

BLESSED & BROKEN

Kolbe House Jail Ministry

FALL 2021

I AM

by Lithia H.

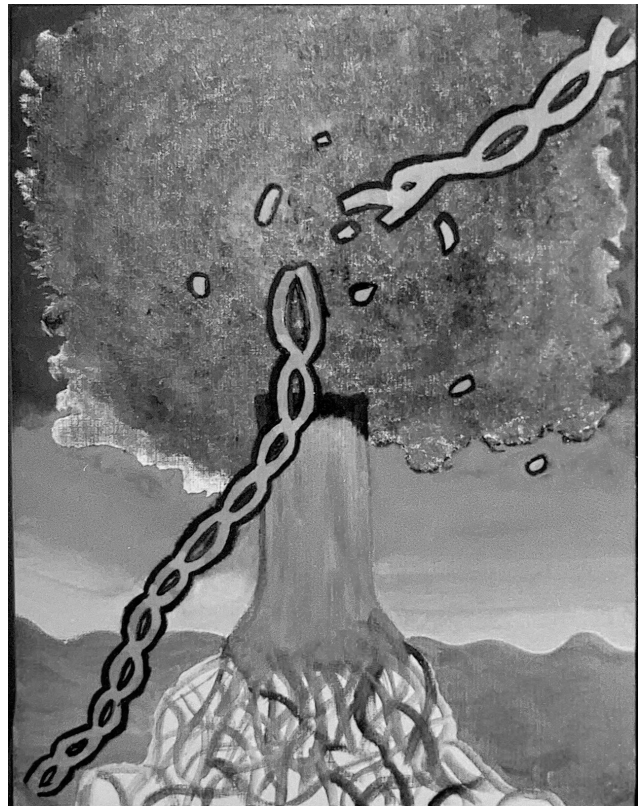
I am a mother who has always stood alone.
I wonder where in my life did I go wrong.
I hear the drums beating to my favorite song.
I see my life story being prolonged.
I am a mother who has always stood alone.

I pretend to be unphased and strong.
I feel that this part of my journey is too long.
I touch the surface but the wind is gone, gone, gone.
I cry out to God as He sits high on His throne.
I am a mother who has always stood alone.

I understand that I stand in this world on my own.
I say that everyone will weep what they have sown.
I dream of the day that love will rise unbound.
I try to hear the world's unfamiliar sounds.
I hope for freedom and life above the ground.
I am a mother who has always stood alone.

The Glow of My Freedom & Beauty

by Vanessa G.



Blessed & Broken

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Publisher

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Blessed & Broken

is a quarterly anthology of creative art by persons currently/formerly incarcerated in Cook County Jail and Illinois Department of Corrections institutions. It seeks to lift up the voices of our sisters and brothers impacted by incarceration. It is a project of Kolbe House, the Jail Ministry of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago.

I AM

by Jose Luis L.

I am saved and loved.
I wonder what heaven is like.
I hear the gates of heaven open.
I see a light so bright,
I want to be set free.
I am saved and loved.

I pretend to have wings and fly.
I feel sad deep inside.
I touch an angel hand.
I worry to be left behind.
I cry for the lost.
I am saved and loved.

I understand the truth of the Bible.
I say, Repent and be set free.
I dream to be used as one of God's instruments.
I try to help and teach.
I hope I'm not too late.
I am saved and loved.

Youth, Take Time!

by Willie S.

Take time to help each other,
And they in turn will help you.

Take time to look for wonderful
Ways to make new ideas work,
Not for reasons they won't.

Take time to love another through
All the difficult days.

Take time to maintain a positive attitude,
No matter what the circumstances are.

Take time to put God first in our lives today.

At 16

by Arnold J.

Life at age 16 became my absolute everything. I had been running with the grown-up scene: having sex, using drugs and committing crimes we called a “stang.” This I got caught up inside a quagmire that shattered all my dreams.

I was trialed as an adult at 16. I was charged with seemingly everything. The judge stated at my sentencing, “Arnold, you have forfeited the rest of your teens.” I received ten years to do five years, day for day at 16.

My mama nor big mama could do nothing. I tried to remain serene. I went to the maximum-security Joliet I.Y.C. where my survival instincts kicked in protecting me. I went from a child to a real life grown-up immediately.

Yet my mind hadn’t caught up with my body as I kept living immaturely. See, being an adult comes with total responsibility. I kept using drugs and gangbanging. I was fighting, cussing and rebelling, and I felt there was no one there understanding. I was released on March 20, 1983.

Today I’m still doing what I was doing at 16 –

Free of Mind

by Tyrunda B.



Time! I have four years remaining. This is my fifth time in I.D.O.C. I have been blessed and broken for what seems like my eternity.

We never know how life’s going to turnout when we stop listening. I could say, I spent 43 years in misery, or I could blame it on my insecurity, but none of that would be true. This has been my blessed & broken reality.

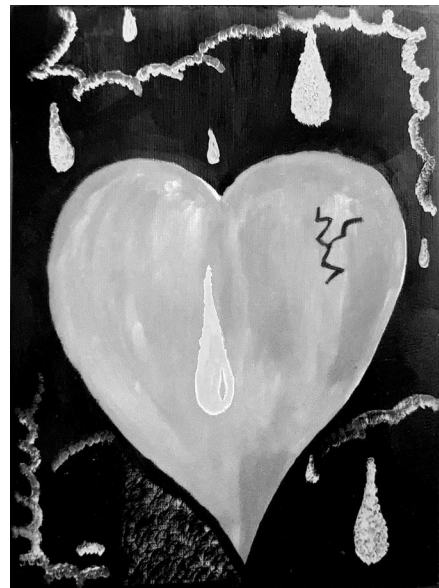
I’m no longer irresponsible or 16. I’m a MAN who spends his life Motivating, Assisting and Nurturing. I’m of the royal bloodline of Jesus our King. He was also blessed & broken around the turn of the first century. They’re still talking about his life and death scene.

