogynist violence. In other words, we are Amazon warrior gangsta bitches who don't tolerate haters!

Our beginnings in 2009, have gone through a lot of battles on these yards, literally, and tested by fire. "That which doesn't kill us only makes us stronger!" So now there are about 25 of us statewide in California, on the "SNY" yards. Transwomen are prohibited from GP yards by the longtime existing prison gangs.

Anyways, shout outs to Amazing Fucking Rainbow Clan and all sisters in the struggle who identify as Amazon Queens! We love y'all!

-Jennifer Gann

Who/What/Where is Home?

By Jennifer Gann

"Home is where the heart is"
Or so the saying goes
My mother, sister, and Nana,
And the sweet smell of rose

Home is Mother Nature
the Goodness of Earth
and all her lovely children

Burning fires in the hearth.

Home is where I'm safe
to lay my head and sleep
to dream of a better world
where love and devotion are deep.

I find my home in a lover's arms
Whoever s/he may be
or in the presence of my Guru
as I worship at her feet.

Who/What/Where is home?
It's Amazonian sisterhood.
It's ancient, ancestral homelands
And the local neighborhood.

Who is home? The Goddess!
What is home? The Earth!
Where is home? It's here and now
as I end this verse.

A POEM FOR TONYA HERRON

[Editor's note: This poem has content relating to a graphic suicide. Please take great care reading this. Honor yourself and honor the legacy of those who survived and persisted]

through mental health challenges and honor the legacy of those who suffered a similar fate to Tonya Herron. You are precious. We love you so very dearly]

Written by women prisoners inside dnvr women's correctional facility inspired by the loss of a friend inside, summer 2016

I am a woman, a daughter, a sister, a niece, a mother, a fucking human being, and so was she....

I feel overwhelmed with the images flashing through my mind. It hits like a tsunami sometimes and takes all my strength to not feel like I have no rights, am no longer a human being, because that's what is pounded into my head. I can still hear the thud on the wall from her body falling. I can imagine the blood from her jump and still see that

poor girl's body naked and strapped down, completely helpless, yet still surrounded by demons tasing and hitting her.

I am a woman, a daughter, a sister, a niece, a mother, a fucking human being, and so was she... so are the rest of us... our lives matter... Stop all the abuse...

Never being noticed by family or the people who are supposed to care. Empty and lost. Needing love. Needing a family who won't hurt you. Until it's too late. Someone comes to death or dies. Just to see who cares.

I am a woman, a daughter, a sister, a niece, a mother, a fucking human being, and so was she...

Each of you... me... each of you - life, death will never cease - never forgotten - how could our time together ever be forgotten? I will never be the same - go on - why? Did you hear my heart break? Yet another day - I'm lost - empty. Filled, yet not - speech is leaving me, sealed with us. Never forget.

I am a woman, a daughter, a sister, a niece, a mother, a fucking human being, and so was Tonya Herron.

I have seen so many different kinds of abuse at dwcf (denver women's correctional facility) from suicide to guards being abusive, and negligence in every department. Everything feels so futile right now.

I am a woman, a daughter, a sister, a niece, a mother, a fucking human being, and so was Tonya Herron...

I care. I cannot get the image of guards dropping vending machine snacks from tier three in Unit 3. Watching M&Ms drop in jest of Tonya Herron, the woman who jumped a week before from that same spot. Fell on her neck and died instantaneously. Suicide is entertainment for correctional officers at the D.O.C. I care. Do you?

I am a woman, a daughter, a sister, a niece, a mother, a fucking human being, and so was Tonya Herron...

The prettiest smiles hide the deepest secrets; the prettiest eyes cry the most tears. The kindest hearts have felt the most pain. R.I.P. Tonya.

The authors of this poem are still in the process of trauma and grieving the loss of Tonya. They also continue to fight for their own selves on the inside. They continue to fight for their freedom and to be returned to their children, their friends, their loved ones.

Greetings Unstoppable,

My name is Skyylar Alexxys Munk (well legally speaking it's danny p***** jr.). I am a MT7 transgender girl. I'm currently 28 years old doing 25 years in the Missouri Department of Corrections. I've got 11 years done.

