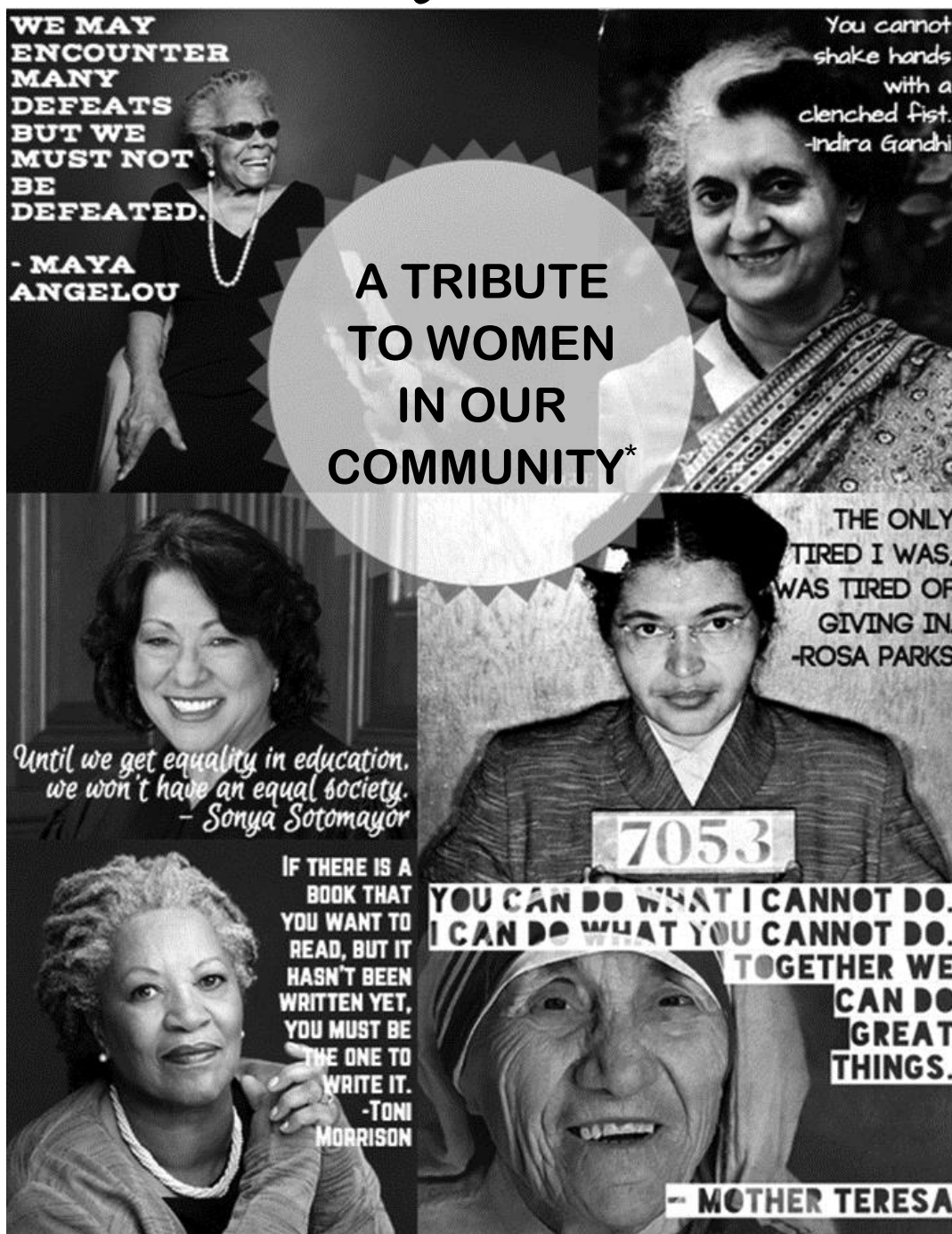


Free Minds Connect

THIS MONTH'S THEME:

My Sisters and Me



IN THIS ISSUE:

**A Free Minds
Big Sister's
Point of
View (page.5)**

**A Mother
Home from
Prison
Gives Back
(page 10)**

**Keela's Wish
for her
Daughters
(page 11)**

**From
Foster Care to
Law School
(page 12)**

Is brought to you by...

Tara

Co-Founder and
Executive Director

Kelli

Co-Founder and
Book Club Facilitator

Alison

Managing Editor

Seana, Julia, Jess

Project Editors

JG, HF

Columnists

Keela

Book Club and
Reentry Manager

Marcus

Reentry
Apprenticeship Trainer

Cynthia

Intern

**JH, AG, EJ, BH, IG,
SH, LW, R, QS, DT,
TE, GW, DJ, SJ, CD**
FM Members

**Teresa, John, Mona,
CG, and Kali**
FM Friends

*We are ALWAYS looking
for new contributors.
Write or draw something
for our next issue and
send it to us! (Pieces not
published in the Connect
will appear on our
writing Blog, and at a
Write Night event!)*

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

Next Issue's Theme:
History

Happy Summer Free Minds Brothers and Sisters, ☀

I hope you are enjoying what I think is one of the best all time seasonal traditions of devouring books on your summer reading list. I know you are going to find this issue of the *Connect* a top pick! ☺

Things are heating up at your Free Minds headquarters and it's not just because the thermometer has been off the charts here in DC this July. It's because our movement of reading, writing and connecting is catching fire and your words are spreading across the country. Currently 8 cities are hosting On The Same Page Write Nights with hundreds of community members of all ages responding to inmate poetry from prisons all over the US. The majority of those volunteers are female which brings me to the wonderful theme of this issue: "My Sisters and Me," where we pay tribute to the powerful role women play in all our lives. You'll read touching poems and articles about mothers, grandmothers, girlfriends and sisters. JG in his regular column, "Words of Wisdom," calls the women in his family "super women" who taught him from a young age that men and women are equal. History was made this month as for the first time a woman was nominated to be the presidential candidate for a major party. At the Democratic National Convention, one woman who cast her vote for Hillary Clinton as the democratic presidential nominee was born in a time when women did not have the right to vote. White women got the right to vote in 1920, but black women didn't get the right to vote until 1965 with the passage of the Voting Rights Act. John Lewis, who you've been reading about in the BAM! book *March* was one of the activists involved in the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Can you hear the glass ceiling cracking? (glass ceil-ing, *noun*, an unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities.)

A running theme through this issue is how supportive women naturally are. I can attest to that as both our staff and enthusiastic volunteers are mostly women. A Free Minds big sister shares how she has been there for her incarcerated brother, and how important it is for incarcerated people to be there for the women in their lives too. We at Free Minds believe that one of the best ways to show emotional support is to write about it. If you turn to page 15, you'll find an easy way to be there for the women in your lives by writing a poem or a letter. On page 10, you'll read about Teresa, a mom who served 5 years and came home to start her own organization to help returning citizens adjust to life on the outside. Now that's what I call "being there."

While women volunteer more worldwide, they also suffer the most as victims of domestic violence and rape. In our "Paying It Forward" column, Kelli profiles an amazing woman who survived rape and took the pain of her experience and turned it into a power for positive change. She co-founded the organization "A Long Walk Home" which uses art therapy and visual and performing arts to end violence against women and girls. They have helped more than 100,000 rape survivors. Another Free Minds friend, Kali, shares her inspirational story of surviving childhood abuse and finding healing in forming a new family of friends and loved ones. This issue is so uplifting it will probably float above your hands as you read it! As always I want to deeply thank our contributors for sharing their stories of hope and you our Free Minds members for embarking on your journeys of change so together both men and women can unite in strength to heal the world.

