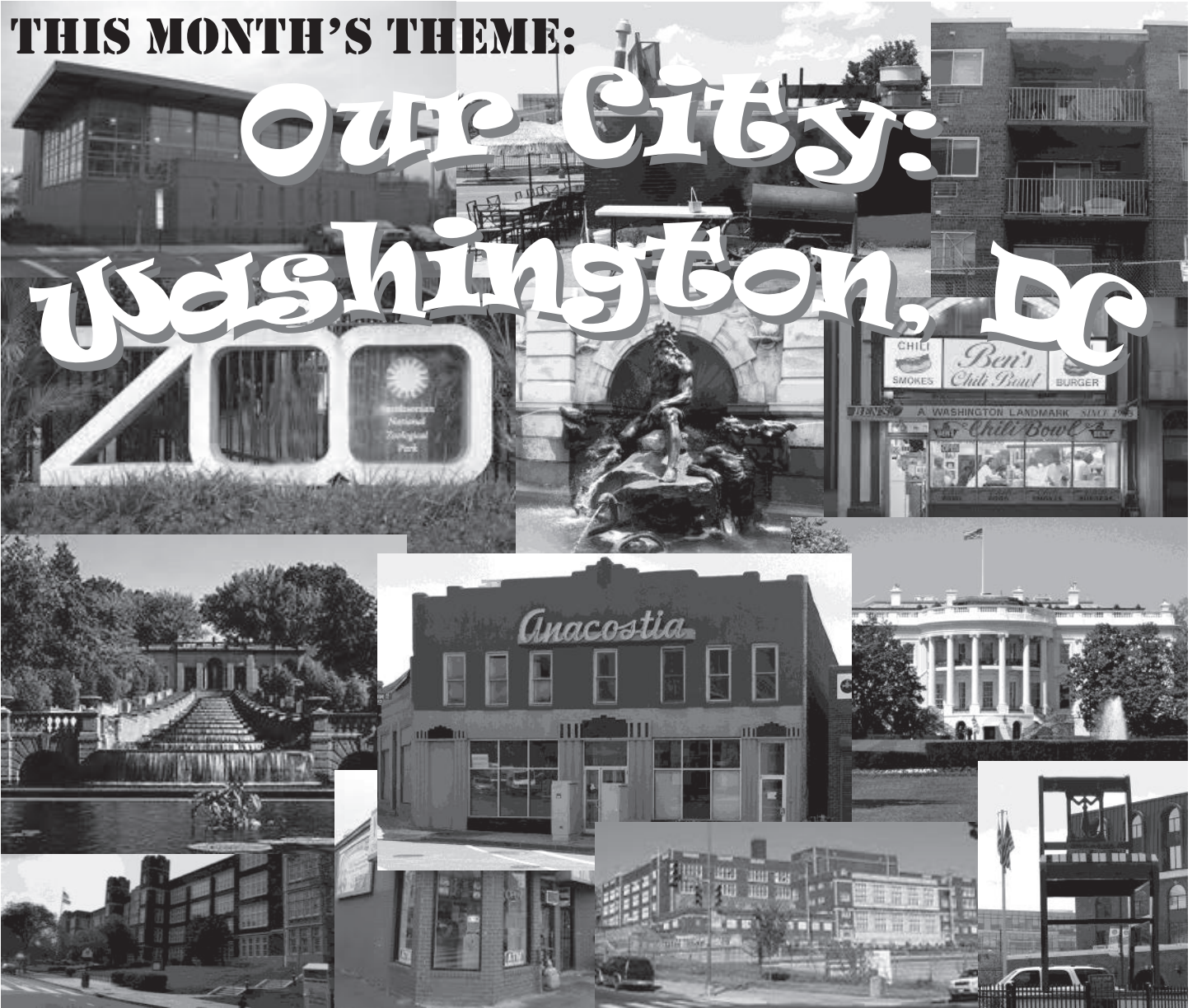


Free minds Connect

THIS MONTH'S THEME:

Our City: Washington, DC



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from trouble"
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I'm okay" (page 5)

Is brought to you by...

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FM Members:
BG, RD, AT, MJ, MP,
JG, CM and MA

FM Friends:
HF and John

*We are ALWAYS looking
for new contributors.*

*Write or draw something
for our next issue
and send it to us!*

*Because of the volume
of submissions, we cannot
include everyone's work in
each issue. If it doesn't
appear in the Connect, we
will share it at Write
Night.*

*Free Minds Book Club
2201 P Street NW
Washington, DC 20037
202-758-0829*

**Next Issue's
Theme:**
"Moving Forward"
(see back page
for details!)



Happy Independence Day, Free Minds Family!

By the time you receive this, the country will have celebrated

July 4th, one of our favorite holidays here at Free Minds. You can probably guess why! It reminds us of our motto: no one can imprison your mind without your permission—true independence!

This issue's theme of **Our City—DC** brought out some awesome creativity in you all: thank you! As usual, you inspired me and I now look at the city with fresh eyes. Reading about your favorite spots and traditions made me feel closer to the city. Seeing modern condos sprout up overnight and whole neighborhoods made over so I can't even recognize them has filled me with nostalgia and unease. But after working on this issue I've got a whole new attitude! It's like the city is metamorphosing right along with us. As Free Minds grows and expands nationally (see HQ update about Write Nights) and each of us grows into the person we always were deep inside, so does the city grow towards an exciting future.

In this issue, we sing the praises of DC's homegrown roots, like legendary Eugene "Thunder" Hughes from Midtown Boxing Academy and Chuck Brown. I love how Washington Post music critic, Chris Richards says go-go is "the culture of having one's personhood recognized." At Free Minds, we're all about recognizing personhood and bringing it into to the bright light. Shy Glizzy said he used the time he was incarcerated to build up his mind. Keep on building up those minds of yours and sending in those poems and book reviews! And remember, home is where the heart is and you've always got a home in Free Minds.

