

Human Kindness Foundation

a little good news

Spring/Summer 1998

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO...



Bo Lozoff & Ram Dass talk about doing some prison work, 1973

Dear Family,
Twenty-five years ago, a spiritual teacher named Ram Dass and I got together and talked about helping prisoners to use their time for spiritual growth. It was a quiet chat, no solemn pronouncements or bolts of lightning, no press releases or fund-raising campaigns. We just sat together on the lawn of the ashram where Sita and I were living with our two-year-old son, Josh, and mulled it over: "Wouldn't it be nice to do *something* to help?"

At the time, Ram Dass was sending copies of his book, *Be Here Now*, into prison libraries, and was beginning to receive mail from prisoners. My sister's husband was in prison, and visiting him had motivated me to do something positive in such a negative environment. So we both had a soft spot in our hearts for the prison population, but we had no idea that brief conversation would turn into the Prison-Ashram Project. Sita and I certainly had no idea it would turn into our life's work. (We were only in our twenties at the time!)

In the quarter-century since, the Prison-Ashram Project — and Human Kindness Foundation — have reached every corner of the globe, enjoying spiritual friendship with hundreds of thousands of prisoners and many others who struggle to live a decent and meaningful life. The depth of love, gratitude, trust and sincerest affection we have exchanged with our worldwide family is impossible to put into words. It has been a great Grace in our lives, a blessing we never could have imagined.

Now the years are rolling by me and they're rockin' evenly, and I'm older than I once was, younger than I'll be, that's not unusual. Nor is it strange that after changes upon changes, we are more or less the same. After changes, we are more or less the same.

— Paul Simon, *The Boxer*

Our office has changed a lot in the past twenty-five years. At first, it was in our bedroom, and we didn't even have an electric typewriter. Ram Dass sent us a couple hundred dollars a month to run the whole project. Now, we're in a two-story building with five computers and a million other gizmos, and we spend about a hundred thousand dollars a year on printing and postage alone.

And of course Sita and I are older, hopefully wiser in many ways; maybe our ideas and advice have become more practical over the years. But in the largest sense, what we started out to do — offer spiritual friendship to prisoners and others — remains exactly the same.

It's STILL Not About "Coping"

Right from the beginning, our work has been about helping people to make The Big Change — deep, genuine spiritual transformation. We truly believe that we are all capable of becoming sages and even saints. Most people seem willing to settle for a little less suffering, or some psychological adjustments which allow a little more happiness. To us, this is like settling for a piece of granite when the world's largest perfect diamond is up for grabs.

This is the main difference between a spiritual path and a strategy for personal happiness: One is about the self, and the other is about moving beyond that very self. This bigger journey is not about being comfortable or nice or safe. It's not about living in a supportive environment. We may need some special support for a while, but when real transformation happens, we are able to go anywhere, be among any kinds of people, and not be thrown off from our peace and goodwill.

The great Indian saint Ramakrishna likened our journey to the life of an oak tree: In the beginning, it may need a lot of care and tenderness, it may even need a little fence around it to keep it from being trampled on, but when it grows into its full stature, with its roots deep into the earth, the tree can provide shade for countless travelers and it needs nothing in return. That's who we all can be.

A Voice in the Wilderness

And that's the perspective which I hope the Prison-Ashram Project and Human Kindness Foundation will always provide. In this age, we are constantly bombarded by messages to avoid pain, avoid struggle, take a pill to get rid of this, get divorced to get rid of that, put your own happiness above all other concerns — basically if it's too difficult or too painful, bail out. Take the easiest way.

The timeless spiritual message is always a voice crying in the wilderness: *Life is about something more wonderful*

than you can imagine. You are Divine. You do not die. Don't be afraid. You are bigger than you can possibly imagine. This whole world is not what it appears to be. Wake up to your true nature. Wake up and rejoice.

When we are in a miserable prison — either self-made, or one of bars and steel — or when we are steeped in our addictions or compulsions which we continue to engage in even though they may destroy our lives, those timeless spiritual messages may seem so remote from our daily reality, that they strike us as totally irrelevant.

