



Sharing Our Stories

Fall
2026

Our stories can connect us. They can help us understand our world and our place in it. When we tell stories that are incomplete or untrue, however, these stories can keep us away from each other. In our last newsletter, we shared a difficult and honest story. Your responses overwhelmed us with their vulnerability, kindness, and bravery. We are so grateful for the connections we made as a community by sharing our stories with each other. And we're committed to remaining open, honest, and transparent in the stories we tell and share.

This newsletter features a small sampling of the stories we received in response to our last newsletter. Some are letters people wrote sharing their experiences of trauma and abuse as well as their commitments to healing and accountability. We are so proud to be part of a loving community doing the hard work of growing and healing together.

Another story comes from our work revising *We're All Doing Time*. For forty years, this book has built a spiritual community around the shared wisdom reflected in its pages. The revision process is deepening this community. We're including amazing writing and artwork from new and old friends. We've also had the privilege of working with a group of writers at Orange Correctional Center in North Carolina. A story in this newsletter comes from a participant of this group.

It started with what seemed like a simple question: What's it like to be Jewish in a North Carolina prison? The response proves there are no simple questions. When the author shared his essay with the group, a thought-provoking conversation resulted. People asked questions. Some were uncomfortable. We all learned from each other. Our curiosity allowed us to connect over one person's story.

A lack of curiosity is one of the many problems at the heart of our criminal legal system. We're often not curious enough about what has happened to people before or after crimes are committed. We're not curious enough to look for creative and truly healing responses. There's a magic that happens, however, when we are curious about people's experiences.

Curiosity requires openness and humility. It means we know we don't have all the answers. But we're willing to ask the questions and listen to the responses. The responses might hurt. Pain doesn't just turn into wisdom. It takes work to understand how the hard stuff shapes us. It takes time to understand the lessons within the pain. When we are able to distill pain into stories, we are able to share our wisdom. Thank you for allowing us to be the caretakers of so many of your wisdom stories over the years. May we continue to grow, learn, and heal together with curiosity, humility, and joy.
Love, Erin



"A New York City Jew in a North Carolina Prison," by Josh Evens

I have a Star of David tattoo on my neck. The reason that it's there was calculated. I wanted it visible. I wanted to say to the world "I'm proud of my Jewishness, I'm not hiding it." I got it at a tattoo shop on St. Mark's Place in the Village. I got it during Chanukah. It's our Christmas in a way, lots of presents and also lots of history and meaning.

I went to college in Mobile, Alabama. While there I experienced a lot of antisemitism, or prejudice against Jewish people. "Whoa, come on, you know I'm Jewish right," I'd say when I heard antisemitic remarks. "No you're not," they'd say. "What do you think a Jew looks like or acts like?" I'd ask. "I don't know, just different I guess," they'd respond.



When certain sorority girls found out I was "a Jew," they stopped hanging out with me, like I was contagious. Not many Jews in Alabama. I was a new thing. People are often afraid of what they don't know. Eventually I was accepted, but not enough to marry one of them. I was an outsider. I didn't belong. The tattoo was a reaction to what I went through in college. I wanted to avoid all confusion going forward. Within seconds of meeting me, you know I'm Jewish. I'm happier that way. Until I went to prison.

Having a Star of David tattoo on your neck in prison is problematic. Within days of being in Central Prison in North Carolina, I was brought into a whiteshirt's (lieutenant or captain) office. "How long have you been Boss," he asked me. "What the fuck are you talking about? What the hell is Boss?" I responded. He said he wasn't fucking around and he was going to STG me Level 3. For those that don't know, STG stands for 'Security Threat Group.' It means you're now labeled a 'gang member'. Once this happens, you're completely fucked.

I told him my tattoo is a Star of David, a 3,000-year-old symbol of my Jewish people. "No, it's a six point star and it's the gang symbol for the Crips & Boss. Since you're not Black, you're Boss," he informed me. Thank G-d I had two other Jewish tattoos, both in Hebrew. I got off. I wasn't STG'd. However now I was a target for both Boss members and Neo-Nazi gangs alike.

Guys that have giant swastika tattoos usually aren't fans of Jews. What's funny was that in time I won them over too. This Aryan Brotherhood member once said "Hey, New York (a nickname I was fond of), you're not so bad for a Jew!" To which I replied, "You know, you're not so bad for a Nazi." As soon as I could, I got another tattoo on my neck. This one said "Jew-ish," a play on the popular TV show *Black-ish*. I got it right next to the Star of David. This did help the Crip/Boss confusion, but exacerbated the Nazi one. You win some, you lose some.