I have identified as a female (girl) since I was five years old but hid it

'til I was 27, my family was very religious/ judgmental type of people. I hid my true feeling for 22 years after the first time I tried to express them. I came out of my parent's room wearing my mother's negligee which was like a dress to me. My father had said "Oh, great our son's gonna be a faggot." I didn't know what he meant but I knew he was angry and I was wearing girl's clothes. He was always bashing the LGBTQ community growing up and even went as far as saying they

building a lawsuit for if I can't get help.

I am writing because I seen you are making a trans oriented publication. I seen your information in Prison Action News volume 9.1 February 2016.

Please place me on your mailing list and feel free to publish this letter if you wish. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Skyylar Alexxys Munk



Art: Megan Smith

should all be killed. So I kept my identity a secret. It tore me up through the years. Multiple psyche hospital visits (around 17 inpatient treatments) 3 times in the Division of Youth Services, countless times in juvenile. All because I was rebelling against myself for not being myself. I just opened up in February 2015 after my father left the state of Missouri, and having a lot of trouble getting help. I can't even get a psychiatrist to evaluate me for gender dysphoria. I have been filing numerous grievances and am working on

Long live John Africa Forever!

On the Move!

I just want to stay in touch and let y'all know about our parole hearings. We (Debbie, Janet and myself) saw the parole board on May 12th, it was a Miss Labenny and a Mr. Macray. It was the same old thing but this time we got to talk! We don't care what their decision is, we feel good because we got to put out the truth! We talked our belief like we were on a radio program! And whatever decision they make, they will not be able to dismiss the truth they heard! The power of truth is final! So if they don't make the right decision, that information is going to eat them up with guilt and that's a prison they can't get parole from!

During our hearings the parole agents commented on all the support we have from all of you! All of the letters, e-mails, faxes and phone calls are putting pressure on the system! So don't ever feel like what you are doing

is not effective. Everything that's being done for our release is chiseling away at this system and is wearing it down! Thank you! I can't express how good it makes us feel to see all the love and support we have! It's as John Africa teach, love is a powerful force! And we have plenty of love from all over the world!

This system is so hell bent on hurting Move, they ought to be wanting us out to help fight this mess they have made of the world! They have read JOHN AFRICA's teaching, they know that JOHN AFRICA has the solution to the problems of the world, they see the proof of this in Move people!



Yet they are keeping this from people. Because these officials, politicians don't have peoples' interests at heart. All they care about is money! But thanks to all the work y'all, our family is doing these officials won't be able to keep the truth from people too much longer! That's the real reason they don't want Move people out of prison because they know people will flock to us and they don't want people to be influenced by Move. But they cannot stop the truth, wrong cannot defeat righteousness! It's just a matter of time!

We are all doing good and staying strong, committed to what's right. We will never give into the system! You can depend on and trust that! Tae care and be strong, things are working! On the Move!

-Janine

(Update: We were denied parole- one of the excuses was we're a threat to society. It's the people who are sending petitions, e-mails, letters and phone calls to the parole board asking for our release. The system is trying to break us or kill us in these prisons. Move will never break!)

A Letter from Marius Mason

Dear Family and Friends,

This has been a strange and intense year, both for me personally and for so many others as this world has changed significantly. It has been an inspiration to witness the Black Lives Matter movement as it confronts police brutality and to draw wisdom from that. It has been an inspiration to witness the federation of peoples supporting the Standing Rock Tribe as they confront the ecologically suicidal energy policy of this country, and to draw wisdom from that. And we have borne witness to the struggle for freedom and dignity that so many who have been forced to leave their homes in order to escape war, poverty and violence and in the hopes of finding a more open society where they can put down roots. Though,

sadly, all refugees find themselves at risk of prejudice and abuse, trans people have found that they experience a unique discrimination and isolation as they cross borders, and find themselves set apart in detention centers, unable to access medical care and suffering abuse. We continue to gather and hear the stories of trans prisoners who continue to be raped and physically brutalized, in an effort to advocate for their safety and protection and to offer our help. We have seen a year where the laws and policies have changed and shifted, sometimes increasing the civil rights and access to care for trans folks, and sometimes identifying them for particular discrimination and criminalization through the new "bathroom laws" and local ordinances limiting their protection from job and housing discrimination. The United States has a history of civil rights being fought for and lost in a constant dance of egalitarians confronting bigotry, in all of its many forms. We must remain determined and implacable.