But that's precisely the time it may be most important to remember: *Hang in there. Do the practices. Study hard. Pray for help. Be willing to change. Make an effort.*

As a prison friend once told me, sometimes we may be hanging on by a thread, but that thread may be enough to keep us from snapping. Life is always going to be loss and gain, pleasure and pain, pride and shame. Everyone has tough times. Life is pretty hard. Everyone struggles.

The great tragedy of our times is that the vast majority of people — especially our youth — seem to feel they are struggling for nothing. Imagine how hopeless and weary they become. The spiritual seeker struggles too, struggles constantly, but with faith that life is intelligent, not chaotic; merciful, not cruel. May we be blessed to continue reminding you of that simple, ageless perspective for many more years to come.

Bo

Ways You Can Celebrate our 25th Anniversary With Us

In Prison or Wherever You Are

❖ Saturday Meditations, 7:30 AM

Join us for meditation at this time for the rest of 1998. We will focus on our sense of community and friendship with you. You can do the same.

❖ Envelope Art

We will dedicate one large wall of Kindness House to display envelope art for the rest of 1998. The themes can be something relating to our work or its place in your life, or anything else you're moved to create.

❖ Brief Letters, Poems, Stories

If you feel our 25 years of prison work has made a difference in your life, and if you can express yourself *briefly* (one page or less, please!) as to how or why, or merely wish to say thanks in your own way, we'd love to hear from you, though we won't be able to reply. Like the envelope art, we'll try to find a place to post these "testimonials" for the rest of 1998, and read from them at the various events we may sponsor here.

Events at Kindness House (please don't escape from prison to attend!)

❖ Weekend retreat: *Forging A Holy Life in Modern Times* (June 12th-14th) — Bo will lead this

weekend of meditation, discussion, chanting & singing, and general fellowship. As with all other events here, there is no charge, but donations will be gratefully received. Space may be limited, so please let us know as soon as possible if you wish to attend.

❖ Sunday September 27th, Picnic & Reunion

Volleyball, frisbee, special guests & speakers, and a reunion after many years of the Bo Lozoff Rock & Blues Band! You are welcome to camp out on the grounds of Kindness House for the weekend, or we'll help you find a motel or local host home to stay in.

*** If you are interested in attending any of these events, please be sure to let us know so that we can send you specific dates and information as it becomes available. Prior registration is a must for all of these special events.*

An InterFaith Order of Communion and Community

Many of you have asked whether there is any way to "join us" in a more formal manner than merely receiving our newsletters and books. After twenty-five years, it now feels right to create an ongoing link between our own lifestyle at HKF and those of you who wish to make a serious commitment to the same principles and teachings. In classic spiritual terms, this has been called an *order* — like an order of knights or an order of monks or nuns. Members of an order may live in many different places and do many different things, but they hold some of their deepest values, beliefs & vows in common.

The Human Kindness Foundation is creating an **InterFaith Order of Communion and Community** to provide such a spiritual family for those of you who feel this is important for your spiritual journey. Among other things, becoming a member of this Order will mean signing a pledge agreeing to several conditions regarding body, mind and spirit — including giving up smoking, drinking, and drugs (*entirely*), spending at least an hour a day in silent spiritual practice (including at least a half-hour of meditation), and finding ways to be of service wherever you are.

Inside or outside of prison, the same spiritual laws apply. Being a member of this InterFaith Order of Communion and Community is not limited to any particular life situation. And being interfaith, it is not limited to nor in opposition of the religion you may follow. Rather, it is a determined commitment to the daily, practical application of those same religious teachings, which always boil down to study, practice, and service.

Joining an order is a serious commitment, because each member represents the aims & values of the entire order. Joining an order requires personal sacrifice, integrity, and a lot of self-discipline, and ours is no exception to that rule.

Whether or not you are interested in taking such a formal step with us, our broader friendship will remain unchanged. We are not *encouraging* anyone to join this order, but merely issuing an invitation for those who may yearn to take this step in their spiritual life. **If this describes you, please write for more information: InterFaith Order, c/o HKF, Rt. 1, Box 201-N, Durham NC 27705. When you receive it, please follow its policies for at least one month before writing back** — until you have a sense whether or not this is something you truly intend to do. If you decide that you would like to join the Order, you'll need to sign and return the pledge form.

