



45TH ANNIVERSARY

BIG TRUTH THAT'S STILL TRUE

This month is the 45th anniversary of HKF's Prison-Ashram Project. We're honored to continue this work, sharing ancient truths and time-tested practices with you. We move forward in gratitude and awe, watching Human Kindness Foundation grow. The "old" truth hasn't lost its power or its relevance. As always, whether you live inside an institution or anywhere else, we hope your connection with HKF points you to some simple ancient wisdom that inspires and uplifts you.

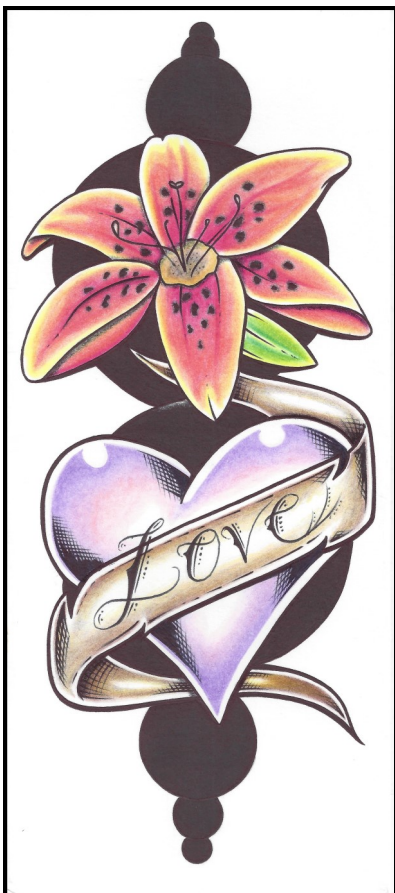
This newsletter contains part of a talk given by our co-founder, the late Bo Lozoff. His words that we share here and in his books are often challenging. Bo was committed to shaking up the beliefs and habits that keep us limited, and he was never interested in holding back to make

the message easier to hear. So why is it worth challenging ourselves and our friends? Because the potential benefit is enormous. **Can you imagine a life of truly knowing that God is bigger than ALL suffering?** Can you imagine what your normal day would be like if you knew—fully, with all certainty—that life is ultimately good? That's the powerful truth that's available to everyone, no matter how they've been treated in this world. And it's a big enough truth to create a project that is still going strong after 45 years.

We hope you'll reflect on Bo's message. If it challenges you, we hope you'll explore it very deeply. Like Bo, we believe you are bigger than everything that has happened to you. We hope you'll spend some time looking into that idea for yourself. —Catherine



Catherine and Sita at the HKF office. Photo by Hannah Peele, who has been a dedicated HKF volunteer for many years.



A Note From Sita:

How could Bo and I have predicted 45 years ago that the adventures of our youth would lead to the birth of the life-changing Prison-Ashram Project? It would have been enough that we felt the nourishment of helping loved ones during their time in prison. It would have been enough that we were able to work with our friend and mentor, Ram Dass. It would have been enough that Bo was moved to write We're All Doing Time, which has become a 'Prison Bible,' transformative for so many of our friends in the prison system. But the real miracle, the brightest candle on our 45th birthday cake, is the way Bo and I and each of you have arrived at this wonderful moment simply by creating and spreading Kindness, one book, one letter, one visit at a time. With every day, my joy and gratitude grows. I love you.

Life Is Good

Transcribed & edited from a talk given by Bo Lozoff in Costa Mesa CA, in March, 2006



Bo and Sita, 2006

I hope that every time we have a meeting like this, we change ourselves. I'm hoping to be a deeper, more inspired and committed person when I leave the room tonight, and I invite you to do the same. My motivation to change is hard-wired at full tilt. I want to change as much as possible every time I meet somebody or engage in any kind of activity, experience or exchange, because that's really what it's about—changing. Constantly. Shedding the layers of the onion until we're ripe, deep, compassionate, unafraid, simple people. I have never seen a time in our national life that it's more appropriate or would be more beneficial to do that. There are people in horrendous suffering all around us, all over the world.

