



Freedom Inside

A National Newsletter For Prisoners
Based on the CWG Material
Issue # 9 October 2002

Words! Words! Words!

Ah words! How often do I misuse them?

It was pointed out to me this month that the subtitle of this newsletter, as it appeared before, contained a word that some of you could find offensive. That word is 'inmates'.

I now know that though 'prisoner' is a neutral term, 'inmate' is not.

I apologize for its use. It was done out of ignorance.

Now that I know better, I will do better. Isn't that how life goes?

This led me to think (there she goes again, right?) about how of-

ten words do not convey the meaning we intend.

What can I do about it? What is my responsibility in how

"What is my responsibility in how people receive my words?"

people receive my words?

Those of you who have come to know me will realize that I meant no offense by using that word. But does that end the matter?

As with everything else, I believe each individual has to answer that for him- or herself.

So here is my answer. My intent is to never deliberately hurt anyone. My intent is to shine a loving light on everyone I meet.

It follows, then, that when I learn some of my words have hurt, I need to make sure that my message is clear.

In order to do that with this newsletter I chose to change the wording of its subtitle.

There is a big push to be politically correct these days and it seems there is a growing list of terms to avoid. Some people complain they can't keep track of them all.

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I believe words are nothing but tools, very imprecise ones at that. We use these tools to connect with each other. Sometimes the connection will be clear, sometimes it will need work.

I like connecting with people. I use words all the time to do that. I also use laughter, non-verbal communication, looks, gestures, anything that works. And I use Freedom Inside.

So if my message is misunderstood, I have no problem with changing it.

I hope you'll have no problem with my mistakes along the way.

In peace,

Janine

In God's Shadow

I am incarcerated in an Alabama prison for women. As Bo Lozoff says, "I am a seeker of truth on a spiritual journey." My journey has led me to you guys and CWG, through another inmate, friend, and mentor here with me.

When I first came across the book I was totally overwhelmed, in a good way, because I just knew that there were other people out

there who believed in a loving God that would not send you straight to hell.

My journey has not been easy, I'm serving 19 years for petty, property crimes. In reality I am serving for the harsh things that I never got caught doing. I came to prison when I was 23 and I just turned 30 so, emotionally, I grew up here and grew up in the right

way. I found people like you who are so willing to give pieces of themselves to restore the pieces of us that were taken by the harshness of life. You who were "born lucky" yet realized that others were not and needed the gentle boost of courage and confidence that you could give, I say, "Thanks".

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THE SKEPTIC'S CORNER

So, there I was, in the Visitation Room, trying again to find the strength to say good-bye to my loved ones. It felt as if I'd swallowed a hook and the Department of Corrections was pulling my guts out with a tractor. I wanted sooo much to curl up in a little ball and stow-away in their pockets as they left—not so much to escape this prison, but simply to stay with them a while longer.

For me, the single, most difficult aspect of prison life is being away from my family.

Almost all of you know what I'm talking about. It's that gut-wrenching, pit-of-the-stomach, falling-out-of-an-airplane, the-world's-about-to-end panic just before the end of those oh-so-short bits of time we spend with our people.

A few minutes later, I had made it back to my cell. But my mind and my heart had not. They were still back in Visitation, refusing to accept that our time was up. In fact, the whole rest of the day I was a useless, mindless blob of lonely Jell-O.

Part of me knows that, had I not been visited, I wouldn't have felt so bad afterward. And that part of me wished that I hadn't.

I guess what I'm saying is that I have a problem. After years of incarceration, it hasn't gotten any better—worse, actually. And I suspect that many of you suffer as I do when we must again be separated from those we care about. This is a problem that affects many people—not just prisoners— but prisoners experience it in a way that no one else ever will.

Are you still wondering why I'm telling you this? It's because We've been provided with a wonderful opportunity through *Freedom Inside* to help each other solve these types of problems. We can share with each other what we know, what we've learned, and what we believe.

I am just barely beginning to understand the CWG

material and philosophy. I've read some of the books and pondered many of the concepts, but it hasn't all taken hold yet in my puny little brain. And of course, my skeptical nature has played a part, too.

I want to know what You think of my problem (or Our problem). How can I apply CWG principles to my Visitation situation to lessen the pain? How do You deal with it? What am I doing (or not doing) that keeps me from internal content?

When my people leave, and leave me behind, I'm not free, inside or out! I'm mentally caged. I'm trapped in my own prison of despair and I don't know how to deal with it.

I have no other CWG readers in here with me. As far as I know, I'm the only one in this prison. But through *Freedom Inside*, I know I am not alone. I know there are others out there, and this is the only way I can contact You.

Through *Freedom Inside*, I'm trying to tap into Your wisdom, and I know You won't let me down. I know You'll help me achieve freedom...inside.

Respect,
J.M., the Skeptic
Arizona

P.S. I'd like to thank each and every one of You who've responded to my past writings. You've all helped me move toward the next grandest version of Who I Really Am.

Although all of You who wrote touched me in very distinct, beautiful ways, I'd especially like to thank J.F. of Florida, who re-minded Us that this is all an illusion and "You can learn a lot from a dummy." I hear ya, brother!

