



# Freedom Inside

A National Newsletter For Prisoners  
Based on the CwG Material  
Issue # 26 March 2006

## To Pray Or Not To Pray: That Is The Question

**Freedom Inside**  
**B.P. 315**  
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**Canada J0W 1L0**

*Many of us have been taught to pray. Most of us have not done so very regularly. I know I haven't.*

*Or have I? I think we may pray more than we realize.*

*Isn't it a prayer when something good happens or something bad has been averted and I say, "Thank God"?*

*Or when I'm nervous or frightened and find myself thinking, "Help me"?*

*Yes, of course those are prayers. But what do they say about who I believe I am? About what I believe the Universe is all about?*

*How often are we asked to pray for a cure for someone's terrible disease? How often do we hear, when*

*someone is cured, "God is good"? Does that mean that when a person dies, God is bad?*

*Does it mean that when we cannot avert disaster, God is cruel?*

*"...what kind of prayer would I say if I consciously chose to Be the Highest Version of Who I Can Be?"*

*punished, God is unjust?*

*What do my prayers say about who I choose to be? Or better yet, what kind of prayer would I say if I consciously chose to Be the Highest Version of Who I Can Be? What then would I pray for?*

*Would I pray to be healthier,*

*richer, happier, or that my loved ones be healthier, richer, happier?*

*Wouldn't these prayers state, in fact, that Life as it is showing up is NOT OKAY?*

*If I believe, and I do, that Life and Love are synonymous and that I am a spiritual being living here in this body to have a human experience, isn't it then up to me to make this experience as full of life and love as I can?*

*My purpose in this world is NOT to change this world. My purpose is to experience my Self. In order to do that, I need people around me to mirror who I am choosing to be but they do not decide who I choose to be. They do not even influence it, unless I give over my power to do so. They are only a way for me to see myself more clearly, to experience my Self.*

*(continued on page 2)*

## And the crowd went wild

By BEN DOBBIN, AP

GREECE, N.Y. (Feb. 24)

Jason McElwain had done everything he was asked to do for the Greece Athena High School basketball team - keep the stats, run the clock, hand out water bottles.

That all changed last week for the student manager of the team in the final home game of the season. The 17-year-

old senior, who is autistic and usually sits on the bench in a white shirt and black tie, put on a uniform and entered the game with his team way ahead.

McElwain proceeded to hit six 3-point shots, finished with 20 points and was carried off the court on his teammates' shoulders.

"I ended my career on the right note,"

he told The Associated Press by phone Thursday. "I was really hotter than a pistol!"

In recent days, McElwain's phone has hardly stopped ringing. When his family went out for a meal, he was mobbed by well-wishers. A neighborhood boy came by to get a basketball autographed.

*(continued on page 2)*

**To Pray Or Not To Pray: That Is the Question**

*(continued from page 1)*

*I believe I am here to deal with the situations that show up to the best of my ability, with the best of me.*

*Which leads me to my prayer. What could I possibly ask of God, of Life, of Love if I believe I am here of my own free will, to experience Life exactly as it is showing up?*

*I can pray God for help in remembering who I am.*

*I can pray God for the strength to be the best I am regardless of what is showing up.*

*I can pray God for unconditional acceptance of what is.*

*I can pray God because being in touch with God, with Life, with Love is the very best I can possibly be.*

*Life is good, not because it is perfect but because it brings us the perfect circumstances, the perfect opportunities to show up as the next version of our very best.*

*God IS good!*

*In Love,  
Janine*

## *A Prayer*

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war;  
For we know that You have made the world in a way  
That man must find his own path to peace  
Within himself and with his neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end starvation;  
For You have already given us the resources  
With which to feed the entire world  
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,  
To root out prejudice;  
For You have already given us eyes  
With which to see the good in all men  
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end despair;  
For You have already given us the power  
To clear away slums and to give hope  
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease;  
For You have already given us great minds with which  
To search out cures and healing,  
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to You instead, O God,  
For strength, determination, and willpower,  
To do instead of just to pray,  
To become instead of merely to wish.