There's also a groundswell among religious people and religious clergy to get rid of the mystical, the transcendent, the miraculous. There's an Episcopal bishop who's just about made his whole career out of telling Christians they don't have to believe in "hokey" things like the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection to be a good Christian—he says religion is just about goodness; about human ethics.

Well, no, it's not. The Virgin Birth and Resurrection are child's play to the Holy Force that all religions are about. Nothing difficult about believing that at all. This is not a secular world; this is a mystical world. And it's not like, "Well, if I believe it, it's true for me but if you don't believe it, it's simply not true for you." That's like saying if I believe my heart pumps blood, then that's true for me but if you believe that your heart digests your food, that's true for you. There are certain absolutes that we don't get a choice about. The Transcendent, the Deep, the Real is an absolute. Tens of millions of us, through the ages, have touched that Reality directly and we're called mystics.

What in the East is called the Sanatana Dharma—which roughly means "universal religion"—is based on the truth that **there is a Divine Reality**. Whether you call it God, Buddha Mind, the Great Spirit, the Divine Mother; it is real. Like the Dalai Lama told an interviewer a few years ago:

"Sir, the Buddha was not just a nice man." We're trying to make Jesus and Buddha and all the mystics and masters into nice people. We're trying to say, "I don't need anything deeper than human ethics to believe in. I don't need a crutch." But it's not a crutch. It's all that's real. So that's one thing I just want to lay out at the beginning: I'm not secular. **My life is about touching a Power and a Force that is absolutely real.** I've touched it many times and it's the only thing that makes sense out of all the tough and crazy stuff we go through in the course of our lives. Kabir says, "A moment with the Beloved and the river changes her course." So don't settle for the psychological spirituality that's popular these days: "Whatever you're comfortable with is fine." No, it's not. The Absolute is Real. And you know something? Being comfortable is pretty dull. It's really nice to live

without fear. It's really nice to stop worrying about your comfort. It's really nice to know what Jesus meant when he said, **"Be in the world but not of it."** We never think about the second half of that sentence—"but not of it." I've been an activist since the 1960's. I've dedicated my life to working in the world. But what did He mean, "Be in the world but not of it?" There is something to be of that's so much bigger that we never get burned out on our activism, that we're not just so frustrated and tense. We keep doing work in the world, but, sweet friends, that's not the world we're of. Thank God.

The world we are of is the size of the galaxy. We have unlimited strength to draw on when we know where we are of, in order to work in this struggling, suffering, challenging world with all the contradictions and evils that we are in.

After Sita and I came back from a meeting with the Dalai Lama in India in 1994, I was on the phone with one of my elders, an eighty-five-year-old British Anglican monk, and I said, "Father Murray, His Holiness is so completely in touch with the suffering of his people and the world, he's not in any way detached from anybody's suffering. And yet he's the happiest human being I've ever met in my life. He can hardly say ten words without laughing."



Father Murray's instant response, being a wise man himself, was, "Yes, Bo, and can you imagine how much pain that man has been willing to endure in order to become this happy?" And I got it. There's no Resurrection without the Crucifixion. And so I've just lent myself to that pain. I've shown up time and time again. I'm walking around in a much bigger world than I've ever walked around in. I'm no longer "of this world." It's not just rumors—the things that the wisest, most loving people have handed down to us, like, "Take courage and be of good cheer;" "I'm with you until the end of the world."

It's all literally true. **We're so worried that it's going to hurt. Yes, it is. But we're bigger than anything that can possibly kill us, and that's the secret.** There's a lot of fear in meeting God. But it's okay. We can do it again and again. After we do it the first few times, then we say, "Yeah, I'm afraid but I really want to know God. So yes I'm afraid, but I don't care. I'm going to keep saying 'yes.' I'm going to keep opening up." We change our relationship to fear.

