
Atlantian Revival

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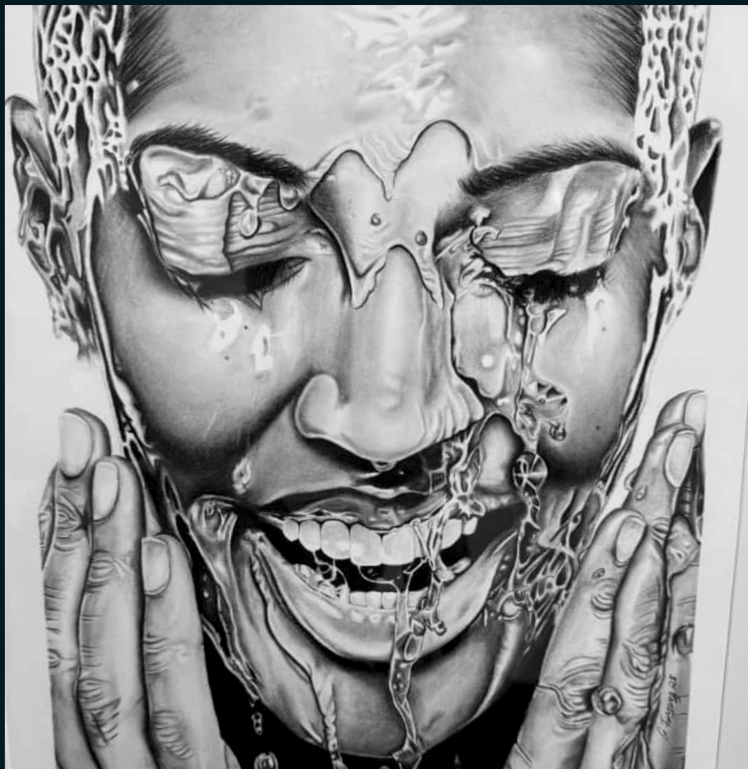
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ATLANTIAN

Revival

ATLANTIAN REVIVAL

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**THE MISSION OF THE ATLANTIAN REVIVAL IS TO
EMPOWER ONE ANOTHER AND BUILD SOLIDARITY
BY FUNCTIONING AS A CENTRAL SOURCE OF
INFORMATION, HIGHLIGHTING THE HUMANITARIAN
NATURE INHERENT IN ALL OF US, AND ABOVE ALL,
BEING OF SERVICE AND CONTINUING TO LEARN TO
BETTER SERVE OUR COMMUNITY HERE AT HISTORIC
USP, NOW FCI ATLANTA.**

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

HEALING THROUGH THE CIRCLE

At the heart of our justice journey here at FCI Atlanta, we continually seek paths toward transformation, healing and accountability. As we explore the principles of Restorative Justice, we will discover new ways to see our stories—not just as individuals who've caused harm, but as people capable of repair, growth and rebuilding trust.

Instead of asking, "What law was broken? Who broke it? What punishment fits?" restorative justice asks, "Who was hurt? What do they need? And who's responsible for making things right?" This shift puts healing—not just punishment—at the center of the process.

A key part of this healing is found in the Circle—a powerful concept rooted in Indigenous cultures like the Native American nations, the Māori of New Zealand and many African tribal traditions. These cultures have long practiced community-based justice that emphasizes connection, shared responsibility and storytelling. In the Circle, there's no front or back, no judge towering over anyone—it's all level. Everyone gets a voice. Everyone gets heard.

The Circle is where truth shows up, where pain gets named and where healing begins. It's about community stepping up, not just to punish, but to repair the break, restore relationships and bring folks back into the fold.

So as we walk this path together, here in FCI Atlanta, let this be a space of reflection, real talk, responsibility and most importantly, hope. 'Cause no matter where we come from, restoration is still possible.

The following stories and events are aimed at helping us take steps forward, toward that goal, and showing us all, in real time, what Restorative Justice can look like in a penal space.

SONNY, THE PRO SE VOICE

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Got a story to tell?

If you or someone you know would like to contribute artwork, poetry, or written reflections for future editions, please contact one of the Atlantian Revival editorial staff or the Education or Reentry Department.



CHARLITA'S TOUCH

MURALIST TEAM BRINGS LIGHT TO THE VISITING ROOM

By Sonny, The Pro Se Voice

A design by Charlie "Charlita" Mitchell in the visiting room: "Painting in this moment is extremely humbling." / Photography by Sean Ellis

The walls inside FCI Atlanta have seen more than a century of lives pass through. Built in 1902, the prison carries the weight of its age with white cinderblock walls that never change and fluorescent lights that never dim. Studies show this combination can quietly wear on the human spirit, disrupting sleep, heightening anxiety and dimming moods.

For generations, men have tried to reclaim a sense of self within these walls. They hang family photos, children's drawings or love letters; small windows to a world beyond confinement. Others have pasted pages from *Hustler*, *Playboy* and *Robb Report*; images of freedom, desire and what once felt like possibility. Even staff members occasionally soften the monotony, piercing the gloom by hanging decorations during the holidays.

But one space had never known that kind of reprieve. The visiting room, the most sacred part of the institution where hope and heartbreak sit side by side, remained untouched and harshly lit. That began to change during the Paint and Sit event in July 2025 directed by Reentry Coordinator Ms. Bailey. It was there that Education Teacher and Correctional Officer Mr. Kennedy had a vision to transform the visiting room into a place that felt human, warm and welcoming. He shared his idea with Atlanta-based artist Charlie, who was attending the event. She immediately understood what he was trying to create. "Let's do it," she said. And she meant it.

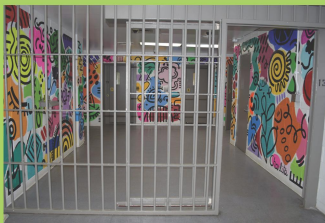
By October, the project had taken shape.

Charlie, known in the art world as Charlita, has been painting since childhood. "Painting in this moment is extremely humbling," she said. "It makes me feel very accomplished to have this opportunity." Born in Fort Carson, Colorado, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, she grew up surrounded by color and light. Now an installation artist by profession, Charlita designs for commercials, films, museums and galleries. But her heart belongs to projects that serve people. "Children are my favorite audience," she said. "Their excitement and happiness are unforgettable."

Her artistic roots reach back to Claude Monet and the Impressionists, but over time she developed her own vivid language of color and shape. "I like to fill big spaces with identifiable forms such as the sun, clouds, flowers and leaves, using bright colors layered with tribal patterns."



Charlie and Henry Kenner at work in the visiting room



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Whimsical scenes created by Charlita and a team of FCI Atlanta muralists greet children and families. Muralist Oscar Dieguez, above, brought a scene from "Jurassic World" to life in the visiting room.

That is exactly what she did inside FCI Atlanta's visiting room. The mural bursts with life: glowing yellows, deep blues, energetic greens and playful shapes that ripple across the walls. "The kids are going to love this," she said with a smile.

She did not paint alone. She was assisted by several incarcerated men: Kenner, Jamie, Gary, Oscar, Sam Arnette, and Romail. Each brought his own skill and creativity to the work.

Kenner helped fill in color patterns under Charlita's direction. "Working with Charlie has been a pleasure," he said. Jamie agreed. "I love being part of this project. It is fun to do something for the kids, and it helps me get through my time here. I get lost in it." Nearby, Gary painted characters from Bluey in the children's section, while Sam brought Blue's Clues to life on a cement post. On the back wall, Oscar turned a blank slab of concrete into a vivid scene from Jurassic World.

"There were a lot of roadblocks and moments of resistance along the way," Mr. Kennedy admitted. "But we were on a protected path. We stayed patient, and the vision stayed alive."

For Charlita, that persistence feels familiar. Her life has been one of movement and reinvention. Before settling in Atlanta, she traveled through

Europe, the Middle East and several US states. She came to Atlanta in 2014 with \$1,200 in her pocket. "I would not suggest that for anyone," she laughed. But standing before her mural now, she can feel the meaning of the journey. "Atlanta is a magical city. I feel like here, you can do anything. Atlanta has helped shape me into the artist and woman I am today."

The mural is more than color on concrete. It is a gesture of light in one of the dimmest corners of confinement and a bridge between hope and hardship. In a place designed to contain, she found a way to create. And in doing so, Charlita reminded everyone who steps inside that beauty, too, can serve time.



MOREHOUSE MORATORIUM

By Sonny, *The Pro Se Voice*
Illustration by O

In 2023, a five-course curriculum culminating in six college credits from Bard College was made available to incarcerated men at FCI Atlanta by Common Good Atlanta, piloted in partnership with the Andrew Young Center and the Morehouse College Higher Education in Prison Program.

At the same time, administrators from the Morehouse prison program were thinking of something far more consequential. They were assessing whether FCI Atlanta could support the launch of a full Bachelor's degree program for incarcerated men.

Morehouse's presence inside the prison had been met with mixed reactions—some were skeptical, others supportive. Still, the arrival of this HBCU undeniably boosted morale among both the incarcerated population and prison staff.

The initial rollout was promising. Classrooms were filled to capacity, and Morehouse brought an all-star lineup of professors. Intellectualism behind bars seemed to be on the rise. Then, in April 2024, Morehouse's Higher Education in Prisons Program was awarded a \$1.6 million federal grant to expand its educational offerings across Georgia's prison system. And FCI Atlanta was named as one of four facilities to benefit from the grant. The future looked even brighter.

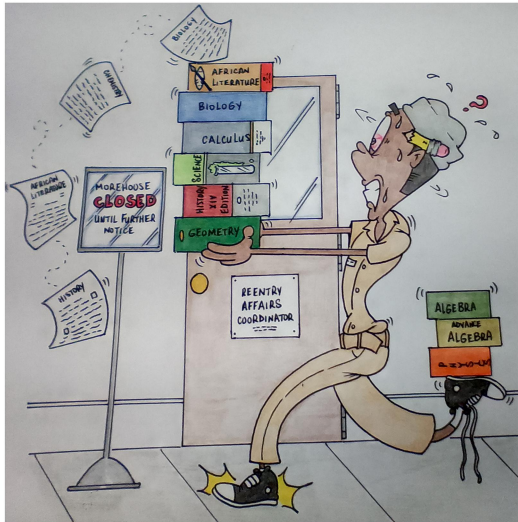
Through the spring, summer and fall, Morehouse became more integrated into the daily life of FCI Atlanta. Staff from both institutions collaborated on meaningful cultural events, including Juneteenth 2024, a basketball game between the Maroon Tigers and an incarcerated FCI Atlanta team, and Black History Month 2025. Alongside the celebrations, promises were made.

In fall 2024, Morehouse announced to the prison population that it would soon launch the Bachelor's degree program at FCI Atlanta. Those interested were asked to submit applications, undergo interviews and write essays.

This wasn't just talk — this was a serious opportunity. A real step beyond the five-course Clemente Humanities Cycle offered by Common Good Atlanta.

After the selection process, on Oct. 15, 2024, about 30 men were told they had been accepted into the Morehouse College Higher Education in Prisons Bachelor's Degree Program. The news was electric.

29 men called home, telling their loved ones they'd been accepted into Morehouse College. For a moment, they were no longer invisible. They were Men of Morehouse,



stepping into the legacy of excellence and transformation that name implies. According to Morehouse administrators, the registrar was scheduled to come to FCI Atlanta in Feb. 2025 to begin the enrollment process.

Lives were changing.

But February turned into March. Then April. Then May. The registrar never came. For the Maroon Tigers on the inside, this was the first sign that promises were being made — but not kept.

Then came another blow: word spread that Morehouse did not accept GEDs.

Wait—what? Why would a college offer a Bachelor's degree program in a prison setting if it didn't accept GEDs? The question echoed through the housing units.

A town hall meeting followed, bringing together incarcerated Scholars, Morehouse administrators, and FCI Atlanta officials. Everyone agreed to give Morehouse time to iron out the issues. The incarcerated Scholars stayed the course, committed to their education, and continued taking classes like Race & Law, African American Studies and Social Justice Leadership. Spring gave

way to summer, and hope was renewed. Morehouse staff informed the group that GEDs would, in fact, be accepted. All they had to do was submit their GED transcripts by July 14, 2025.

With the urgency and determination of fugitive slaves crossing the Mason-Dixon Line, the incarcerated Scholars rallied and submitted their documents. This was it. Finally — freedom. Finally — a chance to rewrite their stories.

But July passed. Then August. And still, no enrollment.

"What's going on?" became the refrain. The excitement that once filled the air had thinned into frustration, then mistrust. Another town hall was convened. That's when the truth emerged: there was no official Bachelor's degree program.

Wait—what? So all this time... for nothing?

The promises of enrollment and a college degree, presented as certain, turned out to be nothing more than aspirational goals. The dream had been pitched as a matter of fact, not speculation. And now, it had unraveled.

(Cont. on p. 29)

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PROFESSOR SANTOS RETURNS TO HIS ALMA MATER

By Alex Rousseau with contributions by Delta and Church

How would you like to reclaim your identity? As most of us know, on or about the minute you're arrested, your whole persona is replaced with your I.D. number. In the eyes of many, you are now reduced to your alleged crime. But wouldn't it be nice to have someone type your name into an internet search engine and not cringe at the results? On Oct. 17, 2025, a man named Michael Santos — who once spent eight years where we're sitting now — presented us with a tool we can use to author our own narrative, a free media platform where we can begin to rebuild our online presence, methodically documenting our personal progress.

In two separate seminars held in the chapel that day, the 60-yr-old Mr. Santos lacked no discernible amount of stamina or conviction, speaking for almost three hours on both occasions. Santos came to present and promote his personal foundation, which he built upon the blueprints of his own liberation and success. He informed us, his "brothers in prison," about prisonprofessors.com, a website which features the writings of incarcerated people, and invited us to help him in his mission to "end generational cycles of recidivism." His greatest ambition, he said, is to get the First Step Act expanded "to all crimes and for unlimited credits."

Santos has substance. A renowned public speaker, professor, hugely successful businessman and author of multiple publications, Santos has become such a notable activist in prison and justice reform that he was invited by the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to participate as a keynote speaker on this same topic. Most substantial, however, is the fact that he served 26 years in federal prison. For the first eight, he was a resident of a then-notoriously violent penitentiary in a much smaller federal system: USP Atlanta. He said he even took a small pilgrimage to visit his old dwelling, cell 616 in unit B-3.

Originally from Seattle, Santos was arrested in Miami at age 23. As one of the notable Cocaine Cowboys of the time, he was facing serious time. At trial, he said, he put his hand on the bible, took the stand and lied. "I made every excuse: 'Oh, this is just hearsay from snitches, the only reason I'm here is because my dad is Cuban,'" which, he said, elicited a room full of laughs. But Santos has earned the right to make light of his youthful mistakes by the way he chose to re-form himself, against all odds.

Frederick Douglass wrote, "A man is not judged by the height he has risen, but from the depth he has climbed." Santos said he spent his first year in solitary confinement, during which time a CO named Wilson introduced him to the writings of Frederick Douglass, then Plato's "Republic." These two works, he said, along with his pain from the fact that his grandparents had stopped talking to him, were what galvanized his rebirth into righteousness. They were his inspiration.

