Our publication seeks to create and foster a space for worldly conversation and artistic expression through writing and art.

A big thank you!

The editors of Conversations Through the Fence would like to extend our sincerest thanks to all who have contributed to our inaugural issue. To writers, thank you for submitting your art. To readers/responders, thank you for your patience and passion for fostering a love of literacy and conversation.
What’s In This Issue...

**How Conversations Through the Fence Began** by Sarah

**Featured Writing**
Each One Teach One by R.R.
Ambition by Casimir
Mistaking Paradise by K.B.
I Am by Antoine
I Choose to be Free by Anonymous A
Lessons by Ben
Decisions by Brian
Confidence by Anonymous B
Time Needs Me by Antoine
Mentor and Wise Man by James S

**Featured Art**
What Would You Say? by MJ

**Outside Responses to Contributors**
Artwork by men at the FCI

Prompt for the next issue...

“What is a man and what is a male?”

Submissions due June 18
Include your name and unit on the submission

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**Want to Submit?**

*Handwritten and typed submissions are accepted.
*Please, if possible, do NOT submit original copies. Our team cannot guarantee the return of work.
*Include your name and your unit.
*Limit entries to 300 words (2-3 pages handwritten or 1 page typed).

**Want to Respond?**

We want to create a dialogue through the fence by including responses to the Inside writing, and vice versa. WVU students can email for more information on how to respond to submissions. Contact conversationsthroughthefence@gmail.com.

**Interested in Joining Our Mission?**

*Inside men can reach out to the Conversations liaisons, Kevin and Kenneth (Wattheeq), to submit works and inquire/give input on future issue themes and prompts.*

**Editorial Board**
Antoine, Big Jeff, Brandon, Chazzio, Donte, Em, Ernest, James, Katy, Kevin, McKenzie, Mark, Mark Anthony, Ricardo, Sara, Sarah, and Kenneth (Wattheeq)
How *Conversations Through the Fence* Began

In fall 2017, fifteen West Virginia University students and their teacher, Dr. Katy Ryan, embarked on the first class meeting for *English 275: Justice and Literature*. However, this course was not taught in a university classroom. Rather, it took place in the visitation room of a federal prison. University students were joined by fifteen “inside” classmates, incarcerated men from the facility. Together, the students began to collaboratively learn about literature, discuss complex sociopolitical issues, and meld together experiences from “inside” and “outside” worlds. Thus, the class was called an “Inside Out” class and was part of a larger, national program based at Temple University that generates transformative education.

As the semester ended, Inside Out students worked tirelessly to plan and execute final projects to display the many rich ideas they gained from learning together. Project groups grappled with how to bring public awareness about the need for educational and rehabilitative programs. In the end, four projects were constructed, and the class voted on which project they would like to be presented at the Inside Out graduation ceremony. This project would also be continued by the FCI “Think-Tank”: a group of students, inside and out, who continue to meet and work on programming for the prison. *Conversations Through the Fence* is their creative writing magazine featuring the poetry, non-fiction/fiction, and artwork of inside men.

*Conversations Through the Fence* strives to create and foster worldly conversation and artistic expression through writing and visual art. This magazine will feature prompt-oriented written work and visual art by inside men. To uphold the “conversation” part of the publication’s name, each inside writing/art piece will have a response from an outside reader. Thus, conversations “through the fence” will take place. The magazine is being compiled and edited by members of the FCI “Think-Tank” and West Virginia University students. Our editorial board consists of members from the original Inside-Out course. –Sarah
Each One Teach One
by R.R.

I am who I am because as a young man coming out of one of Chicago’s worst South Side neighborhoods, going to one of its most decrepit schools where I received a poor education, and being faced with being stereotyped and discriminated against, society never gave me a chance. I never stood to win in life.

Sounds good, right? Well, for a long time, it did to me. But then again, I never looked back to see how many lawyers, doctors, accountants, or other professionals went to the same decrepit school that I went to and waded through the same or similar set of circumstances as I did.

