

# Compassion

Written by Death-Row Prisoners

HELPING PRISONERS ON DEATH ROW LIVE CONNECTED AND FRUITFUL LIVES

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Publishing compassionate and introspective articles written by death-row prisoners.



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[www.compassionondeathrow.net](http://www.compassionondeathrow.net)

## WHO IS IN CONTROL?

**A**s a writer I try very hard to focus on a wide variety of topics that are positive in a nature and hopefully uplifting. It is with that same passion and purpose that I address this topic – the political chaos that is going on in our country today. American politics has become a dirty game of bickering, name calling, character assassination, and even threats of physical harm. It is rife with impossible promises from all sides. Respect and honor have exited the stage!

Christianity in America has enjoyed the blessings of a country founded upon freedom of religion. We have been free to worship as we choose and live without persecution. Those times have changed! A question Christianity in America must answer is, "What is a Christian's primary responsibility?" Is it following the teachings of Jesus or maintaining their own ideological culture?

The two really clash and that is where we find ourselves today. I was always taught, and still fully believe, that Christianity is called to speak out against evil and demonstrate love and mercy even in the face of persecution. Christian values do not support leaders who lie and cheat to hold onto power. History has proven that Christianity can

thrive in a hostile environment, and the reality is that it has a purifying effect.

Those who are committed to their faith should be willing to stand up to politicians who constantly lie and mislead. It is sad to see leading Christians, who claim moral authority, stand next to these politicians or set up "prayer phone lines" specifically geared to raising money for them.

Is this the example Christians were taught? Is this the example you really want to leave as a teaching legacy to your children and grandchildren? Our responsibility as Christians is to call society to follow the teachings of Jesus. Remember, Jesus who died on Calvary for the sins of all humanity! To build a faith-based society, based on morals and principles where politics comes after God, family, friends, mercy and forgiveness. Our politics should be defined by our faith – not the other way around. May we realize that God is in control regardless of what men may think and do



John Robinson  
Kansas Death Row  
El Dorado, Kansas

## THE PROMISED LAND

What kind of life is at hand?  
Taking food from where you can,  
At what point do you take a stand,  
What's become of the Promised land!

The harbor reaches out her land,  
Offering what little help she can,  
Isn't it time to take a stand?

What's become of the Promised land  
What's become of the Promised land,

The politics are hard to understand  
What's become of the Promised land?

Taking food from another's hand,  
Looking past veteran's with flags in hand,  
How long before we take a stand,  
What's become of the Promised land?



Richard Hamilton  
Florida Death Row  
Raiford, FL

# Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are welcomed from all prisoners (this includes non-death row prisoners) and the outside community.

In submitting letters, we ask that compassionate and introspective guidelines apply to your communications.

Limit size to 400 words or less. Letters may be edited for clarity and space considerations.

## SEND ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO:

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**PLEASE NOTE:** Any opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individuals writing them and not of Compassion or other staff members. Anything death row prisoners write may jeopardize their future appeals. This may limit the scope of their expressions.

*All stories are subject to editing for grammar, sentence structure, and clarity.*

# GIVING THANKS

First and foremost I would like to send thanks to my auntie for raising me as her own since I was 4 weeks old!

Secondly, my big sister Roxy for never giving up on me when others had closed their doors and hearts to me. I can always count on you for a place to call home! I would like to give thanks to my pen-pal Miss. Roxie for always being the one I can vent to when it seems like no one else cares.

Also I would like to give thanks to Ms. Sha'ri Eggum for her inspiring submission in the

first Compassion I've ever gotten: issue 110. I still have and share every issue with those around me. Thanks also to Tone, for taking me under your wing and, importantly, thank you to all of the Victim's Families: you are the strongest people in the world, especially the ones forgiving those who have taken the life of one you loved so deeply.



Paul Sanchez  
Nevada Death Row  
Ely, NV

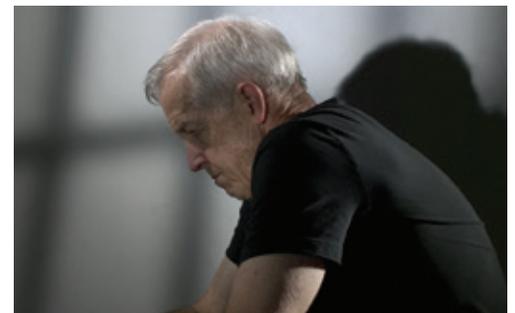
## EDITORIAL:

### "...I SIN AGAIN"

On my cellblock is Kenny, a man with dementia. Despite the disease disabling him, he loves the Lord and is so full of joy he brightens our dark environment. Kenny needs to be in an "assisted living" facility but we are death row prisoners. Thus, Kenny can only go to hospice to die, or stay on our pod and try to manage.