Why did Santos' message resonate with us? He was one of us. Santos obtained a master's degree, wrote books and built a strong support system while incarcerated. He wrote to his probation office every few months to let them know what he was up to and what he planned to do after his release. His achievements and initiative while inside had this remarkable effect: his supervised-release term of 19 years was shortened by 18 years.



Michael Santos/ www.prisonprofessors.org

The crux of Santos' message: he needs our help to achieve his goal of attaining 10,000 participants. His organization offers the course "Preparing for Success After Prison," in which he proposes a three-part plan. First, get an education. Second, find a meaningful and measurable way to contribute to society while you're in prison. Last, write letters and build a strong support network.

The Prison Professors platform is a place to post essays, book reviews and more on a social-media-like profile, a personal yet public page to express the fullness of who we are. When shown to judges, Congress members and other influential figures, this might eventually contribute to changes in the law and in public perception. Santos presented a comprehensive, simple and realistic tool for overcoming what he most accurately called "a system that obliterates hope."

Both before and during my incarceration, I have attended seminars on self-improvement, success, and entrepreneurship, and have come to regard them with little more than quiet amusement for what usually amounts to be a generic pep-talk, a medley of, "Yes you cans" and "Believe in yourselves." Afterwards though, no one knows how to get a loan, a grant, or a clue for that matter. This was different. Santos gave us practical steps, and a tool we can use, to tell our stories and use our words to impact change.

To sign up for Santos's Prison Professors course, you can have your family visit PrisonProfessors.org; send a TruLincs email to Atlanta@PrisonProfessors.org; or send a letter to: Prison Professors Charitable Corp., PO Box 50996, Irvine, CA 92619.

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WHAT'S PERCOLATING? BE A COFFEE BEAN!

By Sonny, *The Pro Se Voice*

It's not every day you see a Secret Service detail at a prison plantation — but that was the scene at FCI Atlanta on Aug. 29, 2025. The occasion? A special visit from Federal Bureau of Prisons Deputy Director Josh Smith, comedy icon Steve Harvey and a percolated coffee bean named Damon West.

Escorted by the institution's executive staff, the three entered the chapel with a message for all of us who live and work at FCI Atlanta. Before addressing the incarcerated population, the Deputy Director, Mr. Harvey and Mr. West met privately with staff. While we weren't present, "inmate.com" reported that the message emphasized the first and perhaps most often forgotten word in the correctional officer's triad of duties: care — as in "care, custody and control."

After the staff meeting, 60 to 70 of FCI Atlanta's "top-performers" — those demonstrating good conduct, program participation, rehabilitative behavior and a positive impact within the institution — gathered in the chapel. Warden Abdelaziz welcomed the guests and introduced Deputy Director Smith, who shared his powerful journey from incarceration to leadership.

"While incarcerated I found a drug. That drug was peace. Peace allows joy to spread," said Deputy Director Smith, who served five years in federal prison for drug trafficking. Upon release, he carried his inspirational message to correctional institutions around the globe. His efforts caught the attention of President Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi, who appointed him to his current role.

"I've seen compounds change not because of staff, but because of you," Smith said, driving home the message that real reform

comes from within. His mission, he said, is to improve the prison environment by strengthening relationships between staff and those incarcerated.

Next up was the "coffee bean" himself — motivational speaker, author and prison reform advocate Damon West. West shared how his life changed with "Six Dimes and a Nickel" (the title of his book). Once sentenced to 65 years in Texas, under a state RICO statute for being the head of a meth-influenced burglary ring, West spent seven years in a level 5 maximum-security prison before being paroled.

How did he earn his early release? By becoming a coffee bean, he said.

"Prison is like a boiling pot of water," West said. "You can be like a carrot and turn soft, mushy and weak in the pot of boiling water, or you can be like an egg, and get hard and angry and crack. Or you can be like a coffee bean, and turn the entire pot into coffee."

During his 7-year bid, West lived that metaphor, bringing peace, growth and optimism into every unit, wing and dorm he entered. "Everywhere you go, you've got to bring positivity," he said. His consistency earned the support of correctional officers, many of whom advocated for his release before the parole board.

He recalled being asked during his parole hearing, if granted freedom, what would be his purpose — in one word. His response was simple and resolute: "Useful."

That dedication to usefulness and positive transformation is what brought Mr. West and Deputy Director Smith together — and

eventually pulled in none other than celebrity comedian Steve Harvey.

"I met West at a fishing convention and I was mesmerized by his speaking," Harvey said. Inspired by West's work and driven by personal connections behind the walls, Harvey said he felt compelled to get involved in prison reform.

"I am one of y'all," Harvey told the chapel crowd. "I've never been to prison, but I've been to jail... and I know it's some good men in here. You've got to identify your gift and your creator." He continued, "You'll know what your gift is because it will be the thing that you love to do the most. Get yourself in a position to improve yourself and God will do the rest."

As expected, Harvey had the chapel erupting in laughter, while also moving hearts with his sincerity. He closed with a pledge to donate \$50,000 to the Be A Coffee Bean Foundation — a fund supporting children of incarcerated parents. The offer: anyone may nominate his child for the Coffee Bean Cares program. Steve Harvey's \$50,000 donation will pay for as many as 20 "scholarships" for children of men incarcerated at FCI Atlanta. The scholarship for each is \$2,500, intended to enable the child to take part in one or more extracurricular activities.

The theme that echoed throughout the visit from Deputy Director Smith, West and Harvey was this: how you start does not determine how you finish. Whether you were incarcerated or narrowly avoided it, you still have the power to become who you were meant to be. And within these walls, both staff and prisoners share the responsibility to improve the environment — together.

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Steve Harvey, above left, and Damon West, above right, address the crowd at FCI Atlanta.

In the words of Steve Harvey: "God has made a lot of my dreams come true. In fact, God is in the making dreams come true business."

So let's make FCI Atlanta a fertile ground for coffee bean cultivation — and turn this boiling pot into something bold, rich and full of purpose.

JOSHUA SMITH: A LIFE OF FIRSTS *By Sonny, The Pro Se Voice*

Joshua Smith was raised by his mother in a small town outside of Nashville. He had a traumatic childhood, experiencing abuse from a stepfather, running away from home at 11 and incurring 10 felony convictions for theft-related offenses by the age of 16. As an adult, he was sentenced to five years in federal prison for drug conspiracy (selling a kilo of cocaine and over 150 pounds of marijuana).

It was in prison that Smith's transformation occurred. First, he found God. Then he invested in self-improvement, devoting his prison term to education. He learned about banking, finance and real estate from men serving time for white-collar crimes. Upon release, Smith obtained a job earning \$6 an hour. With the support of his wife, he remained committed to securing a better future. Eventually, he started a small foundation waterproofing company. The business eventually grew to

employ more than 150 people. Smith sold the company and expanded his entrepreneurial interests into real estate and other ventures.

With \$10 million of his own funds, he founded the prison initiative the Fourth Purpose Foundation, aimed at restoring lives through faith, purpose and second chances. He also founded Prison Life Media to boost correctional morale, improve recruitment and reshape public understanding of prison work.

In June 2025, Joshua Smith was sworn in as Deputy Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. His ascension to the upper ranks of the FBOP is unprecedented. He is the first person to reach such a senior position after serving time in its custody. As a formerly incarcerated man, Smith says, he's dedicated to transforming correctional culture for staff and incarcerated individuals.

Joshua Smith, below, was sworn in as Deputy Director of the BOP in June 2025. / fourthpurpose.org

"While incarcerated I found a drug. That drug was peace. Peace allows joy to spread."



"COFFEE BEAN CARES" Scholarships for Kids

Guidelines to completing your application, as supplied by Kendall Romero, Executive Director of the Be a Coffee Bean Foundation:

Application process: The nomination form includes two essay questions. You can nominate your child for the program, however, the process also involves coordination with the child's guardian. This is essential to ensure that guardians can manage the responsibilities that come with the program.

Award amount and purpose: These are \$2,500 awards, designated for extracurricular activities. Funding is capped at \$50,000 for FCI Atlanta. Once these funds are allocated, the application process will close.

Obtaining application forms: The child's guardian can obtain the application by emailing: kromero@beacoffeebeanfoundation.org

"This method ensures that we have a clear understanding of the fit for the program and the funds will be used appropriately."

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Sept. 4, 2025: Acting Warden "Abe" Abdelaziz held his first townhall meeting with executive staff and select "AICs" including your humble Atlantian Revival correspondent. The acting warden opened the initial meeting:

"I called this meeting because I knew how last week was going to go, in that we were not going to have time for a formal Q & A. It took almost 2 months to schedule that event as it was. You know, celebrities run on a tight schedule. They're high-maintenance. Kind of like some of you guys...so let's begin."

1) HOLD ON, CHANGE IS COMING

Clarification was given on the purpose of the previous week's visit by BOP Deputy Director Joshua Smith, whose agenda included justice reform, activist/public speaker Damon West and comedian/actor Steve Harvey (whom I have personally nominated for immediate sainthood). They came to deliver a message of hope and motivation - that big changes are coming, but that ultimately, we must choose to act toward our own success.

2) THE MESSAGE Acting Warden Abe addressed what most consider to be the biggest concern - a unanimous desire for better communication between us incarcerated men and the staff whom we very much depend on. This is particularly important in areas such as First Step Act implementation.

"This is something that bothers me, so let me address it now: Your punishments are given by the judge, not us," Abdelaziz said. "We are here to give you the tools to succeed in reforming yourselves. We want to put good neighbors back into society. Ultimately though, that will be your choice."

He acknowledged shifting the prison culture will not happen overnight: "We

are turning a mindset that has been established for over a generation. It takes time, but we are determined." This call for change is being echoed throughout the BOP - "get on board or get out of the way."

3) UNICOR-NO MORE The previous Friday, addressing the status of the long-derelict "Unicor" building, Dep. Dir. Smith said he had just recently taken over facilities "to cut through all the red tape fast, to establish more paid positions, and put more tools in your hands that will translate to realistic job opportunities outside of prison."

Question marks still hung in the air as to what exactly the deputy director meant, until the following Monday morning when, bright and early, contractors appeared on the roof of the defunct factory. The Acting Warden revealed this was the \$3 million beginning of what will soon be a \$18 million project to refurbish/repurpose the structure and reopen it as the Education & Reentry Development Center.

The ERDC, he said, will offer vocational courses such as: HVAC, CDL, welding, Computer-Aided Design and a state-of-the-art robotics laboratory for Electronic Vehicle Repair. This ambitious new reformation hub is tentatively scheduled to open in spring of 2027. In Abe's words, "You should be able to go into that building, apply yourself, receive a certification and go out there to work for TESLA." All right, count me in.

4) NO MORE LOCKED DOORS!(?) The question was asked: Is it possible that we will stop being locked in our cells nightly, and/or for count time? The answer: NO. Abe said while he did in fact look into this possibility, he has been instructed by his superiors that as long as there are doors, they will be secured at night. An exception was made for the camp, whose custody classification is significantly lower than that of the rest of the population. They are like, "The Diet Coke of captives."

At this point, fellow Atlantian Revivalist Sonny, The Pro Se Voice, stepped in when the assembly got a bit rowdy. In his unique manner, he reestablished focus by saying, "Hey. Why don't we all acknowledge that things have been running a little different lately, since there was a regime change. It's starting to feel more like a low. Right? Has there been mass punishment lately? No.

Have the moves been happening on time? Yeah. We're having this meeting, right? All right. So, let's move on from this issue, do our part, and maybe they'll make an exception for us later on. In the meantime, let's show a little gratitude."

Promptly, order was reestablished. Many stood in applause, some with a look of nervous bewilderment. Will Gresham, seated to my right, gave Sonny the honorary title of NCIS (Nonsense Control International Specialist).

5) NEW TABLETS The score 7C tablets have not turned out to be what we expected. Just the other day, one even spontaneously combust on the charging station in B-1. BOP officials are aware and are equally discontent: "If I were you guys, I wouldn't spend any more money on those tablets," the acting warden said. "The director wants to get you new ones, and he's serious about it."

6) LAW LIBRARY The various necessities for the improvement and modernization of our law library were addressed in detail by our resident librarian, Mr. Stoune. Most notable was the prospect of word processors to replace our 19th-century typewriters. Mr. Stoune was instructed to compose a list, which is perfect: Mr. Stoune is great at lists.

7) VETERANS DORM & HONOR DORM Approved. By the time you read this, you may be living there. That is, if you're a veteran who is currently on a federally funded extended vacation. Honor dorm residents must meet educational requirements, and all must have a clean disciplinary record for the previous 2 years.

8) HOBBY CRAFT, INC. Associate Warden Coleman introduced the exciting possibility of our hobby craft participants soon being able to sell their products (legally).

9) FIRST STEP ACT Antonio Manning, Sr. addressed the need for clarification on FSA incentives, and things such as "management variables." The Acting Warden is committed to publishing information to clarify such matters, and The Atlantian Revival volunteered this publication as an outlet.

10) WHO IS WHOM? The need for clarification on which staff members are in charge of which departments was



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addressed. The executive staff agreed, and a memo was sent out on Sept. 11, 2025. You can look it up on the trulincs bulletin board. Select "all" and proceed down to the date. The memo contains a detailed list of various departments and areas within the institution, along with the staff members who provide oversight.

11) SUPPLIES The necessity of basic supplies in the "Indigent Pack" was thoughtfully addressed by B-2 resident "KY" Burton. Abe said he was completely unaware and acknowledged that we are entitled to this.

12) TVS Someone asked about the TVs staying on during the day. Abe responded: "Absolutely not. During the day, you're supposed to be out making something of your time; making something of yourself. TV is mostly garbage. I don't even watch TV." However, the issue of maintenance for the cable system, which is "choppy" in the B-house, was addressed. It was agreed that sports are better in real time!

Dec. 9, 2025: Acting Warden "Abe" Abdelaziz has made good on his promise to make town halls a regular event. Since the first meeting in September, two subsequent gatherings have been held to address important issues and to field our questions and concerns, establishing a sustained line of communication between staff and incarcerated residents. Times are changing.

THE BREAKDOWN:

1) SECOND CHANCE ACT:

Originally established in 2007, this law was beefed up as part of the First Step Act of 2018. The only qualification: You must be an American citizen. There has been much frustration over how much time you will get toward halfway house. The bottom line from A.Warden Abe:

"We're maxing everyone out. Period. Right now, we're putting everyone in for as much time as possible."

2) COMMISSARY: This is more complicated than we thought. Apparently we need to cut the commissary staff a little slack. Continuous issues with keeping inventory in stock were chiefly caused by an *outside* party — the organization responsible for shipments to this institution.

A. Warden Abe said: "We've had all kinds of issues with them. Everything from lost shipments to theft."

SOLUTION: Steps have been taken to reassign FCI Atlanta to a different four-letter acronym office nearby that *doesn't* have the same problems. I was asked not to name the problematic party, but if you watch the local news you've probably figured it out.

3) WANT A JOB OFFER UPON

RELEASE? If you are a GA resident, a new program is being offered through Georgia Works: a 90-day program for which you will receive a job offer upon completion. These are trade jobs; e.g., construction, electricity, plumbing. You do have to be released first to take the program. If interested, see Ms. Bailey, Reentry Affairs Coordinator.