Abandoning all excuses today. I guess the truth is that I just chose the so called easy way in life, not realizing that in the long run it would become the hard way in life. I would love to blame who I became on what I saw growing up, on the hostile environment, on the teens on the corner with the smooth gear, the gold chains and four fingered rings to match. But then does that mean that I am responsible for making someone out there who they are today? I would hope not.

I’ve had time to realize that me believing that society is solely responsible for me being who I am and is the cause of my present circumstances amounts to me just B.S.’ing myself and anyone else who would agree and listen to my nonsense. I mean, if that were true, wouldn’t I have turned out like my parents? They were hard working citizens that worked hard to bring me and my siblings up the best way they could. They are the ones I should have been imitating.

I’ve now abandoned making excuses and blaming everyone and everything on who and how I turned out. I’m growing to accept responsibility for my life and with that I have given myself a chance to turn my life around.

I realize that “I need to change because” I want to have and leave a strong positive impact on someone no matter who it is. If I only reach one person, then my life would not have been in vain.

I didn’t become a preacher, scientist, philosopher, or anything close to that. But I’ve learned hard lessons in the classroom of life that I believe can benefit someone if I can reach them. I know this because of my changed attitude and perspective in life and the result of someone reaching me.

As the saying goes, “each one teach one.” I’m also encouraged after recently learning that not all of society has given up on someone like me and that there are some who work tirelessly at changing the negative narrative that no good can come from a seven-time felon like myself.

People who understand that beyond race, class, education, or situations, we are all the same on the most basic level. We are all human beings.

So, to all who facilitated and participated in the inside/out program, I thank you and assure you that your work out there is not lost or in vain.

There are many reason why “I am me,” as a person who continues to work towards positive change, and the young people out there in society is one of the biggest. Thank you again for believing.
Ambition
by Casimir

All of my life it’s been hammered into me to achieve. From that I’ve developed an eager desire for success. This is definition of ambition.

So I am me because I have ambition. My ambition has given me the courage I need to follow my goals. Any time I’ve faced a problem, my ambition to never quit has kept me pushing forward. I’ve always wanted to attend college but I didn’t complete high school. This never deterred me from getting my GED and attending college. I knew education was my key to success and to propel me in life, so I continued studying and now that I’m incarcerated it has slowed the process down for me. Even though I’m a convicted felon, it hasn’t discouraged me because I’m still ambitious and I strive for what I want. This is who I am and I know my resources for education are limited now more than ever. I will still chase my goal to earn my degree whether it’s in prison or when I’m released because this is crucial for me. Just because I’m a prisoner doesn’t mean I don’t deserve education or that I’m a dangerous person.

See me for who I am, an ambitious man who is striving to get his education and always following my goals no matter what. This is who I am this what makes me the person that people do not know about.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story!

Mistaking Paradise
by K.B.

I am “free” because I choose to be free.

I need Allah because without his mercy, teachings, and examples, which he set out in each one of his messengers, I am fooled to take this world as my “Paradise,” and the devil himself as my light.

I am me because April needs a father.

Antoine
I Choose to be Free
by Anonymous A

Because there’s been a systematic war against every woman in existence since the beginning of Westernized Religion’s initial invention, and Lady Justice is just another victim…I guess it’s just how we like our Women…objectified, materialized, subjugated, terrorized, vilified, and demonized for speaking Wisdom’s Mind

Because Black Women everywhere won’t quit fighting and White Women all over can’t stop trying, and Black & White Men are still dying in this war of worlds with no real winning side

Because Life on this Earth is bigger than Black & White…Right?

What about every other side…Everyone else’s rights?

