

# Words of Fire

writings by and for prisoners  
published by the Chapel Hill Prison Books Collective  
issue 7, spring 2013



*Words of Fire* is a collection of prisoner writing and artwork. It is published by the Chapel Hill (Internationalist) Prison Books Collective.

We welcome submissions of essays, poetry, opinion pieces, and art work from prisoners.

*Words of Fire* only exists with your support! We'd like to thank everyone who submitted work featured in this issue.

**Mail submissions to:**

**Words of Fire  
Chapel Hill Prison Books Collective  
405 W. Franklin Street  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516**

Please include your name and location on all submissions so we can credit you.

About us: We are a Chapel Hill, NC-based anti-prison group that sends hundreds of books to prisoners in the South each month, maintains an extensive radical 'zine catalog, widely distributes a monthly poster promoting political prisoner support, and publishes prisoners' art and writing. <http://prisonbooks.info>

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## Introduction

Hello Friends and Comrades,

It has been an exciting and busy couple of years here at Prison Books! As usual, we've been sending out thousands of books around the Southeast and have actively expressed our solidarity with prison struggles. But a lot has happened since our last publication of Words of Fire in fall of 2010.

To start, we moved our collective to a new, larger space and now have the capacity for more volunteers and books. Recently we have been catching up on our backlog of letters thanks to all of the help from folks who donate books and those who come in to volunteer. We've also made an effort to increase awareness about our book program to more women's prisons and, as a result, have seen more and more letters from female comrades.

As for world news, the height of the Occupy movement in 2011 involved 951 cities and 82 countries. Occupy enabled people on all ends of the spectrum to experiment with collective, anarchist-based organizing. There were several building occupations throughout 2011— where people took over entire buildings to show their rejection of the capitalistic system that values property over people. Two of these occupations happened in North Carolina (Chapel Hill and Carrboro).

In Montreal, the demonstrations against government tuition hikes eventually merged with a local, annual anti-cop march that totaled 400,000 people. The local Occupy group of Bloomington, Indiana organized hundreds of people for an anti-prison noise demonstration. It is one of many examples of the ongoing momentum built around the anti-prison movement.

Acts of defiance within prisons have also gained a lot of attention over the past couple of years (including hunger strikes, sit-ins work strikes, etc). All of this is a helpful reminder that these are not isolated events but part of an ever-growing protest against state oppression.

In other news, Obama is going into his second presidential term. This year's inauguration had even more anti-government protests across the country than Obama's first inauguration—proving that more and more people are realizing that it doesn't matter if a Democrat or Republican is in the office when the whole system is corrupt, racist and capitalist.

As always, one of the main highlights of our year at Prison Books has been hearing from all of you, about your struggles and your efforts to make the most of an oppressive situation. Thank you for sending us your art and words and for continuing to organize collectively through reading groups and more.

With Love and Solidarity,  
The Internationalist Prison Books Collective  
Spring 2013

## Me, Us, and They

By T.A.S.  
Raleigh, NC

Everytime they move me, you hear shackles and chains  
they just trying to degrade me and make me ashamed

Everywhere we go they carry a stick  
little do they know I don't fear it.

They walk around with their handcuffs and mace  
talking shit behind my back while they smile in my face

They control when I sleep, eat, and shower  
Always letting it be known that they got the power

They dress us alike and make us look the same  
caring little for our feelings and ignoring our pain

You can't help but be hard and have a prison mentality  
their goal is to strip you of your individuality  
but I refuse to lay down and be a victim  
chewed up and spit out by their system

So I'm a stand tall and hold my head high  
do whatever I gotta do to maintain and get by

I realized they locked up my body, but not my mind you see  
that's why I can sit and write this convict poetry.

## My Nook

By M.B.  
Pearl, MS

If you looked into my memory you will find holes  
If you look through them you'd be looking through a purple haze at  
things you didn't want to see  
I thought your memories were stored in safety  
But here I sit  
In my memory nook  
Here you are again  
The good you  
Not the boozy or mean abusive you but, the loving, kind, sweet you  
I miss you  
I feel you  
Yet here I am firey but not freezing cold with untold fury  
Years have past  
I see the light  
The sky is white  
Snow is coming  
The leaves on the trees are just now turning colors  
Well, back on the shelf in my memory nook you go

## Dark Forrest

By J.C.S.  
Leakesville, MS

I would like to bring to the attention of the citizens of the United States. Those who are left to listen to the truth. I am just a man of my own social order because I didn't think I was still a citizen myself anymore, and you wouldn't or won't be for long either. You see it everywhere. The end of our rights as we know them. If you make a mistake, like most people do these days, you are going to end up being a function of the State, instead of the State being a function for you.



