

February 2013

Vol. 2, Issue I

# Free minds Connect

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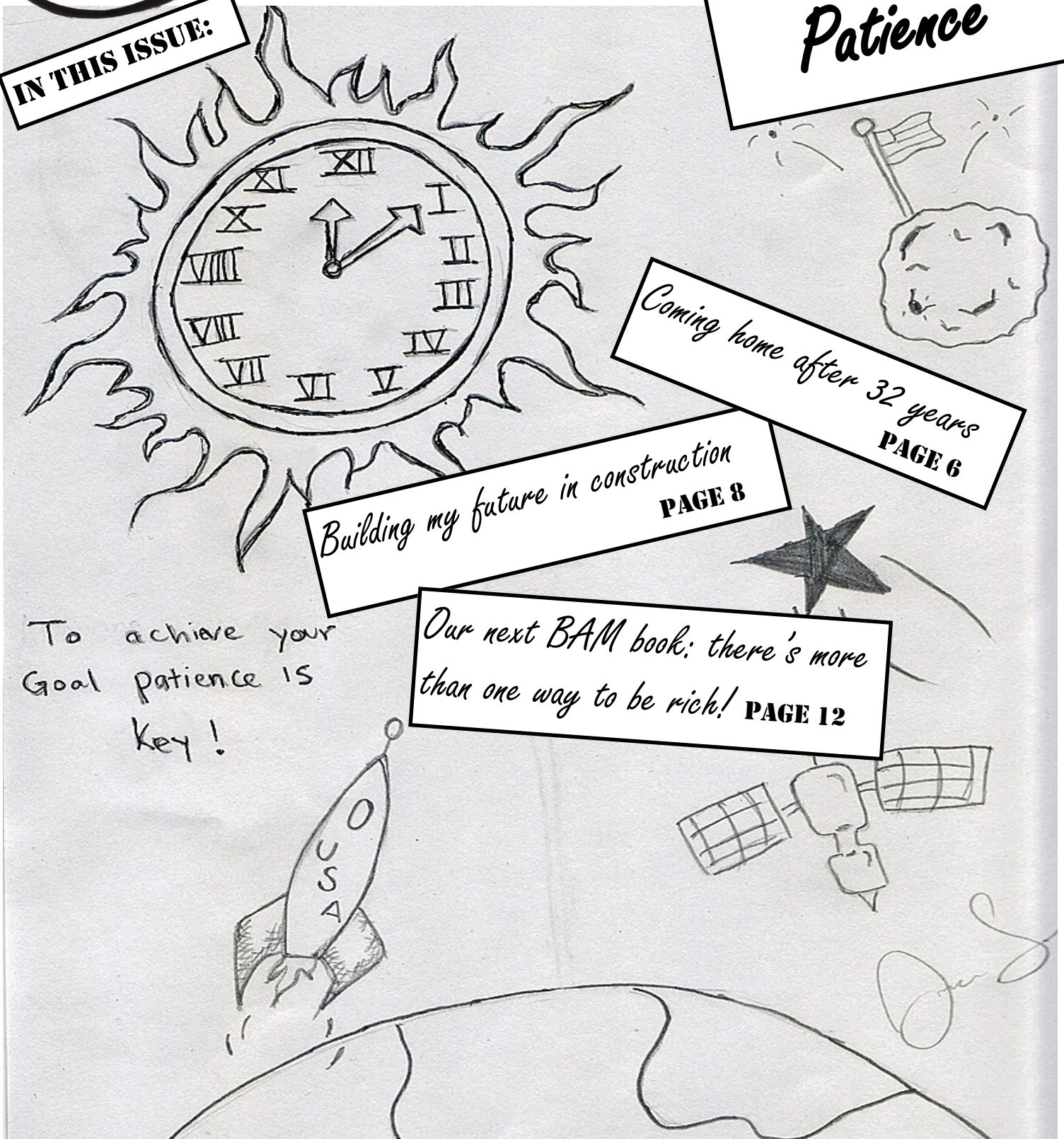
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To achieve your  
Goal patience is  
key!







Is brought to you by...

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*Want to be on this list?  
Write or draw some-  
thing and send it to us!*

*Free Minds Book Club  
2201 P Street NW  
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202-758-0829*

**Next Issue's  
Theme:**

**Trust**

*Do you think trust is im-  
portant? Who do you  
trust with your secrets?  
Can you ever rebuild  
trust if it's been broken?*

## TALK-BACK WITH TARA

### Greetings and Salutations Free Minds members!

I hope 2013 is bringing you inspiration and creativity already. It certainly has for Free Minds headquarters. We've continued running On the Same Page events and even spoke to a high school spoken word team! These amazing young poets talked with our reentry members about how to perform your poem in front of an audience and how to make someone connect with your story and struggle. And last week was our Reentry Apprenticeship! Two reentry members worked in our office all week, learning office and interview skills and giving back to the Free Minds community.

We hope you felt refreshed after reading our "green" renewal issue of the Connect. I know I did, which was really good because I needed it to tackle this issue's theme of patience! Patience has always been a struggle for me and I think I misunderstood its meaning for a long time. I thought it meant you just had to accept things and not work to change them, which I thought was a cop out and way too passive for me. But no! Here are some definitions I dug up that really clarified it all, and now I get why my mom always told me, "Tara, patience is a something you need to find, so keep searching!" :)

- The ability to wait for a long time without becoming annoyed or upset.
- The ability to remain calm and not become annoyed when dealing with problems or with difficult people.
- The ability to give attention to something for a long time without becoming bored or losing interest.
- The capacity to endure what is difficult or disagreeable without complaining.

I especially love thinking about patience as self-control or discipline. I've had a hard time with it, but wow does it make life a lot smoother.