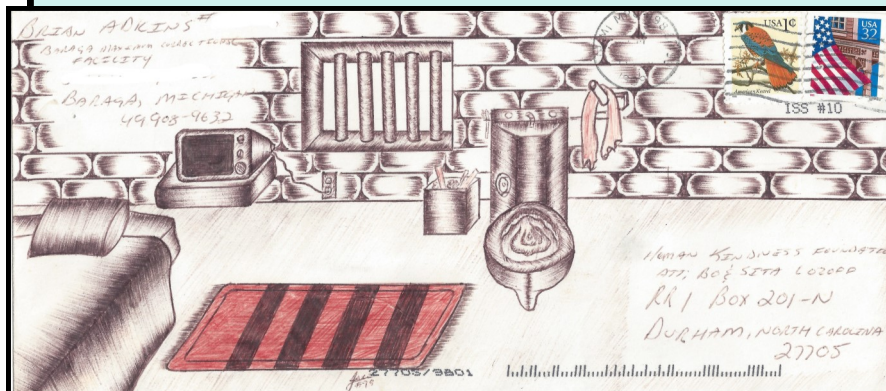
Ram Dass used an analogy of skydiving: We're free falling, and you suddenly reach for your ripcord, and you find you don't have a parachute at all. You start freaking out and you call out to someone like me, "I don't have a parachute!" and I call back to you, "It's okay: there's no ground."

That's us. We do have to leap, but we never hit ground. Life flows and we flow with it, and it's okay because we're people of faith. What it means to be a person of faith is: there's an ultimate Good, not an ultimate randomness or neutrality or chaos. This enormous explosive power of the universe... it's not neutral.



Bo took Father Murray Rogers for a motorcycle ride when Father Murray came to visit HKF sometime around 2002.

It makes you squirm because it really hits the nail on the head. A "selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."



The Light is at hand; it's available to all of us and it's only our false self-protection that keeps us small and limited. We have this popular word, "boundaries." Forget about boundaries; boundaries are for volleyball. George Bernard Shaw has a beautiful quote that we put in *We're All Doing Time*:

"This is the true joy in life: Being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

Tonight is the time to do something about it. It always seems like it's not quite yet. Tonight is the time to decide: "I'm a person of faith; I do believe in this ultimate Good. Self-protection is a lie." How that looks in your life—living more simply, opening your heart more—that's your adventure every day. But the intention and the commitment are very simple. Applying it may sometimes be complicated. But with daily practice, we strengthen our intention and commitment—they remain forever simple. You say, "I'm a person of faith; I want to give up this self-protection that's keeping me so tiny and afraid. And I'm

doing it; this is it. I'm signing up, and I'm gonna sign up every single day of my life."

We can do that. It doesn't ever have to get more sophisticated than that. How does it look as we walk around with the enormous number of decisions we have to make? What is selfish here? What is unselfish? Does it mean I let everybody take advantage of me? Of course not. So that's your adventure movie. It's going to bring ups and downs, but Life is ultimately good.

—Bo Lozoff



PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

[This practice is also in Bo's book *Deep & Simple*]

What would you do, how do you think you'd behave, if you could see God or feel God with you right now? ... Well, the scriptures of every religion tell us it's literally true—God is here with us at every moment. They also assure us that by Grace, each one of us can actually experience God directly; we can know God first-hand—what I call touching the Sacred. This experience was the way of life in most Native American faiths. Walking Buffalo, a Stoney Indian, said, “We see the Great Spirit’s work in everything: sun, moon, trees, wind, and mountains. Sometimes we approached him through these things. From this we have a true belief in the Supreme Being.”

We can practice this presence of God to develop an awareness and lifestyle more in keeping with how holy everything really is. Try it yourself: Remind yourself dozens or even hundreds of times throughout the day, God is here, right now. The Holy Father, the Divine Mother, the Messiah, is with me. Everything I think, do or say is in the presence of a loving God. Nothing is unimportant. No one is meaningless. Everything counts. I want to act accordingly.

The presence of God can be practiced anywhere, anytime, because nothing is excluded. Look around you right now. You're on hallowed ground. God is here.

**If we really trust God, we don't have a care in the world.
Father Thomas Keating**

Father Thomas Keating, our beloved friend, elder, and Human Kindness Foundation board advisor, died on October 25, 2018. He was 95 years old.

Father Keating believed that a strictly simple, focused lifestyle would help him get closer to God. At the age of 20 he entered an austere monastic community. For five years he lived in almost total silence and did not leave the monastery even to visit family. Later, he and a few other monks developed the practice that is now known as Centering Prayer, which they shared in prisons.