We Believers advocated to keep Kenny with us so he can be near friends until the end, and so we can take care of him. One of my chores is to clean Kenny's cell for him – and boy does it get dirty fast!

One day as I was cleaning Kenny's cell, a non-Christian snarked, "I don't know why you bother; it'll just be dirty again tomorrow." I felt the Spirit move me to say, "That's okay. I see it as a picture for how easily we dirty ourselves



with sin. Every day I must ask God to forgive me, and He does. Yet, soon afterward I sin again. I am just physically doing for Kenny what the Lord does for me Spiritually."

Now when I clean Kenny's cell, I am filled with gratitude for what Jesus does for me by keeping me clean.



George Wilkerson  
Editor  
North Carolina Death Row  
Raleigh, NC

# Letters to the Editor:

## BOXES AND BOXES

A man died, went through the Pearly Gates,  
where God was waiting.  
Next to God's mansion  
he saw another building.  
"What's that for, Lord?"  
Oh nothing – it just holds boxes...  
"Boxes? For what, Lord?" the man asked.  
Nothing, really – just unused items.  
The man was clearly curious!  
So he wandered over to the building,  
pulled open the door. God warned him,  
You don't want to see what's in there...  
This only piqued the man's interest even more.  
When he walked inside, he saw shelves  
stacked to the vaulted ceiling  
with white boxes wrapped in red ribbons  
like lovely gifts! The man asked,  
"Who're the boxes for, Lord?"  
Everyone. "Even me, Lord?"  
Even you. The man noticed  
the boxes were set in alphabetical order,  
so he tracked down his, opened it,  
saw inside: All the blessings  
in the world that he never bothered  
to even ask for.



Sha'ri Eggum  
Gatesville TX

Dear Editor,

I heard about your newsletter through a friend and wanted to contribute one of my poems. I have been locked up for a year and a half now. Jesus has really helped me come to grips with things, though I honestly have a long way to go. I pray for you guys at Compassion as well as everyone who benefits from your newsletter.

## THE CHAIN BREAKER

My soul yearns for freedom  
From the cruel shackles of my mind  
I've brought myself misery  
In this prison of my design

Every minute's like an hour  
Every day is like a year  
Can I wash my dirty conscience?  
Can I shed just one less tear?

Forgiveness still eluded me  
But I've got to let this go  
To learn from my mistakes  
To free my weary soul.

The Bible says forgiveness  
Is just a breath away  
Come to God our Father  
Say what you need to say.

With this knowledge, finally  
My torment reached an end  
My crimes have been forgiven  
And Jesus is my friend.



Shannon Creevey  
Crain Unit  
Gatesville, TX

# WHAT HE CREATED US TO BE

Perhaps the most fundamental desire of every human person is to be known and to be loved. During our lives, all of us search for love. All of us search for that special somebody who really knows us – who really understands us. Often, when a couple start going out you will hear one of them excitedly remark; “He (or she) really understands me.”

Men and women get married on the basis that they have at last found someone who can relate to them, appreciate them, understand them and so love them. On the contrary, most loneliness in the world is, sadly, caused by the feeling that no one understands me, no one knows who I really am, and nobody loves me.”

When Philip introduces Nathanael to Jesus after telling Nathanael that they have “found the one Moses wrote about in the Law” (the Messiah), Jesus looks at Nathanael and says “There is an Israelite who deserves the name, incapable of deceit.” (John 1:47). Stunned by the fact that this complete stranger already seems to know him intimately, Nathanael asks Jesus; “How do you know me?”

Nathanael's question can be applied to every Christian. It is an amazing truth of our faith that the Lord Jesus does know us, and knows us intimately. In fact, because God created each one of us, He is the only one who truly knows us. The gospels tell us that Jesus “did not need any testimony about man for He knew what was in a man” (John 2:25). The Psalms paint a similar picture of God's complete knowledge of our innermost thoughts: “Before ever a word is on my lips, you know it, O Lord, through and through.” (Psalm 139:4)

As we begin to come to know Jesus, we also realize that He knows us. Indeed, the closer we come to Him the more we discover who we really are. In other words, as God reveals Himself to us through prayer, He also reveals our true selves to us, that is, who He created us to be. We often have false notions of who we are, or who we are supposed to be, and we try to put this face forward to the people we meet in everyday life. When we enter into a deep relationship of love with the Lord, however, He strips us of these false images we have of ourselves and shows us who

He intends us to be – what we were created for. In doing so, He reveals the deepest desires of our hearts to us – desires of which we are not always immediately aware. He also shows us that only He can fulfill these human longings that transcend anything the world can offer. They are desires for what is eternal, infinite and perfect, and relate to beauty, truth, justice, peace and love.

