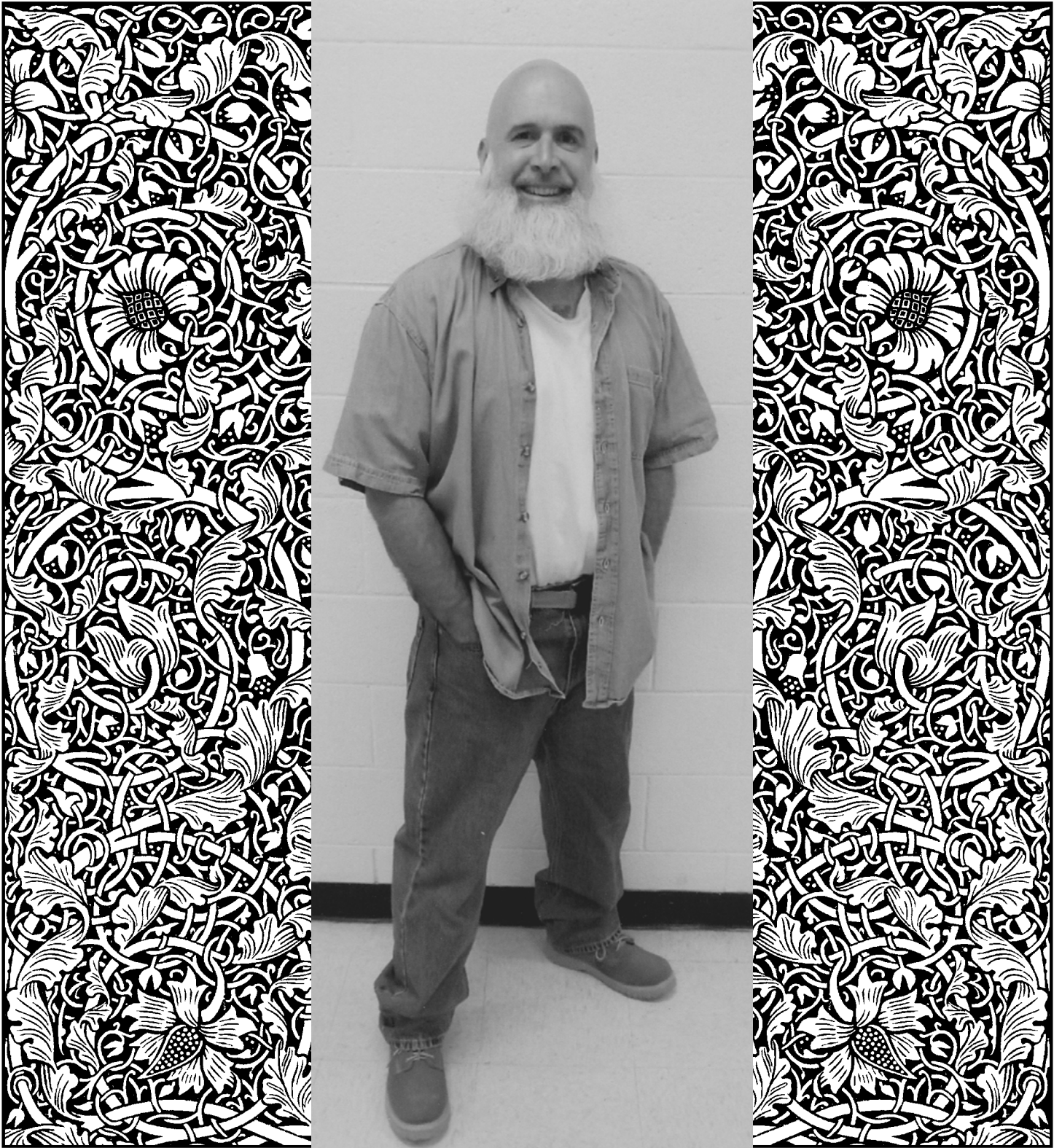


# FIRE ANT



## ANARCHIST PRISONER SOLIDARITY

This issue of Fire Ant is dedicated to the memory of our brother and comrade Oscar Wilde.

This is issue #8, Winter 2021. Fire Ant is a collaboration between anarchist prisoners and free roaming anarchists. Fire Ant seeks to raise material aid for anarchist prisoners while fostering communication between anarchists on both sides of the walls.

To support the anarchist prisoner war fund, please email [bloomingtonanarchistblackcross@riseup.net](mailto:bloomingtonanarchistblackcross@riseup.net). All money will go directly to prisoners. The fund currently supports Michael Kimble, Jennifer Rose, Eric King, Sean Swain, and Marius Mason.

To download this publication, please go to [bloomingtonabc.noblogs.org](http://bloomingtonabc.noblogs.org).

Front photo is of Sean Swain. Back cover art by Sean Swain.

Thanks to the Bloomington crew for all their hard work on this project! Thanks also to Michael, Jennifer, Marius, Eric, Noah, Thomas, Sean, Julio, Patrick, Rochelle, Pepe, Brandon Oden, SOLECAST, Argyle crew, TC from BC, Peter and Fifth Estate, the Burning Books crew, Little Black Cart, Gloo Factory, Final Straw radio, MJ from Idaho, the Squashed Crew, Matt D, Risa, Cal, Dave, Olivia, the Wabanaki People, Owl, Mini, Baba Yaga and the North Woods green anarchist horde.