I learned many years ago that the only way I could give quality time to prayer was by getting up early in the morning. (I must add parenthetically that I didn't have a great desire to get up so early - I usually tried to stay in bed as late as I could.) In the early hours of the morning, before the phones and doorbells started to ring, before the man arrived, seemed to me to be the best for spending quality time with the Lord. So I promised God and myself that I would give the first hour of each day to prayer. This doesn't mean that I have not experienced the struggles that other people have faced. Quite the contrary. But early on, I made another decision. I said, Lord, I know that I spend a certain amount of that morning hour of prayer daydreaming, problem-solving, and I'm not sure that I can cut that out. I'll try, but the important thing is, I'm not going to give that time to anybody else. So even though it may not connect me as much with you as it could, nobody else is going to get that time.

— Joseph Cardinal Bernardin (1928-1996)



LETTERS

Dear Bo,

Have you lost your goddamned mind! That candy-assed advice you gave "J" in our Christmas newsletter is Bullshit, man! I guess it may seem that I'm coming down on you. I cut for you, I really do. BUT, this man is 2 cells away from the guy who beat his MOMMA to fucking death with a goddamn baseball bat! He saw his momma's eyes roll to the back of her head.

Bo, Fuck it. This guy needs to get a shank and take this motherfucker off the count! Nobody on earth could live after taking my momma like that. I can practice spiritual principles later! As soon as they put that dude in the ground!

Bo, I'm not a killer. I'm so passive I make myself sick. Sometimes I'm forced into a fight. But I swear to God, that man would die if he did my mother.

This must be the ultimate spiritual challenge for this Brother ("J"). I wish I could talk to the dude. Ah hell, what do I know? I still think you're full of shit. I'll tell you what though, "J" has more guts than I do.

This is making me sick at my stomach, I'm fucking crying. Goddamn, but I'm mad! Man, I hope that nobody does that to my mom or dad. I'll kill em!

Later, D

Dear D,

I appreciate the honesty and friendship in your letter. Yeah, it's intense, isn't it? Maybe more intense than any other situation we can imagine. You said, "I can practice spiritual principles later!" which of course, is our natural response when horrible things happen. We want to react from our gut. We don't want to think about right and wrong or anything deeper than "take this motherfucker off the count!" as you put it.

That's very natural. But it's also "natural" for a baby to crawl off a cliff or drown in a pool. Natural doesn't mean that it's good, or right.

One of the worst things a human being can do is to kill another human being on purpose — no matter who started it, what the circumstances were, whether there was any choice or not, etc. It's a tragic thing to do and has unpredictable consequences inside the mind and heart of the killer. It doesn't matter how natural it is or how much the victim "deserved" it. Look at the current popularity of executions. People are cheering outside the prisons, just like you

may think you'd like to cheer if our friend from the last newsletter took out his mama's killer.

But murders and executions shame us all. It is the supreme failure of human conduct, the supreme failure of trying to be decent human beings. Our friend had the horrible misfortune to see his mama killed right in front of his eyes. It is not any sort of loyalty or love to respond "naturally" and become a killer himself. That's not what any mama wants for her son. Please think about this.

Spiritual principles are the most important, powerful tools human beings can use to protect ourselves from living like brute animals. They are *especially* important and powerful when things are at their most horrible. Look how Jesus made that very clear: He didn't say, "Father forgive them," over a little disrespect; He said it after being unjustly arrested, convicted, tortured and nailed to a cross! Spiritual practice is not about being "nice." There are heavy mysteries and secrets locked up inside of us. Spiritual principles and practices are the only way to unlock that Divine Nature in our hearts.

I gave our friend that "candy-assed advice" because I know his real nature, and I want more than anything else to help him experience that for himself. Life has handed him an incredibly intense challenge, and I want him to meet that challenge in the best way instead of the worst way. The best way honors his mother and makes her death mean something wonderful to the world. Your way would only continue the pain and bloodshed in a world which has quite enough already.