Jack Riemer,  
*Likrat Shabbat*

### **And the Crowd Went Wild (continued from page 1)**

McElwain, 5-foot-6, was considered too small to make the junior varsity, so he signed on as team manager. He took up the same role with the varsity, doing anything to stay near the sport he loves. Coach Jim Johnson was impressed with his dedication, and thought about suiting up McElwain for the home finale.

His performance was jaw-dropping: 20 points in four minutes, making 6-of-10 3-point shots. The crowd went wild.

"It was as touching as any moment I have ever had in sports," Johnson told the Daily Messenger of Canandaigua.

McElwain didn't begin

speaking until he was 5. He lacked social skills but things got easier as he got older. He found many friends and made his way through school in this Rochester suburb, although many of his classes were limited to a half-dozen students. And he found basketball.

On the varsity, he never misses practice and is a jack-of-all-trades.

"And he is happy to do it," Johnson said. "He is such a great help and is well-liked by everyone on the team."

Even though McElwain was in uniform for the Feb. 15 game, there was no guarantee he would play - Athena was battling for a division title. The fans, however, came prepared. One section of

students held up signs bearing his nickname "J-MAC" and cutouts of his face placed on Popsicle sticks.

The Trojans opened a large lead against the team from the nearby Spencerport. With four minutes left, McElwain took the court to deafening cheers.

The ball came to him almost right away. His 3-point shot sailed completely off course, and the coach wondered if he made the wrong move. McElwain then missed a layup. Yet his father, David, was unruffled.

"The thing about Jason is he isn't afraid of anything," he told the newspaper. "He doesn't care what people think about him. He is his own

person."

On the next trip down the floor, McElwain got the ball again. This time he stroked a 3, all net.

He was just warming up.

"As soon as the first shot went in that's when I started to get going," he said.

On the next attempt, he got another 3-pointer. Then another, and another. In fact, he would have made one more 3, but his foot was on the line, so he had to settle for 2 points. Greece Athena won 79-43, and pandemonium reigned. McElwain signed autographs, posed for pictures and was hoisted by his teammates.

I am 44 years old, and it has been almost 10 years since I left prison and reentered society. In that time I got married to a kind and generous woman and traveled throughout Europe and Mexico. My opinions on criminal justice issues have been sought on CNN, Court TV, and *The O'Reilly Factor*. My op-eds on politics, religion, and other cultural issues have appeared in prominent national newspapers. But even though I'm far away from my past in many ways, I can still vividly recall the fears I had about reintegrating into society. And they make me remember my early lessons in real heroism.

The first test of my freedom came unexpectedly, after I had been out of prison for just a month. I was sitting outside a sidewalk café with my girlfriend. As we ordered, a man walked into the middle of traffic and posed as if he were hanging on a cross. His clothes were tattered and filthy, his hair disheveled. He screamed obscenities at the honking cars. After a few minutes, the man walked over to the café and sat down 20 feet from me. He stared at me and said: "Stupid dirty fuckin' Mexicans. Smelly burrito-eating motherfuckers. Go back to where you came from."

I don't know why he sin-

gled me out, but the barrage of insults awakened something primal in me. Within seconds my fantasies about what I should do to that man turned frantic and bloody.

This wasn't the first time I had had that response. Not even close. Ever since I was 16, when I stabbed my father in the neck during a particularly vicious beating he was giving me, in which he broke my rib and elbow, I'd been a violent person. I'd felt helpless after years of my father's abuse, but in that one moment of retaliation, I learned that I could control situations with superior, calculated violence. I would go on to stab other men.

So with that "vengeance is mine" ethic, it was easy for me to think about picking up my knife from the café table and stabbing that man. I was on the brink of ruining my life, and I realized that I was at the place, the fatal and perilous moment, that every parolee gets to, when you have to decide if you stay out or go back in.