Until next time
DC Proud!
Tara

*May the long time sun shine upon you
All love surround you
And the pure light within guide your way on*

FREE MINDS HQ



June Apprenticeship Graduation

In June, seven young men worked diligently to complete a month's worth of job readiness and life skills workshops in the Free Minds Apprenticeship Program. They worked on resume writing, college preparation, physical fitness, and entrepreneurship. The apprentices provided program support in the Free Minds office, as well as working for DC-area remodeling, cleaning, and landscaping companies. At the graduation ceremony on July 1, family members, Free Minds supporters, and leaders from several local non-profits joined apprentices. After remarks from Tony Belton, a business owner, returning citizen, and valuable role model, Tara led us in a toast for change. Each person in the circle stated one short-term goal. Answers included: "more sleep," "more patience," and "a better attitude." We then dug into plates of lasagna and celebration cake, and took lots of pictures! We celebrate these young men, and look forward to the next graduation!

Book Club on the Outside: Expanding to CSOSA Challenge to Change program

CSOSA heard about all the great success FM members were having and asked if we could bring our Book Club sessions to their young adult (18-25 years old) Challenge to Change program. We meet weekly and we are thrilled to report the reading, discussing, writing, sharing—even meditation works on the outside too!

Taking Write Night National

Our current Write Night model has been wildly successful in DC and MD. We have more volunteers than we could have imagined showing up at each event, and are inspired by the poetry that you all send us for their feedback. The process changes lives on both ends, and now we want to take the program nationwide! In late June, Kelli traveled to Aspen, Colorado for the Aspen Ideas Festival, a competition among innovative ideas for social change. After making it to the final round, Kelli presented her pitch for a national Write Night program, and WON THE AWARD! We are SO EXCITED! Look for more on the project and Kelli's experience at the Aspen Festival in the next Connect!





LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By Kelli

Hey Little Brothers,

I moved to DC by myself when I was 22 years old. To me, coming from Eugene (a small college town in Oregon) to Washington, DC represented the biggest adventure of my life. I fell in love with the city immediately. I have lived and worked in Washington, DC area for more years than I ever lived in Eugene, and to be honest, this is now Home with a capital “H.” Whenever I travel, and then I come back into DC, there is a special feeling I get just seeing the Lincoln Memorial or the Capitol building, or the guys playing chess in Dupont Circle. This city will always be a part of me.

In my eyes, DC has a toughness that never quits. It also has a creative energy that I haven’t experienced anywhere else. The thing that I love most about DC though is our diversity. In DC, you will see every kind of person imaginable! To me, that is ideal ☺

Here are just a few of my favorite things in DC: the Neptune fountain in front of the Library of Congress (I took a photo of it for you last week. Check it out on the cover!); a half smoke from Ben’s Chili Bowl on U Street (yum!); people of every race mingling together at Eastern Market standing in line for blueberry pancakes; listening to jazz in Adams Morgan clubs; sitting on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial — just steps from where MLK gave his “I Have a Dream” speech — watching people climb up to see the statue of Abe; listening to kids bucket drumming downtown in the summertime; eating peanuts at a Nats game; Going to Open Mic night at Busboys and Poets; rooting for our Wizards; and last but not least, reading The Washington Post, my favorite newspaper anyplace, ever...I love DC!

Like me, each of you has special ties to the city. Just remember that you are a part of this place. When you left, you left a hole that will not be filled until you return. We look forward to that day!

Your friend,
Kelli

JG’S WORDS OF WISDOM

By JG, Free Minds Member in Federal Prison

Washington, DC

I’m very proud to be a Washingtonian. Being born and raised in DC, I don’t feel there’s a better city. Much of who I am is due to my growing up in DC, Northeast to be exact. Coming up in the late ’90s/early 2000s, in NE was lively, exciting, gritty and rough. I learned valuable life lessons early on because the streets of DC don’t slow down for nobody. I am proud of being from DC because even though



it’s small, no other city will offer one a better street education. Sure, these lessons could have come through different means, but I can only speak on my experience. I don’t want anyone to take what I’m saying as me trying to glorify the street experience because that’s definitely not what I am trying to do. But this has been my experience being from DC. I think it helped to make me mentally and physically tough, and helped make me much more flexible, tempered with this prison time and all the support my family and Free Minds gives me.

I also think in DC we have the most unique slang on the East coast. We’re the only city that says, “jive” in every other sentence or “jive like” or how we use the word “joint” to reference nearly anything in a conversation. Or how every other East coast city says “yo” and we don’t. That’s just naming a few. You know you’re from DC when you naturally ask for “salt, pepper, ketchup and mambo sauce” on your chicken wings and French fries in any given Chinese restaurant. Some of the things that most represent DC to me are go-go music and beating your feet, an authentically DC dance style. Someone who reps DC to the fullest is Wale. He’s always putting on for the city through his music. No matter where I travel in the world, DC/Chocolate City is my hometown and will always hold a special place in my heart.



THE WRITE WAY

By FM Writing Guru Julia

Making the Impossible Possible

How many of you guys like to read science fiction (like *The Hunger Games* or *The Maze Runner*)? Have you thought about writing your own science fiction?

Science fiction is a genre (a category of literature) that imagines a different world; usually based on technology/science—books with robots, aliens, time travel, that sort of thing. It is a way of exploring issues from the real world (such as racism) by coming at them sideways or imagining things that are impossible in the real world, such as the novel *Kindred* in which a modern day black woman travels back in time and meets a white man who owned her ancestors.

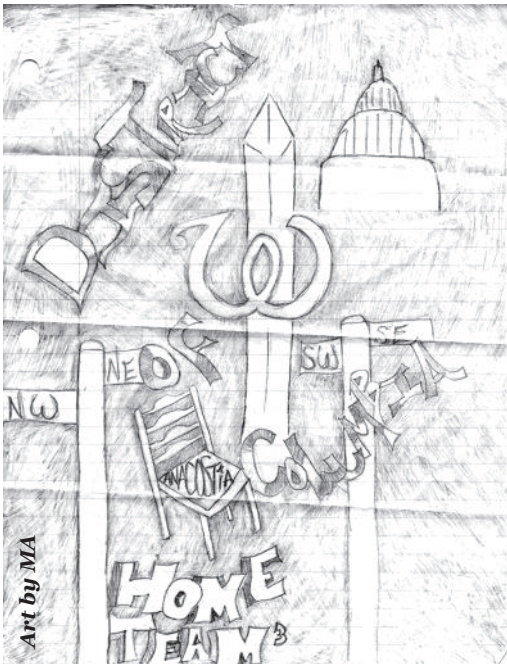
There's a specific kind of science fiction called "afrofuturism," that explores issues relating to the African American experience through science fiction, often using visions of the future or technology. One example of afrofuturism is the singer Janelle Monáe, whose songs and music videos are about androids (robots) in the future who are treated like second-class citizens. The hero of Janelle Monáe's songs is an android from the future that is fighting to free her people. Another example of afrofuturism is the comic book series *Black Panther*, about a superhero from the fictional African nation Wakanda, which is the most technologically advanced country in the world. In the *Black Panther* comics, the writers imagine what could have happened if African countries like the fictional Wakanda were never colonized by Europe—and Wakanda became a very rich and powerful country. These are just a few examples of what's possible with science fiction or afrofuturism.