Because just to see what it’s like on the other side of cowering, just to have a taste of sniveling, conniving power, both my grandfathers used to rape and beat both my grandmothers until one killed the other with a 45 caliber magnum…but my Mother’s Mother just died of cancer

Because my Mother is the product of domestic rape; some things in life you can’t escape

Because the Cherokee, Black, and French in my Mom thought she saw Salvation in the Black, Navaho, and Irish in my Dad…

Because I inherited depression, anger, and madness; but that’s not who I really am…Because I’m responsible now, so I no longer question why or even how…Because there really are silent weapons for a quiet war; no longer imagined; no longer lone…Because what I need now is a Network of Truth…A Network of You; Because I was born in July on an island something like Paradise, formed in the sign of Cancer in Honolulu, Hawaii, on the Tropic of Cancer, made to be a Cancer by design; Because I chose this way myself…Right?

Because you think that just because I write about the piss and cognitive degeneracy, that that’s going to appease my hunger and urge for justice and revenge.

Because that’s the new tactic…the new trick…make ‘em chase success by another name; slavery by another name…but slavery is not our claim to fame…the new Jim Crow with its fake ass iron chains; golden teeth and bling

Because Truth hath touched mine eye…Steady…Patient… as the Sun’s Rise…I’ve seen the demise of lust led by lack of Love

Because sometimes I believe I’m in love with destruction

Because I’m running from myself and growing weary with running. Because the other guy is catching up

Because I met Em and two Sarahs, a Rayna, a Dr. Ryan, and a Stephanie who really seem to care…I’ve been made more aware; I read Rebecca Solnit the feminist and essayist-activist; I’ve read Richard Wright’s Native Son and Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man; I know about Dark Water by W.E.B. DuBois, along with his call aloud to “The Souls of Black Folk”…Because the police and lieutenants help perpetuate oppressive emergent systems; and corrupt correctional officers give birth to the Gabriel Prossers…they are the cause for the Nat Turners and etymological original Marooners, the Denmark Vesey’s, Haitian Revolutions and Amistad Mutinies

I am me because They were Them…Because You Are…Because I choose to be Free regardless of my relationship with Lady Liberty

I am me because this is My Cross; staked to the third eye of a place called Golgotha…
Lessons
by Ben

I have been on this Earth for 42 years. For the first 33 years I thought I was a Blackman in America. Then 9 years ago I figured out that was a lie. The truth is, I am a Yisraelite held by America. The totality of my life experience has become the foundation upon which my morals, principles, and values are created. I know hate because I have experience hatefulness. I am surrounded by confusion, therefore at times I am confused.

Think on this: We are here to learn and the only way to learn is through experiencing. Because this is truth, you move through time and space having multiple experiences or lessons. Some lessons (experiences) you learn from fast so you never have to experience it again. Some you fail and must repeat.

Therefore I am me because of the lessons I’ve learned in life. To sum it up: I am me because I can only be me.

Decisions
by Brian

I am me because of the decisions I’ve made. From the time I realized my family was poor, I made the decisions that I couldn’t live like that no more. As I got older, my decision making got bolder. I was a man in my eyes, and only I would decide. I am me because I could no longer hide the poverty that I despised.

I mean, I had pride, besides I got tired of hearing my mother cry and my absentee father tell lies, so I had to decide whether to step out on my own two feet and do what my father was supposed to do.

I am me because I decided to take a walk on the wild side. They say the grass is greener, but forget to mention that it is much meaner. I met the hard way with each turn of the corner. Some days were ice cold and others were warmer. I kept going until I fell in love with the former and it was then that nothing else mattered.

I am me because I watched a life shatter from the outside in. The ones who I thought were my friends weren’t really my friends and the car that I drove was really my Benz. They belonged to the person I created on the day I decided that I couldn’t take it.

Now understand that I am me because of the decisions I’ve made. Only this time I am free of a criminal mind. I’ve replaced it with something better to better my chances to shine. On that note, but on this line, I am me because I am Brian.
Confidence
by Anonymous B

I need confidence because I have great ideas that I want to put out for the public to see and utilize. Many people see me as dangerous, violent, and no good. I believe in myself, but because of the perception of being locked up, most people won’t give my ideas a chance.

