



free them all

a 2024 wall calendar

*in collaboration with writers, poets, and artists inside
illinois department of corrections*

illustrations by aidan anne frierson

about the artwork

january



“One Mic” was painted by Nickolas “Red” Haselrig and several other artists for the Dixon Performing Arts (DPA) program to display at the “One Mic” concert performed in 2020 at Dixon Correctional Center. The banner now hangs in CTJC’s community room. It has also doubled as a stage backdrop during spoken word events hosted by the CTJC reentry program.

february



“Irretrievably Torn” by Sherman Spears acknowledges systemic racism and the effect it has on community violence throughout the urban areas of America. It visualizes the deterioration of the Black family dynamic caused by the diabolical racism of mass incarceration on Black & brown men and women, leaving families **irretrievably torn** and/or broken. Sherman Spears is an art instructor inside the Dixon Correctional Center.

march

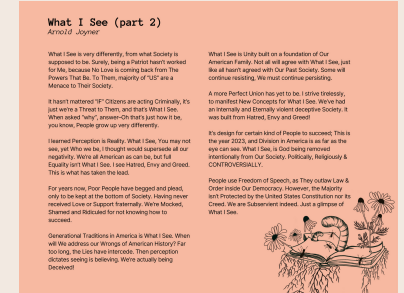


“What I Love About Performing” is a short essay written by rapper STREETBABYGREEDY, also known as Jose Saucedo. He performs with the Dixon Performing Arts program. STREETBABYGREEDY writes and performs his own original music. Check out more from SBG: youtube.com/@StreetBabyGreedy.

april & may



“What They See / What I See” is a two-part piece written by poet and writer Arnold Joyner. Arnold often writes about systemic injustice, observations and self-reflections on incarceration and personal experiences.

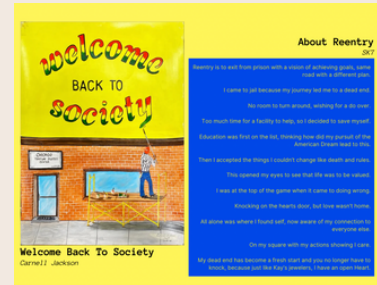


june



“Perseverance”, painted by Nickolas Haselrig, represents an individual who rises as a graduate of his past circumstances.

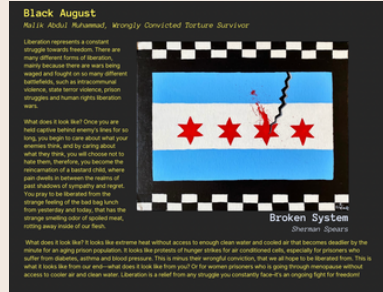
july



1) “Welcome Back To Society” was painted by Carnell Jackson for CTJC. The bright colors represent the future for those coming home, and the man working outside cleaning the Center symbolizes putting in work to keep the Center safe and growing.

2) “About Reentry” was written in response to a prompt facilitated by a DPA writing group. Signed SK7, which represent’s Stacey’s 7 kids, the author defines the moniker to mean “spread love to the world”.

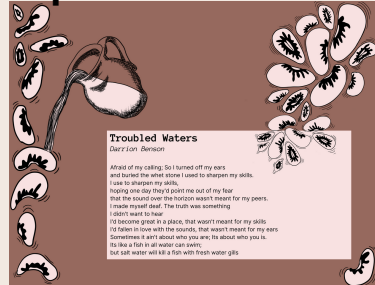
august



1) "Liberation" by Abdul-Malik Muhammad, was written in response to the prompt "What does liberation mean to you and what does it look like?". Abdul-Malik Muhammad graduated with the first cohort of students from Northwestern University's Prison Education Program in November 2023. Learn more about Abdul-Malik's case: facebook.com/FreeMalikTIRC.

2) Painted by Sherman Spears, "Broken System" represents systemic racism, inequality and illegal practices within CPD. It is a representation of all the Black and brown lives lost as a result of racist and illegal practices of policemen who destroyed countless innocent men's lives and families.

september



"Troubled Waters" was written by a young poet named Darrion Benson.

october



Emerging from a writing workshop facilitated by the Dixon Performing Arts program, this collection of pieces by Eric Gholston, Peter Andrews and Curtis Clark are responses to the prompt "Where do I belong?".

november



"Black Friday" by writer and poet Dennis Morland was originally published in the August 2021 issue of our newsletter.

december



"Extension of a Man" is a poetic collage collectively written by Marvin "Prince Saleem" Alexis, Darrion Shemiyah Benson, and Toussaint Daniels. Each poet's contribution is denoted by color.