Bo & I visited him at St. Benedict's Monastery, which is where he lived for many decades. We received communion from him and were graced by his presence throughout our visit.

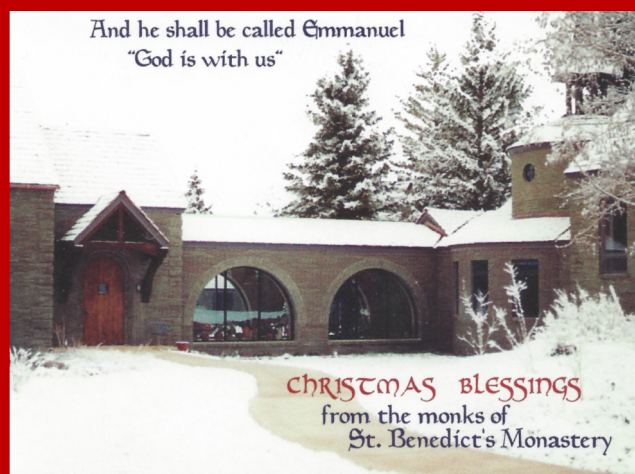
When Bo died in 2012, I received this notecard from Father Keating:

Dear Sita,

I was grieved to hear of Bo's passing and send you my heartfelt sympathy and compassion.

Thanks for continuing the wonderful work you have been doing together for these forty years (or longer?). My admiration for him has always been very great since I first met him. May you be consoled and find a new relationship with him. He will be closer to you than ever. May the Spirit of God dwell with you always and always more lovingly and direct all your actions.

Your friend, Thomas Keating



May you rest in Peace, beloved friend and mentor. —Sita

Happy Holidays to you, our beloved HKF family.

And **happy 45th Anniversary**. Thank you for being the courageous, compassionate people who write to us about love and transformation and forgiveness and healing. You inspire us.

Some of you will be joining us for an in-person celebration on December 1, 2018. Others will hear about the anniversary after that event (this newsletter is being printed before the event and delivered after). More than 90 percent of you who receive this newsletter are incarcerated, so there's no way for us to have celebrations that everyone can attend. Since we want to include all of you, we will take some time on December 1 to bring you to mind at the celebration, using a practice that you can participate in any time, any place.

In the midst of the festivities, we will come together for a quiet time led by Gina DeVine, a member of the HKF board of directors. Gina wrote this guided meditation which she will lead the whole group through that evening. The practice is for all of us—inside and out—to call to mind anytime. In a broken and divided world, such an effortless practice could have powerful results.



To begin, if possible, find a comfortable and quiet place. Variations are fine. You'll know when it's right. You can't go wrong.

**(Deep Breath)
Blessed be the love and laughter of a young child, pure and simple.
(Feel it now. Imagine the sweet giggles.)
(Deep Breath)**

**Blessed be the embrace of a friend in a moment of worry.
(Feel it now. Hear the words "...It'll be okay.")
(Deep Breath)**

Blessed be catching the eye of a random stranger and just knowing that they understand.

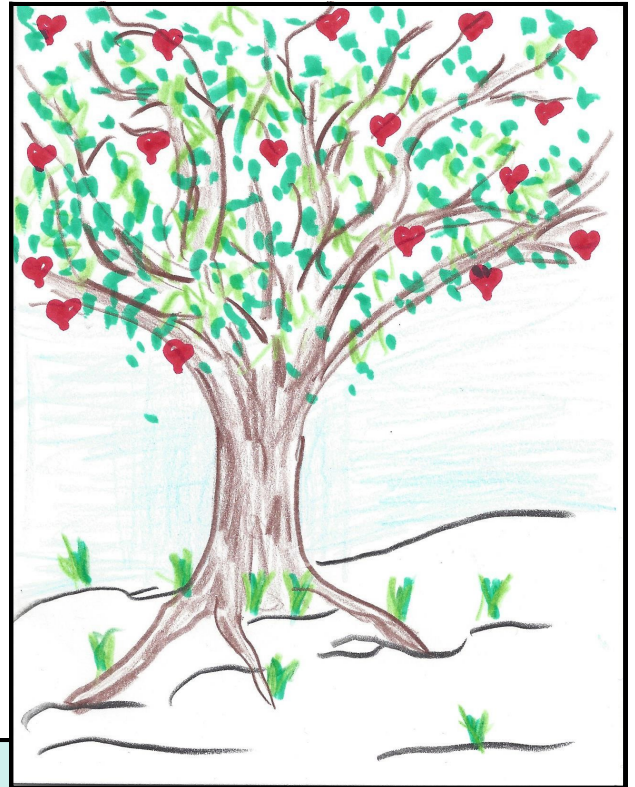
**(Feel it now. Look for just an instant into their loving soul.)
(Deep Breath)**