ISSUES ADDRESSED BY COMMUNITY COMMENTATORS:

1) JAMES HINES: ACE classes (and other programs) not showing up on team sheets / credits for programming going undocumented.

SOLUTION: As per Associate Warden Coleman, every department has its own specific entry code for keying in these classes. When an issue arises, please follow the chain of command within the department that offered the class. Education dept. = Dr. Gary, Recreation = Mr. Preston, Chapel = Chap. Johnson. If a matter cannot be resolved within its respective department, see Mr. Coleman.

2) K.Y. BURTON raised the important issue of F.S.A. incentive awards. Many of us are excluded from earning time off under F.S.A. because the scales of "Justice" are unbalanced and decidedly biased. The law offers certain incentive awards which we used to get, and others which have yet to be made available.

THE ANSWER: Money. Unfortunately, we are currently running solely on "operational funds" (the bare minimum).

3) MATTHEW "TAZ" TASSIN: Addressed the ongoing toilet paper shortage, tackling the proverbial elephant in the room like a champ. The one-roll-per week crisis has only been exacerbated by the store having none. It's being worked out.

4) SONNY DOES IT AGAIN: when the meeting was threatened by disorder, The Pro Se Voice delivered an impromptu lesson on formulating proper questions vs. redundant statements.

5) JOSHUA "HAMMER" FISHER: Brought up the need for more programs

geared toward those of us with long sentences. Abe acknowledged that most *are* geared toward short-timers. For now, he encouraged us to inquire about the two college programs being offered through the University of West Georgia and CommonGood Atlanta (The Clemente Cycle). I'm in one of these and it's pretty great.

"Hammer" also presented the idea of starting a dog training program, which is not uncommon in other Georgia prisons. He's begun research on this and has contacted the local ASPCA.

THE TAKEAWAY:

I first heard our Acting Warden give a public address when I graduated the "Threshold" program, hosted by Chaplains Smith and Johnson, last spring. Abe told us about how his own way of thinking had changed over time: "I was a custody guy for over 20 years. Back then, it was us versus you, and you know what? I found out I was wrong."

He said his pivotal moment arrived when he met the previous BOP Director Colette Peters. "I had a chance to meet with Ms. Peters, and my first conversation with her was what renewed my mentality. I was wrong. We were all wrong." It was the first time I heard A.W. Early speak as well, and I was very surprised. I sensed something from the two of them I had not from any warden in over 11 years: genuine empathy and gratitude.

I have to agree with Sonny — things have felt a bit different since "The Regime Change." It's been a long time since I felt I had a voice in anything. Personally, when I first heard the acting warden speak, I had gotten used to being one of the unheard. Time tells who the truth-tellers are. I graduated Threshold on April 7, and so far Abe has kept his word. For this alone, I honestly have hope.



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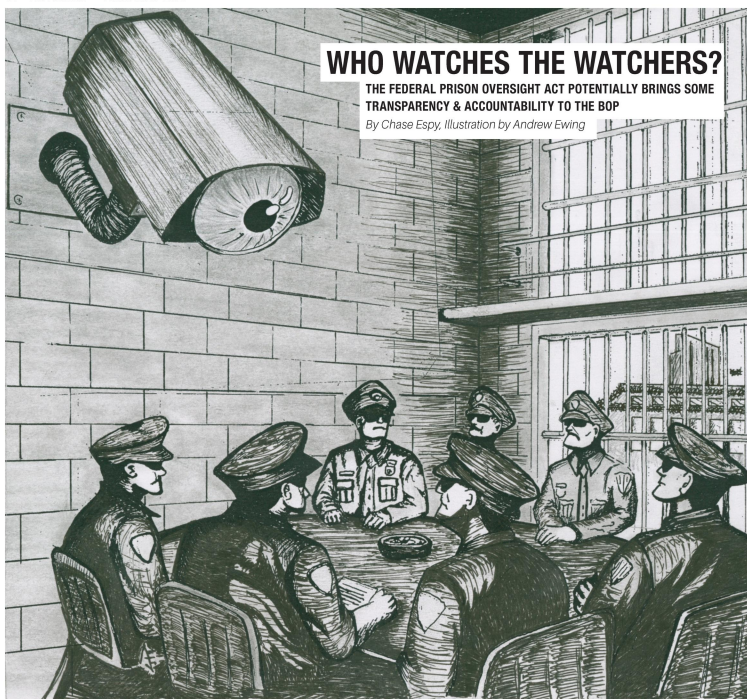
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WHO WATCHES THE WATCHERS?

THE FEDERAL PRISON OVERSIGHT ACT POTENTIALLY BRINGS SOME
TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE BOP

By Chase Espy, Illustration by Andrew Ewing



A recent investigation of federal prisons revealed what many have described as one of the nation's most urgent civil-rights failures. In response, Congress convened a Prison Policy Working Group tasked with making recommendations for reform. This coalition of advocates, correctional officers and other stakeholders found that the BOP—a division of the Department of Justice with an \$8 billion budget, responsible for 122 facilities, housing over 150,000 people—was not simply under-resourced. Rather, investigators found it often failed to recognize problems inside its own facilities or identify what resources were needed to solve them.

To address the BOP's systemic issues, Congress passed the Federal Prison Oversight Act, which was signed into law back in July 2024. But although it's been on the books for well over a year now, the FPOA will not take effect until it is specifically funded by Congress. That hasn't happened yet.

Once it does take effect, the FPOA will provide a system of transparency and accountability that includes: (1) an inspection regime covering all BOP facilities; (2) the establishment of an independent ombudsman; and (3) multiple methods for receiving and responding to confidential complaints.

INSPECTIONS: ANNOUNCED OR UNANNOUNCED

Inspections will be based on a facility's combined risk score, with higher-risk facilities receiving more frequent inspections. Inspections may be announced or unannounced, and the Inspector General must be given unfettered access to the facility, including the opportunity to conduct confidential interviews with incarcerated persons.

Criteria for the inspections include: conditions of confinement; availability of First Step Act-approved programming and application of earned time credits; lockdowns at the facility; policies relating to housing and visitation

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and “adequacy of staffing.”

Following an inspection, the BOP will have 60 days to respond in writing to the IG’s report and recommendations, and additional inspections—announced or unannounced—may be conducted to monitor BOP’s compliance with any corrective-action plan.

A NEW OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN IS REQUIRED TO REVIEW AND RESPOND TO ALL COMPLAINTS

The FPOA also requires the DOJ establish the Office of Ombudsman, tasked with reviewing and responding to complaints from incarcerated people, correctional staff or any other interested persons, including friends and family on the outside.

Complaints to the Ombudsman may involve allegations of abuse or neglect, conditions of confinement, inadequate staffing and any alleged failure to respond to complaints by incarcerated people.

Within 15 business days of confirming receipt of a complaint, the Ombudsman must respond to each complaint with a written determination whether any action is warranted. If so, the Ombudsman must conduct an investigation and render a decision on each complaint and communicate its reasoning to the complainant and the BOP, along with any recommendations for corrective action.

COMPLAINTS ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND RETALIATION IS PROHIBITED

Family members and other (free) persons may submit complaints to the Ombudsman via a secure online form or a confidential telephone hotline. Meanwhile, incarcerated persons must be afforded multiple ways to raise concerns free from staff supervision, including at least one process involving a non-BOP-affiliated entity capable of confidentially forwarding complaints to the Ombudsman.

All communications with the Ombudsman are treated as privileged and confidential, in order to prevent staff or other incarcerated persons from learning a complainant’s identity before, during or after any investigation. In addition, the Bureau and its staff are strictly prohibited from retaliating or discriminating against any complainant. Any alleged retaliation may itself be grounds for investigation or other action by the Ombudsman.

THE FPOA REMAINS STALLED AWAITING FUNDING

When Congress passed the FPOA back in 2024, it tied the law’s start date to future funding. The act as a whole only takes effect 90 days after money is appropriated specifically for its implementation.

Although President Trump’s recently signed “One Big Beautiful Bill” poured billions of dollars into the Bureau of Prisons for staffing and facilities, it did not fund the oversight law. As a result, the Ombudsman’s office, the inspection regime and the publicly available reports and recommendations remain on hold until a separate appropriations bill flips the switch. The most likely vehicle is the Fiscal Year 2026 Commerce-Justice-Science spending bill, which, like everything else, was pushed back even further by the most recent government shutdown.

Assuming the appropriations bill does include explicit FPOA funding, that will finally trigger the 90-day countdown to the law’s effective date, along with the other deadlines leading up to full implementation.

In other words, the protections promised by the FPOA exist on paper, but not yet in practice. Until Congress comes through with funding, the oversight that was supposed to start in 2025 won’t realistically arrive until sometime in 2026 at the earliest.

A DECENT “FIRST” STEP FOR OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

As they say, sunshine is the best disinfectant. Indeed, the union that (until recently) represented federal correctional officers hailed passage of the FPOA for its promise to “bring more transparency to working conditions,” and in hopes it will assist with “identifying the inadequacy of staffing within the Bureau of Prisons”—both of which can put correctional officers at risk.

But unless and until Congress puts some teeth into the law—such as equipping overseers with the power to compel compliance with their recommendations—the inspections conducted by the IG and the investigations by the Ombudsman essentially amount to giving the BOP a report card, without any consequences for failing grades.

That said, the FPOA does at least provide direct lines of communication with those responsible for the BOP’s oversight. And with the requirement that reports, recommendations and BOP compliance (or lack thereof) be made available to the public, the bright lights of accountability hopefully will prove sufficient to begin nudging results in the right direction.

For a system this entrenched, we can forget about taking any immediate first steps in the right direction; in this case, reform will have to learn to crawl before it can walk.

MARIJUANA REFORM: SMOKE, MIRRORS & SCHEDULE III

On Dec. 18, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order directing the Attorney General to move marijuana from the draconian confines of Schedule I to the more forgiving—if still constricting—Schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act. The White House says DOJ’s proposed rescheduling rule (issued in May 2024) drew nearly 43,000 public comments and is now waiting for an administrative law hearing.

“High potential for abuse, no accepted medical use,” is how marijuana has been classified for 50 years, along with heroin and LSD. The move to Schedule III would acknowledge medical value and put weed on par with ketamine and Tylenol with codeine. But it would not mean legalization. Recreational use would remain a federal crime.

Who benefits from Schedule III? Wall Street and white coats.

Tax relief: Businesses would finally shake off the shackles of IRS § 280E. Unlike other businesses, cannabis-based companies can’t deduct ordinary business expenses from their federal income. This could flip struggling dispensaries into profitability overnight.

Research access: Scientists would gain easier clearance to study the impact of cannabis on everything from chronic pain to PTSD.

Banking and capital: Schedule III clears a path for institutional investment and mainstream banking.

What about people already locked up?

Here’s the hard truth: this changes nothing for men and women serving federal time for marijuana-related offenses. Unless rescheduling is paired with additional measures—like expungement, retroactivity and widespread clemency—it offers zero relief for the incarcerated.

Meanwhile, the recently reintroduced MORE Act (H.R. 5068) seeks to decriminalize and deschedule cannabis, expunge certain offenses and reinvest in communities harmed by prohibition. As of Feb. 2026, the bill remains referred to committee with no floor vote scheduled. So the brother doing 10 years for a marijuana conspiracy? He stays put. The woman denied housing because of a conviction? Still waiting. Until Congress acts—or a president plays rescheduling with across-the-board clemency—the industry will profit, researchers will publish and incarcerated voices will continue to echo in the silence between the headlines.

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STACKING TIME OR STACKING THE DECK?

WHY BOP'S NEW RELEASE RULES MATTER *By Chase Espy*

In 2025, BOP leadership issued new marching orders: stack First Step Act credits and Second Chance Act prerelease custody together, and move people earlier. Much earlier. Sounds great, right? But anyone who's lived through BOP "reforms" knows the devil is in the details. The Bureau can announce a new policy, but a case manager still has to translate it into SENTRY screens, incorporate it into referral packets and implement it in the face of a culture that has spent years saying "no" by default.

Here's what the new "stacking" push looks like in plain English: staff treat the first installment of 365 credits as an "FSA release date" bucket, with additional credits reflected separately as "conditional placement days." Subtract those conditional placement days from the FSA release date and you get the key date that shows up on the time-credit assessment sheet: the FSA Conditional Placement Date, which, in theory, should drive the referral. In practice, however, your mileage may vary.

That's where the on-the-ground reality gets messy. Even if everyone agrees on the date, the process still involves paperwork, reviews, local practices and the fact that the Bureau's machinery moves at the speed of forms. Most notably, for anyone with an ICE detainer,

the Bureau currently will honor the FSA release date, yet ignore any earned FSA conditional placement days after the first 365 credits and refuse to recommend any SCA placement. Given that the FSA itself excludes only those facing a "final order of removal," not just a detainer, the BOP is presently embroiled in litigation challenging its detainer-veto policy.

Which brings us to the SCA lines. People see "recommended placement" and assume it's arithmetic. It isn't. The SCA "recommended" lines reflect a discretionary recommendation based on the "five-factor review" and can be "N/A" even when the "max" math looks favorable. The Acting Warden has decreed that everyone (without a detainer, I guess) should be recommended for the full 365 days of prerelease custody available under the SCA as a mix of halfway house and (up to) six months' home confinement. Fingers crossed.

Here's the bottom line for anyone trying to read their own paperwork: find the FSA Conditional Placement Date. Then look at whether SCA recommendations are real numbers or "N/A," not applicable. If the answer is "N/A," demand the reason in writing. A system that can calculate dates down to the day can also explain, plainly, why it won't honor them. If the Bureau is going to advertise stacking as a "new era," people deserve to know what the new rules actually mean in the units, not just in memos. The BOP should standardize application of its policies. Stacking time shouldn't mean stacking the deck.

MYSTERIOUS "PUBLIC SAFETY FACTOR" REVEALED BY MS. BAILEY

By Alex Rousseau

2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12, 2025, the dreaded "PSF" was finally confronted. From the shadowy mist of obscurity and frustration, the elusive Public Safety Factor was dragged into daylight by someone decidedly fearless. It happened in the Law Library/ "Hogwarts Satellite Boot Camp." There I was, typing extremely fast and sloppily, using a 30-minute block of my Trulincs email. The clock was ticking. The atmosphere was charged with lightning bolts, dragon flatulence and other miscellaneous forms of battle-magic, cast aloud by the Atlanta Dungeons & Dragons Alliance. At the same time, a heated religious debate was escalating en español. It was intense. As a bead of sweat rolled down the bridge of my nose, an authoritative voice called a halt to all manner of spell-casting, pontification and power-napping.

"Hey, y'all! Excuse me. Can I please have your attention?" When Ms. Bailey speaks, the needle gets snatched right off the record. Silence fell. She then proceeded to deliver an impromptu "Special Bulletin" regarding Public Safety Factors. Ms. Bailey is our Reentry Affairs Coordinator, and a very dedicated one at that. Because she takes her craft so seriously, she often deals with this issue, which has been of growing concern within our community. The "PSF" is a label applied to your custody classification which affects where you can be housed. The resulting limitations of this designation are severe.

It's been called "The Kiss of Death" and other euphemisms which we can't publish. The label ostensibly implies you are a risk to the public's safety. The most common problem is that it keeps you from ever being able to transfer to a camp. Often enough though, when someone sees it next to their name, they are utterly bewildered as to how they earned such an infamous title. I remember the first time I learned I wasn't "camp material." "What?!" I thought. "But I was only ever considered dangerous on the dance floor!"