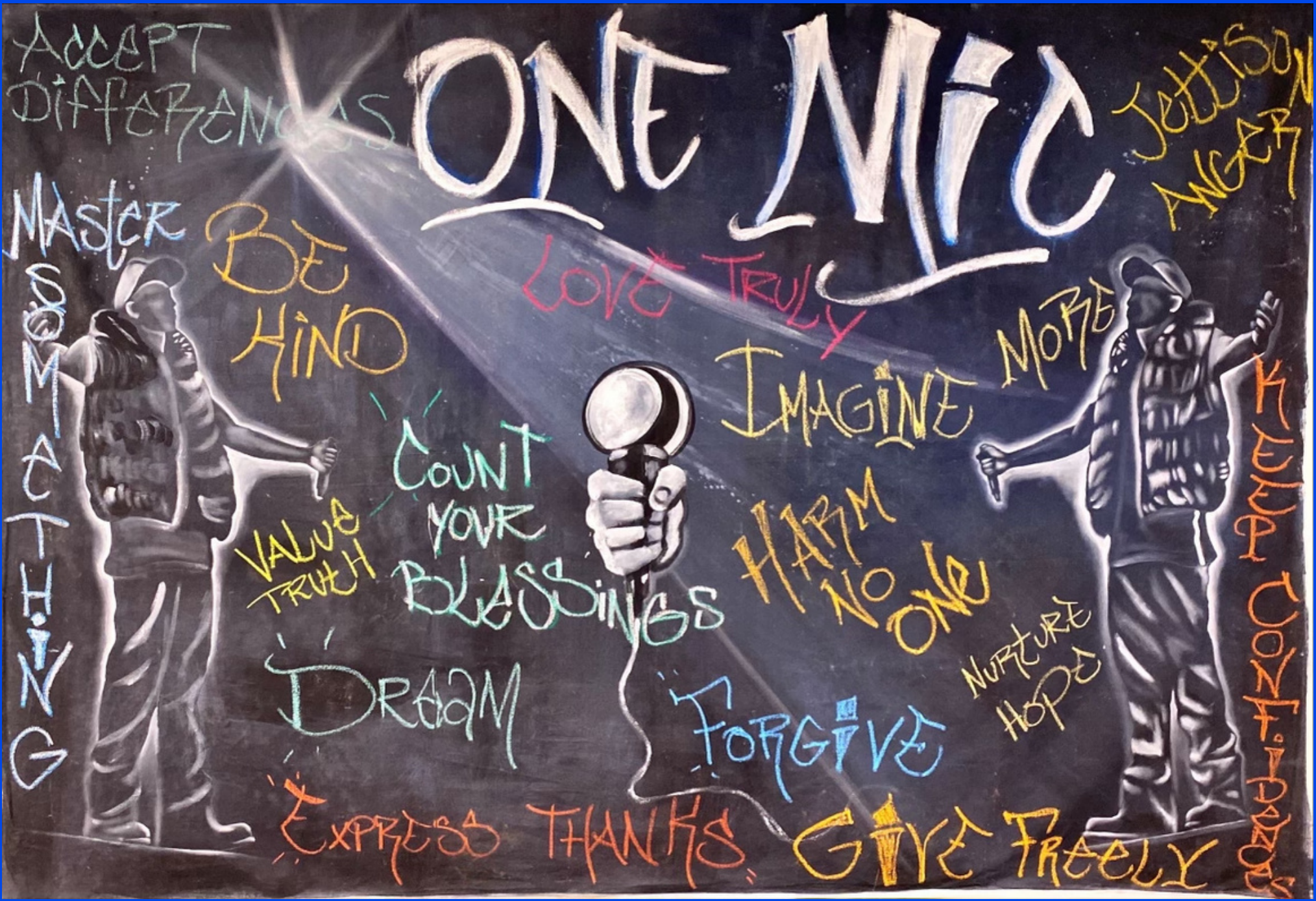
The poem can be read two ways: 1) as a stand-alone poem or 2) three separate poems. Despite each writer living in different units, they crafted the poem specifically for this calendar. Brian Beals supported the construction of "Extension of a Man".

about the illustrator

aidan anne frierson

aidan anne frierson is a Chicago-based maker. View more of their work on Instagram @skinlessdog. In 2022, they designed a t-shirt for CTJC that is available for purchase





ONE MIC

Nickolas Haselrig and Dixon Performing Arts

JANUARY 2024

1.15: Martin Luther
King Jr. Day

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Irretrievably Torn Sherman Spears