When this happens, we start to grow in our knowledge of the Lord and to become the people that He created us to be. We thus anticipate eternity where our knowledge and love of God will be perfect.

As St. Paul says: “Now we see but a dim reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12).



Al Cunningham  
California Death Row  
San Quentin, CA

## VICTIMS VOICE Taking Each Day Step by Step

On June 26, 2018, I lost a big piece of my life. I lost my brother the day after my birthday. I've experienced loss before losing my first cousin and close friends, but I had never experienced anything like this. I was in this fog for the longest time. I replied to messages from people not making any sense and didn't even remember talking to them. I was also pregnant at the time and had to be put on medication to help prevent harming my daughter with my grieving. Losing Brandon (because someone purposely took his life for reasons we will never understand) has completely changed my life – and me as a person.

I remember when I got the phone call. I was standing in my kitchen about to cook dinner and my dad called me screaming that Brandon had been shot and to get hold of my mom at her work so she could meet

him at the emergency room. He hung up so I called my mom's place of work and got them to tell her she needed to leave. I called my other brother Dalton to tell him what was going on but we just discussed that Brandon was probably going to be OK because we weren't told how serious it actually was. Then, about 30 minutes later Dalton called me back; he said I needed to go to the emergency room and by the tone in his voice I knew why.

My fiancé and I arrived at the emergency room and Sheriff Noel Brown was there to greet us along with my other family members. He looked me right in my eyes and said, “I'm sorry Chelsey, but Brandon is dead.” All I could do was drop to my knees on the grass and cry silently until I could catch my breath but then began sobbing uncontrollably. Now I can't drive past the hospital without thinking of that night and

feeling that all over again. June 26, 2018 was the most devastating day for me and my family. And always will be.

No one really understands what having a family member murdered actually does to a family. It can either bring you closer together, or push the family apart. We all have taken it differently and grieved differently. It's caused me and my siblings to have strained relationships. It has caused a lot of emotional issues for me and caused problems in my relationship with my fiancé. I grieved so heavily for months at a time that I barely remember anything because I would be in such a fog. I have recently gotten the help I needed and I am taking each day step by step. It will never go away but I know I will eventually find a new normal.

Chelsey Lucas  
Pembroke, GA

## Original Art Work for Scholarships



**Untitled** By Kevin Marinelli 9" x 12" To purchase make your check  
Pennsylvania Death Row \$50.00 includes To Compassion and send to the  
Collegeville, PA postage and handling address on page 2.

**COMPASSION READERS:** To date \$58,088.72 has been awarded in college scholarships to family members for murder victims. Make a purchase of their artwork. To view available selections, view Art for Scholarship in the past issues at [www.compassionondeathrow.net](http://www.compassionondeathrow.net). Call **419-874-1333** and ask for Compassion office to verify availability.

## WINTER

The darkness has come upon us. It's a time to encourage the light. Whether it be the celebration of Hanukkah, Christmas or Kwanza, it's a festival of Light to beat back the darkness. We experience the shortest days and longest nights. There's no growth, all seems stagnant, even dead. In ancient times resources were meager, and called the "lean times" or as the natives say "the hunger moons." This can symbolize the times of challenge and hardship in our lives.

If we haven't sown a bountiful harvest your inner resources will wane and fail in dark times. But if you've sown well, built up your inner resolve and strength, the new spring will be yours. Now is the time to encourage

the light, with acts of Love, goodwill and generosity; to seek out our fellowman and give them a hand up. We must nurture the light, feed the fires of all that is good, and starve the darkness with positivity, hopefulness, love, joy and peace of heart, mind and soul. May the season not find you wanting, but if so, look to the light and may we all find those in darkness to share even the little light we may have. One spark can set the world ablaze.



Kevin Marinelli  
Pennsylvania Death Row  
Collegeville, PA

## WHEN DADDY PRAYS



When Daddy prays he doesn't use  
Big words like the preacher does.  
There are different things on  
different days  
But mostly it's for us.