Maybe the worst part is its stubbornness. Once applied, it's nearly as hard to remove as that lower back tattoo all your friends told you not to get. But there is a criteria to have it waived. This is where Ms. Bailey comes into the picture. After seeing countless folks meet the criteria and follow the steps to apply for a PSF waiver, only to be denied, she took action.

Bailey spoke with a reliable, well-placed colleague who immediately reached out to the only place where public safety factors can be removed: The Designation & Sentence Computation Center (DSCC) in Grand Prairie, Texas. DSCC then called Ms. Bailey for some clarification.

RUMOR CONTROL: A.W. Early has not, I repeat - has not - obtained a magic wand or executive super-authority that would make

it possible for her to "undangerify" you. Therefore, all those inmate.com bulletins about how "They take off the PSF in other prisons ... they just don't want to do it here" are false. Plain and simple. Here is what is real, thanks to Ms. Bailey:

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE: Find out from your case manager why you have been branded and stranded. If there is a blatant error, it can be corrected. In some instances, the PSF comes off automatically - such as when a person has less than 10 years left to serve. In this scenario, the PSF comes off because one must have 10 years or less to get to a camp. Generally speaking though, it is incredibly, notoriously difficult to get this label removed. Especially for things such as a 924C (brandishing of a firearm) and the multitude of increasingly vague SOs (Sex Offenses).

Ms. Bailey's inquiry revealed that this label is often based on criminal history or information presented in your Pre-Sentence Report (PSR). This further complicates the matter, because it may be something you were never charged with. Regardless, if you feel you have cause for a waiver of the PSF classification, you can apply for a waiver through your case manager via Form 403. Ms. Bailey said she encourages you to apply, because the more people who do so, the better the chance becomes for some changes to be made.

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RAISING THE BAR BEHIND BARS

By Marcus "Delta" Stroud

A select few incarcerated people are working behind the scenes to change lives. We get positive recognition from our peers and, on occasion, the justice system. We are jailhouse lawyers, people who take on the role of an attorney but who can't legally represent our peers.

The Role of the Jailhouse Lawyer

Jailhouse lawyers essentially work as paralegals: drafting documents, doing legal research and filling out forms. We often exceed those duties by providing legal advice, something a paralegal is not authorized to do. On the outside, your lawyer signs and files your motions. But the "clients" of jailhouse lawyers ultimately sign their own pleadings as if they themselves were the author.

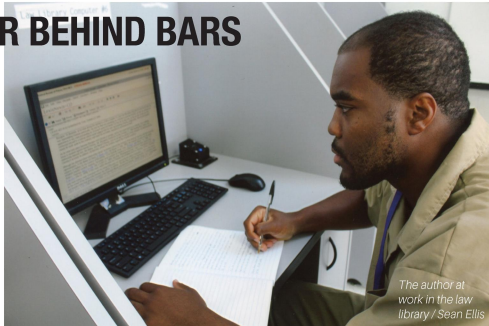
If the jailhouse lawyer can't win on paper alone, however, the client is in a bad position. He could find himself up against a seasoned attorney in person, knowing little to nothing about the legal minutiae that affect his case.

An Invaluable Resource

Nevertheless, jailhouse lawyers are an invaluable resource to the prison population. We can facilitate positive change, fight injustice and even sometimes help bring freedom.

Many incarcerated people are indigent and have little access to resources. They are assigned an overworked federal defender, who may be highly skilled but who also will have an overwhelming case load. These problems are only further compounded by incarceration. Due to their lack of legal knowledge, they can't properly vet motions prepared by their attorney or pay to get a second opinion. For example, Anton Perevoznicov had a bad experience with his defense attorney, reporting his lawyer "got paid and (then) lost interest in fighting," ultimately resulting in Mr. Perevoznicov's conviction.

Conversely, the case in which a jailhouse lawyer assisted Mr. Perevoznicov survived the government's dismissal motions four times. He knew what he wanted to say to the court but wasn't able to litigate it himself. That was especially true because English isn't Mr. Perevoznicov's first language. "Without a jailhouse lawyer," he said, "I wouldn't have gone so far."



Randy Levine echoed that sentiment: "My jailhouse lawyer has performed above and beyond any of my high-paid lawyers, even with very limited resources."

Above all, a competent jailhouse lawyer gives hope. Nicholas Rockwell recalls that the library computer was often called the "slay station," where those without adequate legal knowledge ended up fighting pointless battles.

"My jailhouse lawyer referred to the law library as the law library instead of the slay station," Mr. Rockwell said. "When things were presented in a certain kind of light, it gave me a semblance of hope instead of feeling like the government won."

The Dark Side of Jailhouse Lawyering

There is, unfortunately, a dark side to the informal practice of law behind bars. Some people claim to know and understand the law even when they clearly don't. Mr. Levine said, "We put our lives in jailhouse lawyers' hands. But there are many scam artists." He remembers one jailhouse lawyer who gave him such advice as, "Having 48 typos gives you sympathy from the court."

Generally speaking, you get one shot to raise a claim. So if the first try fails, a trusting client with a meritorious claim forever loses his battle. And when a bad jailhouse lawyer ruins that one chance, the client can't raise an ineffective assistance of counsel claim since, technically speaking, they signed and filed the motion on their own. Jailhouse lawyers have no liability for their lies, deceit or damages. Even if a client later runs into good fortune, most times even a real attorney can't

save the case, as the one chance has already been exhausted.

The Need for Accountability

I am a jailhouse lawyer, a member of the National Lawyers Guild and the Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative, a group looking to unite jailhouse lawyers across the country with at least one representative from each prison and jail. The Guild has created a code of ethics for jailhouse lawyers, provides training and support, and teaches that legal knowledge is power.

I have personally done work for all the incarcerated persons quoted above. My legal successes range from securing people early release, to preventing the forfeiture of assets, to winning a settlement against a duplicitous attorney, to stopping prison officials from engaging in unconstitutional practices.

As someone who has been incarcerated since the age of 18, I've found that the ability to hold those in power accountable for their actions or to get someone home to their loved ones sooner than expected has had a profound effect on my life. Educated enslaved people were often killed, and now I know why: being blinded to the realities of a system makes it impossible to challenge it. In my case, incarceration is a subset of the law. If I master the law, I can fight injustice within the confines of the carceral system.

A simple solution would be to let jailhouse lawyers take the bar exam to measure our skills. In any case, jailhouse lawyering needs to be discussed, acknowledged and respected, as it comes with great responsibility.

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PROJECT VIPER:**VETERAN INITIATED PROGRAMS
ERADICATING RECIDIVISM**

By Alex Rousseau

The VIPERs struck at dawn. To be exact, Veteran Initiated Programs Eradicating Recidivism launched on August 28, 2025, at 0630 hours, in front of the chow hall. For years, the flag pole that stands there was a sight to avoid, bearing only the solid-color flag of the COVID era. Then, as a seam of morning light creased the horizon dividing day from darkness, for the first time in recent memory, the US flag was raised high above this prison compound, reminding us of a certain kind of freedom that cannot be taken.

When it happened, almost no one noticed. One of the weapons VIPERs wield most effectively is their ability to remain purposefully unnoticed, despite personal desire or comfort. Every VIPER is disciplined and devoted to the greater good. Here at FCI Atlanta, we have 65 known VIPERs among us.

At the hoisting of the flag, with a solemn salute, the VIPERs' plan commenced, for the preservation of their brotherhood and the perseverance of our whole community. Three men presented in full uniform for this special detail that morning: Michael Little (USMC), Lucius Kearney (Navy) and the founder of Project VIPER, James Hines (Army).

VIPER began as an idea for uniting veterans, mainly for support. Hines came across a 2021 report by the U.S. sentencing commission which estimated there are 18,000 veterans in federal custody; 51.1% of whom reported mental health issues linked to their service. 15% suffered from PTSD, a debilitating psychological condition which can cause one to suddenly relive violent events from their past in vivid detail. Hines said he was diagnosed with PTSD in 2012 after returning home from active duty, and these words stood out to him in the report: "18 thousand veterans. Alone."

An idea quickly became a plan of action. Hines drafted a comprehensive proposal with the aid of Michael Horning as editor & typist. Illustrations were created by Gary Shields (Army) for a sample placard for veterans to post in their door windows. These would be a simple way for veterans to recognize and connect with each other, and would also promote awareness amongst the general population and staff.

Hines first approached Special Populations Program Coordinator Katongle with the presentation. "Mr. K" reviewed the proposal, and suggested he take it directly to Acting Warden "Abbe" Abdelaziz, who acted pur-



L-R: Gary Shields, James Hines & Lucius Kearney

posefully and decisively in favor of the project.

"He was totally receptive," Hines said. "I could tell he was listening to every word. He said he liked what he heard, and was going to do some research and get back to me soon. That same evening at dinner time, he gave Project VIPER the green light."

In short order, a special work assignment was created for a three-man flag detail, taking place daily at sunrise and sunset, always with the proper ceremonial sequence of tradition and respect.

Most significant, however, was the Acting Warden's expedient approval of a Veteran's dorm. Such housing units are already found on other federal compounds, such as Coleman Complex (FL), a well-known model for a clean, dignified way of living. Achieving this foundational element was crucial, when taking into consideration the unique mental health conditions many of us quietly cope with. For this same reason, the possibility of housing residents trained as suicide companions is being considered as well, to provide in-house counseling in a more discrete manner. The atmosphere created by VIPER is one of mutual respect, genuine camaraderie and loyalty. The dignity that has been granted to these men by allowing them to join together in this environment is restorative in itself.

Associate Warden Ms. Early proposed a Mentorship program that would be based in the veteran's unit. There are simply no better candidates, than for example Mr. Lucius Kearney, who served 10 years as an ordnance officer in the Navy. When I asked him what

his personal goal was for VIPER, he had this to say: "I want the same for everyone here as I always have for my kids. My motto to them was always: become productive citizens. Do not become a menace to society. Become contributors. Give." Mr. Kearney means business. His kids are the proof. He has six grown children, two daughters and four sons, all of whom are successfully employed, either in the military or civil service.

Another VIPER said, "Hopefully Project VIPER will be one of the catalysts that propels our compound to not just a humane society, but an honorable one as well."

The VIPERs have already begun to consolidate their knowledge, talents and ideas for more veteran-lead programs, starting with classes in basic living skills, fitness programs and military history. Antonio Manning (Air Force) joined forces with fellow educator Akohomen "Kay B" Ighedolse. Together, they facilitate an FSA-approved course, "Wellness-Inside and Out," currently offered through the rec department.

In a real sense, these soldiers still fight for our freedom. Their positive mentality is armament against self-destruction and regression to criminal habits. There are veterans who defend your chance to succeed near you always. Would it surprise you to discover that at least one of them is here by choice?

"I have the highest seniority level here," said Officer Monroig (Army). "I can choose a post wherever I want. I choose to be behind the wall with you guys. It's so I can do my part by providing the best example I can. Every day I run the compound, my mentality is the same. I run things like a drill sergeant."

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM: WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO ME

By Brock Boston

Outside of our families and close friends, incarcerated men and women are simply forgotten once we receive long and often unjustified sentences. But there are some amazing men and women behind the walls, people who are seriously seeking and working to build strong foundations for our future, and for our families, friends and communities.

Many of us were addicted to drugs, trying to make ends meet, involved with the wrong people or experiencing mental health issues that were never properly addressed. Some might argue I am making excuses, that we all know right from wrong. I do believe there should be accountability for breaking the law, but there should also be more reasonable judgments imposed during sentencing.

As Opinion Editor, I've drafted a set of proposals for positive and meaningful reform, from my perspective. These are not demands, merely suggestions to get the conversation started, which you may agree or disagree with. I support having dialogue with those who disagree, a foreign concept in today's political atmosphere. Nelson Mandela once said, "The most powerful weapon we have is talking to each other." So let's talk about some positive changes we need to see in our community. The following proposals are broken down into three categories: Congressional changes, BOP changes and institutional changes.

1. Congressional Proposals

END THE EXCEPTION in the 13th Amendment that allows slavery in cases of those convicted of a crime.

ABOLISH MANDATORY MINIMUMS. Too many people have told me their judge would have handed down less time, if their hands hadn't been bound by mandatory minimum sentencing laws.

CHANGE THE GOOD TIME CREDIT REQUIREMENT from the current 85% of your sentence served to a more fair 65%.

RESTORE FEDERAL PAROLE. Parole was taken from us in 1987. Men and women who are doing the right things to rehabilitate ourselves should have a chance at early release. Parole guidelines should be clear and fair to ensure we have a decent shot at parole.

ABOLISH THE FEDERAL DEATH PENALTY.

"An eye for an eye" is cruel, senseless and outdated. All people can be redeemed. Men serving life sentences are some of the best teachers and scholars. Think of the positive results that could be achieved by a condemned man, if given the chance to live a meaningful life and positively impact the lives of others. He may never see the streets again, but the young men he mentors will.

RESTORE THE RIGHT TO VOTE

While incarcerated, right now, only two states (MA & VT) and DC allow you to vote while serving a felony sentence. Just because we are behind the walls, doesn't mean our voices should be silenced. We should have a say in electing a president who has the sole authority to grant our pardon or commutation, as well as in local and state elections - selecting leaders who impact our lives and our families' lives.

Everyone who was in custody during the height of the **COVID-19 pandemic** should receive an automatic one-year reduction from our sentence. We endured horrible conditions in 2020-21. Constantly locked in our cells with no cleaning supplies, we were lucky to receive two showers a week, and were provided little to no medical care when we inevitably and repeatedly contracted COVID. We had no visits with family, and were lucky to get one phone call a week. We experienced cruel and unusual punishment during those years, and there should be some kind of compensation from our government for the poor handling of the pandemic in prisons across the country.

Time credits earned with the First Step Act should apply to everyone. Currently the Act disqualifies a long list of people, based on our charges. Anyone actively working to improve and taking every opportunity to grow should not be discriminated against.

2. BOP Proposals

INCREASE PAY FOR PRISON LABOR to the federal minimum wage. We work hard every day, and want to earn an honest wage.

ENSURE QUALITY MEDICAL CARE. Too often, when seriously ill or injured, incarcerated people can't access proper medical care. If the institution does not have the staff to handle a patient, we should be sent to an outside doctor. Our lives matter, too.

ENSURE PROPER DENTAL CARE. The waiting list to receive a simple cleaning can take years (five years, in my case). We're told the BOP considers fillings "cosmetic." But when our teeth rot and we're in pain, then they will remove our teeth. If the institution doesn't have the staff to provide basic preventive dental care, then BOP must approve for the institution to take us to an outside dentist.

The year off your sentence for successfully completing the **Residential Drug Abuse Program** should apply to everyone. Currently, again, this program disqualifies a huge swath of people based on our charges.

A minimum **six months at the halfway house should be mandatory** for everyone, no matter how long your sentence is. Those of us locked up for 10 or more years should receive a minimum of one year. Currently because of case managers' discretion and bed space at halfway houses, one person may get nine months to a year of halfway house time while someone in a similar situation will be lucky to get one to three months. These disparities in the system have to change, and the decisions should not be up to biased case managers or halfway house administrators.