Right now, our Free Minds dog, Diego, is patiently waiting by my feet, hoping to go out for a much needed walk, so I'll be quick.

The Book Order has gone out!! Hurray! You should be getting your care packages of books soon. Let us know what you think and what books you like and don't like. We love your book requests but we do have a book

policy here at Free Minds, so we can't always send all of the books that you request (ones that glorify violence or mistreatment of women, for example). While we don't believe in censoring and we encourage you to read different types of books, we also feel that our role as an organization is to "free your mind" and provide books that will help you do that.

- Keep those letters coming! Know that I read all of your letters and love them, but just can't always respond, so our wonderful team will write you back. This way you also get to know many more people. Your network will grow, and that helps you go far in life.

- If we accidentally type something incorrectly in your poems, tell us and we will change it. We want to honor your work! We're only human too, and we make mistakes, so we're happy to correct them. We need to give our Write Night volunteers lots of poems to read, so please keep writing!

Finally, remember this is **your** newsletter. Let us know what you think, send us your ideas and ways we can improve it.

"Good things come to those who wait"

Until next time,

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

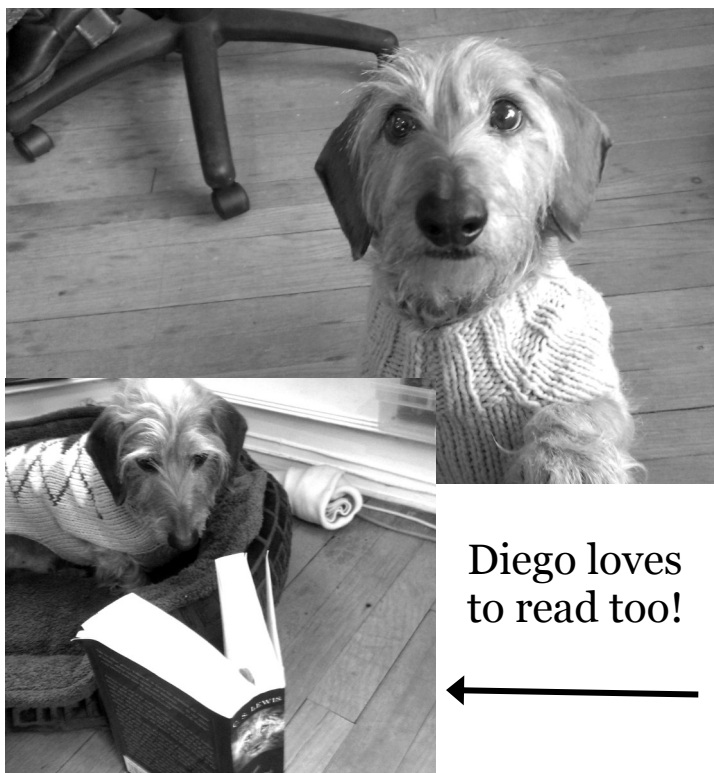
Tara

### DID YOU KNOW?

Free Minds has started a partnership with a community chorus called Carpe Diem. Carpe Diem is a Latin phrase that means "seize the day." We've been collaborating with them to create a fantastic musical performance that will happen in March, and some of our very own Free Minds reentry members will be singing and rapping with them. They even made an original song based on a Free Minds poem! We'll keep you updated on how the performance goes. In the meantime, keep sending us poems and lyrics! You never know what your words might inspire!



# Meet Diego, our Free Minds office dog!



Diego loves  
to read too!



## JG's Words of Wisdom: Dealing With "Forced Patience"

*By JG, FM Member in Federal Prison*

What's up Free Minds? Patience. This is something we should all know about, right? Especially those of us that are still in. but something I've learned over the years of my incarceration is that it isn't always as simple as that. I've learned that there's such thing as "forced patience," at least that's what I like to call it. Anybody who's been locked up has experienced this. We're forced to be patient because we have no choice in the matter. On most prison compounds there's controlled movements every hour on the hour you have approximately 10 minutes to get from one destination to the next and once you're there you're stuck for an hour. If you're in a high or medium you lock down every night at 9:45, and if something pops off you might have to be locked down. You have no choice but to sit there in that cell until

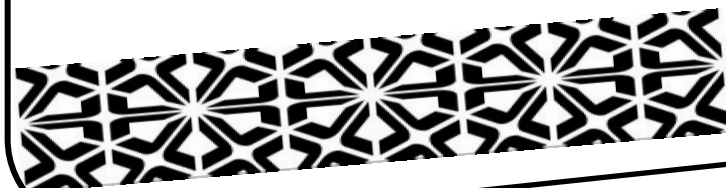
someone comes and unlocks the door. Even in this controlled environment a lot of dudes still don't learn how to be patient, I'm still working on it myself. But I think that perhaps the biggest factor in this is that we like to buck the system in any way possible, partly because we're simply rebellious, and partly because this just isn't a natural environment. And I'm certainly not suggesting that bucking is wrong, what I am saying is that since and/or if you're locked up you might as well take whatever good can come from this situation, and buck the rest. All the situations we're presented with in prison are perfect opportunities to practice patience, because we'll surely need it when we get back out there in the world. Until next time, Peace and Love.