When Daddy prays the house  
is still—  
His voice is low and deep;  
We close our eyes;  
the clock ticks loud—  
And stay quiet, not even a peep.

Daddy prays that we are good  
girls and boys,  
And later good women and men;  
We kind of squirm and  
silently promise  
We won't have any quarrels again.

You'd never think to look at Dad  
He once had a temper too;  
I guess if Daddy needs to pray  
We youngsters surely do.

Sometimes his prayers get really long  
And hard to understand,  
If we wriggle up to him really close  
Daddy will always hold our hands.

I can't remember all of it;  
I'm still little yet, you see,  
But one thing I will never forget —  
My Daddy prays for me.

John Robinson  
Kansas Death Row  
El Dorado, KS

# WHITE FIST

Must've lost a step in my 65 years  
Feeling Hella happy -  
still I'm dropping tears.  
Probably was due for a cry,  
Tripping on these youngsters  
With their fists held high,  
Thinking to myself,  
what a helluva sight:  
60% of the crowd was white.  
Finally woke to America's REAL,  
Saw a brother murdered,  
taste the way I feel,  
Taking down the statues  
of some well-known traitors,  
people wanna see it happen NOW  
not later.  
Here's something I just can't miss:  
A crowd of protestors  
Holding up white fists  
beside black fists,  
Working together to change history,  
The dark, the evil. We'll change it!  
With an idea, Power  
To the peaceful.  
I'll bet you never heard  
That caged bird sing,  
Or imagined the smiling face  
Of Dr. Martin Luther King...



Glenn Cornwell  
California Death Row  
San Quentin, CA

# the halo effect

*Lord, let this day pass  
without me having taken  
any more steps to end it.  
— prisoner prayer*

each line felt sacred as a rosary bead,  
a puff of crushed flower petals  
that i prayed throughout the day

for years. My secret desire for death  
& heaven must've been obvious  
to fellow prisoners, like my dark-circled eyes

& nostrils rimmed in sparkly white dust  
to cops the night they charged me  
with double-homicide.

---

George T. Wilkerson  
North Carolina Death Row  
Raleigh, NC



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*If you want to share someone else's work, please be sure you include the name of the author or its origin.*

# PRISONERS OF DEATH ROW YOUR ASSISTANCE WILL BE APPRECIATED

## 7 SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES

1. Write about an experience that impacted you.
2. It doesn't have to be religious. Here are some themes: anger, apathy, beauty, betrayal, boredom, change, complacency, courage, fear, friendship, growing older, jealousy, pride, purpose, vices, and wisdom.
3. Use sensory details – the smell, who said what, its color, how cold it felt. Sensory details connect your experience to your readers.
4. There's no need to use big words when a simpler one suffices: leave your ego at the door with your case: this isn't the place for either one.
5. Look for ways to unify; help; and solve problems.
6. Be authentic. Be yourself. No one's perfect.
7. Try to limit it to 400 words or less, and if possible enclose a photo of yourself.

As there are numerous submissions it may take up to eight months for selected articles to be published.

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# ...TROUBLES...



Droughts..., Fires..., Covid...,  
Wars..., Floods...,

So Yes!

Even in this incarcerated mess  
You can see that we're  
highly blessed  
Every day that we're allowed  
to know  
it's God's grace giving us  
another chance to grow  
when we give thought to all  
the folks who woke up dead  
we'll be better able to shake  
off some of our dread  
once again!

He's watched over us  
throughout the night.  
His still small voice pleading,  
"Today Get Right"  
So take a breath, then push ahead.

No!

We're not in the greatest place.  
But because of His Mercies,  
we're still in the race.



Al Harden  
North Carolina Death Row  
Raleigh, NC

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## MAKE A CHANGE

I won't be ashamed, Lord when you walk  
though this fire with me. I may feel the  
heat but I'll rise above this hurt as you pull  
me from the pain. Melt my cowardice and  
weakness away, Lord. Let your joy explode  
inside me into courage, confidence and  
strength. Flood my soul like a tsunami with  
your blessings. With your mighty hands hold  
me, Lord.

I have never known such a love as yours,  
Lord. You put hope in me and move every

mountain and part the sea before me. Thank  
you for loving me and showing it so well.  
You have transformed me, rescued me and  
saved me from self, the lost world, the devil  
and hell. God, you have made a change in  
me. I am born again. I am redeemed.



Dennis Morgan Hicks  
Alabama Death Row  
Atmore, AL