Correctional officers should be required to wear body cameras. There should be an **independent oversight** department that monitors and investigates cases of officer misconduct.

UPDATE OUR TABLETS. Currently, our tablets only offer a few crappy games, a small collection of overpriced movies and MP3s. We should be allowed to buy e-books and to access a larger collection of educational programming like GED, ESL and college classes. The tablets should have capability for email and video visits with our loved ones. The director recently told us new, better tablets are coming. We hope he follows through on this promise. (cont. on p. 30)

CORRLINKS ACCESS FOR ALL. Currently, people with sexual offenses are denied access to email. All emails are monitored by staff, and our contacts have to approve emails coming from us so there would be no "security risk" in granting everyone equal access to email.

3. Institutional Proposals

We need **updated computers** with, at the very least, basic word processing capabilities. Currently we use archaic typewriters with overpriced ribbons, which half the time the commissary doesn't have in stock.

(Cont. on p. 30)

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HALF A CENTURY SOBER

By Alex Rousseau

"Fifty years ago, I woke up in a jail cell," Tommy said. "My memory was blank. I knew I had blacked out again from drinking the night before. Then the officer standing behind the bars told me I had killed two people: a young mother and her daughter."

Waking up to a nightmare was nothing new for Tommy. By the age of 25, he had been arrested 23 times, earning 13 D.U.I.'s in the process. Two involuntary commitments to a mental health institution had made no difference. That morning, the guard's words punched into his heart like a staccato burst from a jackhammer. Yet, in just 3 days, he would dip back beneath the surface into the depths of his alcoholism.

His epiphany did ultimately arrive though, and Tommy was saved from himself. The result was the man I met earlier this year on a Friday morning at the chapel. A group was gathered in the front seating area of the main sanctuary, amongst which I saw many familiar faces. Then entered a spry gentlemen of 70 or so, with silver hair swept to the side. Obviously, he was a volunteer. Even more evident, though, was the fact that this man was on a mission.

Tommy has been on that same mission since January 7th, 1975; the day he says he found salvation. For him, that came with a solemn devotion, a promise he's kept most every Friday morning as the chair of our historic chapter of the 12-step program known as Alcoholics Anonymous.

He is known simply as Tommy— anonymity being a central tenet of AA— and he leads our group each week. Call it a life's work.

Prior to his conversion though, during his dark days, Tommy was, in his own words, insane. When he awoke in that jail cell, greeted with news of an unspeakable tragedy he had unknowingly authored the previous night, he imploded under the crushing weight of his own guilt. For three days and nights, he tried repeatedly to commit suicide. Guards fitted him with restraints. After the third day, they informed him that the crash had never really happened. It was a ruse, engineered in an attempt to

finally free him from the clutches of his addiction. The attempt, like others before it, proved to be futile.

When he was released from jail, Tommy immediately returned to the iron grip of the nemesis located conveniently at the local bar, or late night corner store. The adversary with whom he waged war to no avail remains to this day, roving slyly & hungrily amongst every community in our modern society. Shrouded by an unassuming, festive facade, I myself have made this adversary's acquaintance. Probably, you have, too.

On the third occasion that Tommy entered a mental health facility, he did so willingly. On that day of acceptance, he found acceptance in return— through the discrete but renowned community of healing known as Alcoholics Anonymous.

AA began in the year 1935 in Akron, Ohio when two men, "Dr. Bob" and Bill Wilson, a New York stock broker, met and found that mutual support could help them maintain sobriety. The now-famous 12-step process, originally established in 1939 with the publication of the text *Alcoholics Anonymous*, has remained unchanged, and has become the basic premise for virtually every 12-step program that followed.

Today, there are AA groups around the world, a benevolent community that grows thanks to one of the key principles laid in its foundation: share the blessing you have received by offering it to those in need. It was by that principle, in the year 1944, USP Atlanta made history when it became the first federal prison to establish an AA group. From that day forth, the walls built to keep the "bad" inside would be a home for a good that has harbored and healed countless souls.

AA does not require fees or dues, nor does it favor any religious denomination or political group. There is only one requirement to join: The desire to stop drinking. Tommy paraphrased from the Big Book, the AA text: "If you want what we got, and you're willing to go to any lengths for it, then it can and will be yours."

Tommy said he never accepted the idea that "some people just can't stop drinking." To naysayers, he says he's had the same response for 50 years:

"It's worked for over a million people. So why the ---- hasn't it worked for you?"

Despite his slight stature, the older gentleman radiates purpose and devotion. His energy is fierce and his attention to each and every single soul in the room is relentlessly precise. It was for this reason that I was drafted that morning to assist Tommy, as his interpreter for the predominantly Spanish-speaking members of FCI Atlanta's chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous. Tommy's aura of conviction inspired me to examine my own past. I saw a version of myself that I could never allow to return. On that morning, I can say I felt I'd found a place where I had long since belonged. I joined the AA community not only as an interpreter for my Spanish-speaking brothers but as a member. I have felt honored to contribute to this most righteous cause.

It is a lifelong war that Tommy has won, battle by daily battle, for more than half a century of sobriety. He does this with a profound but simple process:

- Ask for strength.
- Acknowledge the blessing.
- Share the blessing.

"One day. I can do this for one day," Tommy said. "That's what I tell myself each morning."

This is Tommy's daily affirmation, and I suspect it is so for countless of our brothers and sisters. For Tommy, one day led to another until 50 years passed. And though life is not "a bed of roses all the time," he has now been married for 46 years, has two children and one grandchild. For all of this, he extends the blessing that made it possible — to us. He says the most rewarding part of our AA group is not his own unbroken sobriety but the people he's met here — people he has later seen free not only of prison, but of alcohol.

Today I looked closely at the blurry silhouette in the polished aluminum square above my sink and stared back at myself. I thought of Tommy, who for 50 years has willingly walked into this prison, where countless pray for the moment they can finally leave. I asked myself: What caliber of a man does it take to go where others cannot leave, so that one day, they may truly be free? I rediscovered my own courage and strength in this old sparkplug — a true gentleman who has blessed us all by bringing in an AA meeting for half a century. As I sought the same fire within myself, I found and repeated Tommy's words:

"One Day. I CAN do this for one day."

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"Alcoholic Alternative," *The Atlantic* Fall 1950

MEDIO SIGLO SOBRIO

Interpretó por Antonio Abrego Bega

"Hace cincuenta años desperté en la celda de una cárcel," dijo Tommy. "Mi memoria estaba en blanco. Sabía que estaba así por haberme emborrachado la noche anterior. Después, el oficial que estaba parado afuera de mi celda me dijo que había matado a dos personas: una joven madre y su hija."

Despertar en una pesadilla no era nada nuevo para Tommy. A los veinticinco años ya había sido arrestado 23 veces, 13 por manejar bajo la influencia. Dos compromisos en una institución mental no habían hecho ninguna diferencia. Mientras los oficiales le daban la noticia esa mañana, las palabras penetraban en su corazón como un martillo. Y aun así, en tan solo tres días, tampoco lo contactaron.

Su pintura finalmente llegó; a través de ella, Tommy se salvó a sí mismo. El resultado fue el hombre que conocí a principios de este año. Un viernes por la mañana en la capilla, un grupo comenzó en la área principal del santuario. Había muchos rostros conocidos. Después entró un caballero de unos setenta años, con el cabello gris peinado de lado. Obviamente era un voluntario, y más evidente aún era que ese hombre estaba en una misión. Tommy había estado en la misma desde el 7 de Enero de 1975, el día que encontró salvación. Para él, la salvación vino con una solemne devoción. Esta promesa es una que el cumple cada viernes por la mañana como líder del histórico capítulo del programa de 12-pasos conocido como "Alcohólicos Anónimos" (AA). Se puede llamar esto, "un trabajo de vida."

Tommy es simplemente conocido como

"Tommy", un miembro anónimo que es una llave fundamental de AA. Durante sus días más oscuros, Tommy era, en sus propias palabras, "un loco". Cuando despertó en aquella celda para recibir la noticia de la tragedia inexplicable de la cual, sin saberlo, había sido autor la noche anterior, estuvo completamente devastado. Tommy pasó los próximos tres días, y tres noches bajo el peso de su propia culpa intentó repetidamente suicidarse. Los guardias lo pusieron en restricción. Después del tercer día, le informaron que el accidente no había ocurrido. Era un intento fabricado para liberarlo de su adicción. Como todos los anteriores, ese intento fracasó.

Apenas fue liberado, Tommy regresó enseguida directo a las garras de la adicción, en las que había sido encontrado anteriormente, convenientemente para él, y para todos en el bar local o en la tienda (cont. on p.30)

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CREATE + CULTIVATE

By Sonny and Kay

In the echoing halls of the Education Department at FCI Atlanta, where the rhythm of daily life is often dictated by confinement, a different kind of energy pulsed through the air on October 24, 2025. An art exhibition curated by Ms. K. Bailey, the Reentry Affairs Coordinator, transformed a once nondescript corridor into a vibrant gallery. Dozens of pieces, ranging from intricate charcoal sketches of forgotten landscapes to bold acrylic paintings bursting with raw emotion, hung from easels, each one a testament to the immense talent thriving behind these walls.

The event drew an unexpected and diverse crowd of administrative staff, correctional officers, art enthusiasts, college professors, prison reform advocates, and local supporters. What made this particular showcase groundbreaking was not just the art—it was the autonomy. For the first time, incarcerated artists were not only displaying their work but also permitted to sell their pieces. The proceeds went directly to the artists, allowing them to use the funds for commissary needs, savings, family support, or reinvestment in art supplies. The dignity that comes from earning through one's own creativity carries a profound psychological weight and this event made that visible.

As co-journalists covering the event, we had the privilege of mingling among the guests, notepads in hand, gathering unfiltered thoughts and heartfelt reactions. Their responses painted a picture as vivid as the canvases around us: one of hope, inspiration and a collective belief in transformation through art.

Q: If you had the opportunity to advise these artists, what would you tell them?

Morehouse Professor Dr. Mac: "Keep perfecting your craft and use your art to say something to the world."

Education Dept. Supervisor Dr. Gary: "Do not look at things and wonder why. Dream of things and wonder, why not?"

Morehouse Professor & Holistic Doctor Dr. Heru: "From my perspective, art is supposed to be dangerous. What I mean by that is art should creatively express the societal conditions of the day. Whether through pen, charcoal, paintbrush or pencil, the medium should act as an agent of social change. The same way a book challenges one to think critically, the artist's role should provoke thought, reflection and action."

As guests weaved through the room, the atmosphere buzzed with reverence and curiosity. When asked how it felt to participate, the artists' responses carried both humility and pride.

Brock, whose colored pencil drawing, "Serenity Rock," shimmered with butterflies and rainbows, said: "I'm honored to be a part of it. It's a great event."

Aaron, whose colored-pencil "Horse" nearly leapt off the page, said, "This is the first time we get a chance to sell our art, so it feels good. It's nice to be on the ground level of something new."

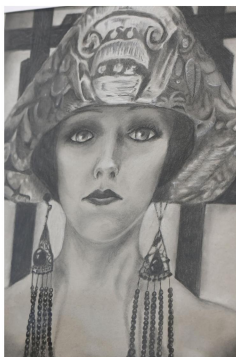
At the close of the evening, we asked curator Ms. K. Bailey what continues to inspire her to organize events like this for the incarcerated population. She smiled and replied, "It keeps a smile on the faces of the AICs...that's what inspires me the most."

For us, this wasn't just a showcase of hobby-craft or commerce, it was an act of defiance, therapy and transformation. It was proof that behind the walls of confinement, there are still brush strokes of freedom, creativity and self-worth.

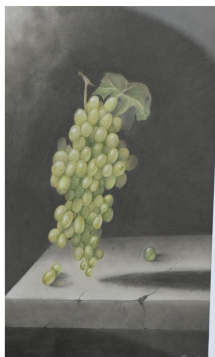
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Above: Gloria Swanson and "Elevated Grapes" by J. Rusch



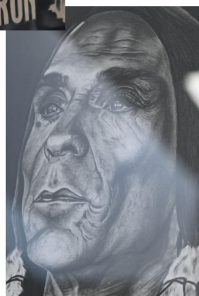
Above: Hobgoblin by Foley



Hank Aaron by Sam Arnette, above, and Zahn McLarnon by GoldFingerz, right.

"Dirty Dancing" by Jeremy Thomas, left, tied for second place.

Opposite page: Ludacris by Sam Arnette and "A Winter's Night" by J. Bucchino.



**ART
SHOW
REVIEW**



WHO IS GOLDFINGERZ??

By Alex Rousseau

FCI Atlanta's top artist, Romail "Goldfingerz" Leach, had not so much as drawn a sketch in over 10 years when he arrived here. That's because the first time he tried to share his art with the public, the person he trusted to carry his work beyond the walls betrayed him, profiting from the labor of love Romail had worked to perfect since he was 11 years old.

"I gained the confidence to start sharing my art with the outside world. I put my trust in one person who I was close to and sent that person my art. He stole it, making like it was his. Then he sold it. It broke my trust. It hurt. I just stopped."

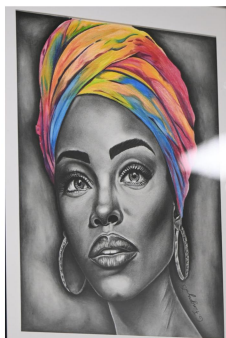
After that, Leach said, he had no intention of ever sharing his craft with the world again.

It's hard to imagine what he saw when he got here as part of the first "work cadre" to begin repairing this old penitentiary in 2021, when USP was closed and reopened as a "low" that same year. As fate would have it, Romail stepped off the bus with something extraordinary and advantageous. Hidden beneath his spartan, clean-cut image was something intangible, irrevocable and invaluable: his inheritance.

"There's a difference between talented and gifted," Leach said. "Gifted is something that you inherit by birth. You can coach talent, but what I have is a gift. It is something I inherited."

Though his gift had lain dormant, it soon became the means by which Romail trans

"Freedom Cry," above, and all art on this spread, by GoldFingerz



formed walls into canvases. He found inspiration in his fellow artists, and was encouraged to try again.

"When I got here, I was given the opportunity to do a mural with Jayson Berry, the island scene in Ms. Bailey's office. It encompasses the whole office and includes a portrait of Bob Marley. I mainly worked on the palm trees. That mural reignited my passion for visual art."

Today, Leach has become the most decorated member of a community of astonishing visual artists who compete regularly in art competitions put on here at a professional level. Again and again, he has emerged to stand out among his comrades, each of whom have an entirely different style. The competition has never been easy: The introspective imagery of Henry Kenner, the enchanting "Soul Portraits" by Gary Shields, the masterful and diverse hand of Jayson Berry, and the bold hyper-realism of Jeremey Thomas. These are only a few of the groundbreaking artists who draw greatness from one another in the art community of FCI Atlanta.

If you know Leach, you know he doesn't adhere to stereotypes. At first glance, he doesn't come off as an artist, but rather the person who owns the art gallery, the gym next door and quite possibly, the bar/lounge across the street. He is a person motivated by difficulty. His artistry, accomplishments and ambitions are multi-faceted. In his own words, here is the long-awaited answer as to the secret identity of "GoldFingerz."