Until next time—Yours in Free Minds,
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



By Jess

FREE MINDS IN COLORADO

In June, Tara and Kelli flew to Aspen, Colorado to attend the annual Aspen Ideas Festival, the nation's premier, public gathering place for leaders from around the globe to engage in discussion of the ideas and issues that both shape our lives and challenge our times. Free Minds won the first ever Aspen Ideas Award for the On the Same Page UNITED project last year. Now, 12 months later, Tara and Kelli returned to the festival to report back on its expansion and success and demonstrate an On the Same Page UNITED (Write Night). A group of activists, speakers, and community members turned out to read and respond to your writing, and were absolutely blown away by the powerful voices and untold stories they found on each piece of paper.



On The Same Page: Write Lunch at Google

A few weeks ago, Free Minds spent their Monday afternoon at none other than the Google Headquarters in DC! As soon as Tara, Kelli, and Free Minds Poet Ambassador Greg got off the elevator, they were greeted by a hologram that read "Welcome Free Minds" and some friendly "Googlers" (aka Google employees) who welcomed them in. After a tour of the high-tech office, they set up for the On the Same Page: Write Lunch which was attended by more than 35 staff members.

PETERSBURG

In June, the Free Minds Reentry team traveled to FCI Petersburg Medium where they spent the morning with inmates who are transitioning home in the next 18-24 months. Marcus, our Reentry Apprenticeship Trainer, shared his own story of incarceration and reentry, and the team shared tips for finding a job and succeeding in a career once they return home. Later in the afternoon, Marcus, Tara, Keela, and Seana met with a group of poets who have been participating in On the Same Page UNITED: Virginia. One by one, each man stood to read an original poem and share what it meant to receive feedback on his poetry and know that their voices are being heard. We are grateful to the staff and the Petersburg writers' group for having us!



COVER PHOTO BACKGROUND

Description of the six women on the cover, clockwise from top left:

Born in Missouri in 1928, **Dr. Maya Angelou** became one of the most famous poets and educators of our time before her death in 2014. She wrote an autobiography about her youth called *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*.

Born in 1917, **Indira Gandhi** was the third Prime Minister of India, and to this date the only woman to hold the position. Indira was India's second-longest serving Prime Minister, and was assassinated in 1984 while still in office.

Rosa Parks was a civil rights hero, best known for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger as a protest to bus segregation in Montgomery, AL. She was arrested for civil disobedience for violating Alabama's segregation laws. At the time, Parks served as the secretary of the Montgomery NAACP chapter. Upon her death in 2004, Parks was the first woman to lie in honor at the US Capitol Rotunda.

Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, popularly known as **Mother Teresa**, was a Roman Catholic Nun of Albanian heritage who founded the Missionaries of Charity, dedicated to giving "wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor." With hospices and homes, soup kitchens, schools, orphanages, dispensaries and mobile clinics, the charitable works spurred by Mother Teresa's work helped to win her numerous awards, including the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize.

Born in Ohio in 1931, **Toni Morrison** is an author and professor who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for her novel *Beloved*. Morrison has degrees from Howard and Cornell Universities, and has taught at Yale, Bard, Rutgers, and Princeton.

Sonia Sotomayor was nominated to the United States Supreme Court in 2009 by President Barack Obama. Sotomayor was born in Bronx, New York to parents of Puerto Rican decent. After her father died when she was nine, Sotomayor was raised by a single mother. She went on to attend Princeton University and Yale Law School. She is the first Latina, and only the third woman, to ever serve on the Supreme Court.

WORDS OF WISDOM

By JG, FM Member

The women in my life are so important to me. In my family, there was my mother, my 3 aunts, my older sister, and several female cousins. All of them were strong in different ways, and I learned a lot from them. Women have had to struggle and fight for equality here since the birth of this country, and I realize that this is largely due to stereotypes and other forms of misinformation that have been perpetuated over the decades. However, when I was growing up I had no sense of this ideology or belief system. I was surrounded by super women. They could do any and everything just as good, and sometimes better, than any man. There were no limitations, and still aren't. Now that I'm older I've had the honor of having several more super women enter my life. I respect and admire the strength, courage and dedication of these women. They have been there for me and supported me unwaveringly. So shout out to my mother, my sister Christine, my aunt, my friend Kelli and my friend Mary. For them I am forever grateful. They have been living proof for me that the myth of inequality, or women somehow being lesser than men is just that, a myth. Men and women were created equal. Period. Peace!

FREE MINDS MAILBAG

We love getting mail from our Free Minds Family. Write us, and let us know what you thought of this issue!

"I read the poems. I liked 'I Gotta Stop' by QS the best. I feel where he's coming from." – JH

"I loved the *I Believe* issue. It was deep and interesting. I was definitely moved by it. It's a beautiful and intriguing feeling to read positive statements, advice and motivation" – AG

"Sometimes people in here be having bad days and when that piece of mail from Free Minds come under that door it changes a person's day plus mood." – EJ

"A woman that I consider most important to me is my daughter. What I respect and admire most about her is the skills she has to express herself to me. For example: she knows I am in jail and she knows a little about how things have to go in order for me to return home. So this past April I called to wish her a happy birthday (8). I then told her I was feeling sad because I was not with her. She said in response, 'Daddy, you always with me.' For a second I was lost, so I asked her, 'What do you mean?' She said, 'You will always be in my heart no matter where you at or go!'" – BH





THE WRITE WAY

Rhyme Schemes in Poetry

By Julia

A poem can be whatever you want it to be. It doesn't have to rhyme or have proper grammar or capitalization. But sometimes you want to rhyme, or maybe you have writer's block and you could use a little exercise to warm up those writing muscles.

Let's look at the poem "Big Dogs & Cool Cats" by S.L. on page 49 of *The Untold Story of the Real Me*:

*He's back! He's back! Who's that?
You know who, the big dog that hangs with those cool cats
Oh yeah, I know him, where's he been?
Freeing his mind through his pad and pen*

S.L. is using what's called an AABB rhyme scheme. This means the first 2 lines rhyme (that and cats) and then lines 3 and 4 rhyme (been and pen).

*that - A
cats - A
been - B
pen - B*

Now let's mix it up a little and look at an ABAB rhyme scheme. This means a poem where Line 1 rhymes with Line 3, and Line 2 rhymes with Line 4.

L.B. uses an ABAB rhyme in "100 Years Ago" on page 127.

*100 and some years ago - A
They brought us to this land - B
100 and some years ago - A
I couldn't be a man - B
100 and some years ago - A
They called us a slave - C
100 and some years ago - A
They made us behave - C*

Ago/ago rhymes of course, so that's A. Land/man rhymes, so that's B. Then L.B. brings in a new rhyme, slave/behave so it becomes ABABACAC.

Writing Exercise

*Write a poem or lyrics using the ABAB pattern!
Remember, this means Line 1 rhymes with Line 3,
and Line 2 rhymes with Line 4.*

WHAT I'M READING

I just read Half Resurrection Blues by Daniel José Older. This is an urban fantasy book set in New York, about a man named Carlos who was brought back to life after he died—and now he catches misbehaving ghosts and other spirits. I could not put this book down, and recommend it to anyone who likes fantasy! —Julia



FAMILY TIES

The column where FM family and loved ones weigh in.