-Fire Ant

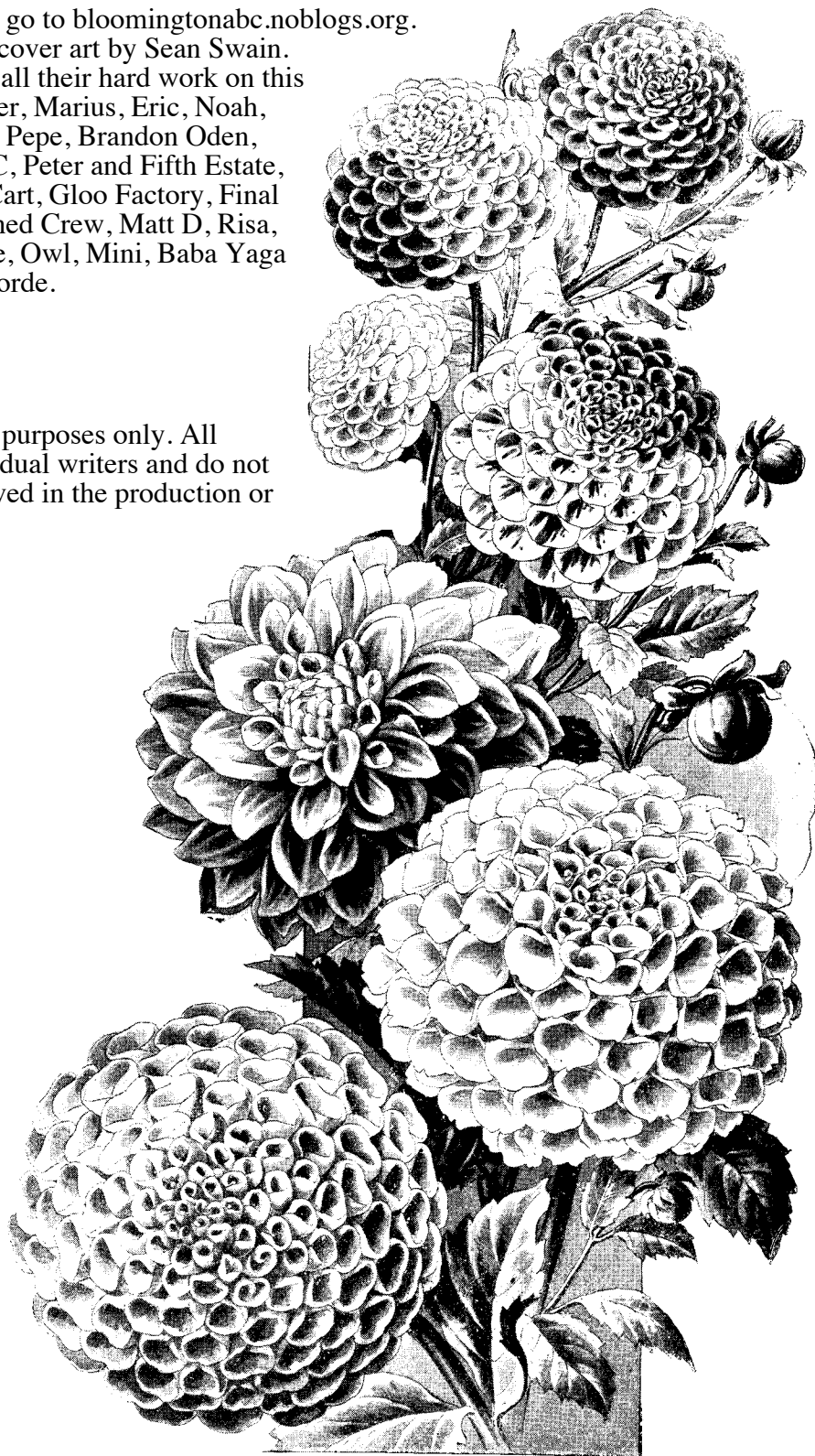
## Disclaimer

This publication is for entertainment purposes only. All opinions and views belong to the individual writers and do not represent other writers or anyone involved in the production or distribution of this publication.

## Hope Is An Open Road

Hope is an open road  
long traveled and never ending.  
We continue on and on  
reading the signs along the way.  
We stop at the road's intersections  
and make decisions galore.  
Some good, some bad.  
We circle back again  
to the main highway,  
and continue in the best direction.  
We can sometimes backtrack  
or go off-road into dirt,  
but then we correct our path  
toward an ultimate destination.  
No matter which way we go,  
or if we get lost along the way,  
there is always a road  
backward or forward,  
or detours and rest stops.  
Then, when we're on the road again,  
always more road to travel.  
There is always hope!

Jennifer Rose  
Salinas Valley State Prison



## A Letter from a Friend

Dear Fire Ant,

I wanted to quickly reach out and thank you for sending the latest issue of Fire Ant. It arrived at a much needed time. Co-vid finally hit the prison here. We were all sent to the hole for 11 to 14 days (sick or not). It was a mess the way staff handled the situation. They even blamed us for getting co-vid. The only way for the virus to get in here is by staff bringing it in. They thanked us for "fucking up their lives", and when they let us out of the hole they took away access to the tvs as a punishment for getting co-vid from them. Thankfully, no one suffered any extreme effects from co-vid. I don't watch tv here, but the fact that they blamed us, said we put their staff at risk (not the other way around), and came up with punishments, is insane. But we know how the state behaves. This is no surprise. Anyway, the time in the hole with no change of clothes, contact with the outside, and even shittier processed food while being sick was not a good combination. But, they let our mail in on a few days. I received some AK Press books, three letters, and Fire Ant. It was very nice to read and see the names of familiar comrades and friends (I even saw a shout out to me). The content also inspired me to get through my time in the hole in better spirits. I truly thank you for your efforts and send my solidarity to all the sisters and brothers confronting this wretched system of incarceration from the inside or the outside.

The morning after I got out of the hole, I saw a fox running across the snow followed by five deer and one more fox. One day I will run free and wild through the snow like them, my tracks telling the story of my newly acquired freedom. Until then I am keeping my spirits up for myself and all our comrades. Fight like hell!

-Anonymous

## Call for Unity in Texas by "Z" at Dirty Darrington Slave Camp

Hey there, this is an important time for Texas. So this message is going to be directed to all prisoners at Dirty Darrington. If there was ever a time to unconditionally cease all forms of prison slavery, it is now. Fact: city council members are speaking to us, letting us know they are not standing for prison slavery, and neither should you!