# Patience

*By DM, FM Member in Federal Prison*

Patience, patience, patience  
At one point in time I used to hate it  
The frustration it brings and all the waiting  
For something that you feel you're entitled to  
Let's not talk about coming home looking for a job  
Wasting time when you can look for someone sweet to rob  
The stick in the dirt thing about it is  
You can get a job in jail faster than you being in the streets  
(My bad, my mind drifted off somewhere else)

But the flipside to the first eight lines  
Is that, in fact, it's good to have patience  
Experiencing the hardship once you've done made it  
Turnin' smiles into frowns  
When people thought you was faking  
And stood firm on what you wanted to accomplish  
With two feet on the pavement  
And before I end this poem forgive me for being direct  
But how much PATIENCE we would've had  
If the fiscal cliff would've came into effect





# THE WRITE WAY

## Improving the Blank Page

By Mary, a Free Minds Friend

Hey Free Minds, Julia here with Writing Tips and Techniques! This month, we've got a great column from a long-time friend of Free Minds, Mary. Mary is a talented writer and today she's sharing her wisdom with this article about how to be patient with writing. I hope you enjoy it! Write to us and let us know what you'd like to see on this page in the future. Do you have writing tips to share? Do you have questions you'd like answered? We want to hear from you!

Hello Free Minds members, poets, and friends! I've been a supporter of Free Minds since 2009 and I teach college-level creative writing classes. I was thrilled when Tara asked me to do a column about writing. So here goes!

As you know, this month's theme is patience. To be honest, I don't tend to think of myself as a patient person. But as I've grown older, I've come to better understand what patience is, and what it isn't. One thing's for sure: patience doesn't mean sitting around doing nothing while you wait for something to happen. As far as writing is concerned, patience means working and thinking and writing **relentlessly**, even if all you do is produce a mess. Patience means taking that mess, and then working even harder with it. But it also means having faith that eventually some amazing, powerful language will emerge – that is, as long as you are patient. We often put pen to paper and want to create something wonderful right away. But that's rarely the way writing happens. Sometimes, yes, we're inspired and the perfect sequence of words flows smoothly right from the pen. But even then, we usually have to add to it, develop it, or make changes. Being patient with our writing is about persistence and perseverance.

So here's a challenge: try writing some poetry about your own experiences with patience. For example, maybe you've had situations when you've tried to be patient. What happened? Or maybe looking back now you realize there were times when you should have been more patient. Maybe you can write about aspects of your life where you'd like to become more patient.

If the topic of patience doesn't work for you, you can always write a poem about writing poetry! I want to end by sharing one of my favorite poems about poetry. If you have requests or suggestions for next month's column let me know. Until then, peace.

## Young Poets

Nicanor Parra Sandoval (Chile, 1914- )

Write as you will  
In whatever style you like  
Too much blood has run under the bridge  
To go on believing  
That only one road is right.  
In poetry everything is permitted.  
With only this condition of course,  
You have to improve the blank page.



## PATIENCE WORD SEARCH

E	Y	S	N	E	D	N	X	U	E	A	Y	W	L	Z
J	C	I	L	S	L	I	Q	C	I	A	T	R	O	B
W	H	N	K	A	L	X	N	U	M	P	I	L	K	F
C	H	C	E	S	O	E	I	W	Z	Q	N	Z	P	Y
L	V	T	P	T	I	G	I	S	H	I	U	G	Y	D
T	K	M	W	T	S	K	C	O	L	C	T	O	H	M
E	Y	E	A	A	A	I	I	R	N	T	R	H	L	O
T	U	P	O	R	I	J	S	T	V	F	O	M	V	K
H	U	M	I	L	I	T	Y	R	U	I	P	I	H	B
Y	D	Q	M	S	B	W	I	T	E	O	P	N	B	X
W	K	L	I	E	Z	H	U	N	G	P	O	D	Q	W
K	A	Y	P	M	W	R	Y	U	G	V	G	F	B	B
C	U	L	D	I	E	X	E	T	G	U	Z	U	A	O
U	K	V	D	T	G	P	U	Y	W	U	E	L	D	V
V	P	L	G	R	G	F	V	H	E	E	B	Y	V	T

CALM, CLOCK, FUTURE, GOALS, HUMILITY, MINDFUL,  
OPPORTUNITY, PATIENCE, PERSISTENCE, TIME, WAITING



# Staff Picks WHAT WE'RE READING IN THE FREE MINDS OFFICE

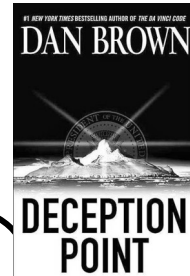
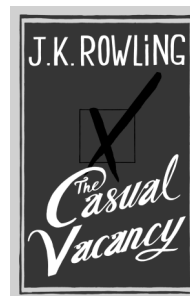
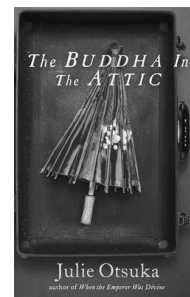
**Tara**—*Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankel. This is one of my all time favorite books that I first read as a teenager after I studied the Holocaust. It's a memoir from psychiatrist Victor Frankel about how he survived unspeakable horror in the Nazi concentration camps which killed his parents, brother and pregnant wife. Even after that, he still found meaning in life. Frankel writes that we are never left with nothing as long as we have the freedom to choose how we respond to every situation. This is so powerful!

**Heather**—*Deception Point* by Dan Brown. The novel focuses on NASA's newest discovery in the Arctic Circle; a meteorite that may prove the existence of life outside of Earth. But there are many politicians who would like to hide this discovery from the public. Brown reveals how politics and science are more closely related than we all think.

**Sarah**—*The Casual Vacancy* by JK Rowling. This is the first "adult" book by JK Rowling, the same author who wrote the Harry Potter series. It's about a man named Barry Fairbrother who dies unexpectedly in his 40s. After Barry dies, the small English town where he lived is left in shock. But the town is not all it seems and soon there is a big scandal over who will fill Barry's council seat. I still think nothing can beat the original Harry Potter books, but this is still a great read with interesting characters!