My Jewishness is more cultural than religious. I'm a New York City Jew. It's a thing. New York City has the second largest population of Jewish people outside of Israel. Jewish people are strong because of their core belief that they're G-d's chosen people (this is what the Bible says, so don't hate, lol!), and second because we've been persecuted for thousands of years. Pressure can bust pipes, but it can also make diamonds. Us Jews, we're the diamonds. We survive.

My identity as a Jewish man gave me an inner strength to survive. I thought of the Holocaust. Then I said to myself, "Man up, you're not in Auschwitz. If they could survive that, you can survive anything." In any conversation that involves Jesus I always try to

chime in with his Jewish-ness, something which is lost on many Christians. Jesus the Rabbi, my type of Jesus.

It's lonely being Jewish in prison. I've only met two other Jews in my twelve years of incarceration at the eight prisons I've called home. It was probably lonely for Joseph in Egypt. Again, we survive. Diamonds. On the Jewish New Year of Rosh Hashanah, leading up to Yom Kippur—the day we ask for forgiveness—some Jewish people use bread to symbolically cast away our sins. We throw the bread into bodies of water to be forgotten—usually lakes, streams, rivers, creeks, ponds, and oceans. In prison, all I had was an open sewer pipe with turtles in it as I tried to perform this ritual on my own.

Then there is Passover. It's when we remember how G-d liberated the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. During Passover we celebrate with a Seder, a meal filled with food, rituals, and stories that symbolize the Israelites' enslavement and freedom. Some camps will try to have a Seder, but they aren't real. They're not traditional. However I do appreciate the effort. I can't blame them. We barely exist in their world. But I do exist.

I recite the Sh'ma every day, a very famous Hebrew prayer: *Sh'ma Yisrael Ad-nai Eloheinu Ad-nai Ehad*. It means "Hear O' Israel Ad-nai is one, Ad-nai is G-d." It's meant to be sung. When I sing it, I feel an ancestral pull that grounds and centers me.

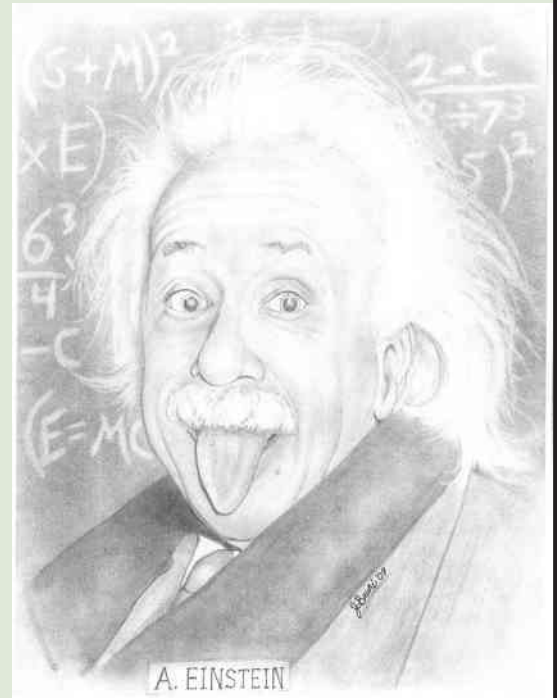
When my father died, I recited Kaddish for him—a Jewish mourner's prayer. I did this twice a day for a year. This was one of the most meaningful experiences I've ever had. Being incarcerated out-of-state, I couldn't attend my own father's funeral. However, I was still able to mourn for him and honor a 3,000-year-old tradition.

I feel like a Jewish ambassador. I've learned to quickly recite very famous Jews. I do this to show non-Jews how many Jews they know but didn't know they were Jewish, and how awesome they are. I try to break stereotypes. I also have to have very thick skin and be able to laugh at the multitude of Jewish jokes.

When people see me, they see me as white. Most of my Black friends say, "He's not white, he's a Jew." They get it. Because we share a history of slavery, persecution, living in ghettos—a term first coined in Europe for a designated area where only Jews lived and it sucked—mass murder and modern-day hatred from all sides.