This is not about Texas Department of Corrections anymore. They lost that image as soon as George Floyd took his final breath! The City is speaking to us. We need to come to our senses and peacefully stop working; and demand parole guideline reform and pay wages. State representatives are now watching Darrington Unit. They need us to move and reach toward them now. This is our cue.

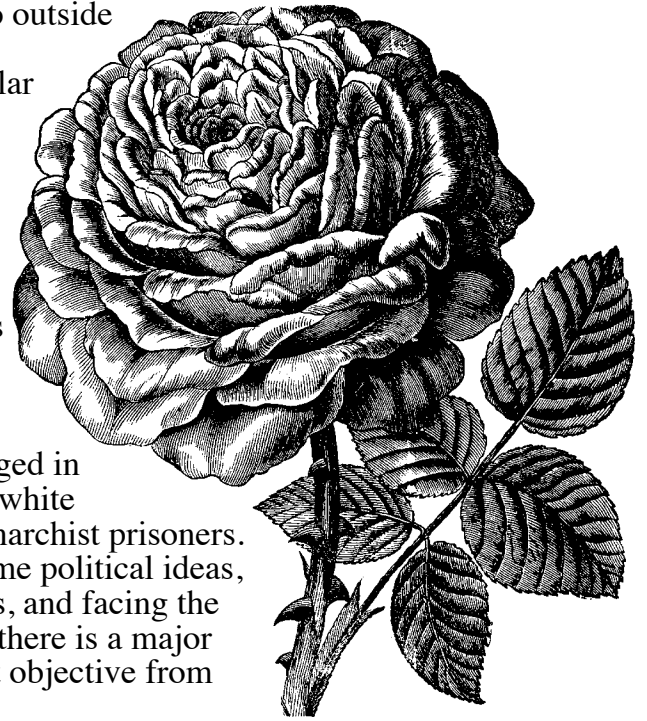
Stated loud and proud by mayor Sylvester Turner's administration, and politicians who care and want to end prison slavery. Brothers unite, and let them hear you at the state capitol. This will be the historic moment we've all been dreaming of, don't miss out brothers, your freedom is real close. Lay it down, peacefully. Let prison slavery die alone, as it should. I love ya'll. We are standing with you in solidarity on E-LINE/ Ad. Seg.



## Support anarchists and Anti-Fascist Prisoners by Jennifer Rose

A couple of years ago, around 2017, I helped co-found and organize the Fire Ant collective, an anarchist prisoner solidarity group that publishes a zine and raises funds for imprisoned anarchists. Working with several other imprisoned anarchists, and two outside collectives, Maine Anti-Racist Action and Bloomington Anarchist Black Cross, we have managed to put out a regular zine. We are now on our 8th issue, and have continued to successfully operate an anarchist prisoner fund, which directly supports several imprisoned anarchists with quarterly commissary funds.

We found this long term project necessary due to the fact that other existing political prisoner support groups such as the Jericho Movement have focused mainly on left wing political prisoners, associated with communist party organizations or national liberation struggles. These movements, usually supported by guerrilla army units engaged in an armed struggle against colonial-states, imperialism and white supremacy, did not usually recognize or even respond to anarchist prisoners. The reason for this is that although sharing many of the same political ideas, and fighting alongside each other against the same enemies, and facing the same types of state political repression and imprisonment, there is a major difference. Anarchist prisoners have a completely different objective from leftist political prisoners. Anarchy not Statism!

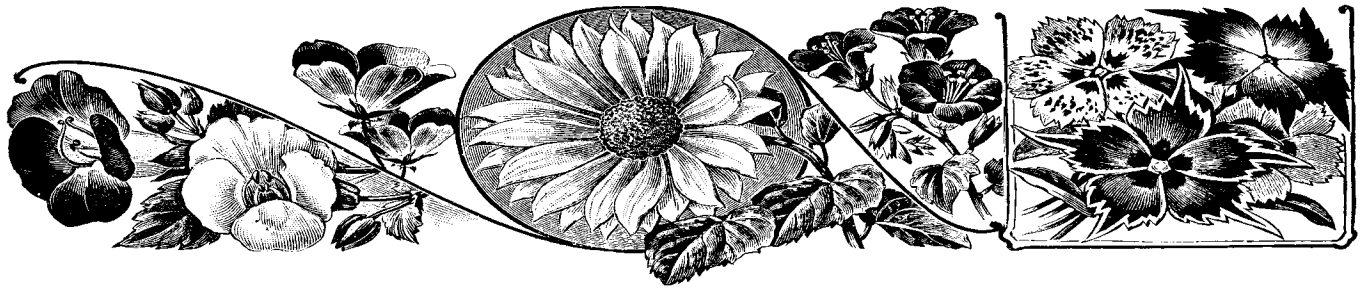


Black liberation movements and other anti-imperialist/ communist political prisoners are part of a political party organization that seeks to either seize state power, or declare an independent state. They seek official recognition of their authority by the international community, as established by the United Nations and international law. Whereas, anarchists seek to abolish state power and all authority. Anarchist prisoners do not even claim any political status, and are actually anti-political. Even though anarchists support the Black liberation struggle, and other anti-imperialist struggles, and the concept of people's liberation and resistance movements that fight against white supremacy, genocide, patriarchy, slavery, and other systems of oppression; we oppose the state and its authority as a legitimate solution.

Historically, there has been a lack of popular support for anarchists prisoners, who have not usually been recognized by existing support groups as "political". A few exceptions have been prisoners such as Kuwasi Balagoon and Bill Dunne.

The only prisoner support group that has focused mainly on anarchist prisoners, while also working to organize support for Black Panther/ BLA prisoners and other prisoners in general, has been autonomous Anarchist Black Cross groups. ABC groups are self-organized and volunteer-run collectives across the world. ABC provides mutual aid and support to all prisoners and builds solidarity against prisons with abolitionist groups. For more information, check out [anarchistblackcross.net](http://anarchistblackcross.net) and [bloomingtonabc.noblogs.org](http://bloomingtonabc.noblogs.org).