A Big Sister's Perspective

By CG

In 2004, my younger brother got arrested and incarcerated at the DC Jail. He was sixteen years old. It was really hard, because growing up, it was always just me and my baby brother and he was my best friend. I was 22 when he got arrested. At first they sent my brother to Wisconsin. Even though he was so far away, I went to visit him twice, once with my mom, and a second time with a lot of family members including my mom and cousins.

I remember when he got sentenced. The judge told him to use his time wisely. I know for a fact that my brother is not the same person he was when he got sentenced. He is articulate, and he analyzes everything and thinks before he speaks. He finished school in prison and has taken college classes. I was so proud of him when he graduated. He started to write a book. Over the years, he has gotten better in terms of our communication. We used to fight all the time when we were younger, but we got really close in our teens.

When we were little, my mother used to tell us all the time that when she was dead and gone, all we would have is each other. She passed in 2006. That was the hardest time for both of us during his whole incarceration. I always made sure that whenever he was transferred, that he always had my phone number and address. I wanted to always stay connected with my brother. My mother always brought us up to be close and we are.

For all the sisters, mothers, girlfriends and everybody at home, all I can say is be there, be there, be there. Letters, phone calls, all that stuff is important for someone on the inside. Incarceration is something they have to go through on their own but we can still be there for them. Even if you don't have the means to send money at that particular moment, be emotionally supportive. And the guys can do that from the inside too. They can be emotionally supportive to us. If I do have a time where I fall off and I can't do as much for him financially, I try to be up front about it. But I always try to make my brother a priority no matter what. He's all I have so I'm going to always make sure he's straight.

Would anyone in your family like to write a piece for The Connect?

Tell them to send it to Alison at Free Minds, 2201 P Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

ASK HF: ADVICE FROM THE INSIDE

Dear HF,

A lot of us in here, myself included, walk around talking about how we're living in the struggle, but lately I've been thinking about the fact that I have 3 hot meals, a bed to sleep in, medical treatment, and a roof over my head while my mother is out there raising my daughter on her own, paying bills, and making sure she has the best while worrying about me at the same time. What can I do from in here to appreciate and support my mother and my daughter who are going through the real struggles of life on the outside without me?

***Sincerely,
IG***

Dear IG,

Ever heard the term "Time is money"? Or how about "Pay attention"? See, time has a value, and in prison, we have what we call a lot of "free" time. But time isn't FREE.

Not only is your mother paying bills and taking care of your child, I'm sure she is also sending money to you in jail to make sure you don't have to ask anyone for anything that you need. Right? So, the way that you can show your appreciation to your mother for her holding you and your daughter down, is to "spend" your time to learn new skills that will help you make money legally when you get home, so that you can take care of her when she gets older and cannot work anymore. And, so that you can be in position to help someone else in your family that may end up in a situation that you find yourself in right now. If you waste your time in idle talk, spending the money that your mother sends you to gamble, smoke weed, get tattoos, and other senseless things that will not lead to you making money to support her and your child when you get out, then you will be showing yourself that you are not grateful for what she is doing for you.

***Sincerely,
HF***

THE LEGAL PAD

by Seana



This month we wanted to let you know about some FREE legal resources that are available here in the city, should you or someone you know ever need assistance in the future. These offices are down the street from each other, with the closest metros being Judiciary Square (red line) or Archives/Navy Memorial (yellow/green line).

Public Defender Service "Duty Day": This telephone and walk-in service can help you with the following legal and collateral matters:

- Filing a motion to seal an arrest record *important information for those of you who received sentences under the Youth Rehabilitation Act.
- Responding to an outstanding arrest warrant
- Providing representation in grand jury matters
- Responding to questions about involuntary and civil commitment
- Recommending mental health and immigration services in D.C.
- Recommending free and low cost social programs and services

(Continued on page 8)



BY FREE MINDS MEMBERS

If I Only Knew

By QS

If I only knew how bad it could get
People told me but I played nonchalant
You were devastated at the crime
That robbed us of our precious time
If I only knew how bad it would hurt
The inner shame, guilt, and scars aren't seen
And not knowing in a crazy way;
That there would be more casualties to this crime
Yes! You and the rest of the family would have to pay
If I only knew how you felt
Your spirits were so low
I only knew you withdrew into a shell
And never let your feelings show
If I only knew my true potential
That I could have gotten through it somehow
By talking to you or dad
Instead of giving up on myself and throwing in the towel
But now I know that I can overcome all life throws my way
And I can find love, peace, and happiness in life too
You see what you couldn't teach me
The hard knocks of life would
And I can never say again
If I only knew

MY STRENGTH

By DT

As I sit and write these heartfelt words
My heart beats a little faster than normal
Because no matter how long it's been
I miss my mother who had
That strong grown woman named
Dolores AKA Baby Sis
I smile as I think about how in one breath she would be mad
About how I hung out with the wrong crowd
But in the next breath
She would be telling me to be careful
And she was going to always be here for me
It's been 6 years since God has called her to him
And for almost all of these years I have blamed him
Until I heard her voice and it told me she was okay
And she was proud of me
Even today as I sit in this cage that was built to break me
It's her strength that makes me wake up in the morning
It's her strength that makes me walk through the rain and
never feel wet
It's her strength that warms me when it's too cold around here
It's her strength that make me smile even when people are
trying to make me frown
It's her strength that stops the tears from falling
Because I know she wouldn't have left me if he wouldn't
have called
She's my strength when I feel weak

Even though I miss her more than a blind person misses
his sight
I must keep pushing because it would be a dishonor to her
And the way she raised me
And I am Dolores's son
And she is my strength
I won't quit because she taught me how to win
I love you mommy and I hope I am making you proud
She's my strength

I Carry Your Heart

By TE

I carry your heart with me
Because without your heart
There's no me
That's why I carry it
So I can breathe
Here is the deepest secret
Nobody knows
Without you
There is no me

My Angel

By GW

My mother taught me how to be the man that I am
I don't have to depend on nobody
She said, "Whatever you want to do, do it yourself"
She taught me how to stand on my own
She taught me loyalty, respect, and love
The love from her and my father
Taught me how to be a parent

When my mother passed
I was locked up
It was like I lost my friend
It still ain't really hit me yet
I just know she ain't here
When I think about her now,
I just think about how crazy she used to be-
She would always make me laugh
How lovable she was
How beautiful she was
When she passed, the church was overcrowded with people
They say there were so many people there

If I could tell her anything right now
It would be "I miss you and I love you."
"Don't leave."
I would let her know
That I became the man that she always wanted me to be
Instead of being in the streets, I'm out here working
I can see her smile, saying, "I finally got my son back"
I know she's proud of me
That's what keeps me grounded



PAYING IT FORWARD

By Kelli

Every two minutes, somewhere in America, a woman is raped. One in every six women in this country has been the victim of a rape or attempted rape. One of these women is Salamishah Tillet. Now a professor at University of Pennsylvania, Salamishah was 17 years old and in her first year of college when she was raped by an acquaintance. At first, she was so humiliated and afraid, she didn't tell anyone. This is very common. More than 60% of rapes go unreported. Approximately 94% of rapists never go to prison.

Eventually, Salamishah told her younger sister, Scheherazade, what had happened. In an effort to help, Scheherazade used photography to document the stages of Salamishah's recovery. The project led the women to write and direct a multimedia performance called Story of a Rape Survivor to help other victims understand that they were not alone. And they co-founded A Long Walk Home, a nonprofit organization that uses art therapy and visual and performing arts to end violence against women and girls. A Long Walk Home has helped more than 100,000 survivors, their loved ones, and allies to build safer communities and end gender violence.