A tremendous amount of people do not think a “criminal” is intelligent, and I want to be able to change that notion. I have an idea to write a book about a man and his journey to success. I have an idea about making an APP that can help people eat well and show them how to get a great workout at home and stay in shape through an easy regimen. I have an idea about creating my own label and have designs in my art portfolio that would be magnificent displayed on special clothes. I’ve also thought about opening a pastry or goodies shop because I’m a dessert/delights artisan, and I can create many innovative sweets that people would enjoy.

With support from people on the outside, my confidence would increase. All I want is for people to believe in me the way I believe in myself, and don’t judge me because of my background or past mistakes.

I’m serving time, locked away, but I have ideas that would benefit the community and put smiles on faces. If you believe in me and support me, I would have all the confidence I need.

Time Needs Me
by Antoine

Time never was when man was not. / I check my heart before I check my watch. / Let me rewind to when I had a dream, / and Time called on me. / I said, “Who this?” / She said, “This Time. I need you.” / Cool. So I raced to the womb. / Pure form. / I was a seed before I was a soldier. / I won’t forget what I’m here for. / Life and Death? / I have an ear for ‘em. / I can hear why Time needs me. / There’s fear in numbers. / So you have to lookout. / Might get killed if you’re alone, / But you won’t hear about police shooting near a cookout. / They don’t shut down family reunions. / Bad cops are the equivalent of bitches in the alley. / They get dirty because their whole life is in ruins. / So what am I doing? / Time needs me. / I’m promoting unity.

Time never was when man was not. / I check my heart before I check my watch. / If I were a King, I’d think as a King. / If I were a slave, I’d think as a slave. / If I control one, I, myself, become one / to know what he’s thinking to prevent him from leaving, / and honestly, / I’d give someone else that job, / Because I’m a King. / Logically, the difference is that I came for change when the opposite follows policy. / Some people don’t care to question authority, but that’s the problem. / They said I needed counseling. / They said I was violent and a potential threat. / They told some people they would never walk again. / They also said a black man couldn’t become president. / Oppression is in the policy. / Why would I ask for their help? / I was a seed before I was a soldier. / I became a King by mastery of steps. / Now Time needs me. / All I need is knowledge of self.

Time never was when man was not. / I check my heart before I check my watch.
I’m Me
By MJ

I’m me because I have to be. I’m me because, in a game of life where the rules are “adaptation” or “expiration,” I chose to excel beyond my adaptabilities. I’m me because I had to be who I was in order to become who I am. I had to be who I was because in some way or another, I was necessary…They say that the two most powerful forms of artistic manipulation are music and drama, and my life has been a mixture of both. With the music being pain and the drama being America.

I’m me because I arrived at the understanding that everything will take care of itself, but it was a gradual process, it didn’t happen over night. And it doesn’t mean that I’m O.K. with my situation—obviously, given the chance to change it, of course I would’ve. But then, you wouldn’t be reading these words because I wouldn’t be me. The reality is that I cannot rewind and change things, so I found peace instead of beating myself up over my situation. It’s not about complacency; it’s about dealing with what I had to deal with and knowing that making peace helped. I’d break down, I’ve been sad, but there’s no changing what happened, and what had to happen. I can’t go backwards, I can’t stay where I am, so I have to move forward.

I’m me because I can’t help but love. I’m me because I wasn’t the kind of person who bitched about the noise when opportunity knocked. I’m me because “I don’t feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.”

I’m me because I know the art of struggle, because struggle is infused into the very fabric of my DNA. Struggle is in my history. Struggle is in the history of my people. Struggle seems to force evolution, and the evolution of man is the evolution of consciousness and “consciousness” cannot evolve unconsciously.

I’m me because I’m most comfortable with discomfort. I’m me because of adversity, which has been nourishing, since I’ve been strong enough to digest it.