FEBRUARY 2024

Black History
Month

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What I Love About Performing

Jose Saucedo aka STREETBABYGREEDY

Ask me what I enjoy about performing, and I'll probably look at you sideways. I'll say, "I think the word you mean to say is LOVE!" I love everything about performing! It is my opinion that performing is something you have to love to do in order to enjoy it. **I love how the people are there to see you, but the performance is for them!** Anybody who gets on a stage is absolutely brave. It's a scary thing to do, honestly. That's why I want to also share my thoughts with artists whose art has to do with being up there on that stage. It's natural to be nervous or afraid, trust me. In fact, I messed up a few times, hell, a lot, just being real. What I believe helped me with that feeling of being afraid or nervous, and I think can encourage you as well is to PRACTICE! Look in that mirror, cause what you see is what the people see. No matter how tired you get with your rehearsal, and I know it gets tiresome, but the only thing you should keep in mind is that your performance is old to you, not your audience. It's always about the people. If you make a mistake while performing, no matter what, keep going! The show must go on, don't stop. While practicing, try to find yourself, meaning your swagger. Be clear when you speak, and most importantly, your confidence. The crowd will only go off of your energy, so bring it every time. Be sure to engage with your audience. Make them hear, see and feel you.

If you ever get to the point where you wanna quit, don't! Just take a break. All of us entertainers get overwhelmed at times. There's nothing wrong with taking some time to just chill, but don't get too lax. It's always good to ask for feedback from the people. Listen to constructive criticism, and apply it if you can. Anything to better you is always a plus.

In closing, what I love about performing is how I get all the attention in the room. I love seeing the crowd go from quiet to bobbing their heads to my music, even repeating the lyrics I created. I love when they callout STREETBABY GREED (SBG). Most importantly, I love that I leave them satisfied. That's what I love about performing.



MARCH 2024

Women's History
Month

3.8: International
Women's Day

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What They See (part 1)

Arnold Joyner



I constantly wonder what they see, especially when they look at Me. I'm surely not Their enemy, yet, they're still targeting the likes of You and Me. Could it really be, this is what they're trained to see? People of Color as Their Enemy. It's fascinating, What They See, while intentionally, ignoring Love and Unity.

The average American focus is on Money, yes Surviving. We all see America's Greed. We all would like to also succeed, but Destiny has been based on What They See. Truly, They don't see all Americans equally, or The Power of White Racism wouldn't be soooo effectively.

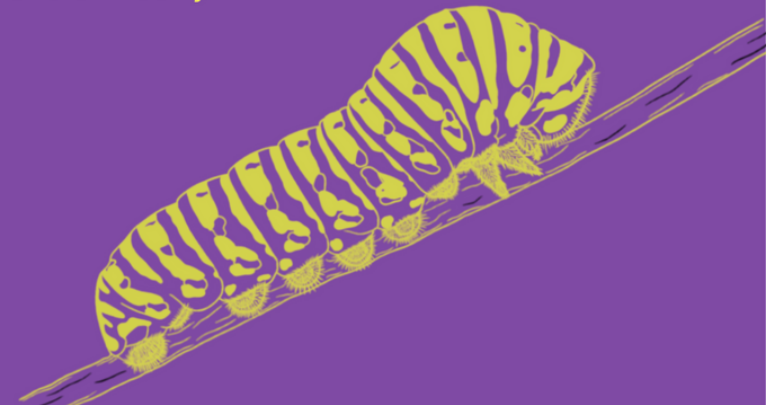
If They could see what we see, we could possibly convince Them to join Our American Team. The red, White and Blue Esteem. We're the Ones developed from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream. Whereas, all Americans can be Redeemed.

When we look back, America's Past is Evil, no matter how They try to make it seem. We live in Shame, Agony and Arrogantly. Pretending one Group is far more Superior than could be. It seems, Themselves is What They See. The rest of "US" are Insignificantly?

That is, until it's time to Vote for Someone's Candidacy. Could it be, The Government's Power is What They See. It's been used to keep Control over the likes of You and Me. They surely use it Indiscriminately. They spend Billions of Dollars on Projects that's Self-Servingly.

The Poor of America it seems They can't see. It's a distorted Reality, done to "US" Intentionally. You would want to believe, after Two & a half Centuries, We would all be able and willing to see, All Americans Collectively. Under Liberty, inside this Democracy, or is this Concept a mere Fallacy we will never be able to really see?