A LONG WALK HOME

I recently spoke with Dr. Tillet by telephone. Here is some of what she shared:

"Rape culture" is a set of attitudes, beliefs, and representations in popular culture, policies and actions that either encourage the act of rape or blame the victims of sexual assault without holding the perpetrators responsible. Rape culture keeps people, usually women, from speaking out because in a rape culture, victims are often not believed.

An example is the way that entertainer Bill Cosby has allegedly drugged and raped an enormous number of women over a period of decades. Many of them spoke out but they were not believed. It took nearly 60 women coming forward with their stories before they were taken seriously by authorities. How could one man consistently get away with raping women before his victims would be believed? That is what happens when we have a culture that blames victims.

Art allows people to be heard and their stories to be recognized. This is something victims need in order to heal. Art also gives victims a sense of solidarity and community that allows all of us take on an issue that is often hard to talk about. For example, survivors of rape and sexual assault may be afraid to talk about what happened to them, but they can use poetry or painting not only as a way to articulate their experience, but to bond with others who have been through the same thing, and work for social change.

The biggest misconception is that a rape was not a rape. Some men tend to believe that a woman was not raped and will come up with all kinds of reasons why not. For example: she didn't say "no," she didn't say "no" loudly enough; or said "no" but she really wanted it. Too often, people do not believe a woman. For way too long, our society has conditioned men to believe that they have a right to women's bodies, and that a woman does not have a right to her own sexual pleasure. This leads men to think that if a woman is sexually empowered, she can't possibly be a victim. She must be promiscuous and therefore he has the right to take control of her body. When people think of rape, they often think of attacks by strangers. The truth is that 80% of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows.

The message I have for your readers is that men who have been incarcerated have an enormous capacity for empathy with victims of sexual violence. They tend to "get it" more than others because they know what it is like to have one's own body under surveillance. They know how it feels to be utterly vulnerable, to have their bodies policed, and be denied control over their own bodies. For this reason, I would ask you, the readers, to please step up and be strong allies on this issue. Your voices are so important! You have enormous power to help us to create change in our communities. You can pass along the vital message to young people. This is not a women's issue. It impacts all of us!

My message is simple. Everyone has a right to control their own body. Nobody else has the right to encroach upon anyone else's body. "No" means "no." "Yes" means "yes." And there is no in between.

Special thanks to Dr. Salamishah Tillet, Ms. Scheherazade Tillet, and their organization A Long Walk Home for their incredible work on this issue.



Original artwork by FM member S.H.



THE LEGAL PAD

(Continued from page 5)

Located at 633 Indiana Avenue, N.W., 2nd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20004. They can be reached by phone (ask for the Duty Day attorney) at (202) 628-1200 and the hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (excluding federal and District holidays).

Family Court Self-Help Center: The Family Court Self-Help Center is a walk-in service that provides unrepresented people with general legal information in a variety of family law matters (such as divorce, custody, visitation, child support). J.P. and K.S., two of your Free Minds brothers were dealing with child support and child custody issues a few months ago and we referred them here, where they were able to have their questions answered and get the situations resolved. K.S. now shares custody of his son! The Center can help with the following:

- Provide you with information about D.C. family law matters
- Inform you of your legal rights and obligations
- Describe your legal options
- Help you determine which forms are most appropriate for you and how to complete them
- Explain how to navigate the court process, and what to expect in court
- Refer you to other helpful clinics and programs

Located inside of the DC Superior Courthouse at 500 Indiana Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001 in room JM-570 (the bottom floor where juvenile cases are heard). The Center's hours of operation are from 8:00 am – 5:30 pm and you must arrive by 5:00 pm to be seen that day.

QUOTE-I-VATOR

*“And since we all came from a woman
Got our name from a woman and our game from a woman
I wonder why we take from our women
Why we rape our women, do we hate our women?”
– 2Pac, “Keep Ya Head Up”*



“I raise up my voice—not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.” – Malala Yousafzai (photo by Antonio Olmos)

“Some women choose to follow men, and some women choose to follow their dreams. If you're wondering which way to go, remember that your career will never wake up and tell you that it doesn't love you anymore.” – Lady Gaga

“When you love and accept yourself, when you know who really cares about you, and when you learn from your mistakes, then you stop caring about what people who don't know you think.” – Beyoncé (photo by Getty)



“Instead of letting your hardships and failures discourage or exhaust you, let them inspire you. Let them make you even hungrier to succeed.” – Michelle Obama

DC Photos of the Month:



Anacostia Senior High School serves students in DC's Ward 8. In 2010, Michelle Obama delivered the commencement speech to the graduating seniors at Anacostia.



Since it opened its doors in 1958, **Ben's Chili Bowl** has been a staple of the U Street area.

Have a request for next issue's DC Photo of the month? Write us at 2201 P St NW Washington, DC 20037 and let us know what you'd like to see!



IN THE NEWS

By John, FM Friend

WORLD

Both at home and abroad, it seems certain that 2016 will forever be remembered for the deplorable violence that occurred during it. And we still have five months to go.

As various militaries continue to pound the physical territory held by the Islamic State (ISIS), the terrorist group has carried out and inspired a slate of attacks on civilians that includes mass casualties in Orlando, Fla.; Nice, France; Istanbul, Turkey; Würzburg, Germany; and Dhaka, Bangladesh. And that does not even cover the far-more-frequent attacks carried out by ISIS against civilians in Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq, one of the countries in which it holds territory.

NATIONAL

At home in America, another storm of violence has escalated involving the law enforcement community. In July, video cameras captured police officers shooting two young black men; Alton Sterling of Baton Rouge, and Philando Castile of Minnesota. Both men were armed with legally obtained guns, though the evidence suggests that neither was threatening police with the gun at the time of the shooting.

Protests began in cities around the country, calling attention to the shootings and to several other recent killings of unarmed black men by law enforcement officials. In Dallas, a protest was ended abruptly when a sniper killed five police officers. Micah Johnson, the shooter, was killed during the standoff that ensued.

Barely a week later, three Baton Rouge police officers were lured to an alleged crime scene and killed by a former Marine named Gavin Eugene Long, who died in a shootout with police.

The American role in fighting ISIS, and the recent killings of and by police officers, are sure to become a focal point of the presidential campaign, which are beginning in earnest now that the two parties have concluded their national conventions. The Republican Party held their convention last week in Ohio, and the Democratic convention just concluded on July 28th in Pennsylvania.

The candidates for president are businessman and reality television star Donald Trump, and former First Lady, U.S. Senator, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Clinton's campaign has painted her as the qualified candidate with the experience to run a country. Trump has embraced the inverse, billing himself as a candidate with no allegiance to any special interest group.

We will update you in the next edition on which issues emerge as the critical ones in their campaigns and debates. A few you can be certain of:

- Whether or not to declare war on, and intensify the attack on, the Islamic State.
- How immigration policy reform should be carried out
- Gun violence
- Taxes

SPORTS

Has any athlete ever had more on the line in one game than LeBron James did in Game 7 of this NBA Finals? Lose, and his career record would read two championships won, five championships lost.

Instead, he took home a third title with a series that saw Kyrie Irving become a breakout star, but reminded us all that love or hate him, LeBron is the best basketball player in the game. He dominated both ends of the floor in the finals, and sealed the Game 7 win with a play he makes with regularity: a weak-side shot-block against the glass.

Instead of a 2-5 finals record, he has now drawn even on championships with Larry Bird and sits two behind Magic Johnson, Kobe Bryant, and one title behind Shaquille O'Neal and Tim Duncan. Speaking of which...