And remember, D: That guy wrote to me. I didn't seek him out. He doesn't want to kill the other guy. Something inside of him has a deep instinct to go a different way. Try to have a little faith in whatever forces are at work inside of him. He's the one it happened to.

You're a good man, D, and I'm glad you felt close enough to me to speak your mind. This isn't an easy journey we're on together. But go back to my books and read them from a deeper place after all this, and try to understand that this stuff goes all the way, in every situation imaginable. No time out. The stakes are too high. The jackpot we're headed toward is better than your wildest dreams.

Love, Bo

Dear Bo,

Thank you for writing back. I don't think the issue at hand has anything to do with that dude or revenge. Thank you for clearing that up. Love is the issue.

Revenge, crime, rent & food. It's all bullshit. It's just meaningless. It seems to me that's what important is that I treat you with dignity. I'm sorry that guy lost his mother. And to be honest, if it was my mom, I'd kill her killer. Thus becoming the killer! I don't even want to be able to respond any other way.

However, I believe I was wrong. You made the point: "that guy wrote me." You're absolutely right. The fact that he has even CONSIDERED an alternative means he is so much more spiritually advanced than I can hope to become. I honor him, if I may.

I was angry. I wrote that letter before I even finished the entire newsletter. You saw honesty & friendship in that letter. I don't know what my motive for writing was, maybe trying to get a personal letter from you! I do operate that way. But my letter was spurred on by anger. We know anger is only fear.

*God wants warriors not cowards. It's easy to be a coward. But it's hard to stand up for what's right. "... this stuff goes all the way, in every situation imaginable." WOW! **THAT'S** a warrior!*

I guess I'll close, Bo. I'm so proud and puffed up that you're where you're at spiritually! I'm even more glad that I'm part of it. I hope the universe

doesn't get together and humble me. I hate it when that happens☺. Thanks again for writing to me. Thanks for your honesty and friendship.

Respectfully, D

Dear Bo and Sita,

It's been two years since my son (then 17) was sentenced to life. I immediately looked for spiritual support for all of us. Your books, tapes and newsletters have contributed more than I can express to the unbelievable healing — in process. God Bless and Thanks.

I'm now involved with the local interfaith prison ministries and support for families of those incarcerated. The quality of your writings and depth of your caring have heightened many dark nights for me. Thank you and the Spirit that works through you.

Love, T

Bo & Sita,

I was arrested back in 1995 because I raped and murdered a woman after a night of drinking and drugs. I had so much junk in my system that I have no recollection of that night's events, but states' evidence proved what I did.

Let me tell you, there were more than a few long nights spent trying to figure out how and why this happened. I wasn't a "bad" guy, I thought. I thought my self-pleasing, destructive lifestyle was just fine. Those long, soul-searching nights slowly made me realize that the only how and why in this formula was me myself. I put myself where I was, and all there was left to do was to deal with it and move on.

I thought I'd turn to Buddhism for guidance. Your address was listed under Buddhism in a magazine I was reading, so I wrote you looking for the age-old teachings of the Zen masters. I was confused by the literature you sent me at first: "I thought these people were Buddhists. What's this We're All Doing Time stuff about?" But when I sat down and read it, I saw that this wasn't about religion, rites, and rules, but about centering ourselves in the big God all around and inside of us (if I misunderstood your books, I apologize).

Now, what I don't understand is how I'm supposed to tune myself in to this peaceful God-ness when I can't shake my old thought patterns. I hate myself with such a despising loathing because of what I did, that I'm convinced it's all but impossible to ever get through it. Damn it man, I killed somebody! How am I supposed to be able to forget that? I realize that it's all a part of the past, the road I took to be where & who I am now, but it's a tough thought to just brush aside as if it were insignificant.

And what about the thought that everything happens as God deems it? Was my murdering this woman all just part of the big picture? I find it very hard to believe that my meaning on this planet was to take the life of another person. That's some divine plan there.