I have a Hope and Dream, no matter What They See. It won't affect Me! I'm Invaluable and Godly. I'm what They don't want Me to be. Intelligently, Serene and Free from all Their negativity. People turn on Your High Beams and use all Your Steam, and remember, It's a Live Stream. Trust & Believe, forget What They See. What do You see, in this Blessed Land of Liberty?



APRIL 2024

4.9: Sexual Assault
Awareness Month
Day of Action

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What I See (part 2)

Arnold Joyner

What I See is very differently, from what Society is supposed to be. Surely, being a Patriot hasn't worked for Me, because No Love is coming back from The Powers That Be. To Them, majority of "US" are a Menace to Their Society.

It hasn't mattered "IF" Citizens are acting Criminally, it's just we're a Threat to Them, and that's What I See. When asked "why", answer—Oh that's just how it be, you know, People grow up very differently.

I learned Perception is Reality. What I See, You may not see, yet Who we be, I thought would supersede all our negativity. We're all American as can be, but full Equality isn't What I See. I see Hatred, Envy and Greed. This is what has taken the lead.

For years now, Poor People have begged and plead, only to be kept at the bottom of Society. Having never received Love or Support fraternally. We're Mocked, Shamed and Ridiculed for not knowing how to succeed.

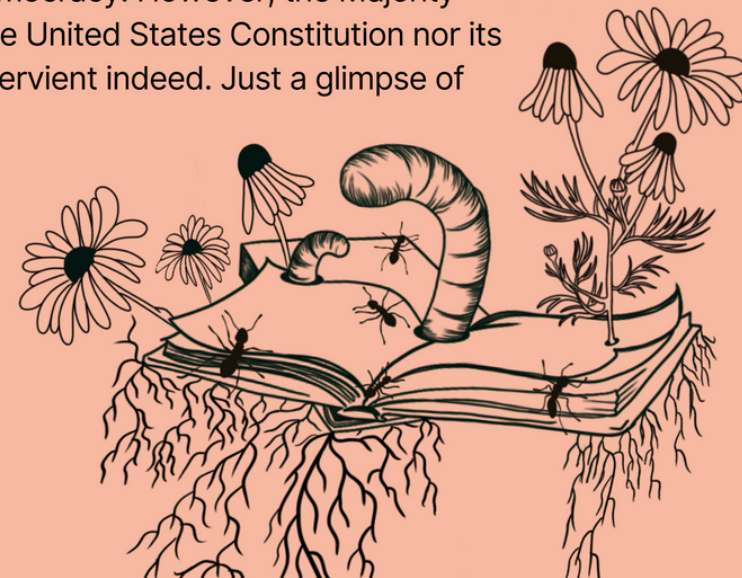
Generational Traditions in America is What I See. When will We address our Wrongs of American History? Far too long, the Lies have intercede. Then perception dictates seeing is believing. We're actually being Deceived!

What I See is Unity built on a foundation of Our American Family. Not all will agree with What I See, just like all hasn't agreed with Our Past Society. Some will continue resisting, We must continue persisting.

A more Perfect Union has yet to be. I strive tirelessly, to manifest New Concepts for What I See. We've had an Internally and Eternally violent deceptive Society. It was built from Hatred, Envy and Greed!

It's design for certain kind of People to succeed; This is the year 2023, and Division in America is as far as the eye can see. What I See, is God being removed intentionally from Our Society. Politically, Religiously & CONTROVERSIALLY.

People use Freedom of Speech, as They outlaw Law & Order inside Our Democracy. However, the Majority isn't Protected by the United States Constitution nor its Creed. We are Subservient indeed. Just a glimpse of What I See.



MAY 2024

5.6: Reparations Ordinance passed unanimously by Chicago City Council (2015)

5.14: Mother's Day

5.25: African Liberation Day

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Perseverance
Nickolas Haselrig