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.” –Khalil Gibran

I’m me because the preparation and experience most necessary for understanding and valuing a great gift is experiencing its opposite, and this I’ve come to know all too well…

I give thanks for all that I have been, all that I’m becoming, and all that I will be, by your grace and with your guidance…I’m me because of God!
Dear KB,
Thanks for sharing your thoughts. I’ve found myself thinking a lot about the ways in which people can be fooled into taking the devil as their light. I think it takes a lot of awareness of oneself and others to be able to recognize which things in life are real and valuable, and which are fool’s gold. It’s easy to get wrapped up in things that seem to matter but really don’t. How do you recognize when you’ve been drawn to something that seems real and good but really isn’t? How do you respond? Personally, I think I’m still working on those questions. Maybe it’s our ability to identify these things and respond to them that shows our values and also makes us who we really are.

Thanks again for sharing your writing with me. I enjoyed reading it and thinking about your words.  ---RH

Dear Antoine,
Your ‘time’ piece was especially thought provoking. It read like a cadence, with such rhythm. I loved the line breaks as well… “Time never was when man was not.” This whole piece got me thinking about time as a human construction. We express time in so many ways: we use time, take time, steal time, count time, waste time, etc. In some instances, time also seems to stop (us in our tracks). Yet, planetary orbits, the rising and setting of the sun, the corresponding changes in light and dark, and the changing of seasons were indicators of this concept long before us… “I check my heart before I check my watch.” The repeating refrain that includes this line has its own beat. It is so poignant. To me, this speaks to reliance on our inner self, to know what ‘time’ it is, to be in tune. It makes sense to check ourselves, over a piece of technology that we created to keep time… “I was a seed before I was a solder.”

Before you go to battle, you must first be called into existence… You say time called on you, that time needs you, that you raced to the womb in response, which is where it all begins. Yet, ‘all you need is knowledge of self’… The lines, “There’s fear in numbers./So you have to lookout./Might get killed if you’re alone,/But you won’t hear about police shooting near a cookout./They don’t shut down family reunions,” made me think of Black Lives Matter, and about the long list of those who have been taken before their ‘time’… To say “Oppression is in the policy” is just plain truth… Time takes time… and now is the only time! Thank you for sharing this powerful piece. ---Rayna

Dear Anonymous A,
I was struck not only by the punctuation you largely rejected--excluding periods as a way of suggesting there is no end to the reasons for why we become who we are--but also by the punctuation you relied on--the ellipses and question marks that suggest there is always something more, always something to ask ourselves or wonder of the

Mentor and Wise Man
by James S.

I’m me because I am a Black Man. I am me because I was groomed by the urban community I grew up in, which makes me a product of my environment. I was exposed to a lifestyle that many will never see. This helped me grow and gave me different views on life. I took those experiences and became a better person. I took those lessons and became a better man. My character was built. I’m loyal, I’m responsible, I’m trustworthy. I’ve sinned and I’ve overcome. I’m a brother to my sisters, an uncle to my nieces, and a man to my family. I can put a smile on my face when times are rough. I am here for my peers when times are hard. I am now in the struggle, I was once out of the struggle. I am me because I am now fighting for the people in the struggle. I am a mentor and a wise man.

Outside Responses to Contributors
world.

I was struck not only by the choice of words you capitalized--the concepts and people you chose to emphasize, admire, respect--but also by the ideas and realities that are large but you chose to challenge without capitalizing--jim crow, slavery, violent grandfathers and oppressors. In this way the Mothers and Truth, the Sun and Paradise, Black and White Women, Writers and Students who shape you are the ones to rise to the top. ---Bonnie

Dear Brian,
Your essay reminded me of the constant societal pressures on a man to be the provider of their family. When you stated, “I had to decide whether to step out on my own two feet and do what my father was supposed to do,” that spoke to me as though you had to make the decision not to abandon your family, like your father did, and take on the role as the provider of the house. You had little to no opportunities on obtaining a stable income legally, therefore you had to step into a harsher reality to achieve what was necessary to stay alive. This ended up with your reality crumbling internally and externally. Your ending paragraph revealed to me you never wanted to be the man you grew up to be, but now you are set free from old ways and are becoming the Brian you were destined to be. ---Vivian

Dear Anonymous B,
Your words make me believe. Your ideas make me believe. Your honesty makes me believe. I recognize your dreams, because I have them too, to create and build and innovate and write. Your words speak not of your incarcerated status but of your humanity, of all of the potential locked behind those walls.