Perhaps part of my problem is just plain bitterness. I was only 25 when this happened, and now I'm sitting with all of the other Death Row inmates waiting to die. I can't seem to get past this and move on to finding peace. Am I wallowing in self pity? I really, truly want to get over this hatred of self and put aside the pain and fear of my situation and my future, but I don't know how. Which is why I decided to bother you beautiful folks. I know you hear from others in worst predicaments than mine, but I thought I might give it a shot in

the hopes that you might be able to beat some sense into my head and tell me what I'm doing wrong. I'm truly fed up with all the inner B.S., but I can't let it go.

I thank you for letting me throw all of this on you. I hope that you're able to help me snap out of it. May God bless you always.

Your servant, K

Dear K,

It's good to know you. You may think, "Yeah, sure! What's good about it? I'm a convicted killer wallowing in self-pity and confusion." But who you are to me is a spiritual seeker, like myself — one more person in this noisy, violent world who is struggling to find a way into the heart of the Great Teachings. And it's always good to know one more.

It sounds like you're going to be there for a while. Well, it looks like we are too. So we can be friends along this slow, confusing, often painful process of awakening. You can take heart in the fact that not only you and us, but also thousands of other seekers in an infinite variety of situations, are doing the same stuff, looking for the same answers. You're never alone in this, regardless of what it may look like as you gaze around the death row unit. You are not without friends. Try to really take that in -- past the mind, into your heart. Sit with it for a few minutes and realize what I am telling you: You are not alone. You are not unloved. Ever.

I am extremely glad you are "truly fed up with all the inner b.s.," because that's the best thing you have going for you. Like a friend of mine said once, "When the storm is over, pray that things don't get back to normal." Don't be satisfied with anything less than truth.

This process isn't just about reading and thinking, K. The age-old recipes are there for everyone to see: Study, practice, and

service. You didn't mention practice at all in your letter. And like many other prisoners, you probably assume you have no opportunity to do any type of service. As you discover how to balance your life between study, practice and service, that's when the missing pieces you yearn for will begin to fall into place. You can't just do it in the mind.

You also insult both yourself and me when you talk as though inner peace were a matter of "just brushing aside" your terrible crime. What genuine spiritual teacher or teaching has ever said to do that? Who ever said it was just "insignificant?" That's your complete misunderstanding of inner peace or enlightenment. We've sent you several books which you say you've enjoyed, but I don't think you're working deeply enough with them. For example, my story "Saddest Buddha," in *Lineage*, is exactly about your situation, and it certainly doesn't imply that the harm we have caused others is trivial or "God's will" in a way that gets us off the hook. Work with it. Learn how to sit still and open to your pain and confusion at the deepest levels, and let them be exactly what they are. It takes a lot of courage, patience, and practice.

And the ultimate key you're seeking is always the toughest one to grasp: **Cherish others more than yourself.** We have to stop being so insanely self-centered and begin to feel compassion in every direction all the time. We gradually die and are reborn as devoted followers of the One Great Way and friends to anyone whom life puts in our path. That's your redemption for the rape and murder, K. That's the redemption for everything we have ever done. It takes a while. It may take our whole lives. But I truly don't see anything else worth doing, whether we're murderers or judges, rich or poor, in prison or out. Study, serve, and practice. The whole world is wherever we are.

Love, Bo

Dear Bo,

I'd like to let you know how your work and messages have inspired me the last few years. I first read a small blurb of yours in Utne Reader years ago. I was struck by not only the truth of what you wrote, but by your ability to make it so understandable. I look forward to your newsletters, knowing that again I'll be awakened by your fresh-ness, down-to-earth quality, and clearness.

Some 14 years ago I escaped the city, to create a simple life. Luckily it worked. I began to see that living simply and sustainably was fine, but not enough. Gandhi then entered my life, then Quakerism, then you and others. As a result, I'm now very fulfilled, living below the reportable tax lever and involved in service projects in my community. These have grown over the last few years, so that now I'm doing nonviolence training in elementary schools, conducting Listening Projects on child abuse and community organizing (in Hispanic and African-American neighborhoods), running a tutoring program for at-risk kids, etc. I've never been more challenged in my life, nor more impassioned. I think I'm beginning to pay rent on the space the universe has allowed for me.