People also assume I'd have issues with Muslims in prison. Quite the opposite. Muslims who study the Koran know we're biblical first cousins. Palestinian friends of mine know that in Israel we have lived together for thousands of years and don't blame each other for politicians and governments. I say don't judge us by Netanyahu but rather Adam Sandler, Seth Rogen, Mel Brooks, Natalie Portman, the girl from the 'Big Bang Theory,' and Wonder Woman, Gal Gadot. If you like bagels and pastrami sandwiches, you're welcome.

I still miss home more than ever and can't wait for the day to walk into a synagogue on a Saturday morning and hear the Torah sung. What's funny is, I won't be accepted there either. A Catch-22. It's the tattoos! Shalom!



Many thanks to our artists: page 1: Juan Barrios Carmona; page 2: Dave Johnson; page 3: Jason Bruni; page 4: Michael Hart; page 5: Juan Barrios Carmona (butterfly), Troy Ramberg (lighthouse); page 6: Troy Ramberg (moon), Juan Barrios Carmona (flower); page 7: Nickers Beauchamp (world), Aaron Krock (hand), Robert Joseph Swainston (birds); page 8: Michael Stringer.

Letters

Dear Human Kindness Foundation,

I recently received the Spring-2026 issue of "A Little Good News." Thank you for sending this. Receiving mail is always a great pleasure for me, and your newsletters are usually so uplifting. For these reasons, I am grateful.

The main article of this issue, "Taking Accountability," stirred up a tremendous amount of emotion within me. Most of it was not positive. I am afraid to say, some of it was downright hostile towards H.K.F. My ego concocted plausible sounding justifications for my anger. But these were all just smoke and mirrors. There was even an angry letter composing itself in my head.

Instead of reacting and writing something bitter, though, I sat with my feelings. For a couple of days I sat with them, actually. Then, I re-read "Taking Accountability" from a space of greater mindfulness. The same hostility arose as before. But I was able to observe it more objectively this time. For having the ability to do this, I am indebted to a number of Teachers.

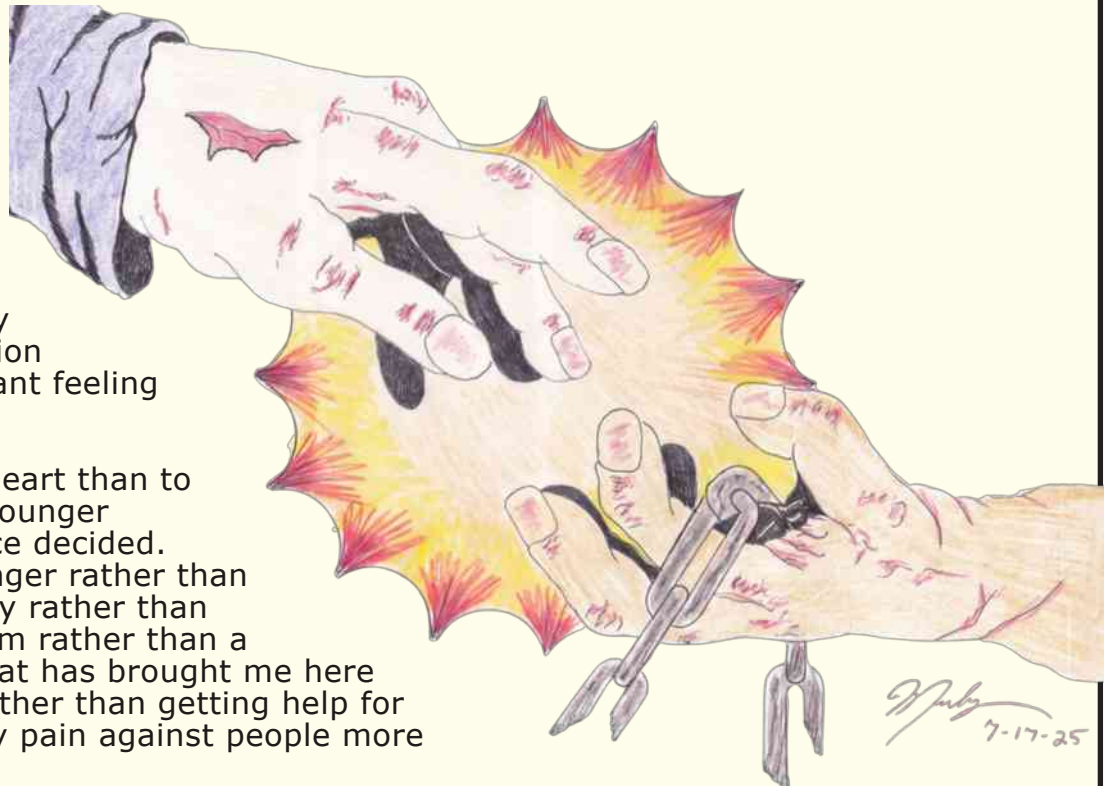
What I found, when I looked closely, was not something I was proud of. In my heart, I held a strong anger towards these women who had been victimized for having their suffering validated. This emotion was one of resentment and injustice, as though I were personally having to pay the price of setting things to right for these women (people). "How dare I be expected to have compassion for these strangers!", my heart raged.