You write that many believe within the “criminal” there cannot be intelligence, and I think of the prison life writer Paul St. John saying, “prisoners have the credibility of elves.” How do you overcome this barrier of disbelief? How do you shatter this misconception of your identity as criminal and nothing more? The questions are loud. They scream across the walls. Your words make me believe. Your ideas make me believe. Your honesty makes me believe. Communities are built on dreams like yours, on journeys of success, on designs, on pastries, on innovation. I believe in you. Please, tell me more. ---Maggie

Dear R.R,
While reading your reflection, I can hear you talking about a circular path in your life that has led you to discovering the ways you desire change and the things you wish you had thought of before doing them. You question “does that mean that I am responsible for making someone out there who they are today? I would hope not.” but then recognize that the work you are doing now to reflect on who you are and who you have become has made you hope that you can “reach one person” in a positive way. I see you thinking here that your life has come full circle. Your parents were “hard working citizens” that you say raised you properly but you were influenced by a rougher crowd of people. Now you hope to be the person to someone else that your parents were to you and I can’t help but think of how admirable that is. You seem to realize that you can’t change your past and you wouldn’t want to even if you could. I admire this sentiment more than anything because it has, as you reflect, made you the person you are and you don’t want to change anything about that. Because of this circle you’ve created, you’re proud of who you are and that is everything in life.

Thanks for sharing your writing! You’ve given me a lot to think about. ---Sara

Dear Casimir,
Ambition is one of the most admirable qualities a person can have. Couple ambition with the desire to learn and that truly is a recipe for success. And that success, even at the level of personal development, should not be hindered or delayed because of incarceration. I was struck by the sentence, “I know my resources for education are limited now
more than ever,” and it saddened me because I do not think that that should be the reality of incarceration—quite the opposite. If someone has the drive to seek out an education, then it should be available to that person, especially if they are incarcerated.

Earning one’s GED and pursuing higher education is by no means easy, and not everyone has the motivation to do it. You should be proud of those achievements and your ambition. Ambition is closely related to perseverance, and your perseverance shows in your determination not to let anything get in the way of you and your education—an education that you do deserve. As I’m sure you already know, the special thing about an education is that once you have it, no one can ever take it away from you. I know that you will take every opportunity to learn despite any obstacles that may present themselves. Never stop being ambitious—it’s what makes you, you.

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McKenzie

Dear Ben,

Loved this little poem, essay, narrative. I can tell you have a lot of powerful thoughts; the end of the first paragraph is stellar. I am only superficially aware of Yisraelite culture. You have the ability, in very few words, to create a forceful argument about the power of experience. You show us, quite beautifully, how our life experiences can create us. Do we also create our life experiences? Or do those just happen around or to us? I wonder what happened 9 years ago. What, specifically, are your morals principles and values? “I know hate because I have experienced hatefulness.” I think this is the drive of this writing. The idea that what is done unto you becomes part of your identity. Or rather, that identity is shaped, not constructed. What experiences do you wish to have? If you experience these things, the things you desire to experience, does that mean you become what you desire? Or does the world decide that? So much to think on. ---Avery