As we prepare for a new administration to influence the massive system of incarceration that holds such a large faction of the population in thrall, we must re-commit ourselves to standing strong for the rights of trans prisoners who will definitely find themselves facing new challenges to the recent changes in healthcare offered to trans prisoners. We must be vigilant and active, so that what few advances have been made are not rescinded. For this reason, it is more important than ever for there to be a lively discussion possible between those who live and work on either side of the walls that separate us. By coming together and building community, by taking the time to develop connection through whatever means of communication are possible – incarcerated trans folks become less vulnerable to attack and our communities (both LGBT and straight)

become stronger as we work to connect and protect each other.

I want to thank all of you who wrote and who organized for supporting incarcerated trans people today. This means so much to me, that I and others like me can be supported. I find great comfort in helping support others who, like me, find themselves attempting to transition in prison. This year has brought a lot of hope for me, as I was finally approved for hormone therapy and began taking testosterone shots on September 14th. The changes have been subtle, and this will be a long road having been so long delayed – but I am hopeful that within a year, I will be allowed to begin the surgeries I need to be medically re-assigned. But there is no guarantee that this policy will stay in place, and it is imperative for all trans folks to be supported in the kind of health care they need (whatever that may be, not everyone needs the same things or anything at all, other than recognition). I also think that as a community that does prisoner support for our comrades behind bars, that we must make sure that all incarcerated folks have access to healthcare, whether that be trans identity related or not. I wish so much that I could be more present with you all. It gives me so much hope and strength to know that you are out there for us inside – just as I am here inside for all of you. We are one spirit, many hearts, moving towards freedom and where we will live the dream of the world released from injustice and brutality. I am so proud to be with you today; many, many thanks and I hope to know more of you as we move together towards what 2017 will bring.

Love and solidarity, Marius

[Marius Mason is a political prisoner, an anarchist, environmental and animal rights activist currently serving nearly 22 years in federal prison for acts of property damage]



carried out in defense of the planet. After being threatened with a life sentence in 2009 for these acts of sabotage, he pled guilty to arson charges at a Michigan State University lab researching genetically modified organisms for Monsanto, and admitted to 12 other acts of property damage. No one was physically harmed in these actions. At sentencing the judge applied a so-called "terrorism enhancement," adding almost two years to an already extreme sentence requested by the prosecution. This is the harshest punishment of anyone convicted of environmental sabotage to date.

Marius came out to his friends, family and supporters as transgender in 2014. Previously known as "Marie Mason," he changed his name, uses he/him pronouns, and embarked on a course to get a medical diagnosis that would allow him to seek gender affirming surgery and hormone therapy. The Board of Prisons (BOP) has already diagnosed Marius as having gender dysphoria, and has made some clothing and commissary accommodations in accordance with their established policy. Subsequently, Caswell prison ran a plethora of medical diagnostic tests to screen him as being healthy enough to receive the care he has requested. Finally, on September 14, 2016, Marius received his first "T" hormone shot.]

A Letter from Inside

To whom it may concern,

My name is teresa I am currently incarcerated here at dnvr women's correctional facility, and have been here since June of 2011. The reason I am writing to you is because I feel strongly that our rights are being violated that that it needs to be brought to the attention of the public. I have already tried to reach out to the executive director, mr. rick raemisch, back in April of this year with no response.

I would like to start with the 2 suicides that happened within 3 months of each other earlier this year. The first was on June 27th in unit 3, A pod. offender Tanya Herron had been telling staff that she needed to see someone from mental health. She had been a resident of Unit 6 previously, which is the Special Needs Unit. This unit is for offenders who need more mental health help than others. So, needless to say, they knew of her mental health history. No one would listen to her and no one obviously got her anyone to even talk to. She is not the only one that staff wouldn't help, it's an ongoing problem here with all offenders at this facility. As a matter of fact, I will use myself as an example, I take psychotropic medication and am supposed to see my mental health provider and have not seen one since the end of 2015. This is obviously a problem.