**Blessed be sharing a tear with a loved one in a moment of grief.
(Feel it now. Imagine shared Peace.)
(Deep Breath)**

Blessed be all who believe in the unrestrained power of love and kindness.

**(Feel it now. No walls can stop love.)
(Deep Breath)**

We dedicate this practice to our friends who can't join us in person today, but who are a very real and deeply beloved part of the Human Kindness Foundation community.



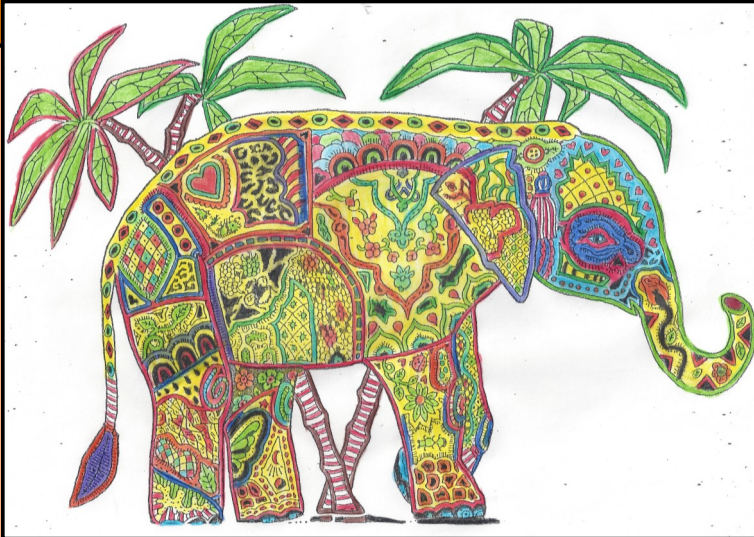
**Be joyful
though
you have
considered
all the
facts.**

**—Wendell
Berry**



Many thanks to the artists: pg 1: Michael Baca, Kanab, UT; pg 2: Joshua Payton, Ruston, LA; pg 3: Brian Adkins, Baraga, MI; pg 4: Jeremiah Glenski, Idaho Falls, ID; pg 5: an HKF volunteer (upper), Scott Arends, Canon City, CO (middle), Anthony Perales, Bismarck, NC (lower); pg 6: Terry Kramer, Santa Rosa, CA (upper), Jason Edward Kulesza, Jacksonville, FL (lower); pg 7: William Mercer, Raleigh, NC (upper), Lee Hankins, White Deer, PA (lower); pg 8: Christian Allen, Greensburg, PA.