I already had two strikes against me, so if I attacked that man, I would go to prison for the rest of my life.

I was revving emotionally high and felt the urgent need to act. But I didn't act. Instead, I talked myself down. I reminded myself that I wanted to be a new man,

and that I no longer subscribed to the violent ethic of payback. I told myself that I would simply ask the manager to escort the vagrant out of the restaurant if he became more aggressive. I told my girlfriend that it pained me to sit there and do nothing, but that's what I intended to do.

And there's the rub. I was committing the bravest act of my new free life, but because it was an absence of action, occurring in my interior world, nobody could witness it.

When we are kids, we develop an understanding of heroism through observing what people do. We watch cartoon superheroes crush meteors headed for Earth. Firefighters are heroic because they run into burning buildings to save lives. Heroism is equated with action.

With more than 600,000 people released from prison every year, reentry into society is a serious national issue. And for parolees, the measure of heroism is different than it is for the "action hero". We are heroic when we *don't* act. When we don't pick up the heroin-filled needle again. When we pick up a gun. Or, for me, when I didn't stab that man who disrespected me with a shower of the most vile, racist terms.

We are heroes because we are acting against our every instinct to repeat

what we have always done. It takes great courage to act against our biography, to act against the defeatist story we have always told ourselves about our lives: That we are losers. That life hasn't given us the breaks. We are heroes because we have altered our ability to imagine what can be.

In prison I imagined becoming the kind of person who would not surrender to violence. That decision occurred gradually, in the landscape of my soul. And so the parolee's heroism is silent, without pomp or pageantry. That is the beauty of reintegrating into society and completing parole: Time reveals to us what we couldn't have known about ourselves in the beginning.

By Joe Loya  
In *California Lawyer*

Dear Joe:

*It is difficult to imagine greater heroism than that of the silent hero, the unknown, unsung hero.*

*I know your story will inspire many of our readers.*

*Thank you for allowing us to publish it here.*

Love,  
Janine

*Wherever a new disagreement emerges so does new hope for enlightenment, on both sides of the fence.*

*Oh joy,  
The Universe*

*from www.tut.com*

**And the Crowd Went Wild**  
*(continued from page 2)*

The Trojans begin sectional play Saturday and McElwain will be on the bench again, wearing his usual shirt and tie.

It doesn't bother him. More important, he said, is "trying to win a sectional title for the team."  
McElwain will soon be done with high school basketball, then enroll in business management this fall at Monroe Community College.

"I'll go on to college and I'll try to hoop there," he said. "I just love it, it's one of the greatest sports in the world."

*Wisdom*

Ask your self, 'what do I need to learn from this' and you will take the first step on the path to freedom. Each difficult experience that you have is a mirror of a fear in your life - discover the fear and the reason for its existence and it has no power over you and then ceases to exist unless you allow it to. The more dire the situation, the greater your need to learn and appreciate its lesson and heal that aspect of your belief system.

Once you acknowledge that you created the reality, it loses its power because it is the paradigm that you built, not the result of someone else's actions against you. Then you can love it free and move on to create other realities that are more peaceful, joyful and fulfilling. No matter what the circumstance, if you can learn to love it, you can free yourself from it and move forward on your journey.

Do you have a poem that reflects the message in Freedom Inside? If so, send it in, it just may be chosen for a future

**POETRY CORNER**

**POETRY CORNER**

**Keep the Faith**

If problems are knocking at your door,  
And you can't take 'em anymore?  
Eliminate the seeds of doubt from your mind  
Faith is going to keep you in line...  
Because it appeals to your feelings and intellect  
Without wonder, astound or neglect  
So be careful about what you choose to believe;  
Often, we are deceived  
Between fear & hope, there's a powerful light;  
Faith is known to deep you tight...  
So visualize your goals through your heart,  
They're going to bring about a new start...  
Because everything else is irrelevant,  
If your faith does not insult your intelligence...  
So do not look at this picture through a dream,  
Because faith my friend, is unseen...  
Through patience, perseverance, trust and gratitude  
You now have the power to move the multitude...  
And the only thing that's left,  
Is your faith in GOD and yourself...