In writing, anything is possible. There really is no limit to what you can imagine. Washington, D.C. where all of the people are robots? Sure. An alien planet where the aliens have the same thoughts and feelings as you and me? No problem. Science fiction and afrofuturism are about dreaming up the impossible and then saying, "What if this was real?"



Writing Prompt: *What does your science fiction version of DC look like? Exercise your imagination and tell us about your alternate reality.*

MEMBERS' WRITING: WASHINGTON, DC



By BH

I feel like the areas that are being developed in Washington DC are a great opportunity for the younger generations to see the beauty in growth and learning. Those who want to get out of the hood and experience different sights and classes of people now have the opportunity that these gentrified places in Washington DC offer.

The worst of my city is the lack of unity black brothers and sisters have—everybody's mindset is focused on self. No one wants to share, come together, or help build up one another. There is a saying that "each one teach one" or "iron sharpens iron." But in DC, we tend to tear each other down because of the selfish desires attached to our emotions. Killing, stealing, robbing, hurting people...not realizing that the only way to be content and happy in life is to first love everyone and turn away from selfishness.

The best of our city? No matter how much violence there is, someone is always going out of their way to make a difference for people who want a positive change in life. People like Michelle Obama, Barack Obama, the new mayor we have and of course save the best for last, Free Minds. These are people who put their selfishness to the side to change one person's life for the future.

My dream for DC in the future is for people to start working with each other to build a future for the generations to come, becoming positive role models for kids to follow behind.



CONNECTING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

“As Long as He’s Okay, I’m Okay”

Tara sits down with Free Minds mom KU to discuss how she copes with her son’s incarceration. KU is currently working two jobs and going to school for Information Technology.

FM: You were born and raised in DC. What are you most favorite and least favorite things about the city?

KU: My neighborhood was real busy with drugs when I was coming up so that wasn’t good but at the same time there was positive things to do for kids. I’d have to say that was my favorite part. It seemed like everyone took part in the Boys and Girls Club activities. They still have the Summer Jobs program, which is great. When I had my kids I left DC and moved to Maryland because I wanted to keep them safe and away from all the trouble though so that’s the bad part—all the trouble.

Why do you think moving didn’t keep your son away from trouble?

My son’s father was never in his life growing up. I was 16 when I got pregnant and at that same time his father got sentenced to a long bid. I took him to see his father in prison when he was young but we had a difference of opinion on how to discipline our son. I wanted to be strict but he said don’t do anything to his son. I stopped taking him to see his father. To this day, I still wonder if I should have told my son about his father. Maybe he would have never been in the situation he is in now, incarcerated at a young age. He spent a lot of time with his father’s family though, so that was good.

When I was in my twenties I got married and that man was like a father to my son. We took my son and his friends to the beach and Disney World. We had a lot of wonderful experiences as a family but then the abuse started. One night I knew I would lose my life if I didn’t leave. I didn’t want to keep exposing the kids to that. The hard thing when a marriage breaks up is that kids sometimes get set to the side. My son started getting into trouble after I left my husband (his step-father). He was always a quiet child, a real thinker. I think he was torn where his father was at and then when my husband wasn’t there anymore either... I think he didn’t know his place.

How did you cope with his arrest, incarceration and court hearings?

I was really shocked, [especially because] he didn’t tell me what happened. I wish he had shared and I could have helped him more, but I realize that’s just what a lot of kids do, or what boys do with their moms. The court case was very stressful. It takes a lot out of you. I had to remain strong for him. If I broke down, he would too. I saw him start to cry once and I told him to be strong. There was so much pressure on us.

How do you connect with each other and maintain a close relationship now?

I talk to him every day until his minutes run out. We email every day. I work 2 jobs so I can send him money. I send him books along with what Free Minds sends and he reads them so quickly. He’s taking a lot of classes and is helping me with my own business, so we talk about business plans and ideas. We visit every month. He loves seeing his younger brothers and sister. We both keep really busy and then we share our activities with each other. I try not to tell him anything bad going on with me because I don’t want to weigh him down. I

ASK HF: ADVICE FROM THE INSIDE

HF is a Free Minds Friend doing a long bid in the Feds. Send him your questions about doing time, family, loved ones, or anything else and he will answer you in his column!

“How do I deal with being so homesick? Sometimes I can forget about home, but then all of a sudden everything I see or hear reminds me of home—my family, all the people round my way, my mans, the females. I even miss the stuff I didn’t care about when I was out there! It’s gotten to the point where I don’t want my phone calls because hearing about home just makes me feel bad. Help! Sincerely, DC”

Dear DC and Free Minds Brothers:

Well, a lot of times guys in prison want to appear to be tough and not honest with themselves and others. When I first felt my initial case of homesickness, I cried—it was Thanksgiving 1997.

The worst thing that you can do is try to avoid feeling homesick. That feeling is a GREAT thing because you need to “feel it” so that you can remember what you are missing so that you can begin to make the changes within yourself to never do anything again when you get out that will put you in this predicament again. That feeling of longing for home and all of the great things in the world that you grew to love and enjoy is the inspiration that you will need to work on your case to give your time back, to avoid destructive people that will lead to situations where you will get more time, and to utilize your mind to resolve conflicts through your mind and not violence.

Even though I have been in prison for 18 years, I feel homesick every day—and I embrace the feeling. With this burning desire to regain my life back I have obtained vocational trades, attended college, and even published 9 books so that I will never have to do anything harmful to myself or others to make a living in society. It hurts at times, but through the pain you will grow to appreciate the things more that you miss and you real also realize how you undervalued certain people, places, and things when you were home that you now cherish. Remember, what does not kill you will only make you stronger; be strong!