Inside these walls we are slaves for our Great State. Outside these walls we are slaves to this State. The Poor stay poor and unless you have money, justice is never served. Everything is under control of a mean Government. Control is made by corrupt politicians that vote themselves into office and only the rich have a say-so in this state. Control is established by police force and from there you are in the grip of the County Municipal court system that takes all of your money. You can't go anywhere which means nowhere with-

out being questioned by the cops. They want your money and if they can't get that, next they want your body.

This State is like the Borg on Star Trek. Resistance is futile!

I feel lost inside this system. Every right that I see, I automatically think the reverse of it because that's what it is. You are never innocent anymore.

The state likes to call it probable cause now. Why souls cry out to the whole.

I ask this: Why should I have to fight the system for my rights? Isn't a Right something guaranteed? Doesn't a better person make a better whole?

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## A Bad Day

By J.S.M.  
WCC7

Lost, but not forgotten...  
Desperate, but still fighten...  
    young, but feel old...  
Apart, but yet whole...  
    Mad and so depressed,  
Confused... "you know the rest"

## Paradise Lost

By J.H.  
Meridian, MS

I compelled to explain how I feel when I watch the flight of birds...  
You might expect to search my mind within this shaken cocktail of  
words..  
Never stirred..  
Far beyond the misconception of love, hate and all things consid-  
ered I am...  
The twice forgotten bird of paradise, plucked clean and whittled  
down, beyond broken, only a man...  
Haunting the sacred edges of sanity begging at the temple's golden  
gate...  
I have no love affair with this gravity nor shall I embrace this  
twisted fate..  
Applause from beyond the clouds, the beautiful beat of wings I  
embrace...  
Countless wild flowers mock in a plethora of color and textures  
blossoming before my down casted face...  
Identity unknown within an ill-fitting human suit of flesh and  
jointed bone  
Against an azure backdrop birds rest upon a wire preening and I  
drop a solitary tear and dream of home...

## Blaow! ... Can You Hear Me Now?

By C.W.  
Raleigh, NC

I communicate  
More effectively  
With my fists  
I can only seem  
To get my point across  
With sharp objects  
I am better understood  
More clearly heard  
When a trigger is pulled  
I've learned violence  
Is a motivational speaker  
While peace  
Is a boring monotone  
If I ask I am ignored  
If I beg I am scorned  
If I say nothing I am oppressed  
If I curse I am paid attention to.

## It's the Law

By M.B.  
Pearl, MS

He heard what he wanted  
Interpreted the situation to suit himself  
There are hundreds of examples of abuse  
So they think  
The imagined slights  
The phantom lovers—all contributed grounds for their anger  
They are all excuses to lash out,  
To hurt, to belittle, to punish, to pound, to bruise...  
It all has to do with the ego and self  
Evil thoughts planted by Satan  
I have more concern for justice  
Than I'll ever have for law  
There is no self-defense  
So it's ok to let them hurt us, maim us, scar us...  
Pound, hurt and bruise us  
To drive us insane, maybe even kill us...  
It's the law, they lie, so we hide it  
Live in fear or maybe  
Try to kill ourselves to escape all the pain  
It's the law  
Don't worry about my death  
The State will take care of that

## You Say You Love Me

By A.C.  
Greenwood, MS

U will never know what a letter can mean, till you've been where I've been and seen what I've seen.

I live in a world behind 4 walls. Where nobody sees and nobody calls. Sometimes I sleep then wake up alarmed, thinking my family and loved ones have all been harmed, just dreams, I admit as I come to my senses.

As I look out the window at the chain linked fences, I anxiously await "mail call." Each day I stand and wait, "none 4-u" they say, not a letter, a note, or even a card. When nobody writes it makes my time hard, so why don't u take this time 2 write me a letter, 2 u it's not much, but it will make me feel better, you will never know what a letter can mean, till you've been where I've been, seen what I've seen.