What an ugly thing to feel. What unhealthy beliefs I must hold to give rise to such feelings. No wonder my mind was squirming so hard to hide this from me. And how irrational too, I thought!

Finally, after more digging, I found something which made sense: a small, broken voice asking "Why should their suffering matter, when mine has not?" Here, then, was the source of my

hostility and resentment: The reminder that, as a man, my own history of suffering sexual abuse and violence had frequently been invalidated. Hearing their stories forced me to relive my own. Having compassion for their suffering meant feeling my own.

Easier to harden my heart than to open it, it seemed a younger version of me had once decided. That choice, to feel anger rather than sorrow, to have apathy rather than empathy, to be a victim rather than a survivor, is largely what has brought me here to prison. Because, rather than getting help for myself, I acted out my pain against people more vulnerable than me.



Letters

I have decided to change this, to open my heart. Because of the article "Taking Accountability," and the soul-searching it caused me to do, I realize that this change must happen. I need to be open about my past, rather than hiding [from] it. I need to ask for help, rather than saying I'm okay. I am not okay. I must heal from my own abuse if I am to ensure that I never again abuse another person, and also for the hope of living a happier, healthier life.

So, my story is this: As a prepubescent boy, I was frequently molested and sexually degraded by children older than me; girls and boys, both. As a young man, I was emotionally abused and manipulated, often sexually, by my (now former) wife. Later, as an adult, I experienced sexual assault and violent rape, at the hands of men and women both. These are not things which I normally share. With anyone. Ever.

But now I will!

Thank you, for having the courage and integrity needed to broach this difficult subject. Coming from your organization, this article had the credibility needed to breach my walls and compel me to re-evaluate my own beliefs and feelings. In this way, I have been given the opportunity to grow as a person. For that I am grateful. Already, I can sense this knot of inner-turmoil beginning to unravel. You have helped me along my path, and for this you have my gratitude.

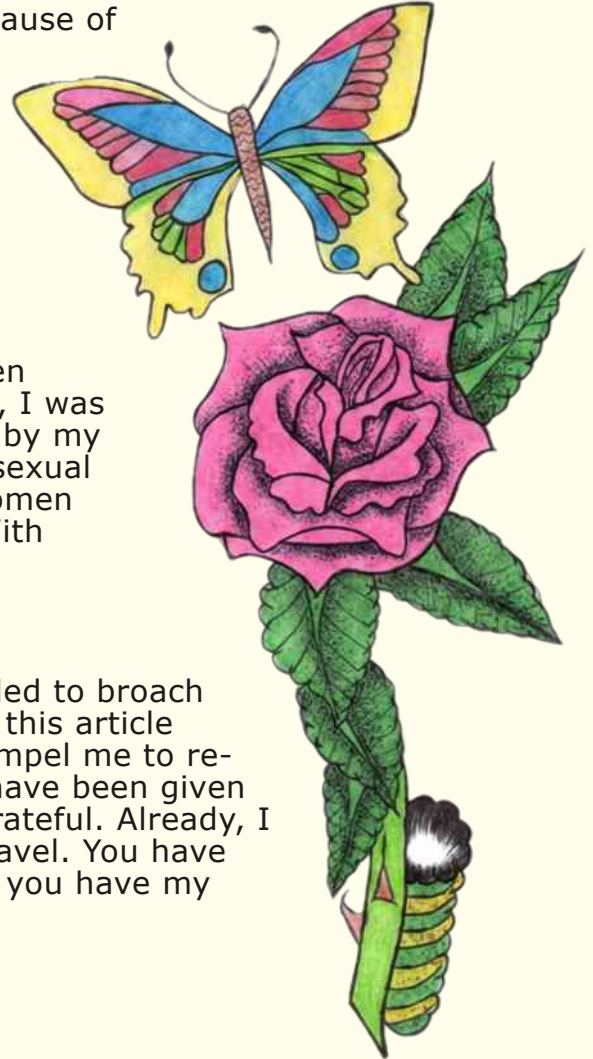
Much Love and Best Wishes, N.C.O.