## **Torture Claims Against US Proceed in International Court by Sean Swain**

Ohio prison officials made two mistakes. First, they tortured me. Then, they let me live. Now, for the first time in history, claims of domestic torture against the United States will proceed to pretrial in the InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights as case number 14-146.

In 2012, I was tortured for a year by Ohio prison officials, admittedly for exposing their illegal policies. I filed my claims in the IACHR under the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, the founding charter of the Organization of American States. I could claim no violation of any other human rights treaty, because the US is the only member state of the OAS to refuse to recognize any of the human rights treaties.

I didn't know it, but Ohio officials stole all of my mail from the IACHR for years, so I wouldn't be able to fight the case. Only after I was illegally renditioned to Virginia prisons in 2019, did I learn the US answered my claims and accepted international court jurisdiction.

They never do that. Never. But here they did.

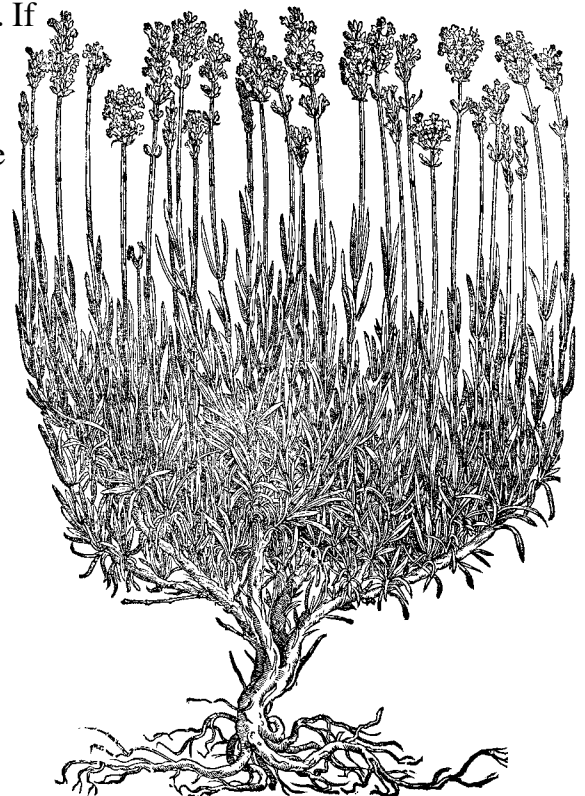
The US denial was based on provable lies. It essentially said officials did not segregate me in 2012 and tortured me for whistle-blowing; they segregated me in 2012 for events that did not happen until 2013. In other words, I was punished in 2012 for events in 2013.

With help, I recorded testimony over the phone that was considered by the IACHR, exposing the lies. They then ruled on December 3rd, 2020 to let my case proceed. If it goes to trial, I can expose US domestic torture to the world.

Now Virginia's corrections operations chief, A. David Robinson, likely on request from Ohio prisons' director Annette Chambers-Smith, has cut off all of my communications, black-siting me in place. No phone, no email, no visits. Robinson is involved in an inter-state conspiracy to conceal Ohio prison officials crimes against humanity.

Those efforts to suppress the truth of domestic torture and human rights violations continue to fail. Historically, it seems.

To contact the IACHR:  
InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights  
Organization of American States  
1889 F St NW  
Washington, DC  
20006  
ph: 202-370-9000  
fax: 202-458-3992  
email: [cidhoea@oas.org](mailto:cidhoea@oas.org)  
site: [cidh.org](http://cidh.org)







## 2020 VISION by Comrade Kado

As I sit here on the Eastham Unit and another day of solitude comes to a close, I'm awestruck at how blind people are, listening to prisoners here in solitary spew animosity, threats, and arguments at one another in defense of their "political views" or favorite candidate for CEO of the Tyrannical Organization, coined "Government", which ironically is responsible for the very rusted cages which they are confined to. Crazier still, less than 1 in 10 have ever voted and, realistically, none of them ever will do so in the future. Wow, really?

People out on the streets clash and go so far as to hurt people they love, emotionally, physically or psychologically because of their opposing "political views". It's sad when this nonsense invades people's lives so absolutely as to seed itself into their very hearts. Masses of people work themselves up into a fever pitch of wild emotions and hold to their politics, like a favorite candidate becomes this incorruptible saint and damn you to hell if you don't agree.

I'll tell you – I have nothing for government laws or rule. Shoutout to my anarchists in the struggle for freedom!! It seems to me people are so indoctrinated with rulership, or slavery for lack of a better word, that when each form of government, every system or set of policies prove corrupt, they automatically seek another. I cannot seem to understand such logic! Why are people so ready for rule?

The hard truth is that it's all they know. Few, if not most, people could never reach the conclusion without help, that we don't *need* government to live! Wow, what a concept! To be governed is to be ruled. I've heard arguments about the need for laws for a safe world. First – the world's not safe anywhere. Next – all laws are merely a source of revenue for an elitist and oppressive entity which seeks to gain by any means all the wealth that they desire. Oh, and those same laws don't apply to them: "qualified immunity", "diplomatic immunity" and a million bilaws and loopholes for their lawyers to smile and cite from. Believe me, it's the laws which enable many asshole types and tie the hands of the oppressed.

In a social order based on the free grouping of individuals nobody needs to stand over you to tell you what's wrong or right to do. It's wrong to think that's necessary. If you have a single argument for why laws of any kind are needed to function as we, the mass of humanity, move about our lives, then feel free to debate it with me.

People are afraid of the unknown. Most couldn't fathom a life without a system. Cash currency, 9 to 5, taxes... Politicians dangle false "freedoms" and promises of posh living to people who know deep down that their slavery to rule is eating them slowly like a cancer. They know that they rage inside to break free of that oppression and the silver tongued politician offers a slavery with more wiggle room while saving them from the unknown, of the freedom they could choose. So people vent that fear and anger upon one another while the elites fist bump in the background. Stop enslaving yourself to promises of freedom from a ruler. Be free.