Back to Ms. Herron. On the above date, she dove head first off of the 3rd tier with offenders in the pod. She obviously died, I would hope instantly. I was told by many of my friends that witnessed it that her head blew up like a pumpkin with her eyes wide open. This was an extremely horrific thing to have to witness, because even just hearing about it has caused me to have nightmares. The thing that really got me was no one even came around to ask if we knew her or if we needed to talk to anyone about it. They locked us down for the rest of the day and then the next day it was business as usual. I actually knew her rather well, that is why I see her face in my nightmares. The next suicide happened on September 5th. Her name was Tiffany Curtis, whom I've known since my arrival in 2011. She hung herself somehow in Unit 4, which is segregation. Once again, she had been asking to see mental health, and no one would help her. Once again, no one came and asked any of us if we needed to talk to someone about the situation. The

same procedure was followed. Lock everyone down for the rest of the day and business as usual the next day.

The next thing I would like to tell you about is how inadequate our grievance system is here. This is the only way offenders have to try to hold staff accountable and the system is broken. First of all, we have to rely on our case managers to submit the grievance and if you happen to have a crappy one, then you are pretty much out of luck. And there are a lot of those types of case managers here. There is a timeline that we have to meet per the grievance policy, and we have to rely on someone else to meet those timelines. I would say that approximately 80% or more of our grievances are not even answered.

We also suffer from retaliation a majority of the time. I have even had other staff warn me not to do certain grievances because of retaliation. For instance, the mailroom. Our mailroom is very badly staffed. The 2 officers that work there are so unapproachable, it is ridiculous. They are a perfect example. Retaliation is supposed to be strictly forbidden, but it happens all the time. Staff is not held accountable for their behavior, so it seems like grievances are worthless. This is very unfortunate for us offenders, to say the least. We have what are called Administrative Regulations, (ARs), that are signed off by the Executive Director of Colorado Department of Corrections, that are not followed by staff majority of the time, and that we are supposed to know, but they are not available to us offenders unless we go look them up on a computer that they have in the library. If we want an AR for our own use, we have to send a withdrawal slip to the ACA Coordinator and pay 0.25¢ per page out of our own accounts. Some of the ARs have a lot of pages. If we are reading them up at the library, you have less than

an hour to read it, and sometimes it will take an offender an hour just to find the AR. Unit 5 offenders don't even have access to the library! All offenders should have easy access to the ARs if we are expected to know what they say. I have been yelled at by a certain Lieutenant to look at my ARs. This is very inappropriate in and of itself.

This next issue is a very important one as it involves our earned time and that is what effects the time when we are able to see parole. The hearings officer that handles our hearings when we allegedly break a rule, is not following proper procedures, as outlined in the doc code of penal discipline. On top of that, the Major over him, who handles our appeals, is not following them as well. Not only are we being found guilty of write ups with no evidence to prove the write up, when we ask for certain evidence to be brought forth at our hearings our to prove our innocence when we appeal a guilty finding, it is not allowed. For instance, if I ask for camera footage to be entered into evidence at my hearing, as it states in the Code of Penal Discipline, it is not allowed and we are just found guilty anyway. We are being found guilty on the hearsay of officers. I as well as many others, have tried to write the warden, david johnson about these issues with no response. We obviously have many rules here that we are expected to follow, yet the staff here, (from the hearings officer to a housing officer), do not feel that they need to follow them, and why should they when they are not held accountable for their behavior or how they treat us. This is absolutely frustrating for us as we have NO place to turn.

There really needs to be some changes made here at this facility and I have no idea how to make that happen, as I have reached out to every avenue that there is to reach out to. As they say, "follow your chain of command." I mean come one, how high up can I go? Hopefully, by writing this letter, I am aiming in the right direction.

I know that I put myself here by the choices I made, I just feel that DOC is not trying to rehabilitate me at all. I am now 5 years to Parole Eligibility Date but I have been

asking for treatment for four years now to no avail. I feel that this facility needs to take more initiative in the rehabilitating us, as some day I could be their or your neighbor. I could be your coworker or maybe just a

violated on a daily basis and changes need to be made.

Respectfully yours.