Your friend, HF

know he doesn’t let me know all that’s going on either.

I just want to make sure he’s not getting in trouble in there and that he’s doing something productive; getting good grades. We talk about future plans. He says he wants to move away from DC. I just encourage him. As long as he’s okay, I’m okay. He’s back in touch with his dad now too. They correspond. It’s a role reversal: he tells him, “Dad, you have to go to school.”

Would anyone in your family like to write a piece for The Connect? Tell them to send it to Kelli at Free Minds, 2201 P Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.



PAY IT FORWARD

Free Minds learns more about Eugene “Thunder” Hughes, a former community organizer who founded a nonprofit boxing gym for youth in DC.

By FM Intern Dominique

Who: Born in 1938, Eugene “Thunder” Hughes was raised in the streets of DC. One of thirteen siblings, Thunder grew up in the NE neighborhood that was eventually torn down to make way for the Rayburn House Congressional Office Building. His family shared an outhouse, oil lamps, an icebox, and a wood-fed stove; needless to say, it was quite a different time and way of life. Although Hughes’ father was a jazz musician who played with Nat King Cole, he also struggled with heroin and cocaine. Thanks to his mother and aunt who convinced him to stay out of gangs and off the streets, Hughes eventually found an outlet through boxing. Beginning at age 9, Hughes eventually went on to become a champion. He enlisted in the Marines, where he won the worldwide all-service tournament four years in a row. After he was discharged, he moved to California and joined the Black Panthers as a community organizer. He was involved in the LA race riots and served 27 months in jail for his involvement. When he returned to DC, he worked for the government and soon after founded the Midtown Youth Academy.

What: Located at 2206 14th St NW, the Midtown Youth Academy is a boxing gym that is open to DC youth, free of charge. However, you have to be ready to put in the practice and dedication. Hughes originally created the gym to not only provide training, but also to provide a safe space for youth, away from gangs and drugs.

When: When Hughes moved back to DC in the 1970s, he began searching for a way to help young folks lead better lives than he had. In fact, when he founded the Midtown Youth Academy in the 1990s, it was also a community center offering classes like sewing and tutoring afterschool and on the weekends. Because he used to be a DC family and drug counselor, Hughes was able to recruit kids from the families he worked with and give them training, mentorship, love, and a place to go in order to stay out of the juvenile justice system.

Where: The yellow and black building on 14th street may look like a forgotten place, but inside is the alive and thriving youth building gym. Although the neighborhood was riddled with drugs, gangs, and violence in the 80s and 90s, it is now facing gentrification like much of DC. Neighboring gyms sell memberships from \$100 to \$200 a month, and many developers have offered to buy out the gym. Despite the offers, Hughes has no intention of selling out and shutting down the 3-decade-old gym.



Midtown Youth Academy

Why: As someone who grew up in a rough environment, Hughes knew he could make a change. He’s helped hundreds of kids stay off the street and become dedicated to boxing. Gary “Digital” Williams, a local boxing scene writer and ring announcer, says, “Boxing is one of those sports that really keeps young people away from trouble. I’ve talked to many different boxers, not only from Mr. Hughes’ gym but also others in the area, that say if it wasn’t for boxing, who knows where they’d be. They’d probably be dead, in jail, running the streets, or doing nothing. He had guys in there that I think he literally saved.” Hughes admits he used to be in a gang, but his mother and aunt eventually convinced him to spend his life doing something positive and to stay in church rather than running the streets. Friends of Hughes say he would always tell kids, “You got one foot in the street and one foot in the gym. That ain’t no way to live.”

DC SYMBOLS AND SLANG



QUOTE-I-VATOR

“I serve as an inspiration for those who are going through all kinds of things. Whatever storm they are going through, they can learn from me.” — *Marion Barry, DC’s “Mayor for Life”*

“To be able to do something great in your life, you’re gonna have to realize your failures. You’re gonna have to embrace them and figure out how to overcome them. Surround yourself with positive people who love you unconditionally.” — *Comedian Dave Chappelle, who grew up in DC and attended Duke Ellington School for the Arts*

BY FM MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

DC

By BG

What can I say about my home, Washington D.C.?
D.C. is where I was born and raised, so it is like
heaven to me
I apologize I left you living the life scarred
now barred
We'll get back together again beneath the stars
I'll play my cards, patiently
Building you
This time
My nation capital's inner city
Youth of mine
I am about you 100% Washington, D.C.
You are the only home for me
Southeast, northeast, southwest, and northwest
We all came together to bring the very best
So like I say, there is no other home for me
As a Washingtonian
I'll always tilt my hat
For no other but Washington, D.C.

Ode to DC

By MJ

When I think of DC, I see a big family
That wants to do positive things
But has no options
I hear music and fast screeching cars
I smell fresh air and carryouts and weed
I feel like we're untouchable and loyal
And we have the best swag and locations
I taste fish in the hood and Johnny's carryout
I think of DC as a small place
That kill each other
We should be able to love and not beef
DC is my home
I love it and will be it
I am DC
DC is me

LOYALTY

By MP

What is loyalty?

If you lie to a friend or talk about him in a negative way to others without him being present, is that a sign of being disloyal? Is it? I can say yes, but you may say no. We all have different understandings on the definition of loyalty. But how does this happen? Loyalty is built on trust, respect, and love, just to name a few. So if we all at least agree that these 3 things are necessary in order to be loyal, why don't we all judge "loyalty" in the same way?

Loyalty is a powerful word I hear my peers use daily, but only 5 out of 100 truly understand it and have it. You have to be 100%, all in, any way you put it—no halfway in either. Loyalty is a lifestyle, not just a word!

Loyalty can take years to gain but can be lost in just a matter of seconds—that's how serious loyalty is. Loyalty is measured not by what you do when one is around, but is determined when one is absent!

I hope those who read this understand that loyalty is everything and without it, you have nothing. And the number one thing I want all to remember is only be loyal to those who are loyal to you, because to some, loyalty is only a word. But to me, it's a lifestyle!!





IN THE NEWS

By FM Friend John

World

There are a whole slew of major issues in play on the world stage these days. The Islamic State plagues pretty much everybody; they appear to have weakened at their base, but continue to take credit for dreadful attacks and killings around the world. Meanwhile, Europe's economy is in crisis because Greece can't pay its debts and the Ukraine is embroiled in civil war.