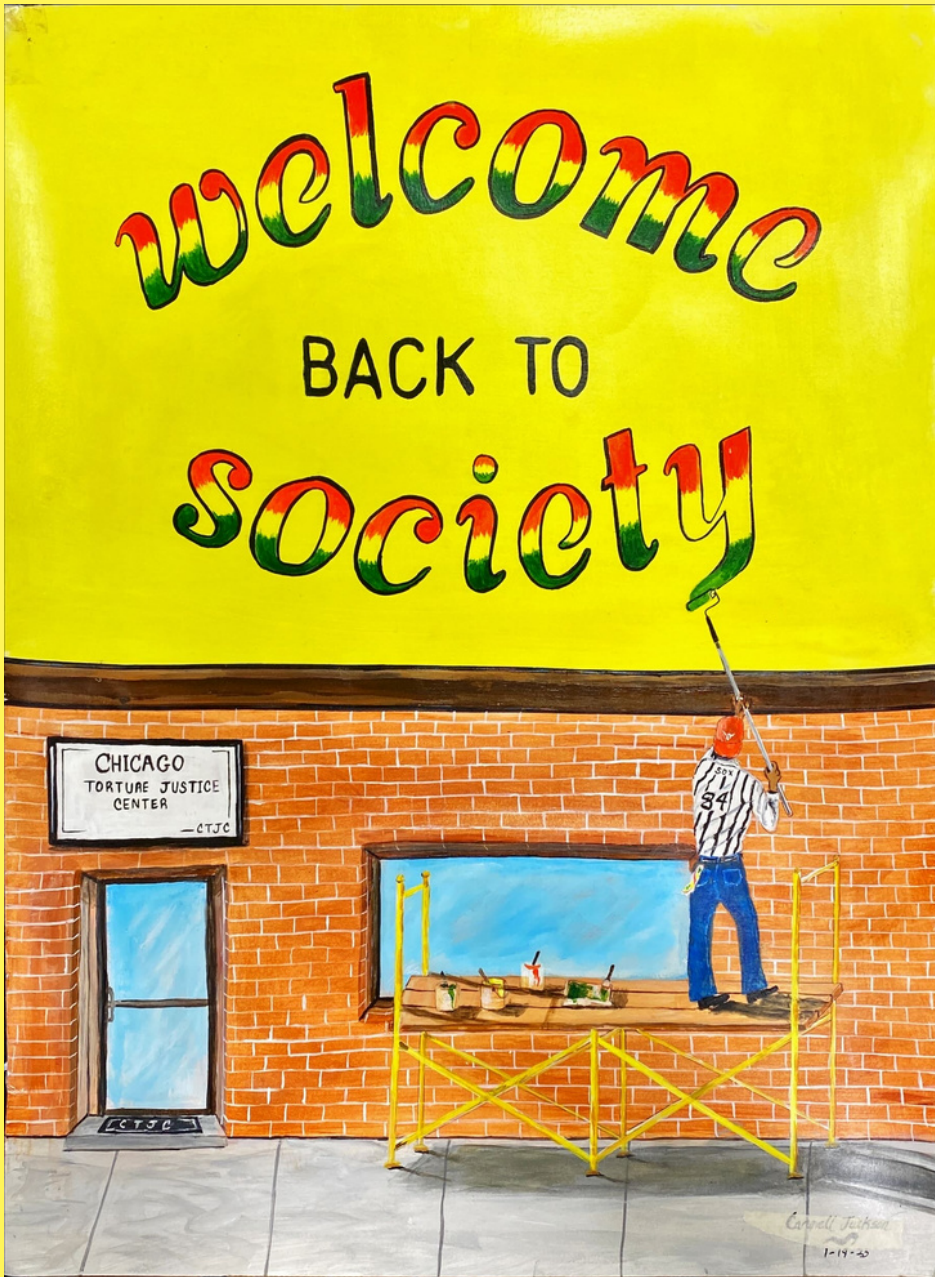
JUNE 2024

6.16: Father's Day

6.19: Juneteenth

6.26: International
Day in Support of
Victims of Torture

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Welcome Back To Society

Carnell Jackson

About Reentry

SK7

Reentry is to exit from prison with a vision of achieving goals, same road with a different plan.

I came to jail because my journey led me to a dead end.

No room to turn around, wishing for a do over.

Too much time for a facility to help, so I decided to save myself.

Education was first on the list, thinking how did my pursuit of the American Dream lead to this.

Then I accepted the things I couldn't change like death and rules.

This opened my eyes to see that life was to be valued.

I was at the top of the game when it came to doing wrong.

Knocking on the hearts door, but love wasn't home.

All alone was where I found self, now aware of my connection to everyone else.

On my square with my actions showing I care.

My dead end has become a fresh start and you no longer have to knock, because just like Kay's jewelers, I have an open Heart.

**JULY
2024**

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Black August

Abdul-Malik Muhammad, Wrongly Convicted Torture Survivor

Liberation represents a constant struggle towards freedom. There are many different forms of liberation, mainly because there are wars being waged and fought on so many different battlefields, such as intracommunal violence, state terror violence, prison struggles and human rights liberation wars.

What does it look like? Once you are held captive behind enemy's lines for so long, you begin to care about what your enemies think, and by caring about what they think, you will choose not to hate them, therefore, you become the reincarnation of a bastard child, where pain dwells in between the realms of past shadows of sympathy and regret. You pray to be liberated from the strange feeling of the bad bag lunch from yesterday and today, that has the strange smelling odor of spoiled meat, rotting away inside of our flesh.