What is Oppression?

"Oppression is the systemic and institutional abuse of power by one group at the expense of others and the use of force to maintain this dynamic. An oppressive system is built around the ideology of superiority of some groups and inferiority of others. This ideology makes those designated as inferior feel confined, 'less than,' and hinders the realization of their full spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological well-being and potential. They are portrayed as "others" and are marginalized via social, mental, emotional, and physical violence which prevents their full inclusion in the community. All actions, systems, cultures, ideologies, and technologies which refuse to take full and equitable consideration of everyone and everything affected by them are aspects of oppression."

Art: N.O. Bonzo



working class mother in your neighborhood. What I'm saying is I won't be here forever, but I'm not being prepared for the outside world because they say I have too much time. That is ridiculous as all I'm doing is sitting here every day doing nothing! I should be being prepared to reintegrate back into society with some classes, drug & alcohol treatment and any other self-help classes that they can offer. DOC's Mission Statement certainly is a waste of ink, as they do not follow it here.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. It's obvious that our constitutional rights are being

Patriarchy (men are thought to be superior, women inferior), **misogyny** (the hatred of women), **heterosexism** (women and LGBTQ people are treated poorly), **racism** (people of color are thought to be inferior and experience more discrimination and violence), **ableism** (giving privileges to people who are physically and mentally more able to conform to mainstream expectations - work 40 hours, be self-

sufficient, etc.) are all examples of oppression.

Madness and Oppression

(Inspired by The Icarus Project's "Madness and Oppression: Paths to Personal Transformation and Collective Liberation")

It started long ago, women were
nothing more than property, for show
Do not speak until spoken to
Do what I say and I'll do what I
want to do

You have no worth, no value, no
claim, if you don't like it, too bad, just
try and go.

I'll replace you faster than you
know,

That was the way things used to be,
but my worth, my shame are still the
same to me..

It may have started long ago, but not
much has changed as far as what I
know.

My worth, my value still seem so
low.

Passed down from woman to
woman, despite the fire, the inside glow
deep deep within my soul.

—Arian Campbell, Colorado

Hey come here, let's have a talk
Just a little reminder of everything
you're not

You're not good enough, you're not
worth it, it's plain to see

You're labeled a criminal and that's
all you'll ever be

You say I have no worth but you get
money to lock me away

Under false pretense of corrections
but without prisoners you wouldn't get
paid

So it's a cycle never-ending, you
really don't care if you help

We're nothing but numbers, living
in your hell

You're wasting your breath because
you speak the truth

We really don't care and no one
will believe you

It's your word against ours so don't
forget your place

We hold the power and you're just
pawns in a game

See that's where you're wrong,
you're blinded by greed

It's your turn right now, but one day
you'll see

That our stories don't end here; this
doesn't have to be our lives

We can take back control we have
the power to rise!

—Jenni Lyn B., Colorado

We go together like a pea to a pod
Precious in my children's eyes
Pumping in my living room
Roses are red and they rise in the
morning.

Everyone feels the same way I do,
caring.

Suffering, anguish, despised, and
rejected.

Started for my independence by
taking action for myself

Everyone feels the same way I do,
caring.

Does it come as a surprise like a
diamond?

—Pamela Branson, Colorado

My shame for all to see
You followed your peers
And as my tears slowly fell
I felt the hell. Oppressed
They say, hell. For all to see
I'll soon be free.

—Dawn Richburg, Colorado

Women For Water // Water is Life



Art: Christi Belcourt

Suspecting toxic water quality at a Colorado prison, women prisoners conducted a simple experiment to test their theory: using water from cell faucets they ran the water through empty coffee filters placed inside unit-assigned coffee pots. The women discovered unidentifiable debris left in the filters; remnants that resembled little rocks or sawdust. With this physical evidence in hand, the prisoners at the women's facility connected with prisoners working on the plumbing crew. These prison laborers in turn investigated the history and quality of the prison water by prodding private contractors assigned to manage the prison plumbing department. Other prisoner efforts on the water project included: library research on the history of the building and architecture as well as the history of the land the prison was built on; uncovering and determining the cause of poor water quality at the prison (old/decaying piping); documenting the prisons complicity with state water testing agencies; writing a report about the toxic water quality and health related concerns mounting in the prison; and writing poems about the importance of the quality of water in prison to publish and draw awareness to the atrocity of water quality and health concerns. A small group of folks became spokespersons within the prison to talk to media, lawyers, and environmental activists; sending out correspondence to garner outside support from lawyers, environmentalists, and activists.