But the biggest ongoing story in international news is probably the talks over nuclear power between Iran, the United States and five other world powers. It is an incredibly complex negotiation involving countries that in some cases despise each other, but here's a basic explanation: Iran says it has no current interest in developing a nuclear weapon, and says it is only developing nuclear capability to provide power within the country.

Many in the world community, including the U.S., do not really believe that and have imposed sanctions on Iran for years now as retaliation for their nuclear work. Those sanctions have greatly hurt Iran's ability to succeed in the world economy.

This negotiation, at its core, is about Iran guaranteeing through inspections and certain restrictions that it will not develop nuclear weapons. In turn, the United States and other countries will gradually reduce sanctions on Iran.

It is an incredibly important negotiation over the stability of the Middle East at a time when things are quite unstable in that region and in others. One day, we may all look back on what happened with this negotiation and think of it as an early step on the way to a world war, or the first step toward ensuring there would *not* be a world war.

National

In South Carolina, we may soon see a silver lining around a very dark cloud. Dylann Roof, a young man from Columbia, S.C., entered Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Church and killed nine of its members, including Pastor Clementa Pinckney.

It is one of many developments in the past two years that has called into the question where we are as a country with race relations. South Carolina serves as a poignant reminder of our troubled history on that subject, because it continues to fly a confederate flag on the grounds of the state capitol.

Governor Nikki Haley and a growing collection of state and federal politicians have joined the chorus of voices calling for the flag to come down. President Obama addressed the issue in a eulogy for Pastor Pinckney:

"Blinded by hatred, [the gunman] failed to comprehend what Reverend Pinckney so well understood: the power of

God's grace. By taking down that flag we express God's grace. But I don't think God wants us to stop there."

Meanwhile, the race is on to determine who will succeed Obama as president. On the Democratic side of the aisle, you basically have three candidates. Hillary Clinton, a former Senator and the wife of former President Bill Clinton, is the frontrunner.

Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont has made inroads with his straight talk about reining in corporate greed on Wall Street. The other candidate is former Maryland governor and Baltimore mayor Martin O'Malley.

Who the Republican Party will choose is impossible to guess at this point. There is a new candidate in the mix every week it seems, so we will update further when it narrows down.

Also in national news, the U.S. Supreme Court made two major decisions this month. First, it held up what is probably the most important part of the health care reforms led by Obama in his first term. Second, the court ruled that is unconstitutional for a state to ban the marriage of anyone based on his or her sexual orientation.

Sports

All quiet on the Redskins front! There will be one question and one question only looming as the team takes the field for preseason: Is RG3 any good?

He had a phenomenal rookie season that ended with a gut-wrenching injury in the playoffs. His next season was squandered, returning too early and reinjuring himself. Last season, he was just flat out bad, taking too many sacks while failing to play with balance between run and pass that made his first campaign successful.

But hope springs eternal, and the team has already named him the starter. It is his job to lose, and if he loses it again, it will probably be the last time.

The Wizards and Capitals both ended their playoff runs in the second round. After getting the upper hand on the Atlanta Hawks, the Wiz fell jussst short in Game Six with Paul Pierce drilling a three-pointer right after the final buzzer. John Wall spent most of the series nursing a broken hand, so expect the Wizards to make another leap forward next season if he's healthy.

The Capitals went up 3-1 on the New York Rangers, and coughed up the series, losing in Game Seven in overtime. The team has already added some strong scorers for next season – T.J. Oshie and Justin Williams – so they too should come back stronger.

The Nationals sit in first place at the halfway point in the baseball season; they have the third-best record in the National League at 46-37.

While the pitching has been less consistent than expected, two stars have carried the team.

First is Bryce Harper, who has 25 home runs and is hitting nearly .350. Meanwhile, new ace pitcher Max Scherzer has a 1.82 ERA, 139 strikeouts and has already thrown a no-hitter this year.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Our City, Our Voices

by Jess, FM Communications & Outreach Coordinator



our city festival

In June, Free Minds participated for the first time ever in Our City Festival, a celebration of DC through film, music, and literature! Our City Festival was created in 2008 to bring the diverse communities of DC together through film. Hoping to strengthen DC's unity while embracing its diversity, the festival chiefly showcased movies that were about or took place in DC. This year, the concept expanded to include music and literature as well. Free Minds was so excited to be selected as one of the show curators (a curator is a person who selects acts to perform at a music festival), and to be partnered with Chris from the Bumper Jacksons, a folk band combining DC roots jazz, country swing, and street blues.

Initially, the task of combining our members' poetry about identity, life on the streets, deprivation of freedom, and love with the Bumper Jacksons' square dancing and folk music vibe seemed like an impossible challenge! After some brainstorming, we were surprised to find so much common ground between the two groups. After all, the focus of both poetry and song writing is to tell a story and to share one's voice.

Out of this understanding, the show "Our Voices" was born.

Deciding to combine slam poetry and go-go music, we collaborated with Chris to host two workshops to prepare. During the first workshop, spoken word artist Bomani worked with the FM members ("Poet Ambassadors") to teach the mechanics of crafting rhythmic poems. The members created a collaborative piece entitled, "Our Voices." The week after writing this anthem, Bomani and the guys met with drummer "Kwick" from the Chuck Brown Trio to put the poetry to music.

On June 7, just two weeks later, FM Poet Ambassadors found themselves at the Martin Luther King Library, about to go on stage in the Great Hall. DCPL Executive Director Richard Reyes-Gavilan gave a warm introduction to Bomani, who then opened the show with two of his original pieces. After warming up the crowd, he went on to introduce the seven FM Poet Ambassadors. One of them, Phil, shared a bit of his own personal story and motivation to do violence prevention outreach before the music began. Joining together as one voice, all seven began to rap their anthem.

*Our Voices are unique; We want to be heard and respected.//
We're sick and tired of being rejected and neglected.//
Our Voices tell you where we're coming from//
Our pain inside derives from growing up in the slums.//
Our Voices say a lot about the struggle//
We living in a jungle steady tryna dodge trouble.//
Our Voices, Our Voices, Our Voices are the key.
Now we feel accomplished, accepted, and free.//*



Drummer Kwick was joined by two fellow Chuck Brown Trio musicians (one on bass, one on keys) who performed with flexibility, talent, and expertise. In between rounds of the chorus, each Poet Ambassador individually spoke poems written by fellow FM members who are still incarcerated. (Among these were pieces entitled "The Perfect Child," "They Call Me 299-359," and "Where I Come From.") The entire performance was received by a loud standing ovation from a large crowd. Afterwards, many approached the performers to describe how they'd been affected by their words.