**Keep The Faith**  
D.R.  
MI

**The Truth**

Some people say, that we're born into sin.  
I'm here to tell you, you're just being born again.  
Life is a process, we're all here to create.  
Always be love, and never be hate.  
If you follow your highest thought,  
And that thought is joy.  
Only truth to yourself and others will you employ  
The undeniable truth is that we are all one.  
You and I and everything, Holy Ghost, Father and Son  
So Be The Truth, The Light, and The Way  
Let this be your guidance, every day  
Don't take it from me, listen to your soul's voice inside  
You and I and God, we are One,  
From this you can't hide  
Be the grandest vision and version of who you really are  
If you live your life this way in evolution you will go far  
So Be The Truth, The Light, and The Way  
Let this be your guidance every day  
Some people say if you don't live right, you'll go to hell.  
I say if you don't live love, you just might as well  
I don't believe in the Devil, or Eternal Fire, for what it's worth  
But I believe in Heaven, and you can make it right here on Earth  
These are all the tools you need, to be one with God and then  
You can make your life the way you wish,  
Again and again, and again and again.  
So Be The Truth, The Light, and The Way.  
Let this be your guidance, every day.

By KC  
Kentucky



## Answer to ...And Justice For All On Injustice

**« What does Justice mean ? What does living in a world where Justice prevails look like? Feel like? What would I do if I were in charge of the world (I just love that idea!!!) and could remake the Justice System to suit my ideals?»**

(*Freedom Inside*, issue 25, Jan. 2006)

Isn't this in fact true for us all? I'm sure that most adults (kids, too) have at one time or another thought, "If I was King of the world things would be a lot different!" When I stop to think about it, this is the job of EGO (a.k.a. inner child, false self, personality, etc); as an individuated aspect of the whole the EGO is constantly trying to be the one in control. The EGO does remember the oneness but believes that all parts of the whole should have the same perspective, because EGO does not remember that free will, not the EGO's will, reigns throughout the universe.

But Ego is a product of fear developed for the purpose of self-preservation with the sponsoring thought "I must survive!" If the EGO believes that it has been or is being threatened it responds in a protective manner trying to restore its idea of order to the universe. In other words it seeks justice.

All justice systems in human history seek, by some means or measure, to get even with a supposed perpetrator. Most of us haven't really looked at one very basic truth: we still have the problems for which justice was sought in the first place. And therefore a logically thinking person might conclude that the justice system doesn't even come close to working to solving the problem; the system is dysfunctional in that regard. But it is also self sustaining in that it establishes polarities.

In order to have a justice system, such as here in the USA and many other countries, we have legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government, at all levels of government, all of which would be out of work were it not for the CONCEPT of right and wrong (I say concept because the idea of what is right and what is wrong varies greatly worldwide). The concepts of right and wrong are not facts except in the mind of the majority of the collective EGO and aren't, obviously, universally agreed upon principles. We are making up new laws every day via the legislative branch. We don't go to any great length to inform the public of these new laws. It should be obvious that all these changes in every jurisdiction are impossible to keep up with. And then we compound the problem by declaring that "Ignorance of the law is no

excuse!" So "right" and "wrong" are obviously not intrinsic values. Such confusion!

Consciously we say that we detest crime and therefore criminals. But superconsciously we understand that without the negative there wouldn't and couldn't be any positive; the game would end because there would be nothing remaining to be experienced and God and life would be complete. But the game is still afoot!! And all the while we are deciding who and what we are relative to the game and its many moves and players.