## Untitled

By A.A.  
Windsor, NC

I manifest my thoughts through pen and paper about my old days  
I look back at the things that happen to me like I pressed replay  
I seen my mother die through polaroids I saw the pain in her eyes  
But I couldn't hear her voice

Now all I have is picture perfect memories  
And if I die behind these walls, tell me who gone remember me  
Is it really out of sight out of mind

I done did more time than a clock, I guess, I really wasted time  
And I done lost some things that I can't get back  
Am I a victim of oppression... is it the reason for my acts



T.G.S.  
Hoffman, NC

T.G.S.  
Hoffman, NC

## Outside Inside

By C.H.  
Kenansville, NC

It's obscene how the trees  
look so pristine  
beyond the barbwire,  
even in their time  
of red, orange, and  
yellow dying.  
Sure, the sun shines  
here, too; the sky  
opens just the same.  
But I can't climb  
that damn oak, can't traipse  
those woods or cringle  
its leaves or scare a squirrel  
and watch it scamper,  
can't live the Fall.

So I must look and wonder  
like one of those pines still green,  
waiting for winter to come,  
waiting for it to pass.

## Untitled

D.D.  
Walnut Grove, MS

Situations that we're Facing...  
The life we live going through mazes positions we are placed in to  
the creative. Things come and go it's up to you what you hold on  
and let go. Push comes to shove, shove come to push even when we  
wish we will still reminisce about what we have missed in a world  
of dreams illusioned with material things how lost we seem...

## Haunted House Glee!

(based on Carroll's Jabberwocky)

By J.W.

Tillery, NC

'Twas brilliant, and the shining moon  
Did fire and glitter on the graves:  
All ghostly were the oaken groves,  
And the mown grass outlaid.

"Beware the Haunted house, my son!  
The calls by night, the locks that latch!  
Beware the hushed-hushed word, and shun  
The perilous Pumpkin patch!"

He took his festal hoard in hand;  
Long time the maximum dough he'd sought—  
So rested he from the Yummy treats,  
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in selfish thought he stood,  
The Haunted house, windows flashing flame,  
Called whistling through the ghastly wood,  
And burbled out his name!

Door one! Door two! And through and through  
He filled his sack with Snickers snacks!  
He grabbed it all, and with the haul  
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou braved the Haunted house?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O wondrous night! Hooray, All right!"  
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brilliant, and the shining moon  
Did fire and glitter on the graves:  
All ghostly were the oaken groves,  
And the mown grass outlaid.

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## Out of Sight, She Flew

By M.T.  
Windsor, NC

Who's down what's next  
Some down, words used out of context.  
Ruff sex, everything is suspect.  
Your actions are jaded, your words a lie.  
Integrity was faded, fake tears you cry.  
Doomed to failure, it was bound to end.  
You tend to bend wrongly, some wounds won't mend.  
Transcend to a higher level yet burdened by the devil  
Got banging on the door like beats of heavy metal  
Foot on the pedal, and black is the kettle  
Ugly is the world, like the situations in which you mettle  
It's all over...hang up... goodbye.  
Love is a like take it like a champ, say goodnight.  
Some life: no fight, one punch, it was over  
Got shot, hands clutchin' weeds, I thought them 4 leaf clovers.  
Hard life no luck there's a long list  
Fears cease to exist, fist clenched, no sense  
Pissed, anger clouds my vision, thick is that mist.  
Same shit, still I won't quit, nor will I admit  
That I'm wrong or you're right, your words I sift through  
In that territory, there's a curfew— happy days are too few  
If I stayed long in these memories, I'd break down, nothing new  
Hence the curfew, with words of hope, the heart beats like it's re-  
newed.  
Back in control I just want you content.  
If I think hard I'd say you were heaven-sent.  
Spent, your wings were bent and out the window she flew.