Water by Jennifer W. Harris

When I say the words agua, vasa, and mul, the first word that comes into my mind is **refreshing!**

When I think about the words agua, vasa, and mul, the first word that comes into my mind is **fulfilling!**

When I bathe or shower in agua, vasa, and mul, the first word that comes into my mind is **exhilarating!**

When I drink agua, vasa, and mul, the first word that comes into my mind is **satisfying!**

Since being in prison, when I think about agua, vasa, and mul, the first word that comes into my mind is **scary!**

**Contributions from
the Outside**

'as you are.' says the universe.
'after...' you answer.
'as you are.' says the universe.
'before...' you answer.
'as you are.' says the universe.
'when...' you answer.
'as you are.' says the universe.
'why...' you answer.
'because
you are happening now.
right now.
right at this moment
and your happening
is beautiful.
The thing that both keeps
me alive
and
brings me to my knees.
you don't even know how
breathtaking you
are.
as you are.' says the
universe through tears.

by nayyirah waheed, from
'nejma.'

your skin
smells
like light.
i think you are
the moon.

by nayyirah waheed, from
'salt.'

Fight

If they ask you how you
are
don't say stolen. Don't
say forgotten, passed over,
ignored. Don't you dare
say Orphan.

Don't say beaten by the
system
Oppressed and disturbed
And don't you dare say
disappointed
Don't you dare say
damaged.

Smile.
Smile with all of your
teeth, even the rotting ones.
Even the rotting ones.

from bone by Yrsa Daley-
Ward

What We Are Not

Listen, you are not
What has happened.

You are not, and I am not.
You are not your cracked ribs
Or the parents who did not want
you
Or the fires you started
Or your own body, unconscious.

I am not
The blood I washed out of my
hair
Three weeks ago.
I am not my shaking hands
Or the knuckle marks
Inside my thighs

I am not
That feeling of choking, like there
is packing material under my
tongue,
Like I've licked all the envelopes
And now everything is dry and
tastes somewhat like glue
I am not my inability to breathe

We are nobody's beatings.
We are nobody's temper.
We are nobody's closed fist but
our own.

You are not the gratuitous
cruelty
Hoisted upon you.

You still have everything you
arrived with.

Nothing has been taken from us
Because you cannot take
A piece of a person
Anywhere
They do not choose to put it

We are not
Our bodies
Or our fear
Or our unlearning
Or our broken teeth

We are fires. Entire forests worth
of fires, we are
Earthquakes
And molecules
And we are pushing on the
pillars
Of this structure
We are the water cutting its way
through
Mountains
And threats
Slowly.

We are every inhalation we
have taken
Against odds



We are not our backs to any
walls.
We are not anybody's trembling.

We are
Still
palpable, you are
Still
Palpable.

--Nina Szarka, milwaukee
wisconsin

The Howling Woman

by Dominique Christina

(She got a hole in her chest. She
keep her fist in it.)

*She is a pocketbook with the seams
Pulled out.
Been clutterin' up her
Womb with men
Who ain't got no Jesus at all.*

*Just howlin' her
Saturdays from under her skirt*

*Plucks the tender kisses
Their hot mouths could not make
From her babies
And listens for rain clouds.*

*Howling woman in the moon-
stretched night
Like a steeple in a valley of rotten
fruit*

*She keep pullin' the weather
Out from the hem of her skirts
She remembers when she was
cathedral.*

*How her hips didn't hold
No rent parties inside 'em.
How she knew what she sounded
like as herself.*

*How the last man took up too much
space in her body.
Slid out of her without a smile*

*And she couldn't find God nowhere
in the room.*

*Just a howl.
Just a tremor.
Where her body used to be.*

**Description of the Howling
Woman poem, an excerpt from
Dominique Christina's book
entitled *This is Woman's Work*:**

The Howling Woman is a dirge. A funeral procession that may or may not have a body. She is a lamentation. A sorrow-walloped soul. Her grief is an empire. A landing place. The only house she stays in overnight. She is the bluest hour. The anonymous groan. She is an agony. She is an agony. She is an agony. She is the bottom, the very bottom, of grief.