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Avery

Dear MJ,

The first thing that struck me was the theme of necessity that runs through your essay. “I’m me because I have to be…I was necessary.” I love the sense of purpose that comes through your writing. Regret has no place here. The past doesn’t get to overshadow your future. You were what you had to be, but that doesn’t define who you get to be in the future. This essay is in essence a definition of self. You break your identity down, revealing a new piece with each line: past, present, future. I am envious of this ability to define yourself on the page. It’s so difficult to put a name to what makes up a person’s ever-changing identity, but you do exactly that. And you do it with rhythm and repetition, drawing the reader forward. You capture peace. You capture evolution. You capture strength. You capture the music and the drama of life. Thank you for sharing these pieces of yourself with us. ---Maggie

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Maggie

Dear James S.,

I keep reading the first line of your piece, captivated by how it feels to echo it for myself—that I’m me because I am a white woman. I picture a room in which everyone utters this line out loud according to their identity, perceiving the edge between common and uncommon ground and using it to see ourselves see ourselves and to see ourselves see each other. Ultimately: to see ourselves love ourselves and to see ourselves love each other. Sentence-by-sentence, I am reminded that I’m a product of my environment too, that I’m also trying to be a better person. I am relieved when I reach your line: “My character was built.” I take this to heart, and I feel capable of celebrating the scaffolding of my identity with the construction of my character. In this way, through your writing, you are here for me too, and I thank you. I am still picturing a room in which everyone speaks their identity like you did, and I am imagining them, us, echoing you again to say: “I am me because I am now fighting for the people in the struggle.” James: you are a mentor and a wise man. May we all earn these words in solidarity with your example. ---Beth
Featured Artwork

What would you say to a person in prison? What would you say to a person in college?
### On the Inside:

**June:** I’m frustrated and sick of putting myself in these kinds of situations. I’m better than my current situation. God has a plan for me and I know it’s not jail.

**Antoine:** What are you reading? If I was on the other side of this fence, I wouldn’t have let you come close to this fence. What’s your name?

**W.L.:** I’m hurt. It’s hard. I think I’m dealing with abandonment issues and people are getting the brunt of my frustrations. It’s not that I don’t want to have friendship. I’m just fearful of the closeness. I’m afraid of intimacy because I don’t want to be abandoned again. I’m sorry.

**Mark Anthony:** I’m reflecting on my life, as each step I take is a foot towards my re-entry.

**Mark Anthony:** Thank you for helping us, we all need a second chance.

**Ruckus:** It’s time to get my life in order cuz I have to get my shit together in terms of how I see things, how I think, how I feel about me. Life has to be more than this.

**Cuz:** Sorry I messed up and was not there for you and the family. Hold it down until I come home. Don’t worry about me. I’ll be fine. Tell my son I love him, and tell Mommy I love her. Pray for me. Be home soon, God willing.

### On the Outside:

**Rayna:** Are you taking care of you?

**Rayna:** Is there something you think people don’t know, but should, about what it’s like inside? If I could be a voice for you while you’re here, what message would you want shared?

**Rayna:** Do you talk to people here about how you feel, what your plans are? Do you have some sort of outlet to express yourself?

**Rayna:** What would make this moment, this time, better/easier/hopeful?

**Anon:** What’s the biggest misunderstanding about imprisonment?

**Katy:** What do you like to read?

**Katy:** If you could talk to one person today, living or dead, who would it be?

**Katy:** Let’s see what good we can make happen—right now, with what we have.

**Elissa:** What are some of the things you say to yourself every morning when you open your eyes and put your feet to the floor to inspire you to face the day with hope and courage?

**Elissa:** How do you stay connected to your friends and family on the outside given the physical barriers that you face?
Artwork from the FCI

Kenneth (Watheeq) making use of time with his hobby of leather craftsmanship.

Going to college gift for Watheeq’s daughter.

“Mom knows best,” says Watheeq. “After receiving a bag that I made with handles, Mom said, ‘I don’t want to always hold my bag. I need a shoulder strap.’”
Even the most beautiful place on earth has to endure its share of rain.

–Moe

Education is the most important tool we can use to change the world.

Nelson Mandela