## Master Buried Beneath the Rubble

By K.H.  
Raleigh, NC

Sentenced to 20 years for da struggle  
But still a rebel  
A master buried beneath the rubble  
Only to die— I'm humble  
Head bruised and bloodied  
But never bowed  
To a system whose every contemplation is envy, greed, lust, and  
hate  
Labeled an enemy of the state  
Cause I was taught to repel  
What the devil motivates  
Caught in an everlasting war  
I'm an eternal warrior  
Who will never turn on my people  
White, Black or in between  
We all shade red  
Da blood is my life  
That I'm willing to sacrifice  
Fight to the death for  
In this everlasting war

## Cheap News

By R.W.  
Polkton, NC (Summer 2011)

Just recently a warden named Richard Neely of Lanesboro Correctional Institution in Polkton was relieved of his position and placed elsewhere in the department of correction for ordering another officer to destroy video footage of officers beating unarmed prisoners with metal batons that left prisoners in serious but stable condition. After many months of being mistreated, belittled and bullied by a programmer at the prison, inmates stood up and said no more! But this was quickly thwarted as those few inmates were handcuffed then beaten with metal batons and fists as officers were caught on tape.

Unfortunately reporters wrote a candy coated tailored account of what actually transpired, and left out crucial details that would paint DOC in a more deserving villainized position. As a result, a new warden will take Neely's place and ensure that this type of incident won't be leaked to the public again and the general public will continue to be blinded by these so called "reporters." Where are the real truth seeking journalists out there that actually once exposed the hideous acts of those we have all entrusted with power over us?

Cheap news is a major reason that everyday we are failing in our core mission of providing people with the knowledge they need for our democracy to function. Cheap news badly done or tailored to protect government culpability spreads false beliefs and racial distrust. A break is fundamental to journalism but our foundations is crumbling. What about governments corruption in our federal and state departments, school boards, city council, crooked prosecutors and SBI agents who continue to man their stations despite what

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unacceptable acts they have committed. The outrageous salary of Beverly Perdue that totals more than half a million a year.

Far too much journalism consists of quoting what police, prosecutors, politicians and publicists say. And this is especially the case with beat reporters. It's news on the cheap and most of it isn't worth the time it takes to read, hear or watch. Much of what passes for reporting about governments these days is not only information that is useless, but laughable nonsense! I've grown increasingly dismayed at the superficial and often dead wrong assumptions permeating the news.

Our North Carolina government, court systems and prisons are corrupt and people need to embrace what is going on behind these closed doors. The building of more prisons isn't due to an increase in crimes by societal criminals, it is due to the greed of those entrusted with power who realize just how lucrative financially the prison complex system has become. It is a proven fact that most prosecutors, politicians, police agencies and high ranking officials are corrupt and shift the attention elsewhere. While you feel the recession and barely make ends meet, Beverly Perdue gets another face lift compliments of the gullible tax payers in her perfect world, police eat free steak dinners, prosecutors get drunk off of the blood of the innocent like thirsty vampires and prison officials get to abuse the human beings they supervise behind bars at will. Thanks to an honest sergeant that no longer works for DOC another white collar crook has fallen from grace. Although many reporters are lax to report on "what's really going on" because they supposedly do not affect their ideal advertiser demographic, beware, for there are some of us who will in our struggle for truth, justice and to prove our innocence, expose truth for all.

## I Won't Die!

By O.O.

Inspired by: Maya Angelou, (Still I Rise) ©

You tried to re-write my history by telling me all your sweet lies.  
You tried to kill my soul, because you saw the fear in my eyes. My  
unhappy heart was still beating refusing to die.

Did my dreams out shine yours? Is that why you made me cry?  
Cut open by your words I lay limp to life. Grace and mercy given to  
me from on high. Barred down with so much grief he still wouldn't  
let me die.

Were you amused by my sorrow? Is that why you left me feeling  
empty and dry? Terrorized when you forced me to get high. Your  
temper roaring like sharp lightning, crashing in the midnight sky.

Does my intellect offend you? It's not that I think I'm so smart,  
you see I was brought you with values and principles that I take to  
heart.

Persuaded to be inferior, broken, and dismayed. Torn between illu-  
sion and the hard reality of my pain. My emotions demolished. Oh!  
How you tried weak but determine never, never to die.

Was my love not enough? Despite how hard I tried, why then hin-  
der me from dating other guys?

Passing through the darkness and misery.

I Won't Die!

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Overcoming my shame from which I came.

I Won't Die!

I'm as beautiful as the sun setting in the evening sky. Being trans-  
formed, from a caterpillar, blossoming into a butterfly.