The Howling Woman *lives* in sadness and grief. She is consumed by it. She is bleary-eyed and grasping because of it. It is dogged work for the Howling Woman to keep her head above its current. So much of who she could be or would be is floundering underneath the weight of the sadness she holds. If she only could be like Atlas. If she only could get out from under it. If she only could find some daylight. If she only could know it was hers all along.

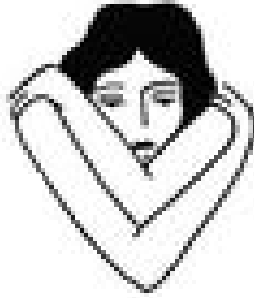
I have known so many women who operate from this energy pattern. So many. Too many to even remember. What I know is that sadness hangs on. And what's worse, sadness can become a thing

that you become dependent upon. The Howling Woman has made an identity out of sadness. She has convinced herself that her hurt tells her who she is. Her pain is as

important to her as her name, where she grew up, what schools she attended, who she first loved, what she knows most. It is an onerous inconvenience to have this kind of relationship to sadness. It doesn't let much daylight in. It doesn't let many people in. And if they do get I, they are hard pressed to stay. Having a commitment to sadness is the worst of it. If you are interested in joy, then you are aware that your sadness is problematic.

You may be trying to right (write) the wrongs. Because sadness is so present, you may be creating work that others call lifesaving. You may find that people are in awe of your truth-telling and transparency. They will tell you they know what you mean, or they have been through something similar. I find that people are so grateful to hear your grief stories, how you grapple, how desperate you became, how you managed to erect yourself despite whatever was tearing at you. But mostly, people are listening for how you *survived* it, how you transcended it. If you are the Howling Woman, you may not yet have a transcendent story, but you can use your creativity to devise an escape route. The Howling Woman is caught under the rubble. Instead of digging her way out, instead of issuing a distress signal, she is trying to hang curtains in a house that has been demolished. She should know the only way to get out is to *leave*.

Self-Care



Your Key Pressure Points

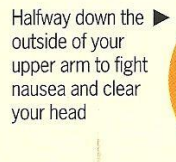
Out of ibuprofen? Reflexologists swear touching these acupressure points for 10 to 30 seconds will heal what ails you. Just press here:



▶ The base of your skull to ditch itchy eyes and exhaustion



◀ The outer edge of the crease of your elbow to decrease tension and congestion



▶ Halfway down the outside of your upper arm to fight nausea and clear your head



▲ The web between your pinkie and ring finger to ease dizziness and back pain



◀ An inch below your belly button to beat period bloat

SOURCE: VALERIE VONER, DIRECTOR OF THE NEW ENGLAND INSTITUTE OF REFLEXOLOGY AND AUTHOR OF THE EVERYTHING REFLEXOLOGY BOOK



GLOSSARY

AGENDER: someone who is without a gender or gender identity.

ASEXUAL (OR "ACE"): Having a lack of sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest or desire for sex or sexual partners.

AUTONOMY: Ability to function independently; make one's own decisions. The word comes from ancient Greek and means 'the law of the self.'

CISGENDER (OR "CIS"): A person whose gender identity is aligned to what they were designated at birth; Someone who is neither transgender nor non-binary.

DEHUMANIZATION: To treat a person as less than human; often likening them to a non-human animal, machine, or monster.

FEMALE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH (FAAB/AFAB)/DESIGNATED FEMALE AT BIRTH (DFAB): Phrases/acronyms describing a person who was deemed to be the female sex at birth via the subjective viewing and labeling of the body's characteristics; having been labeled female at birth because the body possessed traits culturally recognized as female sex.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING (ALSO "GENDER VARIANT"): A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

GENDER-FLUID: A gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of boy, girl, and/or non-binary. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix, but, for example, may feel more man some days, and more non-binary other days.