Letters



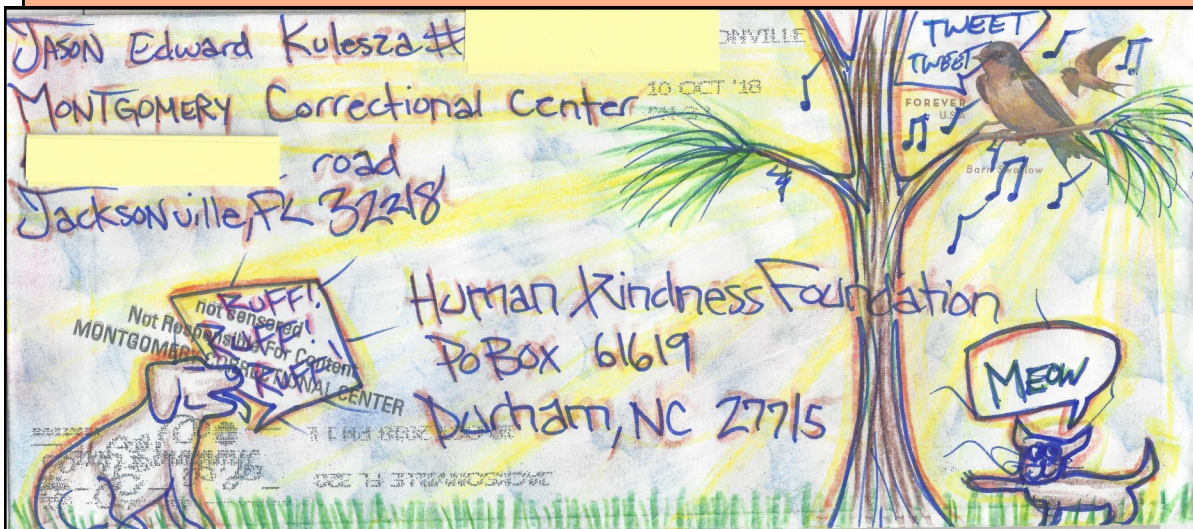
coming up soon and I don't want anything to keep me down or stop me from making it out there because prison is not where I want my life to be. What am I to do? I know I must work on getting my life together but

of your life. Talk is cheap. K has probably heard your apologies before. You need to be patient and extremely committed to creating a new life for yourself that has nothing to do with drugs or crime. Become a good, caring, unselfish man who is a blessing to others around him wherever you live. And as you do that, have a little faith that perhaps Life will bring you together again with your kids. You ask how to "forget about" your kids and move on with your life. You're not supposed to forget about your kids even if you never see them again!! You need to pray for them every day of your life, feel your love for them—not the selfish love about how much you miss them, but the unselfish love that says "I hope you have a wonderful life, sweethearts, and I am so sorry I let you down." Keep them in your heart every day. You may even want to write them letters once a month that you keep to give them someday when you see them, even if it's 20 years from now. That will show them you always cared. But to bitch and moan about missing them and how K doesn't understand, will do you and your kids no good at all. Actions speak louder than words, brother. Become a good man with a life that works and then see what happens if you have an opportunity to communicate with K after a couple years of being successful, responsible, reliable, etc. Life is big, D, and it brings many good things to pass. You need to focus on your part. I wish you every good thing. Do this the right way, okay? Patience and persistence. Never give up. Love, Bo

Dear Bo, Hi my name is D, and as anyone can tell I'm in prison. I've been in ad seg now for 17 months and I received your book *We're All Doing Time*—by the way it was great. Anyway I'm just writing cause I've been living through one crazy life, but the thing that's been killing me the last few years is how I lost my children. Don't get me wrong they're alive but because of their mother (K) and things I've done to her I have not seen them in 4 years now. She hates me with a passion and it kills me because all I can do is love her. I wish she would understand that when I was out there on drugs, that was not me, and I'm truly sorry for the things I've done. But she has taken off and is hiding. I've tried to put this all behind me but it's a daily nightmare I live through. I love my children so much how do I just forget and move on? I know this was just a journey I had to go on to learn from my mistakes, but will I ever see my children again? My date is

how do I get over this hurt pain and loss of my children? What makes it so bad is I always promised my children I will always be there for them and not abandon them as I was as a child but I look at how things are and can't help but feel so much hurt and guilt for causing all this. How do I move on and still hold the love for my children without giving up on them? Well I guess I'll end at this but please if you have any words of wisdom please send them. No one will ever answer me about these issues I have. Always, D.

Hi D, It's good to know you, and I'm so sorry about losing contact with your children. In a way, though, you can be grateful that it hurts you so much, because I know some fathers in prison who never think about all the kids they've left behind. The best hope you can have for the chance of ever having a relationship with your kids again is to get out and make something decent out



Dear HKF,

I've been trying to figure out how to write my story to y'all for years now.

I've been down for nine years so far, and I have 16 months to go. This is the first time for me in prison, and it's for an unspeakable

act of violence I did to a member of my family. I did it while I was strung out on painkillers—I was taking 18-20 narcotics a day—but there is no excuse for my actions. What I consider now is that I don't deserve kindness, forgiveness, family, and a second chance.