To take it a step further every person and collective has justified their actions in the moment; in that moment there is no "wrong" from the perspective of the EGO. And "right" becomes at that moment an absolute and not a relative term, which isn't possible in the realm of the relative, the realm of all possibilities except absoluteness. This is the EGO seeing only one perspective...its own. Even the term *Equity* boils down to getting even.

But all of this assumes life to be limited to two absolutes..."right" and "wrong". To say that the two terms are "absolute" relative to each other is in my estimation and oxymoron. One dictionary definition of absolute is "completeness", but if "right" is complete all by itself where then does the term "wrong" fit into the scheme of things? We may all agree that one of the most worn out phrases is "... the right thing."

But isn't the justice system basically a tool that the collective uses to express its preferences, its likes and dislikes with each side of the equation having opposite preferences, just as people's actions express their own likes and dislikes? As a child I learned to be forever mindful of the likes and dislikes of others or incur their wrath. Then one day I asked "What about me?" And that was the day that my conscious journey to awareness started.

Most of us are not yet ready to leave the illusion of physicality just yet because most of us are still asleep and are therefore unaware of who we really are. Those that are starting to awaken must make a loving choice to awaken the others by our shining example...The more the merrier.

And when, not if, we are all awakened we will find that the justice system and all of our other constructions were only the means of our awakening. But it seems for now that compassion for those still asleep is in order, while looking forward to the day when the human collective works together in harmony to create the world of our dreams...when we all know ourselves as Love and act accordingly. "All of life is but a tool in the evolution of the soul."

Healthy New Year, one and all...Love and Huggggs....

JT,  
Maryland

*Dear JT:*

*Lovely, lovely, lovely!*

*Yes, of course, our justice system, as everything else in this world of ours, is but a reflection of who we say we are and as such, a wonderful tool for growth.*

*Even the 'absolute' world we talk so much about is not 'real', not by any definition of the word as we know it. Even trying to understand the so-called absolute world does not make any sense since we would have to see it as separate and different from us and that would make it relative, wouldn't it?*

*I just need to make another comment on what you said. You write that we consciously "detest crime and therefore criminals". I do not believe that to be true, not of all people. I believe a great many of us can love even while disagreeing with some of the choices made. I think most of us do that a lot of the time.*

*That's the fun of all of us being so different while we are one. We can still love each other truly and deeply.*

*This relative world is 'absolutely' lovely, isn't it?*

Love,  
Janine

## Kenyan convicts give up lunch for famine relief

Sunday, January 1, 2006; Posted: 7:55 a.m. EST (12:55 GMT)

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) -- Thousands of prisoners skipped their annual New Year's lunch Sunday and instead sent the food to hundreds of thousands of Kenyans affected by food shortages, a senior prison official said.

Most of Kenya's estimated 50,000 prisoners gave up their ration of beans and stiff porridge made from corn on the day that President Mwai Kibaki declared the food shortages a national disaster in a bid to speed up relief efforts.

"In the next six months, up to 2.5 million of our people will be in need of famine relief. This represents close to 10 percent of the country's population," Kibaki said during new year celebrations. "To ensure that we have adequate interventions on the ground, I am declaring the famine a national disaster."

Prisoners wanted to help after watching images of starving Kenyans on TV,

reading about food shortages in newspapers and discussing the situation with visiting relatives and among themselves, said John Isaac Odongo, the commandant of Kenya's prison staff training college.

People detained in Kenya's 93 prisons "move about when they are taken to court and this is how the ideal of skipping a meal was spread," Odongo said.

"As human beings, they also feel like other Kenyans ... They asked themselves can they forgo one meal in a lifetime for the sake of other Kenyans? The answer was that will not even affect their health," Odongo said.

Initial estimates show that Kenya needs about \$153 million to provide emergency food to victims of drought. More money is needed to provide water to people and animals, education, health care, seeds to farmers in preparation for the next crop season and restocking livestock, Kibaki said. Officials are trying to determine how

much money would be saved in the prisons, Odongo said.

Convicts at the Naivasha Maximum Security Prison said the food shortages also affect their relatives.