Leaving behind insults and tears

I Won't Die!

Crossing over into my destiny

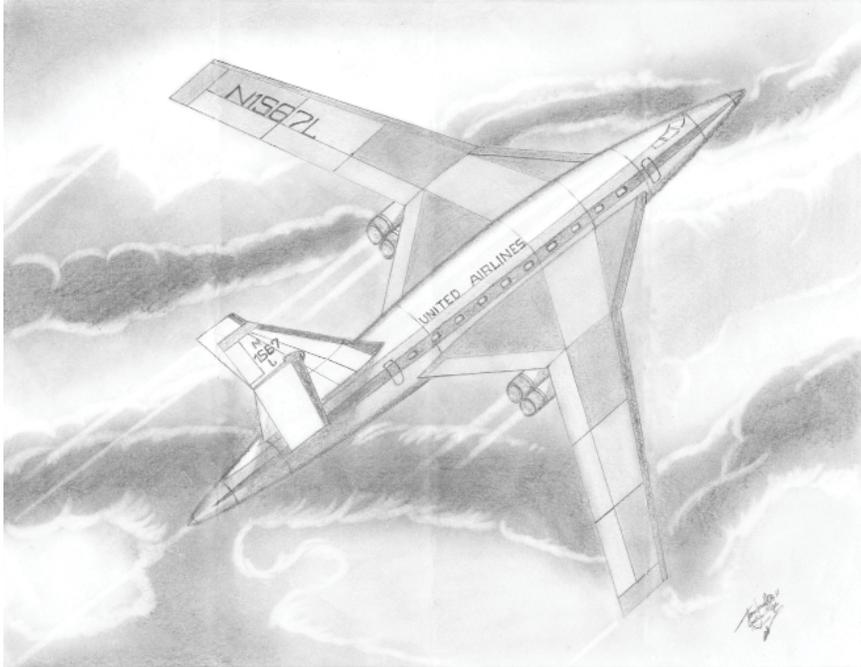
I Won't Die!

Forgiving the mistakes my abuser made, cause I need to be freed  
from all this pain.

I Won't Die!

I Won't Die!

I Won't Die!



## Untitled

By unknown

Turn down the eye  
and watch these words simmer before the steam.  
Many enjoy playing  
the Hollywood fantasy of a make-believe dream.

In the theater, like target practice at the shooting range, it was a  
game  
Until reality hits with a psycho on the loose

mowing down whole families in the joker's name  
Killing innocent men, women and babies now that's a crying shame  
A red headed courtroom clown with fifteen minutes of fame  
If that skin was black he's a criminal  
But when it's pale he must be insane  
And when it's too real to be heard  
these words  
are scorching and blazing with fire to your brain

## Report-Back from New Year's Eve Noise Demo

By Chapel Hill Prison Books Collective

Durham, NC (Dec. 31, 2012) - Joining dozens of similar demonstrations around North America and the world, on New Year's Eve fifty or so comrades and several family members of inmates met up at 7:30 pm at the jail in downtown Durham to show our rage and hatred for the prison system, and our solidarity with prisoners on the inside. Armed with black flags, pots and pans, a drum corps, and numerous banners ("Against Prisons," "Solidarity with Prisoners Everywhere," "Total Liberation from Domination," "Love for All Prison Rebels,") we chanted, screamed, and directed a cacophonous melody of anger at the guards changing shifts. It was subtly amplified by the shouts and banging of prisoners from the small plexiglass windows of their cells, whose faces were visible as dark silhouettes standing out against the modernist architectural gloom of the building complex.

For many months now, prisoners at this specific jail have been waging a struggle against their conditions on different "Pods" of the facility, starting with two massively supported petition efforts that have been ignored by the Sheriff's department. A new anti-authoritarian group on the outside, *Amplify Voices Inside*, has helped these efforts see the light of day with media work and constant communication.

While the crowd marched around all sides of the jail with visible cells, to help the celebration we also let off "sky lanterns," three-foot tall hot air "balloons" that rise into the air when lit.

We recognize that this demo was a small gesture, but we hope that it helped raise the spirits of those struggling inside the Durham jail, as it helped to increase our own morale and dedicate 2013 to a fierce fight against State and Capital.

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