Peace, Mr. N.C.O.,

Thank you for trusting the Human Kindness Foundation with your honest, vulnerable letter. I read your words slowly and then again. They deserved that attention. What stood out was not just the pain, but the courage it took to pause, sit with your feelings, and look beneath your anger. That is hard work.

As someone formerly incarcerated, who also carries the weight of childhood sexual harm, I know healing is complicated. Pain may not show up as sadness at first. It can show as anger, resentment, defensiveness, numbness, or hostility. Sometimes compassion for others feels threatening because it touches our unhealed places. We may ask, "Why is their pain seen when mine was ignored?" While that question may not sound kind, beneath it a wounded person asks to be remembered, believed, and cared for. Your letter shows that truth honestly.

I appreciate that you did not stop at your first reaction. You noticed the hostility, questioned it, and returned to the article with mindfulness. You kept digging and found pain beneath anger, a history of being invalidated



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Letters



beneath indifference, and fear beneath a lack of compassion. Self-examination like this is deep accountability.

Accountability is not only admitting what we have done. It is also becoming brave enough to understand what shaped us without using it as an excuse. It is learning how our wounds may have distorted our beliefs, our relationships, and our choices. It is telling the truth about harm done to us while also telling the truth about harm we may have caused. That is painful, humbling work. But it is also the beginning of freedom inside oneself, even while living behind walls.

Your line, "I need to ask for help, rather than saying I'm okay," is powerful. Many learned survival by saying they were okay when they were not. We hid, hardened, performed strength, and swallowed pain. Healing often starts when we say, "I am not okay, and I need help." That is not weakness. It is wisdom. It is the voice of the part that still wants to live, grow, repair, and become whole.

I also want to honor the complexity of what you shared. Men and boys who have been sexually harmed are often silenced by shame, disbelief, or false ideas about how men should not be wounded. That silence becomes another prison. Without safe places to tell the truth, pain turns inward or gets acted out in ways that harm others. Naming this does not erase responsibility. But it helps us see why healing is necessary—for the person harmed and everyone they may encounter afterward.

Your letter reminds us that accountability and compassion must go hand in hand.

Compassion without accountability becomes avoidance. Accountability without compassion becomes punishment without change. When these meet, something sacred happens: a person sees clearly, grieves honestly, takes responsibility, and chooses a new way forward. I hope you keep walking toward that new way.

Keep seeking help whenever you need it. Continue writing, reflecting, and telling the truth in safe ways. Listen closely to that small, broken voice inside—not to be ruled by it, but to care for it. Remember, the younger version of you deserved protection, tenderness, and belief. The man you are today also deserves healing—embrace it even as you commit to accountability.

Thank you for reminding us that transformation is rarely neat. It is messy, uncomfortable, and often painful. Your letter shows it is possible to pause, look inward, and begin again.

With respect and hope, Craig Waleed

Dear Human Kindness Foundation Community,

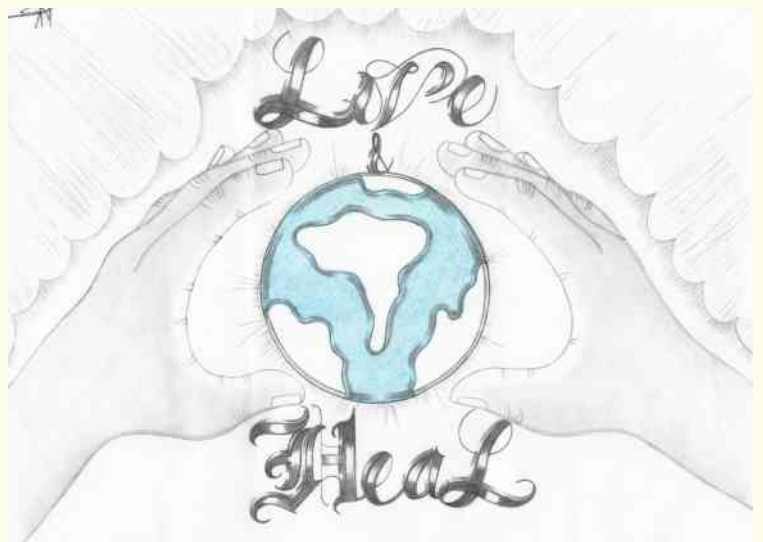
I was deeply moved by the Spring 2026 newsletter that addressed the sexual harm caused by Bo Lozoff and opened a door for reflection and community discussion where survivors and perpetrators alike can contribute. This is very revolutionary. I am an incarcerated man who is both a survivor and a perpetrator, so I see both sides of the issue and share in the pain, isolation, and brokenness experienced by both survivors and perpetrators. I am incarcerated because I was a perpetrator of sexual