Romail, where are you from originally? Tell us about your background and how you first became interested in art.

I'm from Purvis, North Carolina. I started doing wood carvings of animals when I was around 7 or 8 years old. When I was 11, I started drawing. I would get in trouble at home and they would take away my Nintendo. So one day, I started drawing the animals instead.

Tell us a little more about your gift and how it relates to inspiration and motives.

My objective is to captivate the audience and take them on a personal journey, allowing them to enter a space that is calming and revitalizing. I use art to demonstrate the energy that is bound up inside every human being. I am motivated by difficulty and by the concept of a challenge itself. For example, the piece titled "Splash Of Life" (see cover). Until 3 months prior to the competition, I had never drawn water. Therefore I sought to overcome something with an extreme difficulty factor. Also, I knew it would be my last art show in Atlanta. I wanted to leave a "statement piece."

Artist Gary Shields explained to me how technically difficult that piece must have been, having to understand the physics behind how water behaves in relation to light and gravity. Tell us more about this piece, which won first place. For instance, who is the woman portrayed in the portrait?

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"Shades Of Emotion," above. "The G.O.A.T.," below, tied for second place.

The medium I used was charcoal, and it took approximately 80 hours. It was inspired by water – the essence of life. It depicts a woman being revitalized, being given a new start. As to who she is, I wanted to draw someone that each person saw differently.

You accomplished that for sure. Everyone swore she was someone different. You tied for second as well, with a surrealist portrait of a wild goat pulling its own mouth open, with the face of none other than Michael Jordan emerging. The goat's hands were Michael's hands, adorned with all of his championship rings. Can you explain the concept for this piece?

It was inspired by Jordan's story, which I myself was always inspired by. He was told that he was only a mediocre player, didn't even make the team. I was told that

I was only a mediocre artist. The way he let himself be motivated by challenge and adversity was what ultimately made him the G.O.A.T.

This year's show was huge in that for the first time, artists were allowed to showcase their art and sell it. Leach said both his first- and second-place winners went home with a lucky collector. They were the latest in a long line of award-winning paintings he's had in his time at Atlanta. Aside from his visual art, he's also a published author. "Ain't No Other Way," an urban novel published under the pen name Lambo Blue, which stands for Life's About Motivating, Building Others, Breathing Legacy Unique Energy, and "The Woman is only Second to God," a self help book published under his name, Romail Leach. Both are available on Amazon.com.

Despite having been incarcerated for an extremely long period of time, Leach is known for his positivity, and for being a mentor in this community. He shared some of his goals for the future:

"I have served over 21 years of a 31-year sentence. Along the way, I have laid out plans for when I'm released, hopefully in the not-to-distant future. In regards to my artistic endeavors, I want to become a globally recognized artist. I strive for success and renown not only for my paintings but also as a tattoo artist. Additionally, I will pursue a career in public speech. I have gained experience in this art hosting various events while incarcerated. My goal is to become one of the world's most sought-after motivational speakers."

Two days after this interview, Romail proceeded down the next road on his life's journey. On the day he left, there were two certainties: First, he'd become the most decorated member of a community of astonishing visual artists, drawing greatness from one another in the process. Again and again, he emerged to stand out among his comrades – each one with uniquely remarkable abilities. Second, Romail left this place a little better than he found it.

If the competition was never easy, neither were his circumstances. Living imprisoned in The Land of the Free is a life where nothing comes easy. Romail accepted that challenge and transformed it into inspiration. Artists are especially adept at finding this fuel for perseverance, although truthfully it's there for all of us who choose to seek it.



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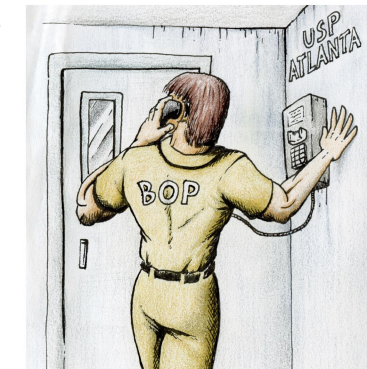
ACE CLASS TEACHES THE BASICS OF IMMIGRATION LAW

By Steve Rosado, illustrations by J. Bucchino

FCI Atlanta currently houses more than 200 people with ICE detainees. There are three ICE detention centers in Georgia: Irwin Detention Center, where horrific medical abuses were exposed in 2020, Folkston, a state-prison-turned ICE processing center slated to double its current capacity to 3,000 over the next two years, and Stewart, one of the largest and deadliest ICE detention centers in the country. A fourth "mega" detention center is planned to occupy a million-square-foot warehouse in Social Circle, GA, where up to 10,000 adults and children would be detained—nearly double the population of the city of Social Circle itself. An ICE field office recently opened in College Park, GA, although its exact location, as well as the number of new agents working out of the new office, is unknown. This is the second ICE field office in the area, in addition to the existing office on Ted Turner Drive in Atlanta.

In the summer of 2025, I began teaching an Adult Continuing Education class on basic immigration law with the assistance of Carlos Figueroa-Gibson, who served as a Spanish-language interpreter. The purpose of this ACE Class was to provide information to non-citizen migrants to help them navigate the U.S. immigration system, with a focus on spouses, children and other family members of people in custody, who themselves do not have legal status in the US. The class also touched on a number of other subjects affecting the migrant population, including the recently enacted Laken Riley Act, which allows ICE to detain any undocumented person if they were ever arrested for certain crimes, even if they were never convicted. Course materials included copies of official forms, non-precedential decisions of immigration judges and the addresses of immigration courts and pro bono law clinics in Atlanta.

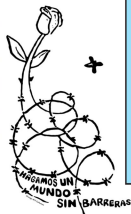
More than a dozen students attended Thursday evenings over the summer and Monday evenings in the fall to learn the basics of US Citizenship and Immigration Services appli-



cations, and to discuss legal issues like asylum, special immigrant visas and marriage adjustment. Students had questions on topics such as sponsoring a fiancée visa, handling a request for evidence or responding to a notice of intent to deny documentation.

As I reminded the class, be sure to seek representation or consult with an experienced immigration attorney before filing anything for yourself or your loved ones. Although the Basic Immigration Law class recently concluded, I plan to teach a more advanced class this summer, and will be glad to share information and resources with anyone who has questions on the subject.

Mr. Rosado is a Latino man who has more than three years of experience working for immigration law firms in New York City prior to his incarceration.



Ivan Arenas/justseeds.org

These can be used by citizens and non-citizens alike:

USTED TIENES DERECHOS CONSTITUCIONALES:

- NO ABRA LA PUERTA si un agente de inmigración está tocando la puerta.
- NO CONTESTE NINGUNA PREGUNTA de un agente de inmigración so trata de hablar con usted. Usted tiene el derecho a guardar silencio.
- NO FIRME NADA sin antes hablar con un abogado. Usted tiene el derecho de hablar con un abogado.
- Si usted está fuera de su casa, pregúntele al agente si tiene la libertad de irse y si le dice que sí, váyase con tranquilidad.
- ENTREGUE ESTA TARJETA EL AGENTE. Si usted está dentro de su casa, muestre la tarjeta por la ventana o pásela debajo de la puerta.

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Q&A WITH DAYE

By Dr. Akhu

This edition kicks off a new feature: a glimpse into the lives, attitudes and aspirations of men in the greater community of FCI Atlanta who are preparing for re-entry. We begin with Detrick Devone Daye from Wilmington, N.C.

How long have you been incarcerated?
Eight and a half years.

What was it like for you growing up?

Growing up, I dealt with a lot of anger issues. To this day, I never really understood where that anger came from. I always had family support. My mother and grandmother never gave up on me. I never was good at expressing myself, so I channel my anger through basketball and boxing.

Do you have any children?

Yes, a 12-year-old daughter named Ja'Niyah who I very much love and miss and think about everyday.

What are some lessons you have learned during your incarceration?

The biggest lesson I've learned is to value your time, educate yourself, stay in tune with what's going on in the world and stay prepared for your release. You have got to remember we're in the feds, and the laws change every day. You could be sentenced to 20 years today and go home in the next two to three years. If you are dedicated to change and rehabilitate yourself, to reprogram your old ways, it takes 21 days to make something a habit. Stay dedicated and disciplined to bettering yourself.

How have those lessons translated into life tools?

In life you need preparation. You've got to know what you want for yourself in order for you to get what you need in life. You have to be disciplined. Vision and effort equal success. Foundation, wisdom, knowledge and understanding are life tools.

What is a lesson that your daughter will say she learned from her father?

The biggest lesson she will say she learned from me is that family matters. The importance of holding and keeping family together is all we got. Also, her understanding that she can be all that she wants to be. The sky is the limit. Do everything that you can, never settle for just being average. Never give up on anything you do. Understand the importance of being an entrepreneur and creating generational wealth!

What are your future plans?

For starters, stay free, remain free, then stick to my plan of maintaining my credit. Investing in myself to make sure I have a successful future. Once I'm free I'm going to school to drive trucks. I'm going to drive for the three years that I'm on probation, to stay



Detrick Devone Daye with his 12-year-old daughter, Ja'Niyah.

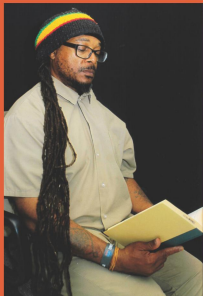
focused on my goals and keep busy and out of the way. That's a short-term goal. The money I save up from driving I want to invest into real estate as a career for myself. I want my generational wealth built off the asset of real estate. I grew a passion for real estate since being incarcerated. The same effort it took to learn the drug game, takes the same energy to understand real estate.

What would you like to say to the men who will walk in our shoes?

To the men who would be future "re-offenders" I would like to use the example I used in college in my public speaking class. This is to persuade you to keep your freedom and cherish your freedom. Why sacrifice something you have not lost? We know the system is against us and unjust. Even though there are laws, we are being sentenced at discretion, especially if you're a "re-offender" - Black or Hispanic. Why sacrifice your freedom and just to come to prison, to fight back for something you already had?

FIVE BOOKS

RECOMMENDED BY DR. AKHU



Dr. Akhu is known for being a historian. We asked him to share five books that he would recommend:

1. Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery, by Dr. Na'im Akbar
2. The African Origin to Civilization: Myth or Reality, by Cheikh Anta Diop
3. The Black Man of the Nile and his Family, by Dr. Yosef Ben-Jochannan
4. African American History: A Journey of Liberation, by Dr. Molefi Asante
5. The Destruction of Black Civilization, by Dr. Chancellor Williams

"To build a historical foundation, study every side. We must also include Will Durant, Gerald Massey and Basil Davidson."

THREE DECADES LATER: AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. AKHU

By Sonny, The Pro Se Voice

After more than three decades behind federal walls, Clay Colbert, known to many as Dr. Akhu, stood at the threshold of freedom. Akhu's journey through the US prison system has been one of spiritual evolution, intellectual awakening and self-mastery. From his early years of confusion and anger to his transformation into a teacher of Kemetic philosophy and African history, Akhu turned confinement into a classroom and adversity into enlightenment. As his release approached, he reflected on lessons learned, struggles endured and the vision he carries into a world he hasn't touched since 1993.

What is your name?

I prefer the Kemetic title Akhu, as representative of one who is enlightened.

How old were you when you were first incarcerated?

16, the tender age of sixteen.

Have you been home since?

No, I haven't. I've been enslaved for 32 years straight.

Can you describe what three decades of enslavement feels like?

Three decades of enslavement feels like climbing Mount Everest 30 times back to back. One is forged into something new after each milestone in the journey of life. The irony is in the fact that we become humane through the inhumanity of the system.

At this moment, how do you feel? How is your spirit?

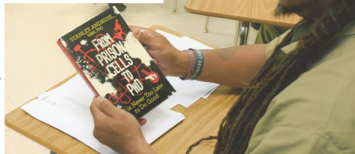
I feel with my hands. My spirit is powered by optimism.

Do you consider yourself to be broken?

No, I do not consider myself as broken. I consider myself as an unfinished product. I know the creator has a plan for me and I embrace it.

What are some of the things you have done to live through this time in prison?

I have become many people over time. From ignorant and insecure to wise and healed. I have tried to walk in every house of learning – including the religious and the metaphysical.



cal. Both have helped me along the road to consciousness.

Can you elaborate on some of the activities you have engaged in to help you over this duration of time?

I have been a student mostly, preaching and teaching Black history, spirituality, and culture. I just settled into Kemetics because I regard Kemet as the platform of true scholarship – after the tradition of Cheikh Anta Diop, Dr Ben Jochannan and Dr John Henrik Clarke, who are all prominent scholars from an African-centered perspective.

Dr. Akhu, please share with us some of the low points of your enslavement and how you overcame them?

Low points, having a fatalistic outlook on life? The isolation of being imprisoned? The death of loved ones? I was able to overcome them all by living according to the teachings that trials and tribulations in life are actually opportunities to allow the Divine in us the option to manifest for and through us – as opposed to seeing ourselves as experiencing a so-called low point. The divinity that I prescribe to has no opponent, so neither do I. Trials and tribulations are opportunities for me to allow God to work through me and for me.

What are some of your high points along this journey?

Temple building, which is an informal social construct whereby people come together responsibly to create a thinktank on African history and culture. I learned to build temples from practicing Moorish Science. I was able to adapt out of the organizational structure a blueprint model for temple design. Along with seven other brothers, we built a Kemetic Temple based on the teachings of the Metu Neter by Ra Un Nefer Amen. He founded the New York-based Ausar Auset Society, a spiritual organization that focuses on the spiritual teachings of ancient Egypt. We lived right and fasted, studied

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and learned, meditated and practiced yoga together. I'm happy to have been a part of a life-long Brotherhood. I consider that as one of my highest points along this journey.

What are you passionate about?

My people. Because there was a time of my life when I did not know myself. I was filled with self-hatred because I did not know about who we were. I have learned to love my people. Even in our lowest hour, I love us.

Did you discover that while you were incarcerated or did you already possess this affinity?

I had never read a newspaper, magazine or a book before coming to prison. Dr. Carter G. Woodson talked about diseducation and miseducation in the classic book entitled "The Mis-Education of the Negro" published in 1933. It helped me to see that I was put here by design. Specifically, through the School to Prison Pipeline. I was actually a victim of society, kept in the state of darkness intentionally, by my so-called educators.

They say adversity builds character. Do you subscribe to this notion, and does it apply to you?

Sure, I do. Adversity is symbolized as Set in the Kemetic tradition - or the spiritual mythology of ancient Egypt. Heru (the personification of man with the ability to choose) and Set (the personification of willful opposition of divine law through disobedience) are related principles in men. Heru is only Heru when married to Maat (the personification of divine law with truth, order and righteousness). So, Set is Heru unmarried to Maat. Conscious use of the will, in opposition to the Law of the Creator, is the definition of sin - by Setian. The Kemetic Satan, who encapsulates greed, lust, emotionalism, sensuality, etc, in man's nature. We are taught that the purification of the character is accomplished through combat. Heru, the will of man, is born from the overcoming of Set. This is what our teachings say about the Son of Man. Heru, the will of man, is the principle that man comes to master only by giving birth to it through the labor pains of battle.

If you could give a person doing time in prison - short or lengthy - advice on how to take advantage of their incarceration, what would it be?