Kobe Bryant, one of the biggest love/hate talents in the history of American sports, spent the entire season on a farewell tour. It culminated in a magical 60-point game to end the season, but it was tough to watch one of the greatest players of all time lead one of the worst teams in recent memory.

In the same year, Tim Duncan returned to help the San Antonio Spurs try for another NBA title; they have won four since the team drafted Duncan 19 years ago. He took a major backseat role on the court, playing limited minutes during the regular season and almost no minutes in some big playoff games.

Weeks after the season ended, Duncan retired without a press conference, just a message issued through the Spurs. And quietly, one of the greatest power forwards in the history of the game walked away.

Next season will be an interesting one, with familiar faces like Duncan (left) and Kobe (right) gone, and LeBron (center) gearing up for a chance to take Cleveland back to the promised land.

But the biggest change will be seeing Kevin Durant don a Golden State Warriors jersey, playing alongside Steph Curry, Klay Thompson, and Draymond Green. That nucleus now becomes arguably the greatest starting lineup in the history of the NBA.



The Summer Olympics begin in just a few weeks, and the American most likely to bring home multiple gold medals is a Washington, D.C. native! Katie Ledecky, the 19-year-old swimmer who will attend Stanford next year, won the 800-meter freestyle at the 2012 Olympics...at the age of *fifteen*. She currently holds the world record times in the 400-meter, 800-meter and 1,500-meter freestyles.

A little too soon for any real Redskins updates. Summer practices are underway, nobody major has been injured, and Kirk Cousins received a one-year guarantee of about \$20 million from the team. If he plays well this season, the team will almost certainly have to pay him big money. If the team does not do well, the two will likely part ways.

As we head into August, the Washington Nationals hold a commanding lead in the NL East, up 6 games on second-place Miami Marlins. It has been an interesting season: Last year's MVP Bryce Harper has struggled, along with several other key hitters and the closer Jonathan Papelbon. But the team has continued to win, especially behind the arms of Stephen Strasburg (13-0) and Max Scherzer (10-6).

It also helps that the team's main offseason pickup, second basemen Daniel Murphy, has become a contender for MVP. He is currently batting .350 with 18 homers and 67 runs batted in.



REAL WORLD OF WORK/REENTRY PROFILE

Starting Your Own Non-Profit Organization

Teresa served almost five years in prison before being released in 2011. Teresa and her daughter Laurin founded a non-profit organization called Mission: Launch, which uses technology to improve the delivery of reentry services. Teresa talked with Alison about the realities of incarceration, reentry, and starting a non-profit.



Alison: How and when did you first come up with the idea for Mission: Launch?

Teresa: The idea for Mission: Launch was seeded around time when I was convicted. At that time I was seeking meaning, and I knew I needed to repurpose myself. I started researching, and then my daughter Laurin and I continued to plan over visiting hours, calls, and emails while I was serving my sentence.

Alison: What are some of the goals of Mission: Launch?

Teresa: At Mission: Launch, we are 100% focused on reentry experience. We want to make reentry more efficient. We work with government agencies and with service providers like Free Minds and others that are working with people coming home from prison. One of our goals is to do any and everything we can to bring people returning home from prison into conversations about creating solutions that make sense for them.

Alison: Mission: Launch focuses on the use of technology in reentry. Why technology?

Teresa: I was always a user of technology, but I wouldn't say I was tech savvy. I really loved having access to all that information. I was like this is powerful. While in prison, the whole social media field expanded tremendously. From prison, I couldn't really comprehend it. Technology was revolutionizing how we live, work and play, and I was on the sidelines. I felt like the fastest way I could get on my feet was to come home and understand technology and use it in a meaningful way.

Alison: What steps did you have to take to develop your organization and get it off the ground?

Teresa: There was a lot of work and a lot of planning involved. We had to come up with our charter, and had to design infrastructure to accommodate what we had in our mind. We also wanted to offer flexibility for growth. We had an attorney help us with the paperwork. Non-profits have to complete paperwork that allows them to get approval by the IRS. It wasn't just we decided to be a nonprofit and next day we were in business. What we have when incarcerated is a lot of time and then when we come home we have a lot of energy and are ready to hit "go". When we come home we have to slow down, because the process is slow. It is critical to take advantage of the time while incarcerated. Whatever your plan for when you return home, it's important to write down your thoughts. It doesn't matter if in right format or not. Then, group like thoughts together. If you write it down and have a clear vision and thought, when you come home you'll be ten steps ahead of everyone else. Once you are home, you can vet your concept with other people and edit.

Alison: What does it mean to you to have your daughter working with you to run your organization?

Teresa: I don't have words to describe it. It is so rewarding and fulfilling. One of my greatest concerns when I went to prison is will I lose relevancy in the life of my daughter. We used that time away working on something that was important to me and became important to her. Today, it is like a dream come true. Prison didn't ruin both of our lives. Somehow, we took that dark painful experience and turned it into something positive.

Alison: What woman do you most admire and why?

Teresa: I would have to say my daughter Laurin. Anyone who's in prison knows one thing; that your family doesn't have to take the journey with you. She could have just said "I'll see you when you get out." But she didn't. In addition to that, it wasn't just "I'll send you money." For her it was we're family and we're going to do this together. She had graduated from college a few months before I went to prison. At that time, she was still a young woman and she had to be on her own. I'm certain that it was not the life she had envisioned for herself, but she shifted. The manner in which she cares about this topic and treats formerly incarcerated people with dignity and respect is astonishing.

Alison: What would you tell Free Minds members who may want to start a non-profit?

Teresa: The end of this journey is going to come. What's important is what are you going to do next? People love a comeback story. It's a matter of maximizing their opportunities by participating in programming that is offered, keeping their mind fresh and sharp. I am a big supporter of journaling, documenting what they're feeling while they're there. When they come home they should make sure they have that journal or notebook handy so they can remind themselves of visions and goals. It makes you accountable to yourself.

Alison: What was the most challenging part of reentry?

Teresa: The biggest challenge was the stigmatization. I didn't anticipate the level that I would be stigmatized. Having a felony on my record, sometimes I felt like I was wearing the scarlet F on my forehead. It felt like I was constantly being judged. It was frustrating.

Alison: How did you overcome that and not become a recidivism statistic?

Teresa: Recidivism is a direct result of people not being able to connect with goals and dreams that they made while incarcerated. We don't think about how challenging it's going to be to not only get a good job but to get a job, period. We lose patience. It's a frustrating experience. The hardest part of incarceration is coming home. Family reunification is challenging. If you're somewhere where you didn't get to connect often with your family, you romanticized what family life would be when you came home. So many times, the people in our lives had to move on and continue with their lives.

Alison: What advice do you have about reentry?

Teresa: The greatest advice I can offer is to be patient, and make a commitment to your freedom. Under no circumstances should you allow yourself to be placed in a position where your freedom can be taken away from you again. Prison is no way of living. You have to be patient, because it is worth fighting for as long as it takes to get to a safe, stable place. For every no you get there's a yes around the corner. It may be 20 corners away, but there are good people out there who want to help, you just have to find them.

Alison: What qualities does someone have to have to start and run a non-profit?