**Joe**—*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. This is one of my all-time favorite books. It's both extremely funny and incredibly moving. It's the story of a young boy whose dad dies in the World Trade Center on 9/11 and how he learns to deal with his grief. After he finds a mysterious key in his dad's old closet, he decides to set out on a mission to find out what it unlocks. If you've ever lost someone close to you, this is a great book to read that explores how we can find hope even while we're struggling to move on.

**Julia**—*The Buddha in the Attic* by Julie Otsuka. It's a beautiful and tragic book about a group of women who came to the USA from Japan in the 1920s. They were looking for a better future, but found mostly hardship. It's wonderfully written and I learned a lot from this novel!



## Saving animal species from prison

By Zac, Free Minds Intern

Nice to meet you, Free Minds! I'm Zac and I'm a new Free Minds Intern. I'm a sophomore in college in DC right now and I'm excited to finish school so I can get a job. College is taking up a lot of my time and money, but it's worth it because I'm learning so much. Patience is so important, because it's really easy to get distracted from your goals especially when they are so difficult. I'm majoring in Public Communication and minoring in African American studies. My career goal is to work to reduce gang violence through education and helping people access jobs. I know in order to make the impact that I want to make, I need to learn as much as I can.

I'm also from Chicago and I love sports. I am a huge Chicago Bears, Bulls, and Cubs fan. Speaking of patience, the Cubs haven't won the World Series since 1908 and they still get 40,000 people to go to every game. In a way, I'm glad they haven't won in almost 105 years. It's going to feel that much better when they do win the World Series. The struggle will make the success that much sweeter.

I also wanted to share something I thought you might

find interesting and maybe can implement where you're at. The Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) is a program where inmates in Washington State are not only learning about the environment, but can help save different endangered species such as the Oregon spotted frog and the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. These species are almost extinct because of how humans have polluted their environment.

But at the prison they are breeding these animals to keep the species alive.

I think it's really cool that even though inmates are confined by the walls of the jail, they can have such an enormous and positive impact on the world beyond those walls. While not every prison has a sustainability program like that, there are many things you can do to help out the environment. Writing on both sides of your notebook is an easy way to save trees. Also ask at your prison if they have recycling because recycling your papers, aluminum, plastic, and newspapers is another way to help out the earth. See if you can bring a project like this to your facility.





# An Exercise in Patience: Coming Home after 32 Years

By William, Community Change Agent

Hi Free Minds members,

I've heard it said that, "Patience is a virtue." Well my brothers and sisters consider this...I come by way of the very same highways and byways as you yourself are currently experiencing. Throughout my transitional process of leaving the confines of life from Behind the Wall (42 months ago) I have embraced the attitude of PATIENCE. I myself spent roughly 32 years in over 17 different institutions across the USA. I want to share with you a glimpse of my reality from both inside and out.

As I served my 30 Year to Life sentence, I did so living life on my own individual terms. I pretty much did my time without ever exercising much patience, be it good, bad or indifferent. Looking back over my earlier periods of incarceration today, I can clearly see that if I would've applied some patience before I just acted out in several instances, I would have probably come home a whole lot sooner. After spending my 20's, 30's, 40's and then the early 50's locked up, I actually started changing the way that I live my life. Out went the quick reactions that I was used to doing, and then I started pausing long enough to think about my situations. In doing so, something new was brought into being—options. Through the exercise of patience, my life ultimately changed for the better.

When I received parole I decided that I would come back out into society and redirect my path to help some of our inner city youths. I wanted to give them a heads up on the pit-falls of the street lifestyle that I formerly lived. I also

encourage them to not be like me and to exercise patience as they move onward with their life in pursuit of their desired happiness. I am involved in a positive endeavor out in our community through the National Homecomers Academy (NHA). NHA is a group of formerly incarcerated men who have come together to try and help enhance the quality of life in our community through several acts of human kindness.

We all strive to bring a positive change to the same community that we once took so much away from. Because of our collective desire to do right we are being recognized as Community Change Agents. We are currently providing a number of services to the underserved and under-resourced communities east of the river in Washington, DC. We've also reached out into the DC Public School system in an attempt to try and encourage our younger generation to embrace education and continue their course in preparation to take their future places in society.

Hopefully each and every one of you who will one day be blessed to return back into society will do so with an attitude similar to that of the members of the National Homecomers Academy. The key to successfully reintegrating back into the fabric of your former community will lie in you exercising a lot of patience. So here's to you and PATIENCE!

Good Luck,  
William

## TO SURVIVE I MUST DEMONSTRATE PATIENCE EVERY DAY

By DR, FM Member in Federal Prison

Free Mind Family! Patience means: the fact, quality, or habit of being patient – out of the Webster's dictionary! But my definition is: you must know yourself first. To be able to build the mind strong, & be able to wait on the outcome you looking for... because without a strong mind & good determination, you cannot practice patience! So to me, it means more than what the dictionary say. This is a lifestyle that I live every day. And to survive I must demonstrate patience every day. We as people meet adversity daily. And in order to make it to the next step, we must show patience & know the self first!!!!

With patience we can overcome anything.

PS I came in peace & I leave in love....

## Some things are not to be rushed

By TH, Free Minds member in Federal Prison

### Patience

Something one should want to have in this life!  
Cause when you don't have patience  
People tend to make bad decisions and mistakes  
That sometimes cost them dearly

Some things are not to be rushed  
Like chess  
A person makes a move  
And expects the opponent to rush his move  
Thinking he saw something  
That was there before the move  
And was check-mated  
Which cost him the game

All I'm sayin' is  
Patience is a virtue  
And if one has it  
Good things shall come eventually!