As Bomani noted, "The more these young men can tell their stories, the better off we all are." Truly, our city is made stronger when people who have been voiceless not only have their stories told, but finally have their voices heard.





FREE MINDS MEMBER REENTRY PROFILE

by FM Intern Caroline

Free Minds recently sat down with AC, a Free Minds Member who was 16 when he was on the juvenile block. AC came home April 15th after serving two stints and in June, he graduated from our FM Apprenticeship Program.

FM: What did you learn in prison?

AC: I was in a federal prison this time around and I actually learned how to be a man. I watched how the men interacted with each other and respected each other. What I really learned though was to stay away from the wrong people, the wrong neighborhoods, and the wrong influence essentially.

What has changed in DC since you have been home?

The rap game—it's gotten better in some ways and worse in others. There are a lot more new young guys trying to make it and they're getting more attention so that's great, but to be honest everybody is talking about the same thing—shootin', hustlin' and shopping—and that's bad. These guys are not painting a good picture for the youth, and they know that the young people look up to them but I guess they don't care. Also the neighborhoods are changing fast, a lot of gentrification going on, and a lot of new buildings going up in old neighborhoods, more white people in the neighborhoods.

What's the first thing you did when you came home?

I went shopping! I needed new clothes obviously and I love shopping. I usually shop at Zara, Guess and H&M.

What's the best part about being home? What's the hardest part?

The best part is the freedom, of course. The worst part is staying away from bad influences. I learned that I needed to stay away from trouble, but now I need to actually apply it in real life and that's hard. I'm doing it though—I have two jobs now, and I just take myself out of all of that stuff. Another hard part was that I was supposed to do more time than I ended up doing. My case got dismissed, so when I got out everyone automatically assumed I was a snitch and gave me a hard time. People also judged and hated on me for going to school and having a job—there's all this pressure in the wrong way when you get home. Trying to stay positive and stay away from the wrong things takes a lot when you get home.

Why did you do the Apprenticeship Program?

Free Minds set me up with a paid apprenticeship the first time I came home and that was great. So when I got back second time, I needed something to keep me out of trouble. Free Minds was the solution.

MEMBERS' WRITING

The Guileless City By RD

I am D.C.
The hustle, the street smart, getting up while it's still dark
I am D.C.
From the seats of politicians to the streets where people go missing
I am D.C.
Look at my beautiful cherry blossoms and pick any historical site;
I have plenty of options
I am D.C.
And people come from Europe, Asia, Africa, and many other
places just to see me
I am D.C.
The voice of the people and the star of the nation
I am home to brilliance and to extraordinary imaginations
I am power and originality
I am boisterous and devious
I am proud and strong
I am witty and sly
I am a leader.
From Southwest to Southeast, from Northwest to Northeast
I am Washington, D.C.

The Worst of the City By AT

The worst of the city
Is the police harassing people
The killing, mostly every day
Young'uns selling drugs
Young'uns robbing old people
That's the worst of the city

Thoughts from Behind The Wall By CM

See prison walls don't give you sympathy
But what they do is give you time to think
What they do is allow the time to sink...
Into your mind, see, I was blind, but think...
I've had plenty of time to see...the life behind me
Was fruitless and distasteful, and these walls
They keep reminding me!

See, prison walls don't give you conversation
But what they do is give you separation
The solitude just leads to segregation
Of thoughtless acts and wise decision-making

See, prison walls don't give you attitude
But what they do is give you "half a room"
And what that does, is just ignite a fuse
To overcome, but still obey the rules
Disregarding what all the "thugs" would likely do
They might last long, but see they fight to lose
And wrong is wrong, we have the right to choose
Let's fight to prove

That prison walls don't show you admiration
But what they do is help you mask impatience
Turn humble those who were once brash and blatant
Furthermore, they change those foolish fascinations
Into persistent prayer, I promise the path is waiting...

Let's remove the wall that is built of pride and arrogance
And subdue the actions that spawn from unhealthy
Thought patterns. And embrace that inner cry for peace
Behind every man's eyes is something that controls
Our decision-making. And once we decide to sever
Our loyalty to negativity, we will never have to think of a positive way
to be heard from behind a wall

REAL WORLD OF WORK

Free Minds interviews Suzie, our program facilitator at New Beginnings Youth Development Center. Before becoming a project coordinator who focuses on juvenile justice reform, Suzie worked for several years as a server in numerous successful restaurants.

FREE MINDS: How did you decide to become a waitress?

SUZIE: My college friend and roommate was working at a restaurant to make some money and told me I should give it a try. I'm glad she did because I worked there for the next four years and had a great experience before moving on to wait tables at two other restaurants.

What did you love about it?

The best thing about being a waitress is meeting amazing people from all over the world who have funny and interesting stories to tell. I met coworkers who became like family to me. Some customers were also a part of our extended family. For instance, we had one regular who came in to spend time with us and work through his grief after his wife died. I also got to see photos from all the travel he had done around the world and hear stories from his college days in College Park—it was one of the best experiences I had working at that restaurant.

What were things that were less enjoyable?

People can be jerks. People would often ask me why I bothered to graduate from college if I was just going to wait tables. I don't think they realized that I truly enjoyed my job and made great money. Also, the job can be very stressful if you don't have the right support around you from coworkers and managers.

What skills are required for successful serving?

Definitely the ability to multi-task; you have to be able to balance the million things that different tables ask you to do. You also have to pick and choose your battles with customers and sometimes you have to apologize even when things really aren't your fault in order to help things run smoothly. I think it helps to be an outgoing and adaptable person. You also have to be patient and believe that everything evens out in the end. Some days someone might leave you an extra \$100 and some days people may not tip you at all. Be patient and remember that it will all balance out.

How do you find and get jobs as a waiter or waitress?