Teresa: They have to be dedicated and disciplined. People who have good debating skills that they can use to convince somebody that this is important, and that they are the person to do this. You have to be resilient and really committed to the work. My work isn't for everybody. I engage with people on a regular basis who are involved in reentry, and for some people, that may lead to them being re-traumatized. If you want to remain far from incarceration, working in this space may not be for you. You may want to work in criminal justice but maybe on the front side, working to keep people from entering the system. Everybody has something that they're good at. It doesn't matter if it's running a nonprofit or janitorial. Find what you can do that you can make a living at and be happy at and bring your best self to it so you can live a productive and civically engaged life.



REENTRY CORNER

By Keela

Bon Jour Guys! (That's French for hello, just trying to switch things up a little!)

I'm excited to get you up to speed on some of the things that you can take advantage on the home front!

Department of Employment Services has rolled a new program called Learn, Earn, Advance, Prosper, or LEAP for short. LEAP is a network of interconnected partners utilizing the "earn-and-learn" approach that will link the city's unemployed residents with employment, education and training opportunities. This means that while you are participating and in the training phase, you will also earn a stipend until completion. This framework will allow individuals to earn wages and accumulate work experience thus bolstering their ability to advance along a career pathway and into the middle class. To be eligible to take advantage of LEAP, one must:

- ☐ Be a DC resident
- ☐ Have a GED or High School Diploma
- ☐ Pass a drug test
- ☐ Must be a recipient of Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF)
- ☐ Have basic computer skills

LEAP is located at the Department of Employment Services headquarters at 4058 Minnesota Avenue, NE, they can be reached at 202-442-4646.

I'm not done yet, because we at Free Minds are passionate about our members getting their education, this next resource is near and dear to our hearts. The Excel Center is a new public charter adult high school where you can earn your HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA. Not only that, you will be assigned a job coach and learn skills that will present greater employment and career opportunities. Not only that, you will receive counseling and support for post-secondary education. Not only that, the Director has reached out to Free Minds personally to refer our members. Excel will also provide transportation stipends, childcare and flexible schedules. The only eligibility factor for attending the Excel Center is to be a DC resident at least 18 years of age. Excel is located at 1776 G street NW, they can be reached at 202-719-1281.

Alright guys, au revoir for now! (That's French for goodbye!)

AROUND THE WORLD...

*The column where we explore places near and far on our miraculous planet.
The writer is the guide and the readers are on "vacation via imagination."*

Matriarchies

By Cynthia

In America's 240-years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a female candidate is closer to becoming the United States President than ever before. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made history, becoming the Democratic Party's nominee in the 2016 presidential election. But there are several global societies around the world which were established as matriarchies long ago. Many of which continue to thrive today. Here are a few of the most prominent women-led societies:

From the Democratic Republic of Congo down to Ghana and the Ivory Coast, the Aka live peacefully in a well-established matriarchal society. Gender roles are entirely flipped. However, men and women play an equal part in this society and are recognized as equal in the eyes of the law. Men bear the responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, and maintaining the household, while the women hunt. An Akan father statistically plays with his children five times more in one day than the average American dad. Women are economically powerful and financially independent. Whereas a man relies more upon his family to provide his needs until he gets married and has a family of his own. Then his wife will support him.

The Mosuo in China have a population of 40,000. The society is located in Lugu Lake in southwest China on the border of Tibet. There is no legally-binding marital institution in Mosuo culture. A woman picks who she wants to be the father of her child, but they do not live together. This is called a "walking marriage." Formally recognized romantic relationships do not exist in Mosuo society. There are no words that mean "father" or "husband" in their language. Kids are raised by the mothers solely. Women handle the business decisions and household duties. Meanwhile, men labor in the fields and sometimes play a small role in politics and government, but this is dependent on the changing views of each generation.

The mountain alps of northern Albania are home to a group of women living as men called "sworn virgins" or burrneshas in Albanian. Sworn virgins take a vow of chastity to remain abstinent, cut their long locks, dress in baggy men's clothes, and live secluded in the mountains. These women grow up in the Albanian patriarchy, but later in life make the active choice to take the vow for their independence and financial freedom. Many sworn virgins become the

(Continued on page 13)





MY JOURNEY

My Journey from Foster Care to Law School

By Free Minds Friend Kali

A friend of Tara's wanted to share her story of survival from childhood abuse and overcoming the odds to let our Free Minds members know it is possible to heal from trauma.

Who am I? I am a strong, intelligent, kind, and beautiful woman. I never imagined that I could define myself. I always thought, I needed the definition of others as my truth. They say, parents guide children in their definition journey but what if, that doesn't happen? Then what?

I was born to Indian immigrant parents in the Bronx, NYC. I was 3 years old and my autistic brother was 2 years old when my mother kicked out my father for being an abusive and unsupportive husband and father. I do not know when my mother became depressed. All I know is, my mother was emotionally and physically abusive towards me. Maybe she was never taught the skills of being a warm, caring, and nurturing mother, and she was mimicking how her parents treated her. We will never know.

She beat me for asking questions; I had a curious mind and I liked asking questions to understand things, life, and people. I lived in fear of my mother, so much so, that at night in our Queen-sized bed, I did everything I could to make sure my skin never touched her skin. My mother barely spoke with me but she was constantly critical, nothing was ever good enough. I didn't get praise or encouragements, just demands, criticism, and beatings.

How did I survive abuse and loneliness? The T.V., and the library books were my best friends. I knew my mother didn't care about my feelings; I journaled my feelings and thoughts on a daily basis. Later in life, I would talk to the mirror; I had the greatest friend in the world who would never leave me, no matter what: me. I also built a network of mentors and friends who have amazing qualities, intelligence, and skills that I wanted to develop in myself.

Eventually, my mother voluntarily placed me into foster care, I was grateful. I stayed in care from 15 to 21 years old with one family. I survived. I went to college; I had a career in NYC government; I attended law school; I found God; I found Kundalini yoga; I became a vegetarian and my focus now is what is my purpose/mission to do on this Earth.

Some of the most important lessons I learned in this journey: I have to save my life every day, no one else is going to do a better job than me. I don't need anyone, but God and myself. I have to love myself 100%, if not, how can I expect or ask anyone to do that? Meditating, doing kundalini yoga and praying have most certainly saved my life. I'm slowly healing. I got to put in the work now because I am a strong, intelligent, kind, and beautiful woman. I define me, no one else does.

With love – Kali

What I Want From My Daughters' Mates

By Keela

Typically, I don't consider myself to be a particularly over protective or "picky" mom. I have 3 daughters and each of them has their own likes, dislikes and personality traits, which makes for quite an interesting and adventurous mix! I have a pretty good relationship with my girls and have been able to maintain a decent balance of mom/friend. I believe that they appreciate that, and it's made it easier for us to communicate, and for them to respect my expectations.

My husband and I have been together for almost 24 years and naturally, I want my children to experience long and lasting marriages and relationships. I have to admit though, when it comes to my children and relationships, I can get quiet anxious, especially where my daughters are concerned. My daughters are 22, 18 and 9, and we've been having conversations about mates, and relationships for as long as I can remember.

I started having these conversations early on because I refused to let society or the media tell them about relationships before I did. I had to counteract what I feared would be forced down their throats without my intervention. Things like domestic violence, women as objects, or women being the inferior partner in the relationship.

As their mother, it's natural for me to feel that I know what's best for them when it comes to a mate, and although it seems idyllic, I know that there are men out there who embody the characteristics that any mom would want for their daughters. So what are those characteristics?