My victim did not die. He is surviving in a wheelchair with a feeding tube. I constantly wonder what kind of God would let this happen. Remorse does not even begin to explain what I feel. I think that sometimes the way to go is suicide when I get out. I have horrible nightmares every night and wake up sweating.

I guess I'm searching for answers I won't find. I came from a good family, had a good childhood. I went to a great Catholic school—I don't know where I went wrong. I don't think I will ever or can or should ever forgive myself.

I'm not looking for anyone to tell me that it'll be okay or "poor guy." I just want to know a neutral person's take on this. I hope to hear back from y'all.

Sincerely, J

Dearest J,

Thank you so much for your heartfelt letter. First, I'm glad that you reached out to us. I can hear the depth of your remorse. There really is nothing we can say to stop your pain or to comfort your aching heart. But God does know the deepest part of your soul, and God also knows how remorseful you are and understands the karmic purposes of lives beyond the human

mind's ability to comprehend. So turning inward and praying for a deeper understanding and guidance is the best

tool you have right now. It may be helpful to you to consider how misguided your state of mind was at the time, and

realize that we are all capable of one moment of anger that can lead to long-term suffering for ourselves and others.

So perhaps now, the best thing you can do for yourself and for your victim is try to have compassion for both of you (even if no one else does) and talk to your victim at a soul level—maybe during meditation or during some quiet moment. Pour your heart out to him as if he could hear you. On the soul's journey, we are all connected in deeper ways than we can know with the mind. Let your victim know how sorry you are, and how much you love him.

We are here for you, dear J. God is merciful, and your victim's soul is under his care.

Love from an HKF volunteer



Dear family at HKF,

I'm serving a year in this maximum security facility, locked down 23 hours with one hour of rec a week. Man, I have 3 prison #s and my first term was 8 years solid. I have no living relatives and no friends as I was a meth head and now I'm abstinent from drugs. I'm involved in N.A. and changing every-

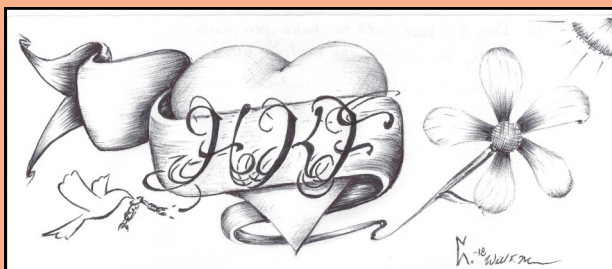
thing in my life. I am super lonely. I gave up my druggie buddies and I have seriously no relationships. I am lonely and thinking crazy thoughts and second I'm scared of getting out after this year and falling flat on my face. I don't know how to live a clean and sober life. I've never been out of prison longer than a year, never held a job, never paid rent anywhere. Never had a credit card. Hell I've never done nothing so I don't know where to start. I have my parole clothes and that's it. Well, that sums up what I wanted to say to see what your feedback is. With love and respect, A

Dear A,

Hi friend, Gabe here and I just read your letter. Your worries and struggles are understandable. And locked down all day thinking about it all probably ain't helping. I won't say "it's all going to be alright and work out" cuz it might not, but I do know, 100%, that the inner work you do over this next year is going to be the main factor in how you handle whatever happens once you step out of those gates. Any of us that make real changes in our lives are faced with the unknown that comes with it. That is part of your journey. You gotta have something to fall back on, a foundation, so when things go wrong you don't just say "f*** it!" For now, I would do nothin' but work with Bo's teachings and meditate.

There is help out here in this world. Work with Bo's books so you'll be as ready as possible to find the help. I know this is all scary and hard, and I respect what you're doing.

Your friend, Gabe





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“When the mailman brought me the package you sent me I was so overwhelmed with happiness I proclaimed ‘*Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala.*’ My Sufi ancestors were big on calligraphy so this is my best shot at ‘Glory be to God in the highest’ in Arabic.”
—Christian Allen, who signs his letter “Christian the Muslim”