A lot of DC restaurants post job openings on *indeed.com* or on *craigslist.com*. Don't ever call during peak times (usually 4-8pm on weekdays and 4-10 on weekends) to ask about openings because you won't get a good response. Write out a list of all of your strengths and try to hit them in your application and interview. Interviews are key, so make sure that you're on time (if not early) and that you show off your personality in the interview. Be sure to play up any customer service experience you have on your resume. It helps to highlight any work experience where you dealt with stressful or challenging situations and kept a cool head.

GO-GO: WASHINGTON, DC'S OFFICIAL SOUNDTRACK!

An interview with *Washington Post* Music Critic Chris Richards

According to you, our readers, the single most important thing that defines Washington, DC is its music!

FM: How would you describe go-go music to the uninitiated?

CR: Go-go music was created in the late '70s by Chuck Brown and was quickly adopted by many others. It's a highly syncopated sound that relies heavily on a distinctive drumbeat. It features a unique, interactive call-and-response between the band members and the audience. This means that the audience is a part of the music in a way that's unique to go-go music. And go-go is meant to be experienced live.

How did you become a fan?

My father was a carpet salesman in P.G. County and I used to go to work with him on weekends when I was little. His co-workers were all from the D.C. area and they taught me to love go-go. So I started listening to it when I was about ten years old. When I was 21, I went to see Rare Essence perform at Club U and that's when I first experienced the magic.

Why do you think go-go has such deep roots in D.C.? Why hasn't it spread across the country the way other types of music have?

Chuck Brown wanted to create his own sound. He'd been listening to James Brown back in the day, and he knew that if he wanted to be as famous as James Brown, he'd need his own sound, too—something unique to him. And that sound became very meaningful to the city. There's always been this idea of two D.C.s, and that "black D.C." can feel invisible in the shadows of "federal Washington." So Chuck wanted to give the District its own sound so the community would have something to rally around. Since then, go-go has become the sound of D.C. people!

As for why the music hasn't broken nationally, the thing that makes go-go so special is that the songs can't be cut down to a bite-size length that works for radio. That's why Chuck called the music go-go—because the musicians just keep going, and the music goes and goes and goes! Plus, go-go bands still attract huge crowds in D.C., so they really have no reason to go on tour. They can make all of their money right here in D.C.

RARE ESSENCE
LIVE PA #8 LIVE @ THE TRADEWINDS
8.29.06



How has go-go changed and evolved?

The music is more than 30 years old now, so there have been changes from generation to generation. There are bands like Rare Essence that formed

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REENTRY SPOTLIGHT

Coming home in the next 6 months? Write us a letter or give us a call at 202-758-0829 so we can help you plan for reentry!

By Keela

APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE

What's Up Moe! (You will never hear me refer to you guys as "Moe" again; this is only in honor of this month's DC theme). I wanted to let you know about some of the awesome things that have taken place since we started our month-long apprenticeship back in February. So far, we have graduated 20 apprentices with our current apprentices who graduated on July 1st—we are so excited (in my Tara voice)!!

Throughout the month-long program, we had many different workshops including resume preparation, health, fitness and nutrition awareness, educational museum exhibits and tours, college readiness, decision making, work scenario role-playing, finance and budgeting and you know we wouldn't be Free Minds without reading, discussing as a group, and writing—I KNOW you guys miss that! Also, did I mention that it's a paid apprenticeship complete with a graduation ceremony once successfully completed?! Now you see why we're so excited?! Moe, you won't believe this but it gets better! The Free Minds Apprenticeship Program offers *REAL WORK* experience complete with paid shifts with our very own Free Minds Apprenticeship Coordinator Marcus Bullock! Marcus is the founder and CEO of the mobile app Flikshop and the construction company Perspectives, which he started shortly after he came home from prison. I know you probably won't believe me, but there's *MORE!* Apprentices give us their feedback and rate each session for its usefulness and effectiveness. This way, we consistently improve our model so that when you come home and participate, it's even better! As you can tell, I am geeking (I don't know if that's strictly DC but you'll never hear me say that again either) for you guys to come home and take your spot in the apprenticeship program that's tailored just for you! Space is limited, so make sure to write to me 6 months before you come home to reserve a spot for you!

RESOURCES

I have found some very useful resources that I want you guys to check out once you get home! Any one of these could be the first step on the path to your future success. Take a look:

Skyland Workforce Center: Located at 2509 Good Hope Rd SE, they offer computer classes, GED placement tests, entrepreneurship and construction training, in addition to a one-week job readiness training with STRIVE-DC that allows you to go straight to the orientation at Jubilee Jobs, bypassing the month-long training program that is typically required! Since Skyland opened in December they have placed hundreds of people in construction jobs and work closely with the contractors responsible for the new Skyland Town Center across the street (which will include a Walmart) that they expect will create jobs for the next 5-10 years!

Next up is **Urban Ed**, a non-profit in DC whose mission is to provide District residents with a technology-driven education. They also provide information and skill development for sustained futures by offering free IT Certification, IT Apprenticeship, and IT Help Desk Training. Urban Ed is located at 2041 Martin Luther King Avenue in SE, and can be reached at 202-610-2344.

Nelson's Welding School offers hands on training in an actual welding workshop. The training lasts for four months, and they offer job placement assistance upon completion. The classes are free for all DC residents with a GED or High School diploma, and can be reached at 202-889-3671. Nelson's Welding school is located at 1101 W Street SE, right behind the Big Chair. ****One of our Free Minds members is currently a student here!*

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when its members were just teenagers and they've been together ever since. I'd say they've been the most consistent of any go-go band. Then you have groups like Backyard Band from the '90s who brought a more rugged sound to the scene. The newer go-go bands like TCB, TOB and ABM are casually referred to as "the Alphabet Bands," and they play in a style called bounce beat. It is a slower, louder, heavier sound with more density to it. You could call it the more extreme version of go-go. You dance harder to it. The old heads say it's not really go-go, and that it's not melodic enough, but that's how it always is when any genre of music evolves. The young people are taking it in a new direction.

What is the reputation of go-go?

In the '80s and '90s, there was violence at various go-go concerts and of course the music takes the blame. Go-go music became a scapegoat for bigger problems in the city. Back in 2010, it became known that the Metropolitan Police Department had started issuing a "Go-go Report," which alerted officers to where all of the area go-go concerts would be taking place each weekend. Promoters and community leaders in the go-go scene felt that the music was being targeted and that the police were trying to force go-go out of the District. A lot of venues have been closed down, but the bands always seem to find new places to play. I think if the young people keep making go-go their own, the scene will stay strong.