- **A healthy relationship with adults in their lives** – I think for any one of us, if we haven't been made to feel worthy or valued as a person, particularly early on in life and particularly from our parents or caregivers, we suffer heart wounds that carry over into every relationship thereafter, and we risk damaging people along the way. I want my daughters to be with people who have worked hard to overcome any wounds they have, and who know their own worth and can create healthy relationships with men and women in their lives - parents, caregivers, family members, or mentors.
- **Goals & ambition** – Having goals and ambition is necessary for everyone and we all should have them, however, this is simply not the case and it's also unfortunate because not having goals and ambitions can greatly decrease the quality of life. Like most moms, I have always taught my children to be goal oriented and follow their dreams.

(Continued on page 13)





AROUND THE WORLD...

(Continued from page 11)

sole providers for their family after the death of the inheriting male in the patriarchal lineage. With nowhere to turn, young women adopt this way of life as a means of survival. Society recognizes them as men and they receive the same economic opportunities and privileges. The independence they achieve allows them to create modest wealth for themselves while supporting their families.

Merriam-Webster describes a matriarchy as “a family, group, or government controlled by a woman or a group of women.” Furthermore, adding “a system of social organization in which descent and inheritance are traced through the female line.” In matriarchies, everyone obeys and follows the leadership of the women in power. If a man and a woman are to be wed, the man will take the woman’s last name in marriage. Similarly, it is tradition for children to inherit their mother’s surname as well. All family history, wealth, and social status is to be traced through the female lineage. Although there are not many matriarchal civilizations, their social advancements rival those of many developed nations.

(WHAT I WANT FROM MY DAUGHTERS’ MATES Continued from page 12)

So if their future mates lack this ability, then eventually resentment may begin to grow in the relationship because they will start to feel like they are being held back.

- **Hobbies & Interests** – In every relationship, each person should have a separate set of hobbies and interests and pursue them regularly. If not, then you start to smother one another, which may breed neediness and we all know that can get real old real fast.
- **A decisive mind** – To me, there’s nothing more attractive than a man with a decisive mind. It makes a women feel secure when they know that their man has the ability to make sound decisions and see them through.
- **A successful career** – Obviously, I want my daughters to have security, but also to do their part to maintain their half of the relationship.
- **Belief** – My family and I are people of faith, and I want my daughters to continue to experience the peace that comes from believing in a higher power. It’s been my experience that when you have belief, everything else falls into place.

I wish that we lived in a world where every man had these characteristics, they all need them and most of all, they all deserve them.

One-On-One with Mona Haydar of “Ask a Muslim”

By Jess

Last issue, we shared a story about Sebastian and Mona, a Muslim couple in Massachusetts who have decided to combat fear and Islamophobia with love and community. Mona is a poet, activist, speaker, and teacher, currently working towards her Masters in Divinity. A few weeks ago, Jess chatted with Mona about womanhood, feminism, and the power to change the world.

JESS: What does the idea of being a woman mean to you?

MONA: For me it’s immensely powerful to know who and what I am, and part of what I am is definitely a woman. Honoring that and recognizing that is part of my power. We [tend to] equate power with masculinity, [but] when I’m trying to be more masculine or more like a man, that’s when a lot of problems come up. When I’m embracing my femininity fully—not saying it has to look a certain way—I often find myself in a greater position of power than before.

J: When did you first start to understand the “difference” between men and women?

M: Watching my mother and father and the way they interacted with the world, those were my first cues. It’s interesting the way we’re socialized as women and men...our society is so binary. [Binary: a system with two parts. In this case, men and women] I don’t see the world as binary, so it can be confusing. From a young age, I was a real tomboy—I lived most of my childhood inside of an apple tree always wearing shorts, and I always had super short hair. I skateboarded, and I rollerbladed; I did all these things that were supposedly “boy things.” They weren’t supposed to be girly, but I was doing them all as a girl.

J: What does beauty mean to you?

M: I totally reject the Beauty Industrial Complex as a whole, especially as a Muslim. [The Beauty Industrial Complex is the combination of messages from the media and beauty industries that emphasizes beauty as the most valuable thing about a woman] My body is not subject to the approval of anybody who desires to judge it; it’s for those who I want to share it with, period. We live in such a consumer society, but my body is not for consumption. It’s a sacred vessel for me, which expresses sexuality, spirituality, which expresses all of these beautiful and valuable things. It will never be limited to just one thing. By privatizing my sexuality, I’m saying that my power lies in other things. My power is so much bigger than what my body looks like—my body is mine to do what I want with. That freedom is inherent and implicit and nobody can question that or play around with that.

(Continued on page 14)





ONE-ON-ONE

(Continued from page 13)

J: How does your faith influence your understanding of beauty and other societal pressures?

M: My faith is instrumental in my coming to these conclusions. My faith is about liberation from the constructs of society and it is instructional in that it tells me that I am free. I am not bound by a society and what the society wants. I am a being of god—no one can mess with that.

J: What is one thing you wish you could communicate to all men about womanhood?

M: When we honor each other, there's more honor and love in the world. When we devalue and cut down one another, there's less in the world. [Women need to be] in the business of being fully embracing of who they are and allowed to do that. When we step up as women, the men will fall into place. We need to step our game up ourselves. They'll know our worth because we know our worth.

J: In the news recently, we've heard a lot about the idea of "rape culture." How would you describe that, and what can all of us do to combat the epidemic of violence against women?

M: I mean that's huge and an issue that's really close to my heart. The statistics are like 1 in 3 women has been abused by a partner. And that's way too high. We need to look at our lives and what situations we're putting ourselves in, and take back the power. How am I going to help and support women in the world? How am I going to help and support myself? What kind of institutions do we need to build to prevent this?

When women tell their stories, we don't believe them. Our society throws away a woman once she has this kind of story. And we need to stop doing that and honor every single story. If a woman has a story of violence against her, whether it's lived or in her heart and on her mind, it's still an experience we need to deal with. We need to honor those stories.

Taking away women's power over their bodies only goes so far. You can never take away somebody's heart and mind. And we will continue to fight violence against women. We will continue to tell the stories so our daughters don't experience what we experience. We will continue to tell those stories...we will do it because we must.

So Tired

By DJ

I'm so tired of seeing my Black sisters cry
Watching constantly as never ending tears fall from their
shattered eyes
I'm so tired of men hurting y'all and causing y'all
so much pain
Turn y'all sunshine into nothing but dreadful rains
Breaking y'all slowly, removing all of your trust and pride
Sucking y'all dry and leaving you with nothing but
heartache inside
Men promised to love you, but what he shown
Is that his love is only a fictitious term
You've yet to see actions from the many lies men have told
I'm so tired of seeing y'all die
At the hands of violent and abusive men in 'deez streets
They may put a ring on it, but if it means your life
No diamond is worth that price
I'm so tired of seeing so many of y'all lost on the
cruel ghetto streets
Just to survive until tomorrow to lie on a stranger's
tainted sheets
I'm so very tired of it all
Disgusted about everything that I've seen in 'dem streets
But men, how can we call ourselves Kings
If we keep destroying our strong Black Queens?
You can't be tired if you add to the stress
So it's about time, surely overdue
That we start to clean up our mess

Peace be upon you!