Solidarity,

K@DO



## Attention Comrades!

- Noah Coffin is still in solitary confinement. It's been almost 6 years now. Please contact the head of GRAD program on Ellis unit, Jay Hart, 936-437-6118. Also, request the numbers for Eva Schriver, coordinator of GRAD, and Lt Valdez, head of STG over Huntsville Texas. The message should be this to all three: "Noah Coffin has been approved for GRAD for 14 months now. Why is he still in solitary confinement?"
- Support Eric King's legal defense. Eric is facing new, trumped up charges. Please go to [supportericking.org](http://supportericking.org) to donate money. Also, he can now receive books from publishers. If we all pull together, we can help Eric make it through this difficult time.
- Support Michael Kimball's legal fund. Due to changes in Alabama's sentencing guidelines, Michael has a real chance at being released. Please donate to his legal fund at [actionnetwork.org](http://actionnetwork.org). If we all did a little something, a lot would get done.

## Support the Clarion Book Project!

Prison seeks to isolate our friends behind walls both physical and psychological. Separated from loved ones, anarchist prisoners are removed from the daily dialogue and exchange of ideas that give birth to liberatory projects and experiments. Imprisoned anarchists will find very little in prison libraries and network television to keep them informed on outside struggles, and, in absence of comrades on the outside mailing in magazines and books, they are left without access to subversive literature of any kind.

Since 2014, Bloomington Anarchist Black Cross has been sending monthly packages of literature to a handful of anarchist prisoners in the United States. These generally feature recently-published anarchist periodicals and zines, historical texts, and articles on current events. In addition, we send packages of books every other month. The project has fostered dialogue on current struggles, enabled US anarchist prisoners to express solidarity to anarchist prisoners around the world, and led to sharing of anarchist literature throughout the prisons where our friends are held captive.

While we have been happy to quietly work on this initiative without publicizing our efforts, we would like to expand its capacity. While we are able to print zines, we lack the funds to regularly purchase quality anarchist books for our imprisoned friends.

If you are an anarchist publisher who feels affinity with this project and would like to send us books for distribution to anarchist prisoners, please email us at [bloomingtonanarchistblackcross@riseup.net](mailto:bloomingtonanarchistblackcross@riseup.net).

We are in this for the long-haul, and appreciate the help.

with toner in our DNA,

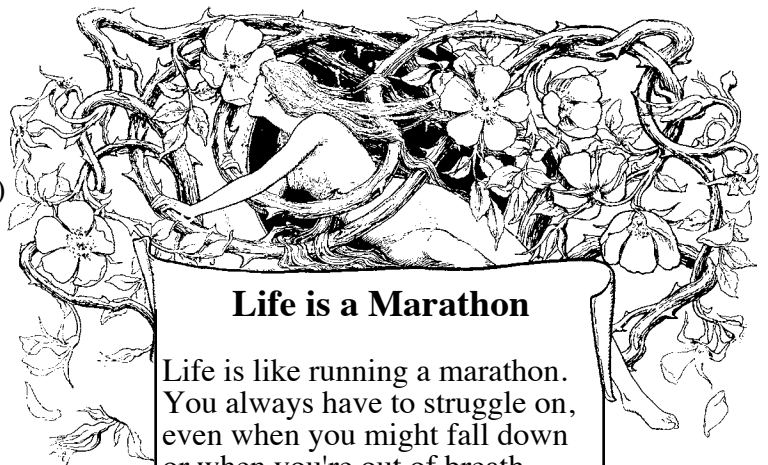
Bloomington Anarchist Black Cross

[bloomingtonabc.noblogs.org](http://bloomingtonabc.noblogs.org)

## Until we are free by Eric King

(a poem about just how fleeting visitation is in prison)

My wrists are chained cold  
but my heart beats pure lava  
waiting for your image to grace  
the 12 inch screen that contains my dreams  
fingertips graze the screen, can you feel me?  
60 minutes until lights go out  
why can't I freeze time just once?  
why can't we both have what we want?  
I want to live in your deep almond eyes  
somewhere safe where we can always hide  
where we can turn off the pain & turn off the lights  
panic sets in, when the thoughts begin  
what if I never see my love again?  
every second separated is its own lifetime  
trying to focus now on every expression  
cause goddammit when you are gone I need to remember  
before we're staring at blanks and the clock reads zero  
is your flight boarding to carry you away from me?  
i'll see you in my dreams  
until we are free



### Life is a Marathon

Life is like running a marathon.  
You always have to struggle on,  
even when you might fall down  
or when you're out of breath.  
You must push and pull and fight  
as if you're battling death!

Life is also very exciting.  
We feel the windy, breezy air  
blowing furiously past  
as it cools our skin and face.  
The feeling of sweet freedom  
as we strive toward winning the  
race!

Jennifer Rose  
Salinas Valley State Prison

## **The Ballad of Reading Gaol**

### **By Oscar Wilde**

I  
He did not wear his scarlet coat,  
For blood and wine are red,  
And blood and wine were on his hands  
When they found him with the dead,  
The poor dead woman whom he loved,  
And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men  
In a suit of shabby gray;  
A cricket cap was on his head,  
And his step seemed light and gay;  
But I never saw a man who looked  
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little tent of blue  
Which prisoners call the sky,  
And at every drifting cloud that went  
With sails of silver by.

I walked, with other souls in pain,  
Within another ring,  
And was wondering if the man had done  
A great or little thing,  
When a voice behind me whispered low,  
"That fellow's got to swing."

Dear Christ! the very prison walls  
Suddenly seemed to reel,  
And the sky above my head became  
Like a casque of scorching steel;  
And, though I was a soul in pain,  
My pain I could not feel.