Peace & Love, G

GOOD WORKS

Rehabilitating Through Reading (submitted by Larry Bratt)

Miss America Tara Holland, a former literacy tutor, said "Nine out of ten people in prison, people who have committed serious crimes, can't read at a functional level. What does that tell you?"

It tells fifteen prisoner literacy tutors at the Maryland Correctional Institution Jessup that illiteracy, although surely not the sole contributor, is a universal factor to criminal behavior. So they've joined MCIJ's Reading Academy, a literacy program developed by the Johns Hopkins Reading Academy. This program is designed to reach hard-core illiterates — individuals who read at, or below, the third-grade level.

For thirteen years Mrs. Jewel Kesler, program supervisor, has worked alongside men convicted of serious crimes to insure they learn vital survival skills such as reading, writing, and job-seeking, which enhance self-esteem and confidence. "I see them as any other human being. The only difference is mistakes they've made, they've had to pay for. We all make mistakes."

Her empathy is contagious. Tutors strive to improve the life of participants, and surprisingly are rewarded. Ernest C. Taylor, a tutor for two years, serving 25 years for second-degree murder explains, "Our program insures rapid success and less stress for participants. Their progress lets me know I'm doing something worthwhile with my life behind bars."

Reading Academy members acknowledge literacy is a primary key to a quality life that frees one's mind from criminal behavior. By becoming functionally literate, prisoners re-enter the community armed with new skills, finally stop the cycle of illiteracy, which often leads to crime.



Larry Bratt on Right

ABC Quilts

Ed Falby, a prisoner at CCI-Enfield, CT, recently wrote us about a volunteer project he has been involved with. It's called ABC Quilts (A-risk Babies Crib Quilts), an organization which distributes homemade quilts to children 0 to 6 years old who are born HIV/AIDS positive, are abandoned by families too ill to care for them, or born affected by alcohol or other drugs. The program was started by Ellen Ahlgren who wanted to do something for HIV-infected babies being abandoned in hospitals.

In ten years, ABC Quilts has delivered over 350,000 quilts to hospitals and care facilities around the world. The quilts are made by students, youth groups, churches, synagogues, prisoners, quilt guilds, retirement communities, and many individuals (the D.O.C. in Connecticut adopted the program in 1993 and instituted it in nearly every institution in the state). All monies are donated or raised by tag sales, church suppers, and the like to purchase supplies. Local volunteers collect quilts, check for quality control and arrange for distribution.

ABC Quilts is always looking for volunteers with time, love, and support. They need volunteers for quiltmakers, organizers, educators, and sponsors. If you are interested in beginning a volunteer group in prison, or if you have the means to volunteer, send a legal size self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Ann L. White
ABC Quilts Home Office
569 First NH Turnpike
Northwood, NH 03261

And More Good Works...

Dear Bo,

After reading Negative & Positive Profundity in Just Another Spiritual Book, I had a great need to give something back to the community, any community. Being in prison makes it a little hard to do.

I crochet, and thought I could make hats and mittens for school children. I spoke to a counselor, she had no knowledge of how to do this. Then like magic, (God) someone told her about a project of making baby clothes for those in need.

I started to make clothing for the babies born to the women of the prison I'm in. We now have over 30 women who take part in this beautiful program. It brings me more joy than I had hoped for.

Where there is a will, there is a way. Thank you for your help in so many ways.

Josephine White, Connecticut

NEWS, NOTES, AND OFFERINGS

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Information about correspondence courses for prisoners is published by the PEN Prison Writing Program. They also publish an Information Bulletin for prison writers about their annual contest, as well as basic English, manuscript preparation, a directory of small magazines that consider new voices for publication, and a list of pen-pal organizations. Request either or both of these free booklets by writing to:

PEN American Center
Prison Writing Program
568 Broadway
NY, NY 10012

FREE BHAGAVAD-GITA LESSONS

The American Gita Society now offers free lessons on the Bhagavad-Gita to all prisoners. The Bhagavad-Gita is that famous chapter of the Mahabharata wherein Krishna instructs the warrior Arjuna in the deepest mysteries of Life and Spirit. Allow four weeks to receive the lessons—send a legal size self-addressed stamped envelope directly to:

The American Gita Society
511 Lowell Place
Freemont, CA 94536-1805

TAPES — SHRINKWRAPPED, NO SCREWS

Most of Bo's recorded talks are now available in clear, shrink-wrapped tapes with no screws. If you know you can receive such tapes, please be sure to include any necessary approval slips, etc., when you request them (we will send up to two tapes per month).