A Mother

By SJ

A friend
That's where life begins
A loyalist
Trusting always, never pretending
An opportunist
Viewing success through all circumstances
An activist
Always down for the cause of Justice for everyone
A caregiver
Never stop nurturing, always protecting
A lover
Keeps it coming unconditionally, no matter the weather
A mother
Always strong, beautiful and peaceful which lasts forever
Stronger than my brothers

MY SISTER

By CD

Sometimes	I couldn't see facing
No, often	What she beat
I find my sisters to be	In those mean streets of DC
Stronger than my brothers	To me she's a beast
Don't ask me how	Stands at about 5 foot 3
My guess	A cutie
They get it from our mother	She reminds me of my niece
My baby sister	The statement (A Strong Black
We call Strawberry	Woman)
Because she's so sweet	Is incomplete without
She's stronger than any woman	mentioning
Could be, should be	Strawberry
She's way stronger	And a picture of her face
Than me	Where the period should be





TO YOUR FAVORITE WOMAN

Use this space to write a poem to a woman in your life--maybe your mother, your grandmother, your sister, your friend, or anyone else who is important to you! If you've got writer's block, you can use the fill-in-the-blank writing prompt below, or you can write your own! This prompt is from the Pongo Teen Writing Project, and they've suggested some words in parentheses (like this) to get you started, or you can choose your own. Please send completed poems to us at 2201 P Street NW, Washington, DC 20037.

a poem by _____ (your name here)

Dear _____,

I just thought you should know what I'm doing now.

I am a _____ (strong, angry, happy, lonely, ???) person

who spends a lot of time _____ (reading, writing poetry, planning for the future, ???).

I just thought you should know how I'm feeling.

I am _____ (happy, nervous, depressed, ???)

because _____.

I just thought you should know what I've been through.

Since the last time I saw you, I have _____ (grown, learned, changed, ???) so much.

The time that I _____ was especially important to me.

I just thought you should know what I wish for the future.

I hope that _____.

I just thought you should know what I don't miss about you.

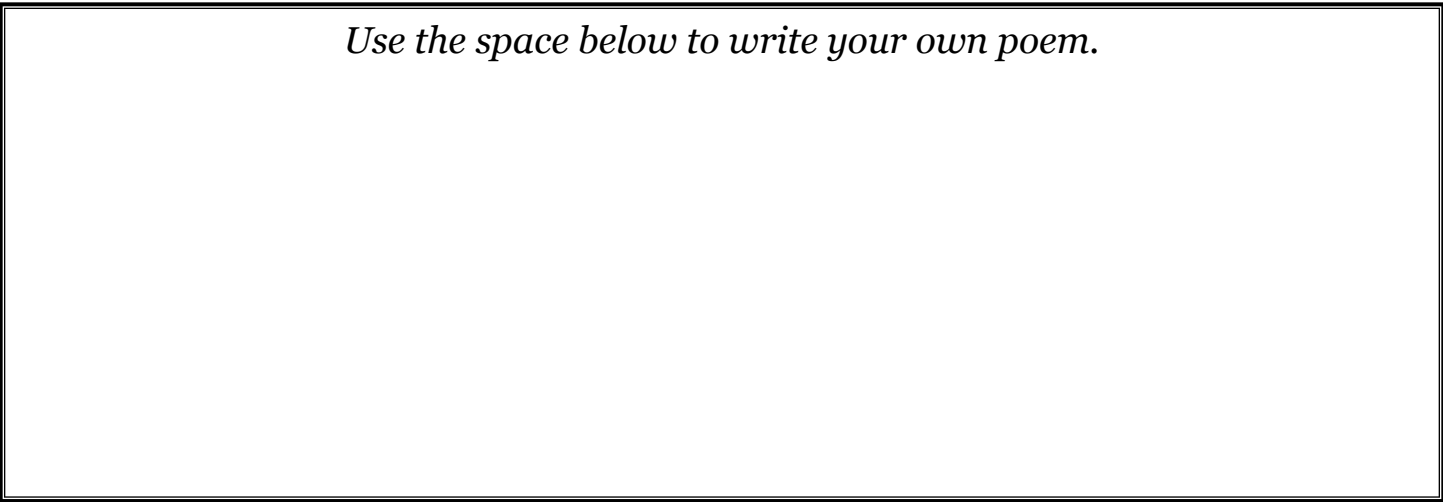
I am glad I don't have to worry about _____ anymore.

I just thought you should know what I miss a lot.

I miss the way (you, we) used to _____.

I just thought you should know that _____.

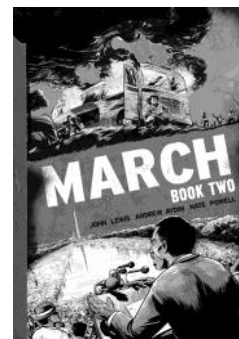
Use the space below to write your own poem.





BOOKS ACROSS THE MILES!

Free Minds long-distance book club
By Julia



Our next BAM book is March: Book Two by Congressman John Lewis, the second in his trilogy of graphic novels about his experiences during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. We're in the middle of mailing the books so you should get your copy in the next few weeks. If you aren't receiving books, let us know!

Here are some discussion questions to think about as you read March: Book Two.

1. How did music play a role in the Civil Rights Movement? Why did the Freedom Riders sing in Parchman Prison (see page 106)?
2. John Lewis had an important decision to make before he gave a speech at the March on Washington. What advice would you have given him? Do you think he made the right choice? (pages 154-157, 162-165)
3. How is racism different or the same in different places? Has racism changed over time?
4. How is the Black Lives Matter movement today similar or different from the Civil Rights Movement? What about other political issues or movements?

Here's what some of you had to say about the last BAM book, March: Book One:

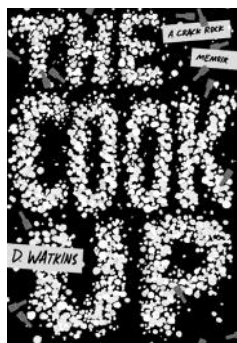
"I really enjoyed the "March 1 & 2" comic. They were amazing and truly depict how far we have come as a people. It was very inspiring to say the least." - LW

"I got John Lewis's book "March" yesterday. I loved it. Can't wait to read part 2. John Lewis is an inspiration and a role model...I love John Lewis's love for the chickens and especially his love for God and humanity. John Lewis was and still is a straight up soldier. I would have loved to grow up on a farm like him minus the segregation part. He is a true example of leadership. He also is living proof of how God works. Him, Gandhi, MLK, and a lot others and you... Whenever you think you strong and a man or a woman because you able to hurt somebody, see if that strength could out match John Lewis and the others at them diners or on that bridge in Selma, or MLK marching in protest with bricks and everything else being thrown at him and others. Or knowing that it was a strong possibility that he would die if he gave that speech but yet still went anyway. Ultimate sacrifice." - R

What do you think? We want to hear from you!

WHAT THE YOUNG'UNS ARE READING

By Kelli



We just started The Cook Up: A Crack Rock Memoir written by a young man named D. Watkins. D. grew up in East Baltimore with his older brother Bip, a successful drug-dealer. Though he idolized his brother and wanted to be in the streets with him, D. followed Bip's orders, staying in the house studying and getting good grades. It was his senior year when D. received acceptance letters from several colleges, including Georgetown University. He could hardly wait to tell Bip. That same day, a friend pounded on the front door screaming and crying, yelling that Bip was dead. This begins D's devastatingly difficult journey. Should he go to college as his brother had wanted so much? Or should he follow in Bip's own footsteps and take over the crack and heroin business he had left behind? The young guys on the juvenile unit love this gritty true life story already.

NEXT ISSUE'S THEME: History

The hit Broadway musical, "Hamilton," tells the story of the life of American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton through hip hop and R&B and has made history "new" again! Tell us about your personal history, the history of our city or what time in history you would go back to if you could. Is learning about history important or should we focus on the future? DC is constantly changing—how do you want our city to be remembered?

Until then, stay strong and KEEP YOUR MIND FREE!