HETERONORMATIVITY: Lifestyle norm that expects and insists that people fall into distinct genders (male and female), and naturalizes heterosexual coupling as the norm.

person can dominate decision making.

INTERSEX: Someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two typical or societally accepted patterns of male or female.

MALE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH (MAAB/AMAB)/DESIGNATED MALE AT BIRTH (DMAB): Phrases/acronyms describing a person who was deemed to be the male sex at birth via the subjective viewing and labeling of the body's characteristics; Having been labeled male at birth because the body possessed traits culturally recognized as male sex.

NON-BINARY: A gender identity that is neither female nor male.

QUEER: An umbrella term representative of the vast matrix of identities outside of the gender normative and heterosexual majority. Reclaimed after a history of negative use, starting in the 1980s.

SOLIDARITY: Relations of support that bind people to one another.

TRANSGENDER (OR "TRANS"/TG): A broad term that refers to all people who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.

TWO-SPIRIT (ED): An umbrella term used by and for Indigenous Americans that may encompass same-sex attraction and a wide variety of gender variance, including people who might be described in Western culture as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, gender queer, cross-dressers or who have multiple gender identities.

SUBSCRIPTION INFO
unstoppable! is free for women, transwomen, transmen, and queer femmes who are currently incarcerated, so write to us if you would like

to receive a subscription or be removed from the mailing list! Like most small-scale operations, we do need financial help, so if you know of folks on the outside who would like to pay for their own subscription, they can visit unstoppable@noblogs.org to donate and get a copy of the publication.

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- unstoppable! seeks specifically to amplify the voices of incarcerated women, queer, and/or gendervariant folks so please submit contributions if you identify this way.

What to write:

We love anything in the form of:
Social commentaries // art
// poetry // field notes // letters

Suggestions for topic content:

Critical views of power structures // gender issues
// organizing against police terror // self-care // overcoming past or ongoing trauma // injustices/deprivation in the

U.S. prison system // cats,
dogs, and all things furry

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and will publish all
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and what name, if any, you
would like us to use.

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Donating stamps in the
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distribute this publication
for free to folks on the
inside.

*((Special shout out to
Jessica Anne Guillotte for
helping so diligently with
this goal))*

**RESOURCES - LITERATURE AND
PRISONER PUBLICATIONS**

For politicized prisoners,
write to get a subscription
(published once every 1-2
months):

Oak Root press
PO Box 775006
St. Louis, MO 63177

For anarchist or anarchist-
questioning prisoners, write
to get a subscription
(published once every 3
months):

Wildfire, c/o The Future
PO Box 3133
Bloomington, IN 47402

For prisoner resistance
news and updates, write to
get a subscription (published
2x per year):

Boston ABC (Prison Action
News)
PO Box 230182
Boston, MA 02123

For LGBTQ prisoners, write
to get a subscription
(published once a month):
Black and Pink

614 Columbia Road
Dorchester, MA 02125

For general prisoner
resource information (Prison
Activist Resource Center, one
guide published per year)
(**NOTE** this directory has
info for legal resources):

PARC
PO Box 70477
Oakland, CA 94612

For North American
political prisoner updates
and prisoner resistance
submissions:

4strugglemag
P.O. Box 97048
RPO Roncesvalles Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M6R3B3 Canada

For ecological and social
resistance news:

Earth First! Journal
PO Box 964
Lake Worth, FL 33460

For Trans legal
information:

Transgender Law Center
PO Box 70976
Oakland, CA 94612 ((for
transgendered prisoners))

For formerly incarcerated
and currently incarcerated
women (trans inclusive):
Tenacious c/o Victoria Law
PO Box 20388
Tompkins Square Station
New York, NY 10009

For books and free reading
materials:

- Chicago Books to Women
in Prison c/o RUFMC
4511 N. Hermitage
Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
- Women's Prison Book
Project c/o Boneshaker
Books
2002 23rd Ave South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
((transinclusive))
- LGBT Books to
Prisoners c/o Rainbow
Book Cooperative
426 West Gilman Street
Madison, WI 53703 ((for
LGBT, cannot send to
Texas))
- Transmission Prison
Books Project
PO Box 1874
Asheville, NC 28802 ((for
LGBT))