"Those suffering out there are our brothers and sisters and we need them once we get out of this place," said One James Kamutu, who was sentenced to death.

Drought has also triggered food shortages in neighboring Ethiopia and Somalia, a country that has had no effective government since warlords overthrew dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1994.

More than 1 million Ethiopian cattle herders face extreme food shortages after the failure of rains that normally replenish water sources and sustain livestock through the dry season.

In anarchic Somalia, where about 2 million people need humanitarian aid, drought has affected its southern region,

### Answer to the article: Buddhism and the God-Idea

Dear Janine,

I had the opportunity to read the article titled "Buddhism and the God-Idea" in the November issue of *Freedom Inside*.

Having had the experience of studying with Therevada Buddhists monks at a temple in Illinois, and Zen Buddhists in Boise, Idaho, I have a bit different take on the God issue and Buddhism.

I would say most Buddhists would say "if you want to believe in God that's ok and if not, that's ok too." The understanding I have is that the Creator and creation are all one thing and some would call it God. The Christian Bible supports this in that "In the beginning there was God and God created all." Since there was only God, what did He create from unless from Himself (or Herself, or Itself).

The Bible says "First there was the

word and the word was God". Hindu creation theory had it that the Creator first thought, thought became sound (om) and all was manifested from that vibration. It's not all that different and scientifically speaking all things have vibrations because they are constantly in motion. Put any solid object under an electron microscope and you will see movement.

Buddhism does refer to other beings or deities that are not and never were human. In the Bardo Thodol (Tibetan Book of the Dead) they refer to both peaceful and wrathful deities. One might call them gods, demons, or angels and guardians.

The bible refers to angels, demons, and also other gods such as "Baal". All of these of course would also be a part of the creation and not the source of such. I would think that the Creator in this sense would be far beyond not only our ability for

communication but most likely our comprehension.

Having taught and studied yoga, practiced with Buddhists, Pagans and Christians, I would say the similarities far outweigh the differences. The one thing I do love about Buddhism is that it teaches not to believe in what you've found to be true. Be you Christian, Pagan, Buddhist, Muslim, or Hindu, I would say "meditate" The answers are within.

OM  
Shanti

MH  
Texas

*Thank you, MH.. I find it very meaningful that most of the world's religions agree on some very fundamental principles that they teach.*

*Meaningful and lovely,  
Janine*

*May you be blessed  
With all things good...  
May your joys, like the stars at night,  
Be too numerous to count.*

*May your victories  
Be more abundant  
Than all the grains of sand  
On all the beaches  
On all the oceans  
In all the world.*

*May lack and struggle  
Be always absent from your life  
And may beauty, order, and abundance  
Be your constant companions*

*May every pathway you choose  
Lead to that which is  
Pure and good and lovely.*

*May every doubt and fear  
Be replaced by a deep abiding trust  
As you behold evidence of  
A Higher Power all around you.*

*And when there is only darkness  
And the storms of life are closing in  
May the light at the core of your being  
Illuminate the world.*

*May you always be aware  
You are loved beyond measure  
And may you be willing  
To love unconditionally in return.*

*May you always feel protected and cradled  
In the arms of God  
Like the cherished child you are.*

*And when you are tempted to judge  
May you be reminded that we are all ONE  
And that every thought you think  
Reverberates across the universe  
Touching everyone and everything.*

*And when you are tempted to hold back  
May you be reminded that love flows best  
When it flows freely.  
And it is in giving  
That we receive the greatest gift.*

*May you always have music and laughter  
And may a rainbow follow every storm.  
May gladness wash away every disappointment  
May joy dissolve every sorrow  
And may love ease every pain.*

*May every wound bring wisdom,  
May every trial bring triumph,  
And with each passing day  
May you live more abundantly  
Than the day before.*

*May you be blessed.  
And may others be blessed by you.*

*This is my heartfelt wish for you*



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