# In the News

By FM Friend John

## POLITICS

The second term of President Barack Obama began with a weekend-long inauguration celebration in Washington. As always, the city filled up with visitors for the festivities. The luckiest ones got to attend the official Inaugural Ball, which featured performances by Stevie Wonder, Alicia Keys, John Legend, Smokey Robinson and Usher. The ceremony was held on Martin Luther King Day, and the president made note of the great civil rights leader in his address to the country:

*"We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still...just as it guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone; to hear a King proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth."*

The president and Congress have returned to work, and will likely spend most of their time and political work on two main issues in 2013:

1) The economy: agreeing on a reasonable amount of government spending, job creation, and how to handle the growing debt of the federal government.

2) Gun control and gun violence: A school shooting in Connecticut, which left 20 young children dead, has sparked a national discussion on guns. Should we ban certain types of high-powered guns? How can we make sure guns are only sold to people who will be responsible owners? Advocates for juvenile offenders are very interested in making sure that urban gun violence, often committed with handguns, is also taken into consideration during this discussion.

Another interesting development since Obama's inauguration is that the military has lifted its ban on allowing females soldiers to serve in combat roles. All four of the armed services must have a plan to include women in combat by May 15. What do you think about this change?

## SPORTS

The NFL season ended in early February, and D.C.-area rival the Baltimore Ravens have won their second Super Bowl! The Ravens narrowly defeated the San Francisco 49ers, 34-31, in a crazy game that saw the Ravens jump out to an early lead and nearly cough all of it back up after a half-hour delay caused by a power outage in the stadium!

In Washington, the city waits nervously as Robert Griffin III rehabs from surgery on his knee. Meanwhile, there was some cause for celebration on Super Bowl week for 'Skins' fans as RGIII took home the award for Offensive Rookie of the Year.

In basketball, the Washington Wizards began the season

with a dismal 12-game losing streak. Things have improved significantly with the return of star guard John Wall and center Nene, who guided them to seven wins in January. That's three more wins than the Wizards had in the first two months of the season combined!

## ENTERTAINMENT

It's awards month! The Grammy Awards for music took place on February 10. Album of the Year went to Mumford and Sons for their album *Babel*. Gotye won Record of the Year for his hit single "Somebody That I Used to Know," and the band "fun." won Best New Artist and Song of the Year. Best Rap Album went to Drake for *Take Care*, and Frank Ocean took home the award for Best Urban Contemporary Album. Jay-Z and Kanye West won two separate awards for their song "N\*\*\*\*s in Paris," and Miguel won Best R&B Song for his hit "Adorn."

Soon it will be the Oscars, the award ceremony for best movies of the year. Quvenzhané Wallis, one of the nominees for Best Actress, is only 10 years old! She is nominated for her role in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, in which she plays a young girl named Hushpuppy who stays with her father as neighbors flee a dangerous storm. The nominees for Best Movie this year are: *Amour*, *Argo*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Django Unchained*, *Les Misérables*, *Life of Pi*, *Lincoln*, *Silver Linings Playbook*, and *Zero Dark Thirty*.

## QUOTE-I-VATOR!

As a child I thought if someone jumped me it would result in me murdering or mutilating a man. But as a man I am not a killer. I'm an artist and a modern person. Forgiveness, albeit difficult, is wisdom. Peace, albeit trite, is what I want in my short life. Peace.

—Frank Ocean

Practice

Always

To

Intelligently

Enjoy

New

Challenges

Everyday

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant. —Robert Louis Stevenson

Have patience. All things are difficult before they become easy. —Saadi



## CAREER CORNER

### REENTRY PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER:

#### STRIVE DC

(202) 587-0807  
715 I Street NE, Washington, DC, 20002

STRIVE DC offers three programs for unemployed residents of DC. The first program is called the **STRIVE job readiness program**, which gives job training and helps participants find job placement. The program also offers two years of support services. The second program is the **STRIVE For Success GED program** that helps DC residents ages 16-25 to prepare for and earn their GED at a fast pace. **Career Goals**, the third and final program, teaches men seeking employment how to dress in a professional manner and provides interview and professional clothing for free.

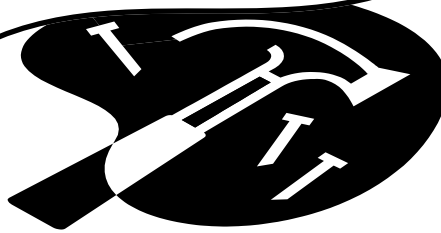
#### DOES

(202) 724-7000  
4058 Minnesota Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20019

The Department of Employment Services (DOES) offers several services that might be helpful when you come home. **The American Job Center** offers career counseling, job search assistance, computer skills, connections with employers, resume and interviewing skills, referrals to programs, access to computers, telephones and fax machines, and many other services. It's a one-stop shop for job seekers. **Project Empowerment** offers a three week training course that teaches job readiness skills followed by an employment opportunity for up to six months. **The Office of Youth Programs (OYP)** runs workforce development programs for DC youth ages 14-24. They offer occupation skills training, academic enrichment, work experience, and life skills training. Each of these programs will give you the skills that you need to successfully reenter the workforce and initiate the first steps in your reentry process.

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!

### Career Spotlight:



### *From Prison to Construction to Engineering*

*By Terrelle, FM Member Home in the Community*

Hi, I'm Terrelle, and I've been a Free Minds member since 2006. I was locked up for 7 years in Maryland and I came home last year. When I came home I went through a carpentry apprenticeship that I found out about online. I scored high on an aptitude test, so the instructor told me he was going to make some phone calls for me to help me out. I dressed appropriately and carried myself well, so I think that's why the instructor liked me—I was smart and polite and presented myself well.

The instructor gave a call to someone he knew at Clark Construction Center and referred me there. I went there and filled out the paperwork and got the job. I came in as a carpenter but I am the type of person who is always looking for the next position up, you know, to step up the career ladder. I met an engineer and started talking with him and liked what he was doing. I went home and googled "Engineering School" and started going to college, so that's what I'm doing now.