I only knew what hunted thought  
Quickened his step, and why  
He looked upon the garish day  
With such a wistful eye;  
The man had killed the thing he loved,  
And so he had to die.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,  
By each let this be heard,  
Some do it with a bitter look,  
Some with a flattering word,  
The coward does it with a kiss,  
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,  
And some when they are old;

Some strangle with the hands of Lust,  
Some with the hands of Gold:  
The kindest use a knife, because  
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,  
Some sell, and others buy;  
Some do the deed with many tears,  
And some without a sigh:  
For each man kills the thing he loves,  
Yet each man does not die.

He does not die a death of shame  
On a day of dark disgrace,  
Nor have a noose about his neck,  
Nor a cloth upon his face,  
Nor drop feet foremost through the floor  
Into an empty space.

He does not sit with silent men  
Who watch him night and day;  
Who watch him when he tries to weep,  
And when he tries to pray;  
Who watch him lest himself should rob  
The prison of its prey.

He does not wake at dawn to see  
Dread figures throng his room,  
The shivering Chaplain robed in white,  
The Sheriff stern with gloom,  
And the Governor all in shiny black,  
With the yellow face of Doom.

He does not rise in piteous haste  
To put on convict-clothes,  
While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes  
Each new and nerve-twitched pose,  
Fingering a watch whose little ticks  
Are like horrible hammer-blows.

He does not know that sickening thirst  
That sands one's throat, before  
The hangman with his gardener's gloves  
Slips through the padded door,  
And binds one with three leathern thongs,  
That the throat may thirst no more.

He does not bend his head to hear  
The Burial Office read,  
Nor while the terror of his soul  
Tells him he is not dead,  
Cross his own coffin, as he moves  
Into the hideous shed.

He does not stare upon the air  
Through a little roof of glass:



He does not pray with lips of clay  
For his agony to pass;  
Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek  
The kiss of Caiaphas.

II  
Six weeks the guardsman walked the yard,  
In the suit of shabby gray:  
His cricket cap was on his head,  
And his step seemed light and gay,  
But I never saw a man who looked  
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little tent of blue  
Which prisoners call the sky,  
And at every wandering cloud that trailed  
Its ravelled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do  
Those witless men who dare  
To try to rear the changeling Hope  
In the cave of black Despair:  
He only looked upon the sun,  
And drank the morning air.

He did not wring his hands nor weep,  
Nor did he peek or pine,  
But he drank the air as though it held  
Some healthful anodyne;  
With open mouth he drank the sun  
As though it had been wine!

And I and all the souls in pain,  
Who tramped the other ring,  
Forgot if we ourselves had done  
A great or little thing,  
And watched with gaze of dull amaze  
The man who had to swing.

For strange it was to see him pass  
With a step so light and gay,  
And strange it was to see him look  
So wistfully at the day,  
And strange it was to think that he  
Had such a debt to pay.

For oak and elm have pleasant leaves  
That in the spring-time shoot:  
But grim to see is the gallows-tree,  
With its alder-bitten root,  
And, green or dry, a man must die  
Before it bears its fruit!  
The loftiest place is that seat of grace  
For which all worldlings try:

But who would stand in hempen band  
Upon a scaffold high,  
And through a murderer's collar take  
His last look at the sky?

It is sweet to dance to violins  
When Love and Life are fair:  
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes  
Is delicate and rare:  
But it is not sweet with nimble feet  
To dance upon the air!

So with curious eyes and sick surmise  
We watched him day by day,  
And wondered if each one of us  
Would end the self-same way,  
For none can tell to what red Hell  
His sightless soul may stray.

At last the dead man walked no more  
Amongst the Trial Men,  
And I knew that he was standing up  
In the black dock's dreadful pen,  
And that never would I see his face  
In God's sweet world again.

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm  
We had crossed each other's way:  
But we made no sign, we said no word,  
We had no word to say;  
For we did not meet in the holy night,  
But in the shameful day.

A prison wall was round us both,  
Two outcast men we were:  
The world had thrust us from its heart,  
And God from out His care:  
And the iron gin that waits for Sin  
Had caught us in its snare.

III  
In Debtors' Yard the stones are hard,  
And the dripping wall is high,  
So it was there he took the air  
Beneath the leaden sky,  
And by each side a Warder walked,  
For fear the man might die.

Or else he sat with those who watched  
His anguish night and day;  
Who watched him when he rose to weep,  
And when he crouched to pray;  
Who watched him lest himself should rob  
Their scaffold of its prey.  
The Governor was strong upon  
The Regulations Act:

The Doctor said that Death was but  
A scientific fact:  
And twice a day the Chaplain called,  
And left a little tract.

And twice a day he smoked his pipe,  
And drank his quart of beer:  
His soul was resolute, and held  
No hiding-place for fear;  
He often said that he was glad  
The hangman's hands were near.

But why he said so strange a thing  
No Warder dared to ask:  
For he to whom a watcher's doom  
Is given as his task,  
Must set a lock upon his lips,  
And make his face a mask.

Or else he might be moved, and try  
To comfort or console:  
And what should Human Pity do  
Pent up in Murderer's Hole?  
What word of grace in such a place  
Could help a brother's soul?

With slouch and swing around the ring  
We trod the Fools' Parade!  
We did not care: we knew we were  
The Devil's Own Brigade:  
And shaven head and feet of lead  
Make a merry masquerade.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds  
With blunt and bleeding nails;  
We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,  
And cleaned the shining rails:  
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,  
And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,  
We turned the dusty drill:  
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,  
And sweated on the mill:  
But in the heart of every man  
Terror was lying still.

So still it lay that every day  
Crawled like a weed-clogged wave:  
And we forgot the bitter lot  
That waits for fool and knave,  
Till once, as we tramped in from work,  
We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole  
Gaped for a living thing;

The very mud cried out for blood  
To the thirsty asphalt ring:  
And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair  
Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent  
On Death and Dread and Doom:  
The hangman, with his little bag,  
Went shuffling through the gloom:  
And each man trembled as he crept  
Into his numbered tomb.

That night the empty corridors  
Were full of forms of Fear,  
And up and down the iron town  
Stole feet we could not hear,  
And through the bars that hide the stars  
White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams  
In a pleasant meadow-land,  
The watchers watched him as he slept,  
And could not understand  
How one could sleep so sweet a sleep  
With a hangman close at hand.