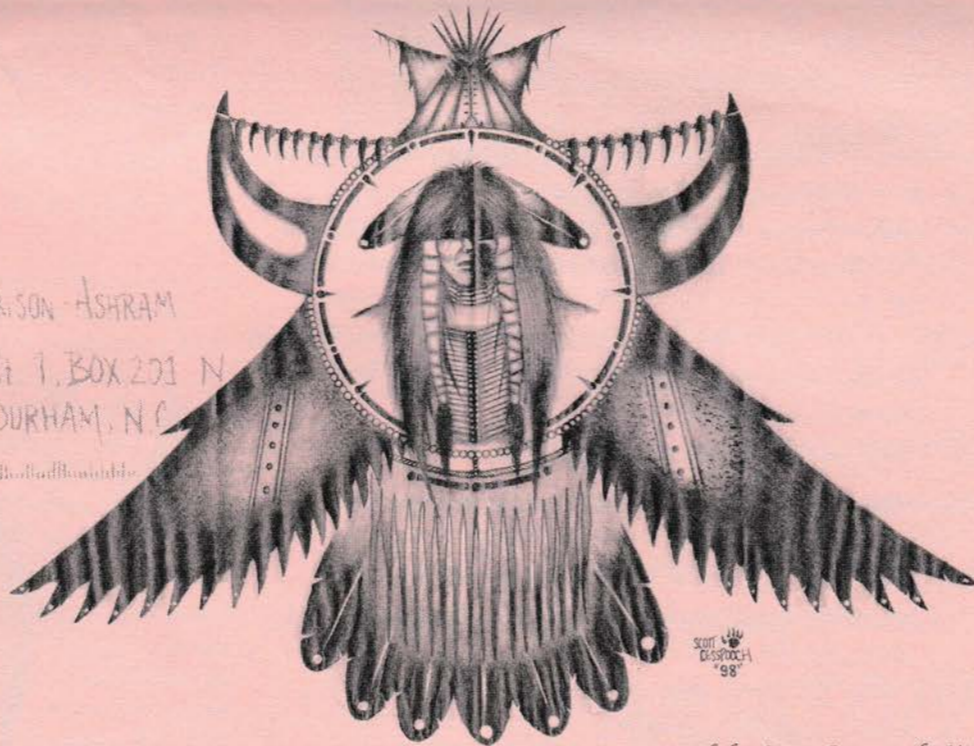
UPCOMING TRAVELS

England: Bo and Sita will be in England August 10th-14th, offering a public talk as well as prison workshops. For more information, contact the Prison Phoenix Trust at PO Box 328, Oxford, OX1 1PJ, or phone them at 18-65-248-098.

Canada: Bo and Sita will be in Alberta, Canada in late September: at a private conference at the Banff Center for Management, and a public talk in Calgary on Saturday, September 19th. For information on the public talk, contact the Yoga Studio in Calgary, Alberta at (403) 228-5808.



PRISON ASHRAM
Rt 1, BOX 201 N
DURHAM, N.C.
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artwork by Scott Cesspooch, Utah

a little good news

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It is a part of the cosmic law that what you say and
do determines what happens in your life.
The ordinary person thinks that this law is external
to himself and he feels confined and controlled
by it.
So his desires trouble his mind, his mind troubles his
spirit, and he lives in constant turmoil with
himself and the world.
His whole life is spent in struggling.
The superior person recognizes that he and the
subtle law are one.
Therefore he cultivates himself to accord with it,
bringing moderation to his actions and clarity
to his mind.
Doing this, he finds himself at one with all that is
divine and enlightened.
This is the profound, simple truth:
You are the master of your life and death.
What you do is what you are.

— Lao Tzu

artwork by Ray Cooley, New Mexico