How is go-go representative of a culture that goes beyond just the music?

It's a music that bonds the community. A go-go concert is ultimately a gathering. The call and response element and the shout outs that happen from the stage are so important. You get kids who will type their name into their phone, and then pass their phone up through the crowd so that the lead talker in the front line will shout out their name. It's the culture of having one's personhood recognized.

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AROUND THE WORLD...

The DC You Never Knew

By Jess

To tourists, Washington, DC is the nation's capital, home to the president and magnificent monuments, memorials, and museums. To native residents, however, the District is much more than the politics and buildings. DC has a rich culture, grown out of the roots of cultural leaders like Chuck Brown, Langston Hughes, Marvin Gaye, and other African American artists and musicians. However, there is more going on in DC than even natives might guess. Join me as I explore my own top seven list of hidden treasures in our very own District of Columbia!

1. Did you know there's actually an official African American Heritage Trail in DC? The route includes a house in LeDroit Park where accomplished black poet and writer Paul Laurence Dunbar lived, as well as The True Reformer Building on U Street. Completed in 1903, this building was solely conceived, financed, designed, built, and used by African Americans.



2. DC is obviously known for its monuments and memorials. But not many people know about the Albert Einstein Memorial, located on Constitution Ave on the grounds of the National Academy of Sciences. It weighs about 4 tons, and is about 12 feet tall!

3. Everyone knows Howard University as a hub for knowledge and learning. But there is also an art gallery on campus, containing their expansive African American Art Collection. It's not only one of the most comprehensive representations of black artists in existence; it's also completely free!

4. Although most of the movies filmed in DC are focused on politicians, one of the most famous horror movies, *The Exorcist*, chose Georgetown as the location for the final scene of its movie. Known as the "Exorcist Steps," this spot is now a big draw for tourist movie buffs and Georgetown students on their workouts.



5. Before Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream Speech" on the National Mall in front of thousands, he first wrote the speech in the Willard InterContinental Washington hotel. Across the street is now located Freedom Plaza, homage to Dr. King and his fight for civil rights. The plaza has inlaid stone depicting part of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's original plan for the City of Washington, including Federal Triangle, the US Capitol, and part of the National Mall.

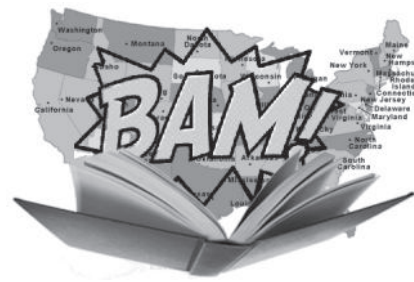


6. The DC community now has a place to celebrate Chuck Brown, the Godfather of go-go! Last August, Chuck Brown Memorial Park opened in NE DC—the park features a tile mural of Brown, a sculpture of the musician, as well as a performance area for small-scale shows.



7. The great abolitionist Frederick Douglass left more than just his legacy to DC. People can actually visit his renovated former home called Cedar Hill in SE DC. Constructed in 1859, this great leader's house also offers a great view of the city.

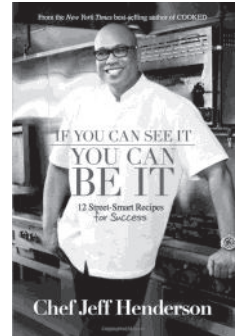




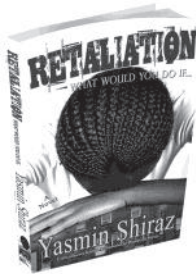
BOOKS ACROSS THE MILES!

BOOKS ACROSS THE MILES UPDATE

By now, some of you should have finished reading Chef Jeff Henderson's "self-help" book, *If You Can See It, You Can Be It!* Now we want to hear from you! Let us know which of Henderson's "recipes for success" you found most helpful. Have you tried to put any of his advice into action? If so, how did it work out? Write us and share your stories, thoughts, and reviews of the book.



We have not yet chosen our next BAM! title. Is there a book that you'd like for everyone to read together? If so, write to Kelli with your title suggestions!



WHAT ARE THE YOUNG'UNS READING?

The guys on the juvenile block are reading *Retaliation*, by Yasmin Shiraz. This is a title that some of you have read. It tells the story of Tashera Odom, a 17-year-old from DC who is jumped and brutally beaten in the streets by a group of high school girls. Her older brother Khalil, a former gang victim who was the victim of gun violence that left him paralyzed and in a wheelchair, must decide how to respond.

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You listen to music and write about it for a living. Is this your dream job?

Absolutely! I played in punk rock bands when I was growing up, so I've always loved music and now I get to write about it. In 2003, my band got the chance to play a show with UCB at the Lincoln Theater. That was an amazing night. I'm honored to be able to write about go-go for the Post. Even though I'm from D.C., I'm an outsider to go-go. I'm white, but I've never felt unwelcome at a go-go. It is such a welcoming community.

What would you tell the guys of Free Minds about following what you are most passionate about?

It sounds like a cliché, but I would say that reading and writing are at the core of any profession you may want to pursue. Dedicate your days right now to doing both. It will make you better at everything that you do! Also engage with people. Take every opportunity to talk with people, especially those who are different from you, because you will learn so much from it! I recently interviewed the D.C. rapper Shy Glizzy for a story that ran on the cover of the Post's Arts section. Shy is 22 now, but he spent two years in juvenile detention. He told me that the time he spent there, reading and writing, are what gave him such a passion for words. And he told me that being locked up was NOT wasted time. He used the time to build up his mind. So yeah, that's my advice. Read and write every chance you get!

NEXT ISSUE'S THEME: *Moving Forward*

This theme comes courtesy of FM member, DB, who writes: *"It is essential to move forward. Mistakes have been made, and milk has been spilled. No more pouting, just moving forward!"* We love what DB expresses here because, much as we may wish otherwise, there is absolutely nothing any of us can do to change our past. We can only move forward, but we can do so with wisdom, kindness, enlightenment and love. Which direction are you moving? What would you like to leave behind (or move away from)? What do you want to move toward? What challenges are there to your moving forward? And what do you have to gain? Send us your poems, essays, and artwork about ***Moving Forward***.

Until the next time, stay strong and keep your mind FREE!