Broken System

Sherman Spears

What does it look like? It looks like extreme heat without access to enough clean water and cooled air that becomes deadlier by the minute for an aging prison population. It looks like protests of hunger strikes for air conditioned cells, especially for prisoners who suffer from diabetes, asthma and blood pressure. This is minus their wrongful conviction, that we all hope to be liberated from. This is what it looks like from our end—what does it look like from you? Or for women prisoners who is going through menopause without access to cooler air and clean water. Liberation is a relief from any struggle you constantly face—it's an ongoing fight for freedom!

AUGUST 2024

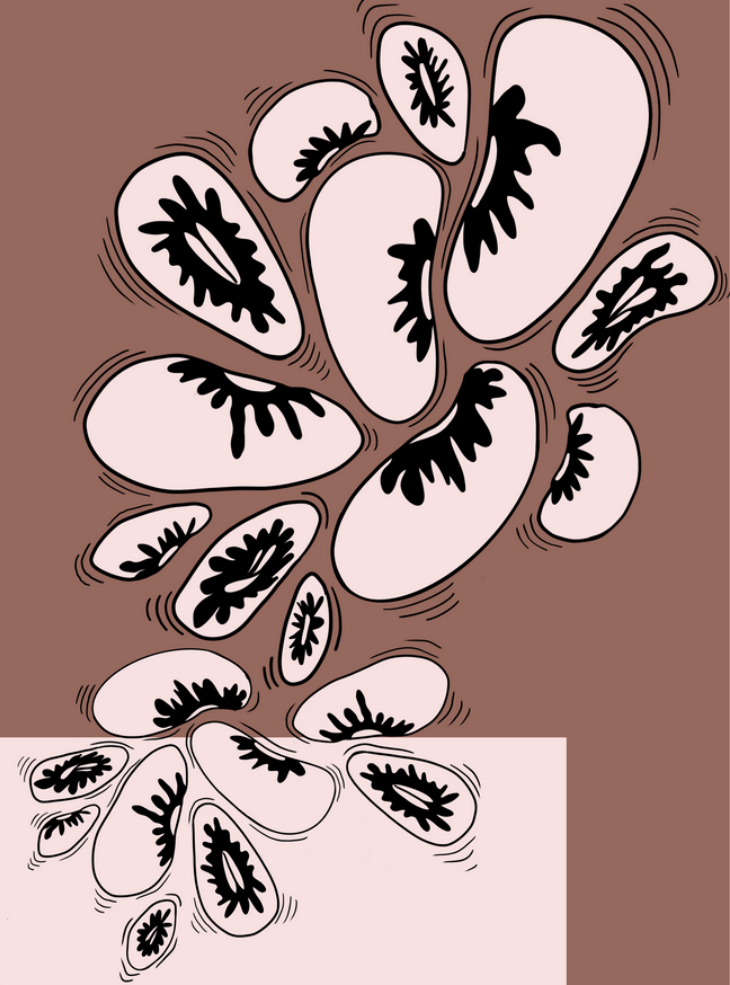
Black August

8.21: Assassination
of George Jackson

8.23: International
Day for the
Remembrance of the
Slave Trade and its
Abolition

8.30: International
Day of the
Disappeared

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Troubled Waters

Darrion Benson

Afraid of my calling; So I turned off my ears
and buried the whet stone I used to sharpen my skills.
I use to sharpen my skills,
hoping one day they'd point me out of my fear
that the sound over the horizon wasn't meant for my peers.
I made myself deaf. The truth was something
I didn't want to hear
I'd become great in a place, that wasn't meant for my skills
I'd fallen in love with the sounds, that wasn't meant for my ears
Sometimes it ain't about who you are; Its about who you is.
Its like a fish in all water can swim;
but salt water will kill a fish with fresh water gills



SEPTEMBER 2024

9.9: Attica Uprising

9.15: Latinx Heritage
Month begins

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Eric Gholston

I perspectivevely believe that I belong within a world that sees me for who I am.

Meaning a Pioneer and product of community.

I embrace my own ability to create change amongst environments of peers, so that it may spread in areas that are in need of opportunities.

Such as trade-skill sets and goal oriented guides to help develop purpose.

My ideal space is where empowerment can be cultivated and made a reality among youth.

Built on entrepreneurs investing long term with skill sets that will enable growth and development.

Where do I belong, among communities making an impact.