But there is no sleep when men must weep  
Who never yet have wept:  
So we—the fool, the fraud, the knave—  
That endless vigil kept,  
And through each brain on hands of pain  
Another's terror crept.

Alas! it is a fearful thing  
To feel another's guilt!  
For, right within, the sword of Sin  
Pierced to its poisoned hilt,  
And as molten lead were the tears we shed  
For the blood we had not spilt.

The Warders with their shoes of felt  
Crept by each padlocked door,  
And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,  
Gray figures on the floor,  
And wondered why men knelt to pray  
Who never prayed before.

All through the night we knelt and prayed,  
Mad mourners of a corpse!  
The troubled plumes of midnight were  
The plumes upon a hearse:  
And bitter wine upon a sponge  
Was the savour of Remorse.

The gray cock crew, the red cock crew,  
But never came the day:

And crooked shapes of Terror crouched,  
In the corners where we lay:  
And each evil sprite that walks by night  
Before us seemed to play.

They glided past, they glided fast,  
Like travellers through a mist:  
They mocked the moon in a rigadoon  
Of delicate turn and twist,  
And with formal pace and loathsome grace  
The phantoms kept their tryst.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,  
Slim shadows hand in hand:  
About, about, in ghostly rout  
They trod a saraband:  
And damned grotesques made arabesques,  
Like the wind upon the sand!

With the pirouettes of marionettes,  
They tripped on pointed tread:  
But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,  
As their grisly masque they led,  
And loud they sang, and long they sang,  
For they sang to wake the dead.

"Oho!" they cried, "the world is wide,  
But fettered limbs go lame!  
And once, or twice, to throw the dice  
Is a gentlemanly game,  
But he does not win who plays with Sin  
In the Secret House of Shame."

No things of air these antics were,  
That frolicked with such glee:  
To men whose lives were held in gyves,  
And whose feet might not go free,  
Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,  
Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound;  
Some wheeled in smirking pairs;  
With the mincing step of a demirep  
Some sidled up the stairs:  
And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,  
Each helped us at our prayers.

The morning wind began to moan,  
But still the night went on:  
Through its giant loom the web of gloom  
Crept till each thread was spun:  
And, as we prayed, we grew afraid  
Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round  
The weeping prison-wall:

Till like a wheel of turning steel  
We felt the minutes crawl:  
O moaning wind! what had we done  
To have such a seneschal?

At last I saw the shadowed bars,  
Like a lattice wrought in lead,  
Move right across the whitewashed wall  
That faced my three-plank bed,  
And I knew that somewhere in the world  
God's dreadful dawn was red.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,  
At seven all was still,  
But the sough and swing of a mighty wing  
The prison seemed to fill,  
For the Lord of Death with icy breath  
Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,  
Nor ride a moon-white steed.  
Three yards of cord and a sliding board  
Are all the gallows' need:  
So with rope of shame the Herald came  
To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a fen  
Of filthy darkness grope:  
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,  
Or to give our anguish scope:  
Something was dead in each of us,  
And what was dead was Hope.

For Man's grim Justice goes its way  
And will not swerve aside:  
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,  
It has a deadly stride:  
With iron heel it slays the strong,  
The monstrous parricide!

We waited for the stroke of eight:  
Each tongue was thick with thirst:  
For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate  
That makes a man accursed,  
And Fate will use a running noose  
For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,  
Save to wait for the sign to come:  
So, like things of stone in a valley lone,  
Quiet we sat and dumb:  
But each man's heart beat thick and quick,  
Like a madman on a drum!  
With sudden shock the prison-clock  
Smote on the shivering air,  
And from all the gaol rose up a wail

Of impotent despair,  
Like the sound the frightened marshes hear  
From some leper in his lair.

And as one sees most fearful things  
In the crystal of a dream,  
We saw the greasy hempen rope  
Hooked to the blackened beam,  
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare  
Strangled into a scream.

And all the woe that moved him so  
That he gave that bitter cry,  
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,  
None knew so well as I:  
For he who lives more lives than one  
More deaths than one must die.

IV  
There is no chapel on the day  
On which they hang a man:  
The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,  
Or his face is far too wan,  
Or there is that written in his eyes  
Which none should look upon.

So they kept us close till nigh on noon,  
And then they rang the bell,  
And the Warders with their jingling keys  
Opened each listening cell,  
And down the iron stair we tramped,  
Each from his separate Hell.

Out into God's sweet air we went,  
But not in wonted way,  
For this man's face was white with fear,  
And that man's face was gray,  
And I never saw sad men who looked  
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little tent of blue  
We prisoners called the sky,  
And at every careless cloud that passed  
In happy freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all  
Who walked with downcast head,  
And knew that, had each got his due,  
They should have died instead:  
He had but killed a thing that lived,  
Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time  
Wakes a dead soul to pain,

And draws it from its spotted shroud,  
And makes it bleed again,  
And makes it bleed great gouts of blood,  
And makes it bleed in vain!

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb  
With crooked arrows starred,  
Silently we went round and round  
The slippery asphalt yard;  
Silently we went round and round,  
And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,  
And through each hollow mind  
The Memory of dreadful things  
Rushed like a dreadful wind,  
And Horror stalked before each man,  
And Terror crept behind.

The Warders strutted up and down,  
And kept their herd of brutes,  
Their uniforms were spick and span,  
And they wore their Sunday suits,  
But we knew the work they had been at,  
By the quicklime on their boots.

For where a grave had opened wide,  
There was no grave at all:  
Only a stretch of mud and sand  
By the hideous prison-wall,  
And a little heap of burning lime,  
That the man should have his pall.

For he has a pall, this wretched man,  
Such as few men can claim:  
Deep down below a prison-yard,  
Naked for greater shame,  
He lies, with fetters on each foot,  
Wrapt in a sheet of flame!