Letters

harm. It has been a rough journey for me to find healing and support for my own trauma. But God has used my incarceration to lead me on a path of reconciliation, growth, healing, and redemption.

As I have worked on my healing, I have been able to see myself in my ugliness and recognize the damage that I have done to so many lives. I have also been able to see the impact of the trauma inflicted upon me which played a role in my perpetration of sexual harm. I understand the bitterness and rage in the heart of survivors as well as the sickness and bondage of the perpetrator.



To every survivor of sexual harm, I apologize as a perpetrator for the trauma and its impact on your life. To every perpetrator, I forgive you as a survivor for the trauma you have inflicted and the impact you have had on the lives of others. There is hope for both sides, I am living proof. I have been healed of my sickness and brokenness as a perpetrator and survivor, so I know that both are able to find healing and wholeness in the aftermath of the trauma of sexual harm.



I believe it is possible for perpetrators and survivors to come together and work together to heal our communities. I am determined as a former perpetrator to never inflict sexual harm on anyone else. As a survivor I am determined to move forward and make peace with the past in order to build a brighter future. I understand this is a difficult issue, but if we take courage to share our experiences perhaps we can collectively increase our understanding. Each of us is broken. But if we look to the Divine Healer and work together, we can overcome our brokenness and find the light and love we need to live meaningful lives with purpose.

Sincerely, Anthony



Together-Apart

My dear friends, please continue to sit with us on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8pm (or any time on Wednesdays that might be convenient for you) as we send love, prayers, and blessings to the many suffering beings in the world. Use whatever practice is meaningful to you, beloveds. "See" you all on Wednesdays!
Love, Sita

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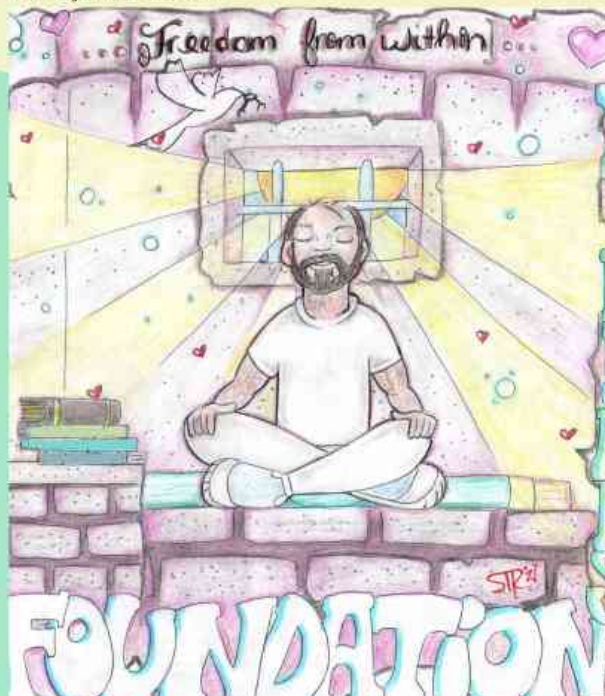
“My pain is no longer something I try to escape from; now it’s a light or a beacon that plays an important part in guiding me.”

Alvin, 2017

Art by Michael S.

Reflection

Look around and find a shadow. Pay attention to its shape. If it moves, follow its journey. Shadows have their own stories to tell, their own lessons to teach, their own way to guide our path. Now look for the light that makes the shadow. Where there is shadow, there is always light. We can choose at any moment which way to turn our head.



Questions

When have you connected with others over shared pain?

Who or what has guided you most throughout your life?

When have you guided someone through a hard time?