In God's Shadow

(continued from page 1)

I have only received two newsletters so far and I enjoy them. There are times when I feel like everything is getting to me and that I can't handle it all. Then I'll read about others and feel a sense of gratitude for my difficulties. In your newsletter, you mentioned that you choose to live in gratitude for your life as it is now and with loving kindness toward others. You questioned if that could be your destiny. I do believe that it is a Universal destiny, we are all one and

put here for each other and God. So whose job would it be? I don't believe that God would just assign that job to one person, or a group of people. Even the people with the hard hearts school me on gratitude, the killers, the rapists, the mentally insane, without their ever knowing it, they fill me with gratitude. In turn I love them. So, like you said, "Whatever the truth of the matter is, this choice brings me joy in my sorrow, happiness in my pain". It works for me too.

It is well with my soul to know you and experience this life with

you and all of the brothers and sisters who read your newsletter. On my darkest journey, I saw no light because I was not looking within, I was looking out. I saw my shadow instead of the bigger picture. The bigger picture was and is of course, the shadow I was walking in. The shadow of God. The shadow that carried the love and power that I thought I had not. The things that harmed were of my own crea-

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In God's Shadow

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tion. The things that I created that

Out of a Fog

“Stop.” The voice was pure and there was absolutely no mistaking the clear feminine enunciation.

Hal obeyed. He turned around but there was nobody there. He turned completely and bodily, three hundred and sixty degrees and still, he was alone. He even looked up, as if maybe someone, some attractive woman of, say, thirty or so, may have been hovering above his head. There still was no one there he could see. There was also no way someone could be hiding from Hal and playing a joke on him because Hal was practically in the middle of nowhere, had been walking along the asphalt road that led from the house he had lived in all his life and shared with his younger brother to the Edwards’ place and on to the highway that connected his little world to the world of all those other people, the ones who seemed to almost never see him and, when he almost forced one of them to see him, by giving them money for something he wanted to buy, looked at him with a sort of look that was definitely different from how they looked at his younger brother or,

even, at one another.

Anyway, Hal was walking on his road, his sneakers dirty with the miles he walked in them every day, and the voice had clearly told him to stop. But, there was nobody there. The nearest tree was so far off the road Hal would’ve had to shout to be heard by anyone that far away so he knew she couldn’t be hiding in or behind it.

“Aren’t you going to say something to me, Hal?” “Where you at?” Hal answered, using his usual hesitant, almost stuttering speech that still sounded like the voice of a much younger male. In all of his remembered life, Hal had heard voices in his head and had learned not to pay attention to them unless they were singing and he could sing along with them but this voice was definitely not one of those voices. This voice was next to him. Actually, since Hal possessed perfect hearing in both ears, he could locate this voice just to his right side, within easy reach.

“I’m here...,” she replied and, as Hal reached out to his right to see if he could touch her, “...here.” This time she spoke from Hal’s left side

but much closer, like her lips were almost touching his ear as she spoke.

Hal had never been a boy, or a man, to be afraid of anything. To the horror of those around him, he was always doing things like picking up a live and rattling rattlesnake and playing with it but now, he was beginning to experience, along with his inquisitiveness, the emotion that any of the rest of the world would call “fear”.

“Don’t be afraid, Hal. I haven’t made myself known to you to have you afraid of me.”

And, suddenly, the unaccustomed emotion left Hal as the voice, still just to his left, was soothing and reminded him of someone far back before his memory, a woman who would hold the little boy Hal tightly to her and sing soft tunes. Hal, on this sunny autumn afternoon was comforted as if he was, once again, that little boy, Hal. Still, the voice was not the same voice as that singing voice in his vision.

“Come, now. We can walk and we can talk to one another.”

Her voice led Hal to resume walking in the direction he had already

been going. “Who are you?”, he asked that which was alongside him.

“I am”, she replied. “I am all that you are, all that you have been, all you will every be or even want to be and all that you see, hear, smell, feel or even taste. I am That as you are That.”

And Hal knew. Instantly, Hal had a memory. Something that had been locked in his mind was unleashed and Hal knew! The world around him had meaning and he knew it was just as he wanted it to be. He clearly remembered that night, a lifetime before, he, his little brother, Tommie, and their parents had been riding in the car when something came out of nowhere and changed his life to a life of fog he just never could see through again, until now, when the fog was lifted.

Hal knew.

S.D.
Texas

Dearest S.D.

What a beautiful story! Thank you so much for sharing it with us. I hope it will brighten other people's day as much as it did mine.

could have killed me were encased in the bigger shadow of protection. I only wish I could teach everyone that revelation. That I could reach out and hold the world by the hand and point and say, “Look, do you see that other shadow? That is the shadow of God, you’re not alone!” If I have to tell one individual at a time, that is living in gratitude. I am living in my “Destiny” and so are you. There should be no ques-

tion about it.

Once again thank you for your openness and your desire to see us free.

C.S.
Alabama

Lovely C.S.

Thank you so much for your kind words about this newsletter and its

mission. I decided to help you spread your message by printing it here. There are a few comments I would like to make about your letter. I have included them in this issue's Mail Bag where I have answered many comments about past issues. In loving peace, Janine



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*Thank you,
Janine Gutierrez*

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