Now I do field engineering for Clark Construction. I'm not working right now because of the weather; they have more work in Spring and Summer, so that's something you need to be prepared for. I also had to go through training before I started working. You can't just show up at a construction site and just start working—for example, you can't use a power saw without knowing how first because you'd cut your hand off. So you have to be patient and go through the right training first.

Another thing about construction is that it starts early. You wake up at 4:45 AM and you have to make sure you eat before going to work because otherwise you get too tired from lifting things. Doing this taught me how to eat healthy because I have to have a good meal before I do construction. Work starts at 6 AM on the dot and you can't be late. Usually the sun hasn't even risen yet. You have to be there even earlier than 6 because there's a safety meeting before work. At the meeting your boss tells you what you're doing that day on the site and what the deadline is to accomplish things. You have to prepare for a long day, because sometime you work overtime.

You have to work hard; it's like being in the army. If they think you're lazy they'll fire you or send you somewhere you don't want to go. The way to get respect in the construction industry is showing you're a hard worker. They want people who are dependable and reliable, who they know will do a good job. It's not easy—your body and feet will hurt. But it's a good workout and a good job. You feel accomplished when you build something.



Give us a call when you get out: 202-758-0829





I call this "Organic" and this is my small example of Patience. Looking at a blank piece of paper and having a 2-inch pencil that's broken and then starting to draw.  
—MH, FM Member in Federal Prison

## Patience is mental

By AJ, FM Member in Federal Prison

Whats good Free Minds this is A.J. and I wanna give y'all a vision of my opinion on wat patience is. First of all I wanna wish everyone well and hope everybody is doing okay and keeping their heads up and their minds free, because trust me I know it gets hard sometimes. Anyway patience to me is all a mind thing. Yeah it's mental. And I know y'all is saying how can patience be a mental thing. Well let me explain myself. First off everything we do or say. It's first a thought then it's an action. So it comes from your mind. Well in being patient you have to first think about waiting for something so it can be an action, you see. They put quotes on the attribute, "patience is a virtue."

Freeing your mind is always a virtue. So that's the key to it all. (Try the steps in the last connect) Keep your mind unclogged and free and you can learn to be patient, because "if you can think it, you can do it." That's so true.

Well I hope y'all got some game out of this. Your Free Mind partner A.J.

## IT'S YOUR FREEDOM OR YOUR LIFE: THE FIRST THREE MONTHS HOME

An interview with Free Minds reentry member EM

**Free Minds:** How long have you been back home?

**EM:** 3 months.

**Free Minds:** What's the hardest thing you experienced coming home?

**EM:** The hardest thing I experienced was realizing I'm free and that I had my freedom back. [In prison] you're so used to waking up at 4:30 and going outside at 6:30. When you're in there so long you become institutionalized. I still wake up early in the morning, expecting to see my cellie.

**Free Minds:** Is it hard being back in your neighborhood? How do you deal with the temptation of the streets?

**EM:** The first person I seen when I came home was my brother. He gave me \$500 and told me to stay away from trouble. But when I came home after I saw my parole officer it was like the whole Southeast side knew I was home. They all said "come holla at me, come ride with me right quick." Once you see all of that you realize you can get money real fast again. But even the smallest thing can get you sent back. Mistaken identity had me at the jail for 8 months. You gonna have to choose. It's your freedom or your life. So to stay out of trouble. my whole thing was that I had to holla at my brother instead. Now I call before I come around the neighborhood so I don't get caught up again. I try not to be around there too much because being around everything tempts you. It's like a fresh wound that Neosporin just won't heal; it's addictive. I only see my old crew when they come to my house.

**Free Minds:** How do you deal with money?

**EM:** I been home 3 months now and I just finally had my first interview. It's hard having a record and there's so many people applying to that one job. You get impatient, and your mind's gonna wander. It gets restless and stressful because you're trying so hard but it feels like you're not being acknowledged. But when you stay persistent with it that's when you start seeing results. I'm not going to go back to hustling for a couple dollars and risk my whole life. It's not worth it. If you get a 9 to 5 that you work hard for, it's much better. You feel better because you're earning the money. You definitely have to be patient [looking for a job]. You have to let it come to you. I believe that patience is the best thing. Sometimes it's hard. Being too patient with jobs they're going to overlook you, but you also have to wait for opportunities. It's a balance.

# AROUND THE WORLD...

A Universe of Possibility: Coming Home From Traveling the World

By Juliana, Foreign Correspondent

What's good, Free Minds? As you may have read in the last issue of the Connect, from India I traveled to Argentina, where I spent a month living in Buenos Aires, the capital city. And now, you ask, what exotic destination have I flown to? What far-off and wondrous land?

Washington DC, my friends.

That's right, I'm home. And after extensive research, I can definitively tell you that there is no place in the world like the city where we're from.

It's good to be back—to see family and friends, to catch up with the FM office (Tara has a dog in the office now! Did you know that?) and also to walk on familiar streets. For six months I was a stranger everywhere. Now it feels so good to walk down the street and simply know where I'm going. But it's also challenging to come back- I think for me it's more difficult than the big adventures. Returning home, I can see more clearly how the choices we make become our lives. And I think that is always in front of us, wherever we are.