And all the while the burning lime  
Eats flesh and bone away,  
It eats the brittle bone by night,  
And the soft flesh by day,  
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,  
But it eats the heart away.

For three long years they will not sow  
Or root or seedling there:  
For three long years the unblessed spot  
Will sterile be and bare,  
And look upon the wondering sky  
With unapproachful stare.

They think a murderer's heart would taint  
Each simple seed they sow.

It is not true! God's kindly earth  
Is kindlier than men know,  
And the red rose would but glow more red,  
The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!  
Out of his heart a white!  
For who can say by what strange way,  
Christ brings His will to light,  
Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore  
Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?

But neither milk-white rose nor red  
May bloom in prison air;  
The shard, the pebble, and the flint,  
Are what they give us there:  
For flowers have been known to heal  
A common man's despair.

So never will wine-red rose or white,  
Petal by petal, fall  
On that stretch of mud and sand that lies  
By the hideous prison-wall,  
To tell the men who tramp the yard  
That God's Son died for all.

Yet though the hideous prison-wall  
Still hems him round and round,  
And a spirit may not walk by night  
That is with fetters bound,  
And a spirit may but weep that lies  
In such unholy ground,

He is at peace—this wretched man—  
At peace, or will be soon:  
There is no thing to make him mad,  
Nor does Terror walk at noon,  
For the lampless Earth in which he lies  
Has neither Sun nor Moon.

They hanged him as a beast is hanged:  
They did not even toll  
A requiem that might have brought  
Rest to his startled soul,  
But hurriedly they took him out,  
And hid him in a hole.

They stripped him of his canvas clothes,  
And gave him to the flies:  
They mocked the swollen purple throat,  
And the stark and staring eyes:  
And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud  
In which their convict lies.

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray  
By his dishonoured grave:

Nor mark it with that blessed Cross  
That Christ for sinners gave,  
Because the man was one of those  
Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well; he has but passed  
To Life's appointed bourne:  
And alien tears will fill for him  
Pity's long-broken urn,  
For his mourners will be outcast men,  
And outcasts always mourn.

V  
I know not whether Laws be right,  
Or whether Laws be wrong;  
All that we know who lie in gaol  
Is that the wall is strong;  
And that each day is like a year,  
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law  
That men have made for Man,  
Since first Man took his brother's life,  
And the sad world began,  
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff  
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise it were  
If each could know the same—  
That every prison that men build  
Is built with bricks of shame,  
And bound with bars lest Christ should see  
How men their brothers maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,  
And blind the goodly sun:  
And they do well to hide their Hell,  
For in it things are done  
That Son of God nor son of Man  
Ever should look upon!

The vilest deeds like poison weeds  
Bloom well in prison-air:  
It is only what is good in Man  
That wastes and withers there:  
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,  
And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child  
Till it weeps both night and day:  
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,  
And gibe the old and gray,  
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,  
And none a word may say.  
Each narrow cell in which we dwell  
Is a foul and dark latrine,

And the fetid breath of living Death  
Chokes up each grated screen,  
And all, but Lust, is turned to dust  
In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink  
Creeps with a loathsome slime,  
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales  
Is full of chalk and lime,  
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks  
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst  
Like asp with adder fight,  
We have little care of prison fare,  
For what chills and kills outright  
Is that every stone one lifts by day  
Becomes one's heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,  
And twilight in one's cell,  
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,  
Each in his separate Hell,  
And the silence is more awful far  
Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near  
To speak a gentle word:  
And the eye that watches through the door  
Is pitiless and hard:  
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,  
With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain  
Degraded and alone:  
And some men curse, and some men weep,  
And some men make no moan:  
But God's eternal Laws are kind  
And break the heart of stone.

And every human heart that breaks,  
In prison-cell or yard,  
Is as that broken box that gave  
Its treasure to the Lord,  
And filled the unclean leper's house  
With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah! happy they whose hearts can break  
And peace of pardon win!  
How else may man make straight his plan  
And cleanse his soul from Sin?  
How else but through a broken heart  
May Lord Christ enter in?

And he of the swollen purple throat,  
And the stark and staring eyes,

Waits for the holy hands that took  
The Thief to Paradise;  
And a broken and a contrite heart  
The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law  
Gave him three weeks of life,  
Three little weeks in which to heal  
His soul of his soul's strife,  
And cleanse from every blot of blood  
The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,  
The hand that held the steel:  
For only blood can wipe out blood,  
And only tears can heal:  
And the crimson stain that was of Cain  
Became Christ's snow-white seal.

VI  
In Reading gaol by Reading town  
There is a pit of shame,  
And in it lies a wretched man  
Eaten by teeth of flame,  
In a burning winding-sheet he lies,  
And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the dead,  
In silence let him lie:  
No need to waste the foolish tear,  
Or heave the windy sigh:  
The man had killed the thing he loved,  
And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love,  
By all let this be heard,  
Some do it with a bitter look,  
Some with a flattering word,  
The coward does it with a kiss,  
The brave man with a sword.





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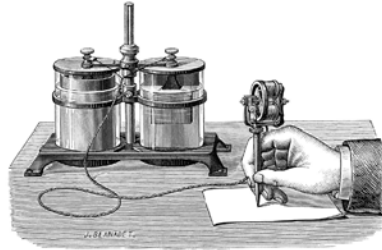
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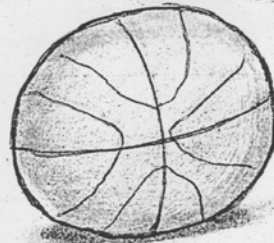


WALT DISNEY FIRST  
DREW ME AS A CHARACTER  
IN BLACK FACE!

HE SUPPORTED HITLER  
AND HATED JEWS!

NOW, AS WE COMBAT  
STRUCTURAL RACISM,  
ENJOY THE NBA RESTART  
IN A BUILDING WITH  
DISNEY'S NAME  
ON IT!

BLACK LIVES  
MATTER!



~~GWXIN~~  
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