Where Do I Belong

Peter Andrews

Where Do I Belong? I belong with my wife and Kids in either San Francisco or San Diego California, living extremely well. Wonderful house, mortgage paid in full, excellent job with the railroad. Benefits for my kids and family's well being. Becoming part of the union, nice family car, paid in full. Exceptional schooling for my kids and not looking over my shoulder every five seconds clutching a gun, thinking about who I have to watch or who I can trust to stay alive.

Curtis Clark

It's gangstas to the left of me, and squares up front.
Democrats are next to Biden, Republicans are by Trump.
Somber minds are staying-smoke-free, while the puffers tryna smoke it up.
People with Knowledge tryna dish it out, those without tryna soak it up.
The "king" of hearts belong with the hearts, and the "Queen" of spades go with the spades.
But, to what suit do I belong if I'm a "Jack" of all trades?
Some consider me a bookworm, yet I still believe in true love.
Menace 2 Society and Boyz in da Hood are the best flick in my opinion.
But give me some Big Bang Theory and Stewie Griffin and I'll show you what I call living.
I'm bumpin' Money-bagg Yo on my way to a tribute concert for the Eagles.
By night I'm out hustlin', by day studying to be a Paralegal.
See, I can be down to earth, and grounded, with the terrestrial things.
Or have my head in the clouds amongst celestial beings.
You can put me in a box, or try to rap me in a case.
So you can catch me running hard towards that finish line tape.
Cuz the place where I belong is running in the Human Race.



OCTOBER 2024

10.2: Wrongful Conviction Day

10.10: World Day Against the Death Penalty / World Mental Health Day

10.14: Indigenous Peoples' Day

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BLACK FRIDAY

DENNIS MORLAND

GUN TOWERS! CAN'T MAINTAIN
OR CONTROL GOD'S POWER,

IGNITED BY A SPARK THAT
TURNED INTO A RAGING FLAME,

SAY HER NAME! AND EVERY
NAME THAT WE LOST
TO THIS DIRTY GAME,

CHAIRMAN FRED! I SEEN
JUDAS AND THE BLACK
MESSIAH, YOU AIN'T DEAD!

EXISTING IN ANOTHER FORM,
BUT YOUR SPIRIT LIVES
ON,

CLOSE THE DOOR OF EVERY
STORE THAT WILL ACCEPT
OUR DOLLARS, BUT NOT
US,

IT'S OVERDUE! THAT WE
BELIEVE IN YOU AND
ME AND ALL THAT WE
COULD BE,

LET'S GROW BIGGER THAN
THE BIGGEST TREE,

DEEPLY-ROOTED IN A
DIVINE COMMITMENT
TO A GREATER EXISTENCE,

CAPITALISM DOESN'T CARE
ABOUT THE COMMUNITY,

BECAUSE CAPITALISM IS
NEVER ABOUT UNITY,

AMERICA WAS BUILT
LITERALLY, FOR FREE
ON THE BACKS OF
ENSLAVED PEOPLE,

BUT THE DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE SAYS
ALL MEN ARE CREATED
EQUAL,

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND
EXCEPT YOURS AND
MINE,

IS THIS JUST A COINCIDENCE
OR BY DESIGN,

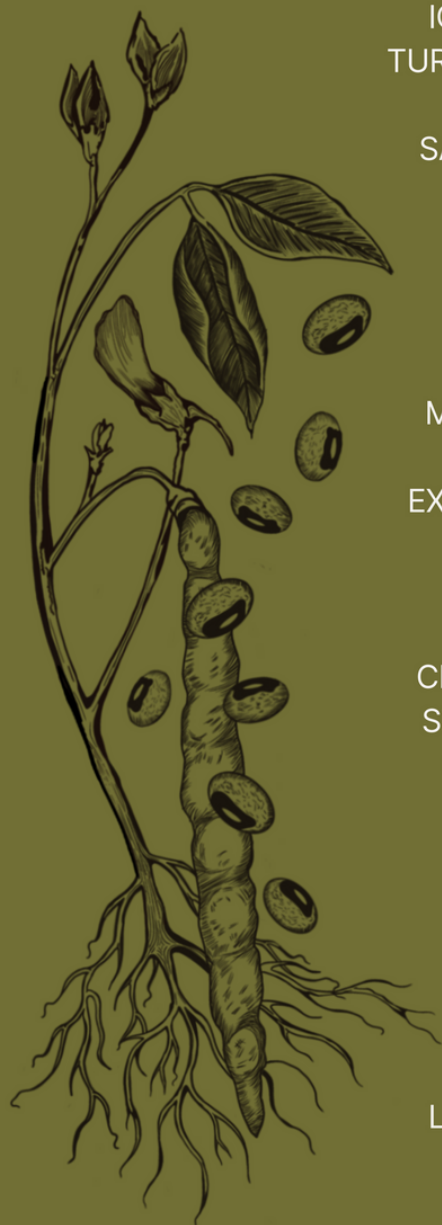
SALE AFTER SALE AFTER
SALE, AND IT NEVER
STOPS,