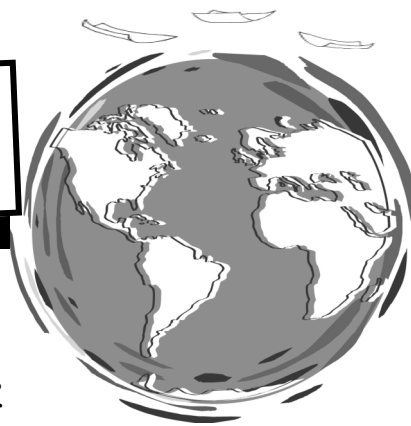
In Buenos Aires, I made contact with a group similar to FM and went with them into the Women's Federal Prison there. It was very different than the prisons I've known in

the US- for one thing, the inmates don't wear uniforms. Mothers at this prison are also allowed to keep their children with them until the kids are four- so there are little ones running around the prison as well. (What do you think about this? Is it better for kids to be with their moms? I'd like to hear your thoughts.) I shared with the participants there about FM and you all and they said, "Wow. They must feel so alone." They said to let you all know that people all over the world are thinking of you and working on their own journeys of transformation.

I could talk all day but I have to end this here. You've heard people say that all rivers lead to the sea? To me, that means we can be on very different roads but we're still traveling together. I hope you know that you all inspire me every day. Try to find those "universes of possibility" in the corners that you can- Keep reading, keep writing, and keep your minds free!

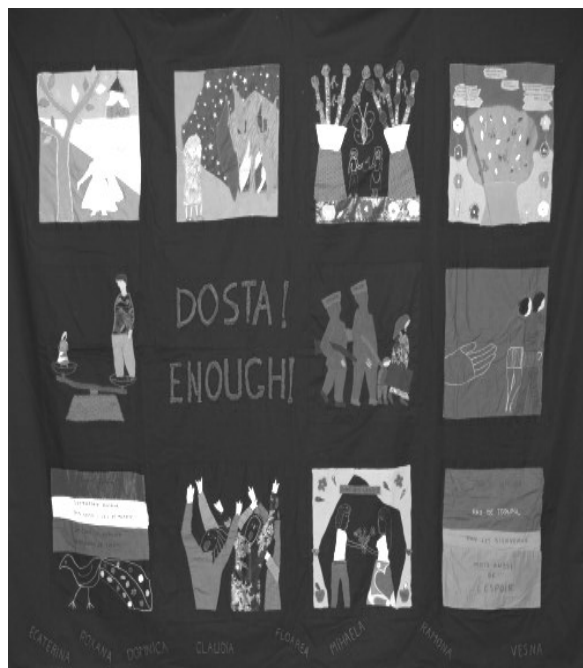
Until next time,

JuJu



## Free Minds Neighbors: The Advocacy Project

By Sarah, Connect Editor-in-chief



Hi FM Members! So you know how you guys send us letters to the Free Minds office? Well you may not know, but the building where we work is full of other interesting non-profit organizations that are doing great things in the DC community and all over the world. One of those organizations is our next-door neighbor, *The Advocacy Project*! The Advocacy Project is a great non-profit that gives a voice to marginalized communities around the world. They send graduate students called "Peace Fellows" to locations all over the world from Uganda to Morocco to Nepal. These Peace Fellows help communities that have been mistreated or abused to take action and advocate for their rights. One project that The Advocacy Project is working on right now is their "Quilt Project," where people around the world create large blankets filled with images that tell their stories. Many people the Advocacy Project works with have been tortured, raped, or have had family members murdered. So for these communities, making quilts is a way to get their voices heard and express things they normally keep inside. Sounds kind of like the experience of writing poetry, doesn't it? Check out this quilt to the left, which was made by Roma people who were persecuted in Europe. The Roma are an ethnic group who travel from place to place, and are also known as gypsies. Because they are a minority group, they are often discriminated against and treated poorly in the places they travel.



Give us a call when you get out: 202-758-0829

## AROUND THE WORLD...



## COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: *Colombia*

My name is Juliet, and I'm currently in Colombia, where I've been traveling for the past two months. I'm living in the city of Barranquilla, where my (American) boyfriend is living and teaching English at a University. I've truly enjoyed getting a taste of this big and diverse country. Colombia is located at the northwest corner of South America, and in the past fifty years the country has experienced a lot of violence and drug trafficking. While these problems still exist, the situation has improved greatly. Cities like Bogota, Medellin, and Cali are now centers of urban design, tourism, and Salsa dancing.

Here on the Caribbean coast, people are currently gearing up for Carnaval, a giant festival before the beginning of Lent. Barranquilla hosts the second largest Carnaval in the world (Rio De Janero in Brazil has the largest one!) Hundreds of thousands of people take part in celebrations that include traditional dances, costumes, music, and parades.

In a recent survey of 54 countries in the world, Colombia was rated the happiest country on earth. So despite the fact that people often still associate Colombia with its dangerous past, Colombians are, in fact, very happy people. My travels have so far been limited to the coast of the country, but I've found it to be a very lively, colorful, friendly place to be (and hot!).

Colombia is also one of the world's most biodiverse countries, with thousands of different plant and animal species. You can travel here from the high Andes Mountains, to the Amazon rainforest, to the ocean, to the *La Guajira* Desert. Colombia is home to the famous author Gabriel Garcia Marquez, but today most people are probably more familiar with its other famous cultural contributions, the pop star Shakira, and TV show actress Sofia Vergara.



## *A Thousand Kisses Deep*

*Spoken Poem by Leonard Cohen*

*Recommended by PGM,  
FM Member in Federal Prison*

I loved you when you opened  
Like a lily to the heat.  
I'm just another snowman  
Standing in the rain and sleet,  
Who loved you with his frozen love  
His second-hand physique -  
With all he is, and all he was  
A thousand kisses deep.

## **At times life throws us curve balls**

*By AL, FM Member in Federal Prison*

What's good Free Minds? Before I get into this next theme, "patience," I would like to give 2 shout outs to Kelli & Tara because I am grateful to ever be friends with you both. 2003 was the year I met 2 women that helped me change my life 4ever, because they showed me that it's strangers that could be your angels on this earth. Thank you!!!