Strive to become the CEO of Self. Self-analysis requires breaking things down into parts. Self has to be broken down and purified before one can achieve mastery. Understanding that life is multifaceted; sort of like a precious stone. There are many angles to look at. Incarceration provides us with the

opportunity to teach ourselves discipline. Discipline to rule over our own emotionalism and the ability to budget finances.

You will be going home at the top of the new year. What's your plan for successful reentry into society?

My plan is to continue earning my bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. I would like to achieve at least a master's degree. Then I would like to go to school to become a Heavy Equipment Operator because after gaining 3 years of experience I want to become a professor that has the ability to educate the hand as well as the mind. I have a plan to teach our people the linkage between cultivating Land and Freedom on the college level. I am happiest when teaching my people about our people.

With over 30 years in prison, what is your greatest achievement?

Survival with possession of my mental faculties. To be mentally sharp at this point in my life. To be able to reflect and make adjustments - mentally. To be able to imagine and strategize. To still be able to cook like Chef Steph, he wore 30 on his jersey, and like him I want to shoot my shot at breaking the glass ceiling that society has built for the formerly incarcerated. My greatest achievement came in the form of a change in my point of view concerning life. Life is not some undefined event without meaning. Life is a gift; the greatest gift ever received. I have also learned that man can make or mar his own destiny. With mines, although marred, I will manage the sequel much better than I did with the first part. Part II will be lived according to "Man Times," filled with me pursuing manly endeavors like starting a family and building an empire. I know of many who have lost their minds, lost touch with reality. I learned to see a therapist as a tool to be used in mental health maintenance and have set up the necessary provisions for maintaining the upward trajectory to success after incarceration. Logistically speaking, establish your very own Mount Rushmore and then strive to embody the principles that each personality canonizes. The Moors used to say that you have to be the message that you bring. In the Kemetics we say: in order to know, you must live it. You must live what you know or you do not know, but are only informed about it.

Dr. Akhu walked out of FCI Atlanta in January 2026. His story reminds us rehabilitation is not simply about serving time - it's about reclaiming purpose. His evolution from a lost teenager to an educator, philosopher and spiritual guide demonstrates the power of knowledge, faith and self-discipline to transcend even the harshest environments.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

By Dr. Akhu

Restorative justice sits on the shelf in the American criminal justice closet, collecting dust. When I reflect on restorative justice, I envision a time when the sages were the architects of society, a time when people had a better grip on their humanity.

It was about communalism, not just individualism - a time and a place when we cared for one another.

When people originally built institutions, they were for the betterment of society. At institutions today, every effort is to further the damage, the hurt and the harm of the individual.

The massive American incarceration system is an injustice to the entire country. Institutions should be in a competition to heal "offenders." FCI Atlanta, FCI Edgefield, FCI Tallegadea, FCI Jesup and FCI Coleman, for example, would compete in the same manner that colleges compete. Not only academically, but rebuilding human beings who have made mistakes.

The great philosopher and football coach Nick Saban said, "You don't practice until you get it right; you practice until you can't get it wrong." I believe that should be the mentality of correctional institution administrators.

Restorative justice has the capacity to make one passionate about healing society. It joins incarcerated people with survivors and system officials, who work together to restore justice.

We the people long for the day when we can all proudly boast of what we have built at FCI Atlanta - human potential.

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WAIT, WAIT . . . DON'T TAKE MY NPR!

By Brock Boston

It's 10 a.m. on a Saturday morning in a federal prison in Atlanta. It's "count time," when the guards count us to make sure we haven't escaped. For me, though, it's time for my favorite show on National Public Radio: "Wait, Wait...Don't Tell Me."

If you've never heard this show, you're missing out! It's an hourlong current events/improvisation comedy show. Every week they have different comedians making fun of the week's headlines. Hosted by the witty Peter Sagal, and announced by the legendary Bill Kurtis, I get to spend an hour every week outside of these prison walls, actually laughing out loud.

So why am I telling you about my favorite radio show? On July 24, Congress passed the Rescissions Act of 2025, and the president signed it into law. This bill did several things, but the one that I paid attention to was the defunding of NPR and PBS, the Public Broadcasting System. Critics of public media say people don't use these platforms anymore to get their news, and that a lot of shows are too liberal and "woke." I'm not here to say whether these critics are right or wrong, but I want you to understand that these news sources are critical for those of us behind the razor wire.

In the age of Artificial Intelligence, anything is only a "Hey Google" or "Hey Siri" away. Getting your fix on the daily news has never been easier. That is, unless you're in prison. Although I would argue cell phones in some manner and monitoring should be allowed inside, as of right now getting caught with a cell phone is a major offense, not to mention losing at least 41 good-time credit days.

We heavily rely on NPR for information about current events, new technology, the trends going on in the free world and, yes, to hear Paula Poundstone or Tom Bodett make a corny joke or two. Shows like *Planet Money*, *All Things Considered*, *This American Life*, *Snap Judgment*, *Code Switch*, *How I Built This* and *TED Radio Hour* are all important for us to keep up with what is going on in the world. For those of us in prisons and jails across the country, NPR is our only free and legal source of information. We need these outlets to be funded more, not defunded!

I would like to share a personal story about what NPR means to me. It was spring of

2015, year three of my excessive 28-year prison sentence. I found myself in the Special Housing Unit, the prison inside of a prison, where they put us if we break certain rules or if we feel we're in jeopardy on the main compound. I was told by three guys I would get a major beat down if I sat down at the table again. I was judged by society, and now I was being unjustifiably judged by my so-called peers. I felt hopeless and defeated, because I wanted to tell them my story, what really happened in my life, and that I am not defined by my worst mistake. That didn't matter to them, and so I "checked in" to the SHU fearing for my safety or even my life.

To understand what the SHU is like, a good comparison would be an adult kennel. A tiny room you cannot leave at all. You eat, use the bathroom, shower, all with another person whom you don't get to pick to live with you, with nothing to do but sleep.

In the spring of 2015, I was on month number three of solitary confinement, and no doubt the lowest point of my life. I had never had suicidal thoughts before, but in my lowest moment, thoughts started to creep in like, "Is it worth it anymore? Could my life get any worse?" Luckily, in the SHU at that time they let me have a radio.

In rural West Virginia the only station I could get in the SHU was the local NPR channel. When all these negative thoughts were running through my head, I listened to the TED Radio Hour program. One man told us listeners the story of the lowest point in his life.

How he tried to permanently end his suffering, how he obviously failed at this, how he pulled himself out of his personal mud and how he turned his life around, doing great things now, and helping others who are in their own painful valleys. This is exactly what I needed to hear, and I quickly got past the harmful thoughts I was experiencing.

Thanks to NPR I was able to get past that painful experience, out of that human kennel, and get to a prison where I felt safe. I tell you this personal story to bring to light that we need more public radio, not less. That even in this AI and tech-driven world, we need NPR more than ever. In prison, TVs are controlled by certain aggressive, dominant people, so you are lucky to get in a few minutes to watch any news. We need NPR to tell us what is happening in the free world.

Since the federal government has decided to defund NPR and poor Big Bird, we need people to donate as much as they can afford to their local public radio station. It is crucial for those of us inside these walls to get caught up on the weekly news or to laugh out loud at a joke we heard. How else are we going to find out which country the U.S. is putting a tariff on this week? How will we know what country's leader we will kidnap next? Or how else are we going to find out what the hell a Labubu is?

Wait, Wait...Don't Tell Me, I should know this one: NPR!

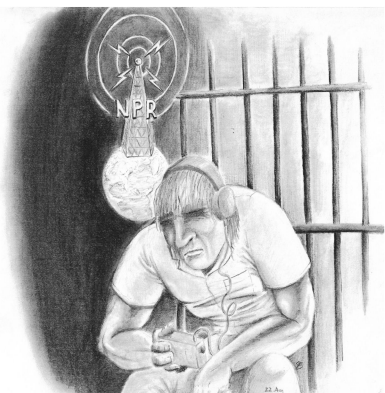


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HOMIE TIME

By Dr. Akhu

The US prison complex produces a subculture within the confines of American society. People doing time in the federal system learn right away that there are rules, procedures and practices governing everything about prison life. But the prison population also follows its own set of rules and practices, commonly referred to as prison politics.

When I entered the system more than 30 years ago, I became part of the subculture's social structure. You had a limited set of choices, and you had to make them promptly. Some choices were for safety, others for reputation. Some people became religious, while others attempted to find other means to cope with their oppression. The federal prison environment incorporates people from all parts of the world. So one way of creating order was to bundle people together according to geography, groups of individuals forming what we call a "car." Your "car" is the group of people you become accountable for, and in return, they are accountable for you. According to prison politics, this is called "Homie Time" – prison jargon for one's political association. When a problem arises,

people understand whom to approach to defuse the situation, and who can counsel you to resolve the issue, either positively or negatively.

I remember back in the days when people called you their homie; they meant it. My homie is one that I will ride or die with regardless of the odds that we are up against. My homie, like my brother, is one I could rely on and who could rely on me. That level of camaraderie came with responsibility. To keep one's car clean, making sure the car was respected in the subculture of prison, also made sure that those whom you placed your life on the line for were in good standing. Everyone understood the rules – those made by prison officials, and those made by us.

As for the federal prison system, I do not care where you were incarcerated: Leavenworth, Lompoc, Terre Haute, Lewisburg or Atlanta. Homie time meant geographics. A major quagmire for many striving to find a way to survive.

There is another political association that is sought after – called Man Time. Man Time is the highest level of stratification among the political caste systems of federal prison. To be recognized as a man, the fullest embodiment of its principles. This transcendent individual deals with whomever they choose based on respect, character, honor, integrity and discipline.

This is the kind of individual who is spared by the joker, overcomes the barriers of geographics and is acknowledged and recognized by all as a man – he's on Man Time.

If you were devoted to making people laugh, you weren't a clown. You were on "Joke Time." If you were committed to your gang, you were on "Gang Time."

Over the years I have seen these conventions deteriorate among people throughout the federal system. The part that has maintained its position over the years is the language, or prison slang. Today I hear people say "my Homie this," "my Homie that," but they do not mean it the way they meant it 30 years ago.

Morehouse, cont. from p. 6

The truth hit, and disappointment settled deep. The morale Morehouse had once elevated had vanished.

Still, Morehouse wanted to continue its prison education program, this time with full transparency: six college credits would be awarded for the two completed courses — three credits each. (The Social Justice Leadership course was canceled in 2025.)

At the time of press, Morehouse is still seeking approval for four standalone courses at FCI Atlanta in 2026, pending approval by Morehouse's Curriculum Board. There was also hope that a Bachelor's degree program could be officially launched in Jan. 2027 — if it passed through Morehouse's internal approval process. Morehouse offered to suspend its Higher Education in Prisons Program until its program met all necessary standards.

But too much uncertainty now clouded the program's future. After intense, heartfelt deliberation, the incarcerated Scholars at FCI Atlanta took a vote and made a difficult decision: they would no longer attend classes without clear assurances of accreditation. Still, they left the door open. They respectfully urged Morehouse to take the necessary steps to formally validate the program — because if and when it did, the Scholars would be ready, and eager, to return.

Public Safety Factor, cont. from p. 14

Criteria for a Public Safety Factor waiver:

1. Good conduct: No incident reports for 18 to 24 months, depending on the institution.
2. Time served: Typically, you must have already served a substantial portion (50 percent or more) of your sentence. For PSFs of "greatest severity offense," you must be within 10 years of release.
3. Program & work participation.
4. No detainers or open cases.
5. Staff Recommendations.
6. Approval from DSCC.

After expressing her concerns on the PSF, Ms. Bailey's colleague informed her that both Deputy Director Joshua Smith and Director William Marshall III had been discussing the matter. Understandably, the specifics of their discussions are confidential for the time being, but the important part is that they are aware. The PSF label has been a non-starter for ages. Finally, someone turned a spotlight where others looked away. In the law library, Chase Espy broke the silence by initiating a warranted and enthusiastic round of applause for Ms. Bailey's heroics.

VIPER, cont. from p. 16

I recall the first time I met James Hines, in 2024. We sat in the stadium one summer morning, and he told me his story: five combat tours as an explosives engineer in the Army, then the tribulations and emptiness that awaited him at home. He wore a pair of silver-mirrored sunglasses. I couldn't see his eyes, yet I sensed them searching, surveying everything.

One of PTSD's hallmark symptoms is self-isolation. Hines said he felt alone since the brotherhood which had fortified him in places like Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo, was gone. The false promise of fellowship offered by a motorcycle club lead him here. Ironically, that brotherhood he long believed lost was found again here.

While VIPER represents all creeds and colors, VIPERs' shared ideology can be summed up in 5 words: "We don't disown each other."

The "justice" system often reduces a man to a shadow of his former self. Prison is where our shadows gather. What if this place was different? How does change begin?

The breaking light of each new day brings a choice. At rock bottom, we often choose one of two ways to rise up. We see those gathered around us and make a decision: to step on,

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or lift up. The strength one discovers within when he chooses to lift up a fallen man is far greater than the inch he might have gained by stepping on him instead. This is the power in one choice.

Like many here, I have felt abandoned, misjudged, disowned and reduced to a shadow. Perhaps you too have felt like a stranger marooned on foreign soil? When the flag went up, I looked around and made the same decision James did, the one that led to project VIPER: We don't disown each other.

Criminal Justice Reform, cont. from p. 17

Every institution should have an **honor unit**, open to everyone enrolled in GED, vocational or college courses. Good news: this institution has implemented an honors/veteran unit for all who want to participate. This should be available at all institutions around the country.

All institutions should be required to partner with at least one college or university for **accredited college courses**. If we want to decrease the recidivism rate, equipping us with college degrees to get good jobs once released is vital to our success. Good news to report here as well: The University of West Georgia offers a bachelor's degree program at FCI Atlanta, and from what we hear more programs are on the way. Other institutions need to join FCI Atlanta in taking take the lead on this new college endeavor.

END MASS PUNISHMENT. When a drone drop is intercepted, or cell phones are found in a shakedown, there are often mass punishments for the entire compound. We should not be punished collectively for something another person did. I do want to give the current prison administration credit for the decrease in mass punishment. We hope this trend continues.

Visitation should not be canceled at the last minute, without notice or recompense. Our families plan and budget to be able to fly in from across the country or even overseas, only to be turned away because of an unannounced lockdown. Our families should receive compensation when this happens. Again, the current administration has made sure this doesn't happen here, but we hope it continues and other prisons follow suit.

In addition to time credits, there should be **incentives for good behavior**. Even simple things like ordering a pizza once a month on our own dime, or the chance to watch a newly released movie with popcorn and candy we cannot buy on commissary, some small reward for good behavior would go a long way toward increasing morale and improving attitudes.

Sobrio, cont. from p. 19

nocturna de la esquina. El cambio verdadero aun no llegaba. Su lucha interna continuaba sin cesar, extendiéndose suave y lentamente a través de cada aspecto de su vida. En la tercera ocasión en que llegó a una institución mental, lo hizo voluntariamente. Ese día de aceptación, Tommy encontró aceptación en repuesto dentro de la comunidad discreta pero renovada: AA.