DO YOU REMEMBER
THE AUCTION BLOCK,

AS WELL AS THE PRODUCT
OWNERS KEPT IN STOCK,

IT COULD OF BEEN CALLED
ANY COLOR OR NAMED
ANY DAY,

BUT WHAT'S BETTER
THAN A DEAL ON
BLACK FRIDAY!?



NOVEMBER 2024

10.12-14: We Charge
Genocide youth
delegation in Geneva
(2014)

10.20: Trans Day of
Remembrance

10.25: International
Day for the
Elimination of
Violence Against
Women

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SPRING

Thought - Permeates - germinates in a void womb of space and time

Spring forward, a Bairn cries - Sentience

Bottles - Babbles, fragment - Sentences

Crawls with voracity, vibrantly - Vernal

Tacit - Tenacity with prodigious felicity for life seems eternal.

Soft black curls

Black cherubim

She sings of new things.

Gumless smiles

Irises shaping questions

Reflecting nebulas filled with April Showers

Perspiring pubescent drops

Riddled along Terra Firma

Like a white Lily sprawled against the limbs of a Hawthorne

SUMMER

Legs longer

Runs less rough

A map has places now

Illuminated by my radiance, they call me S(o)n

Light beams - 93 million mile journey, journals - learning

I gravitate what I radiate

Burning internal, an eternal cinder

Knowledge - manhood: Father, Husband, Family - Prosperity

Wisdom to understanding balance with calculated dexterity

Success - Constant elevation towards your zenith

Some'll succeed - While summer solstice

Impetuous heart warmed with desire

Leaping, jolting, deflowering June bug

Vitality abound like a rebellious widow's peak

In search of purpose

Arches flatten tracking against the grain

Toes barking, trailblazing amongst these dog days

EXTENSION OF A MAN

Marvin "Prince Saleem" Alexis

Darrion Shemiyah Benson

Toussaint Daniels

FALL

Time falls back like hair lines

As fire-orange leaves imbue the color of crisis

Gathering what we can in this deciduous season

Moving different

Creating methods

The young are taking notes

I'm older - wiser, seasoned peers visionary with autumn eyes

Harvested a cornucopia of culture refined

Resolutely retired - Substituted by coaching

Councilor - Teacher - Purveyor

Conqueror - Seizer - Soother - Sayer - Savior- Liberator

For when fallen leaves, promise appears

A waning horizon for mortality is clear

WINTER

The past lay in the soil

An old life planted for the coming Spring

She has become legacy

When every word is evergreen

Rocking raconteur reciting rites in between the glee

Of tiny digits dialing around his smile lines

Finality is near and inclement

Reality flurries, White beard - Golden years - Twilight hours

Highlights blossom like moon flower fort nights like an Aurora Borealis

Winter wonder lands in a rubicon for respite warriors

Decades developing Promethean clef mental notes-

Produced a harmonious accord:

Unity - Legacy - Lineage - Community - Nation - Delegacy - Destiny

The final destination: Nirvana, Jenna, Heavenly Peace.... Sleep

This is my last will and testament.

DECEMBER 2024

12.4: Assassination
of Fred Hampton

12.10: Human
Rights Day

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The Chicago Torture Justice Center was born out of reparations for survivors of police torture. The Chicago Torture Justice Center seeks to address the traumas of police violence and institutionalized racism through access to healing and wellness services, trauma-informed resources, and community connection. The Center is a part of and supports a movement to end all forms of police violence.

This calendar features words and art from community members inside the Illinois Department of Corrections. The Chicago Torture Justice Center corresponds with over 100 incarcerated individuals through a monthly newsletter. Our newsletter is currently the only monthly publication sent into IDOC facilities and features updates about what's happening at CTJC, contributions from community members inside, news about prisons and the legal system, and healing practices. Subscribing to our newsletter is completely free. If you or a loved one would like to be added to the mailing list, please fill out the form at bit.ly/CTJC-subscribe, scan the code to the right, or write to us: 6337 S. Woodlawn, Chicago, IL 60637. Subscribers can be outside IDOC, including federal facilities.

bit.ly/CTJC-subscribe