Patience is a lifelong lesson that can never be depreciated. For example, Free Minds (Movement) started with very little people on its staff, very little people interested in being a part of Free Minds Book Club. Therefore it took taking a chance by the staff & members so that something could evolve from nothing or for better words out of nowhere.

Each year up until now there had to be patience because at times life throws us curve balls and no matter what we must still take our best swing with intentions of hitting a grand slam. Now almost 10 years later and with more patience than we wanted to have. This movement is becoming a beautiful tree of nature that's here to stay for a loooooong time. There is nothing in this world that can be accomplished without patience. Trust me, it's highly permissible. Peace and love my Free Minds family.



# BOOKS ACROSS THE MILES!

By Kelli, Free Minds Co-Founder

Dear Free Minds,

I'm thinking of all of you in this new year. And speaking of "new"...it's time to share the title of our new BAM! book. By the time you read this, some of you may have already received it.

Hold on, though! Before I get to that, let's talk about our last book: The Autobiography of Malcolm X. Recently, I spoke with Decario, who arrived at DC Jail and joined Free Minds in 2004. At the time, he had never read a book before. Decario just recently came home and has not only read hundreds of books, but is now a college student! Nine years ago, this is something Decario never would have dreamed possible. When I asked what book had the most powerful impact upon him, he said:

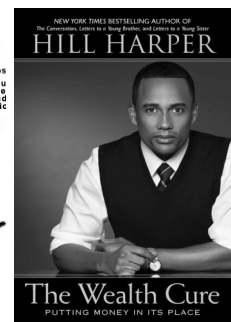
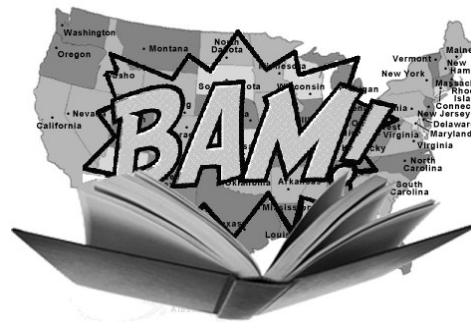
*"Without a doubt, it would have to be The Autobiography of Malcolm X. I LOVE that book! It gave me an entirely new perspective about myself, my people and my history. It changed the way I think about life."*

You might recall that the suggestion to read Malcolm X came from Free Minds member Jonas. Here are his thoughts:

*"I read that joint at least twice...I loved how the book was so relatable, despite the fact that it was written so long ago. Malcolm was from the streets, and any real street dude could relate to his life before and during prison. So many of the things that were applicable back in the 60's are still applicable today, as far as the struggle of black people is concerned. When Malcolm X mentions all the books that had profound effects on him in prison, it made me want to read those same books! To see how he transformed from your average young thug to the monumental figure that he became was inspirational for me. He articulated so well the negative attitude that he got from most white people. While it wasn't on the same level, I have had my own similar experience. When I was locked up in Wisconsin a lot of those white people kinda assumed that the black kids were just slow, and when we would prove otherwise they would become all shocked and surprised. It was insulting because it could be the simplest of tasks. I would be like, 'seriously?' So it's still going on! That is absolutely one of my favorite books."*

And finally, from Trevon:

*"Thank you x 3 for the amazing books you all sent. The Autobiography of Malcolm X just might be my all-time favorite book now. His overall struggle through life at a time when things were much worse than now should be proof to any young or old black male and female that all things are*



*possible if you put your mind to it, despite your economic background or mistakes made in your life."*

Like Jonas, I've actually read this book several times. To me, the most compelling thing about it is the story of transformation. Malcolm X's life is living proof of the power of education. When he was ignorant, his actions and behavior reflected that. When he began to acquire knowledge though, his eyes opened so much that his entire world looked different to him. I love the image of Malcolm X sitting in a prison cell, reading the dictionary from front to back--there was just no way they could keep this man down!

IDEA: What do you think of rating the BAM! books? We could do a five stars rating system. I will average the scores and tell you what the book was rated by all of Free Minds members! One star means, "I hate this stinky book and I can't believe you sent it to me" and five stars means "OMG! This book changed my life forever!" What do you think???

Okay, so on to our new title. Do you guys remember the book Letters to a Young Brother, By Hill Harper? Well his newest book is called The Wealth Cure: Putting Money in Its Place. It's gotten amazing reviews everywhere and is not just about getting rich, but about how to make your life richer. I talked to Hill Harper's publicist a few weeks ago and she said that he might be interested in coming to visit the guys at the jail. Maybe if we all write to him after we read his book, we can make that happen!

I hope that you like the book, and that you find it helpful to the process of sorting out what matters most to you in your life. When you have finished reading, write back with your reviews (including how many stars you give it!) and answer these questions:

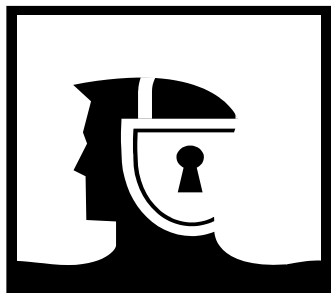
Harper says: "If you are making any decision solely based on money, then it is the wrong decision." What are your individual motivations?

How strong of a factor is money in determining your future goals, or career aspirations?

How did this book change the way you think about money?

That's all for now...Stay strong, keep reading and writing and keep your minds free :)

Your friend always, Kelli



## NEXT ISSUE'S THEME: TRUST

Do you think trust is important? Why or why not? Who do you trust with your secrets? Can you ever rebuild trust if it's been broken? Send us your thoughts, poems, and drawings, and we'll put them in the next issue of the Connect!