AA inició en 1935 en Akron, Ohio cuando dos hombres, "Dr. Bob" y Bill Wilson, un hombre de negocios de Nueva York se reunieron contra la enfermedad que es el alcoholismo. Encontraron que el soporte mutal podía ayudar a mantener una vida sobrio. Comenzaron el famoso proceso de los 12 pasos oficialmente en 1939 cuando publicaron el libro, "Alcoholics Anonymous". Este proceso no solo ha permanecido sin cambios desde entonces, sino que ha sido autorizado en numerosas ocasiones como la base fundamental para vencer la adicción.

Hoy existen grupos de AA alrededor del mundo. Esta comunidad es una fuerza benevolente que ha florecido gracias a una de las llaves principales de su fundación: la empatía, la bendición que recibiste, ofrecida luego a quienes la necesitan. Fue por las llaves principales de su fundación: la empatía la bendición que recibiste', ofrecida luego a quienes la necesitan. Fue por ese fundamento que, en 1944, USP Atlanta hizo historia al convertirse en la primera prisión federal en establecer un grupo de AA. Desde ese día, los muros construidos para retener a "los malos" se convirtieron en un hogar para incontables almas que han sanado por casi un siglo.

AA es una comunidad sin fines de lucro y no favorece a ningún grupo político o religioso. Solo requiere una cosa de cualquier persona que quiera unirse: el deseo genuino de dejar de beber. Tommy lo explica así: "Si quieres lo que tenemos, y estás dispuesto a recorrer cualquier distancia para obtenerlo, entonces puedes, y lo vas a lograr."

El nunca ha aceptado la idea de que "algunas personas no pueden dejar de beber". Para quienes dicen "no de puede", Tommy ha tenido la misma respuesta por cincuenta años:

"Ha funcionado para más de un millón de personas. Entonces, porque no habría de funcionar para ti?"

Sin importar su estatura baja, Tommy deslumbraba por su propósito y su devoción. Su energía, su fuerza, y su atención a cada alma

en el cuarto eran infalibles. Por esa razón fui asignado para asistir a Tommy como su intérprete, debido al creciente número de miembros hispanohablantes en FCI Atlanta para el histórico grupo de AA.

La convicción radiante de Tommy me inspiró a explorar mi propio pasado. Vi una versión de mi mismo que nunca permitiré que regrese. Esa mañana, pude ver que había encontrado providencia a hallar un lugar al que pertenecía desde hacia mucho tiempo. Y así me uní a AA no solo como intérprete para mis hermanos hispanos, sino como miembro. Me siento honrado de contribuir a una causa digna y justa. Es una batalla de por vida, batalla tras día, que Tommy ha ganado por más de medio siglo sobrio. Lo ha logrado a través de tres pasos simples pero profundos:

- Pedir fortaleza.
- Reconocer la bendición.
- Compartir la bendición.

"Un día. Puedo hacerlo por un día", dijo Tommy. "Eso es lo que me digo cada mañana."

Esta es la afirmación diaria de Tommy, y sospecho que también lo es para innumerables hermanos anónimos. Para Tommy, un día lo llevó a otro, y así han pasado cincuenta años. Y aunque la vida no siempre es como dice Tommy, "una cama de rosas", él lleva cuarenta y seis años casado, tienes dos hijos, y un nieto. Por todo esto reparte la bendición que hizo posible su nueva vida. Tommy dice que la parte más recompensante de AA no es solo su inquebrantable sobriedad, sino también las personas que ha conocido encarceladas aquí, a quienes no solo ha visto salir de prisión, sino también liberarse del alcoholismo.

Hoy miro la barrosa silueta frente a mí en el metal pulido del lavamanos. Pensé en este hombre que por cincuenta años ha caminado voluntariamente dentro de esta prisión, donde innumerables oran día tras día para que llegue el día en que por fin se irán. Me pregunto: ¿Qué calibre de hombre se necesita para entrar a un lugar del que otros no pueden salir, para que algún día realmente ellos pueden ser libre? Descubí mi propia fortaleza y valentía en este caballero que nos ha bendecido con su presencia por medio siglo. Y mientras busco mi propio fuego interior, encuentro las palabras de nuestro amigo Tommy: "Un día. Yo puedo hacerlo por un día." ... Y creí.

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The **Atlantian Revival** staff took part in a writing exercise, creating short essays that began with "I remember" or "I imagine." A sample of their work appears on this page.

Want to take part? Write an essay of about 100 words that begins with one of those phrases. Submit your essay to Ms. Bailey by April 1, 2026. The **Atlantian** will print a selection in our next edition.

I IMAGINE . . . Imagining is a power for programming the spirit for success. The things we imagine have the power to transform our reality. The ability to imagine is a power given to us to prehearse and rehearse our words, acts and deeds. The spirit processes what we imagine, and summons the universe to organize itself in a way that attracts the things we imagine into our lives. Some call this the secret. Whatever you call it, the imagination is a powerful tool to be used in your pursuit of success, a doorway that pulls what you imagine into your life. *-Dr. Akhu*

I imagine what it would have been like if my parents had stayed together. Would my mom be alive today? Would I miss the siblings that would never be born? Would I have had the courage to tell my first childhood crush, "I love you"? Would I have finished college as young as I did or been successful in the career I chose? I imagine I wouldn't be here in prison. But I can't imagine what life would be like without the happiness I once had and the accomplishments that made me who I am. *-Steve Rosado*

I imagine making sacrifices to improve my mind, body and spirit, putting in the work and effort to transform my mind through assimilation of knowledge and wisdom. I imagine using this wealth of knowledge, infusing it with activism in a valiant effort to uplift my community. I imagine being active in unifying the street culture to reduce crime and violence in urban and rural communities. I imagine being on the front line mobilizing the Black vote and exposing the systemic racism inherent in America. Helping to ensure that people living below the poverty line have the opportunity to overcome poverty without resorting to crime is what I imagine my legacy to be. *-Sonny, the Pro Se Voice*

I imagine a world where we are treated as more than a number. Where education is a right, not simply a privilege. I was once told by my pastor, we are the sum of our lives, not just the worst thing we've done. In our prison system, it's us vs. them. In a perfect world it's us working with them to better our lives and ensure we are not the same person we were just 24 hours before our arrest. I imagine a system where people are transformed, renewed and accepted in society, not ostracized by our community. The stigmatization leads us back to a life of crime, a sense of not belonging, of feeling left behind. I imagine a world where we're accepted with open arms, nurtured and fed, and we give back in kind. I imagine that, with time, we will achieve this and more. We'll open our minds and grow together so our communities can be better. This era shall pass. Nothing lasts forever. *-Marcus "Delta" Stroud*

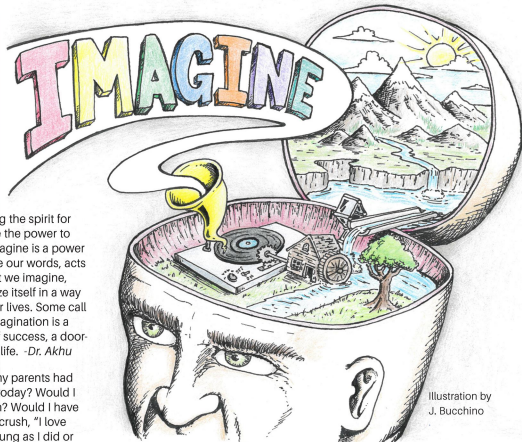


Illustration by
J. Buccino

I REMEMBER . . . I remember fighting for my freedom, deep in the throes of battle, handcuffed and shackled. Railroaded in federal court and dragged to the gallows, the courtroom tantamount to a town square. I was hung from a tree instead of afforded due process: a modern-day lynching. There was no help, no assistance. Just "evidence" fabricated by corrupt government officials. 28 years in federal prison. As my feet dangled, all I could do was hold my breath and remain steadfast in my pursuit of justice. When they realized I wasn't dead, they strung me up again. This time in state court. This time I represented myself pro se. This time I was triumphant. *-Sonny, the Pro Se Voice*

I remember her eyes when she said she loved me. I remember her voice when she betrayed me. But most of all, I remember her text 10 years later; she wanted me back. I texted back "no." I wish I could forget how much I miss who she was, and just remember who we both became. *-Steve Rosado*

I remember getting up at 4:30 every morning when bundles of newspapers were delivered to my house. I was a paperboy for my city's paper, the Republic. I put rubber bands, and when it was rainy or snowy, small plastic bags, around the papers. By 5 a.m. I was off, alone in the dark. I took pride in making sure every customer got their paper by 6 a.m. The best part of my job was personally collecting the monthly fee from my customers, many of whom treated me like a member of the family. They'd tip me, make me food, and during holidays, really look out for me. Thanks to them, I bought my own TV, VCR and gaming systems. Boy, how things have changed, but I'm glad to have been a paperboy. *-Brock Boston*

Very few things compare with learning that someone in your community has died. I remember when I was asked to play some soft music for a memorial here on the compound, for a man I only knew as "O." But then I learned the circumstances that led to his death. Rumor has it he passed out on the elliptical and hit his head, on the same day that we were forbidden from leaving the housing unit with water. O's sentence was almost over, but this place turned it into a death sentence. *-William "Church" Gresham*

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GRADUATION & JOB FAIR

By Steve R.

Photography by Sean Ellis

On the morning of Oct. 1, 2025, FCI Atlanta graduates in caps and gowns marched into the chapel to classic ceremonial music.



Honor students wore gold or silver stashes over blue gowns.



Culinary Arts graduates A. Diaz, J. Brashe and G. Colon received their VT Certificates at the October ceremony.



Graduates turned the tassels on their caps from right to left to mark their achievement.

PHOTO ESSAY



"The Contraband" performed light-hearted music at the graduation ceremony. L-R: "Delta" Stroud on keys, "Church" Gresham on bass, Alex R. on guitar, "Boom" Davis on drums and Jayson Berry on sax.



On August 28, 2025, a Mock Job Fair was held with human resources consultants and FCI Atlanta staff in attendance. Many of the volunteer consultants were network members of the Allatoona Society for Human Resources Management.



Tiffany Parsons (left), a sociologist who specializes in prison education and reentry, talked about the University of West Georgia's Pathways to Campus program, which gives people who plan to live in Georgia the chance to continue their college studies. It also provides case management services and housing assistance.



An estimated 200 men brought their resumes for inspection, sat for mock interviews, and learned about available resources for job searchers who plan to reside in Georgia after they are released from prison.

Mock job fair participants learned about a variety of resources:

- Society for Human Resource Management has several local offices in the state.
- In the metro area, the Center for Employment Opportunities and 2C Workforce Solutions are also available.
- For those who plan to live outside the state of Georgia after being released, Honest Jobs specializes in finding employment opportunities for people reentering society.
- Team Georgia Careers finds jobs for people in state government.
- Team Georgia Rewards outlines benefits available to state employees.

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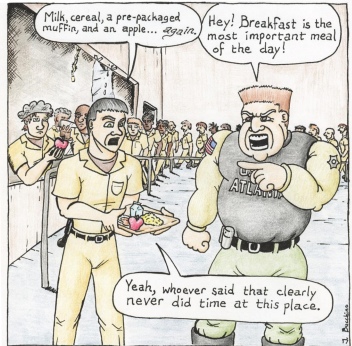
COMIX

Low LIFE

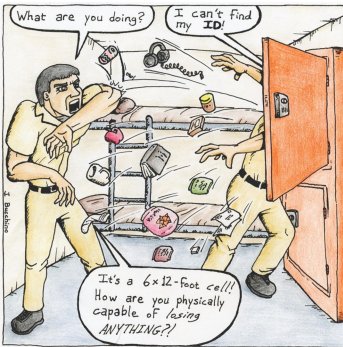
BY J. BUCCHINO



Low LIFE



Low LIFE



DOES YOUR Luggage look like This?

ARE YOU A RECIDIVIST? WERE you a Juvenile Delinquent? Aren't you tired of doing life on the installment plan? Have you made any worthwhile plans for the future?

You know the answer to all of these questions. Think about them awhile. Then it might not be a bad idea to ask yourself a lot of other questions about yourself. But remember you're asking yourself the questions—no one else need know the answers you give or the questions you ask—be honest with yourself. Get to know the real you.

In the event your luggage doesn't look like the suitcase, at the bottom of this page, don't get the idea that you couldn't do well to learn more about yourself by asking a few critical questions. Mr. and Mrs. John G. Public in general might give it a try. You'll find that you, too, have room for improvement!



"Luggage," The Atlantian, January-February 1949

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IN A WAY it was an embarrassing experience to compile the foregoing report. It was embarrassing because, somewhere in the back of minds, there was a gnawing something which kept repeating: stop — don't go overboard! Don't put all of these positive things in *The Atlantian*! Stop — people will say you are attempting to elicit undeserved sympathy for the convicts in Atlanta!

Yet, in our embarrassment we were given courage to attempt a true job of reporting things as they are. We were encouraged by another mental prompting which said: Tell it like it is! It's a war against misunderstanding which must be fought! We could have written many things which we did not write. We could have said many things we did not say. Perhaps, we could have done far more than we did. Perhaps. However, what we did do should be sufficient to point out a simple truth which refutes some of the untruths which have been told about convicts: *Prisoners Are People*.

No matter what impression you may have of us, we are all human beings—the walls which enclose our bodies do not dehumanize us. We are not made into sub humans by the shame, the loneliness, the drab conforming routine which is the Hell called Prison. We still possess some measures of goodness; some worthwhile attributes of character.

We, The Enwalled Ones, know how society has been made to feel about us. We know how society has been indoctrinated—how it has been orientated to abhor us, to despise us, to reject us. We know we made society's mind available for influence against the man who commits a crime, for we sinned first; we asked to be hated; we rejected society and, in turn, society rejected us. These things we know—we know these things and our knowledge does not help our consciences.

Sometimes the realization of our wrongs causes us soul pains. These pains in our souls humiliate us but they do not dehumanize us. It is only when we face total unforgiveness by the people of society that we become psychotic, and in our psychosis we embrace crime as a way of life. It is when we are society prompted toward embitterness that we become a part of the law enforcement statistic called RECIDIVISM.

Throughout all of the equations there is the human element called HOPE—when hope is destroyed by rejection, by unforgiveness, by complete loss of social prestige, society, too, becomes a loser in the Gamble of Confinement. It is up to the people of society to recognize the simple truth in our original statement: *Prisoners Are People*.

Some of the people in prison are penitent. They pay penance in various ways. They try to make restitution to the society which they have wronged. Much of the time society ignores our gestures of repayment. Much of the time society is vindictive. Much of the time society is too apathetic to be sympathetic toward its prisoners. Much of the time society is very much disinclined toward FORGIVENESS with its "Christianlike" discriminatory attitude toward "The Unforgiven."

"The Unforgiven," the men whom we mentioned in the foregoing reports, have been called "Misfits" and "Hardened Criminals" and worse by Hollywood and TV script writers. If your opinions of the convict are tuned in to the TV channels, you may have received a surprising impression of the convict in this report—actually, the only thing surprising about the convict is that he can show some intrinsic goodness in face of all the oppressive badness to which he has been exposed. The goodness is indicative of the hope remaining in his heart—the hope that he may someday be forgiven and accepted again by society.

—H. LEE WHITE, in an excerpt from "Convict Conscience"

The ATLANTIAN, Spring Edition, 1961