I realize, some of you may be 16, and I believe you all would be alright if you change those negative people, places and things. This is exactly what took me down at 16. I lacked maturity, I stopped listening, and I couldn’t decide who I wanted to be.

You have been blessed, your evil is broken, and you are very significant, whether you’re an adult or teen. Please never give up your hopes, dream. I share with you all the highest respect, love and esteem.

Struggle to Recovery

by Jafeth R.



True Liberation / Real Freedom

by Philip H.

Is real freedom riding down Lake Shore Drive late night on a Saturday, listening to the slow jams in your fresh car that you just got out the shop? Knowing you stunt hard, wishing all the homies lifting weights on the yard could see you now. Feeling free!

Is real freedom when your whole family has a reunion at the forest preserves on 83rd and Western? Aunt Gladys makes her famous potato salad. Uncle Remus doing that old country dance, to that hold school song, "We Want the Funk." Can't nobody tell him nothing, he jammin'! Everybody dressed to impress. Everything recorded and put on line to see. Cause the whole fam showed up and showed out. Is that freedom?

Or maybe real freedom is your out date. Everybody gets together, rents a hall. Mom cooks that catfish and fried chicken you been fienin for, for over twelve and a half years. Frankie Beverly and Maze song "Happy Feelings" is playing. Your brother is teasing you like always, your favorite cousin is right there. Even old girl showed up. Yeah she broke bad ten years ago, but she had to see you again. Your son swears up and down, he a man now. But yet him and your daughter can't stop crying and hugging you. It's tears of joy as Momma says, "Baby, ain't no going back."

My real freedom, true liberation is the day Jesus said, "You are forgiven." The day I was washed claim in His blood. Yes, all these thoughts of freedom above are cool. And when my out date comes, I can't wait for the next chapter of my life. But I will never feel as free as I do everytime I open up the Word and learn more about how God has spoken to us through the Bible. I will never feel as free as when I pray to my Savior and hide nothing from Him. And I'll never be as free as when I think of someone else before I think of myself. Final freedom will be when I see God face to face.

So when I think of real freedom, true liberation, I think straight up. I got more work to do, more faith to gain. But one thing I am sure of: I'm closer to that freedom today than I was yesterday. How about you?

Wallz Cry

by Jesse K.

When it's silent and you're in your cell,
Listen and you'll hear what I hear...

When you been around people that ain't never going home,
When you see it in their eyes that they even lost their souls,
Heart so cold turned black to the darkest color of some coal,
That's when you hear these wall'z cry.
These walls did more hard times than the fences outside posted in razor-barbed wires.
When you around people that portray the images of all liars,
That's when you get all violence.
Can you not hear these walls crying?
What happened to the moment of silence...

What happened to realizing chaos from pain turns to riots?
Penitentiary wishes of going home there's even wishes of dying.
Going home, many may never get the chance again.
But those who never sold their souls, society wants to laugh at them.
They never want to hear their story.

Me, I was an average kid
Trying to fit in with the popular crowd,
Stopping my heart from healing
From all the trauma and abuse I seen as a kid.
So the world was a place I didn't want to live in.
So I found a great escape,
I tried to pave the way,
Silence in them hallways carrying a .38.
Back then I thought I was that dude,
Thought that I was cool.
So blinded by the sin,

When looking in a mirror, I was a fool
 With the mentality of something to prove.
 Then one shot took it all away,
 Now I'm stuck within walls as if
 I was a bird locked in a cage.
 Now it's my heart that has to carry
 All of the weight and all of the pain.
 Now it's these walls that got to soak up
 All of the hate and all of the rage.
 Now do you hear these Wallz Cry?
 Don't you see they're tatted with tear drops
 under every eye?
 Does it ever weigh heavy
 What they must've gone through?
 Don't you think these walls mourn for their loss
 too?
 What if these walls were to fall on you?
 Tired of barring criminals that only show their
 hate and neglect.
 Don't these walls deserve some respect?
 Maybe if you put your ear to it, you'll hear it,
 Maybe then and only maybe then,
 You'll hear these Wallz Cry.

The first time I cried in jail, it was as it I heard
 these walls cry too. I put my ear to the wall and
 heard it say, "It's okay, I been through the same
 things as you."

Facts

by John V.

The older I get, the fewer friends I'm with.
 The journey I took, with no nights I slept.
 Wholesome memories, in my pocket I kept.
 Was never ready for trial, no matter how much I
 prepped.

Now years flew by, too quick of course.
 Took me awhile to realize that life is short.
 From the inside looking out,
 People come and go.
 Out of sight, out of mind is
 Something you need to know.
 Over the bottom bunk, you can go toe to toe.
 Banged up head, black eye and bloody nose.
 Some just fight just to put on a show.
 They're the ones, when it's time,

Be the first to get rolled.

Meanwhile I'm trying to stay focused,
 To keep my vision a tunnel.
 Did most of my time in Division 9
 In the heart of the jungle.
 Cook County turns into a crook's bounty,
 Hope you ready to rumble.
 Keep to yourself because most decks
 You can find that it's humble.
 Keep your faith strong
 Or your heart will start to fumble.
 Also say it with your chest,
 They can't hear if you mumble.

Lord guide these souls and take away the
 sorrow.

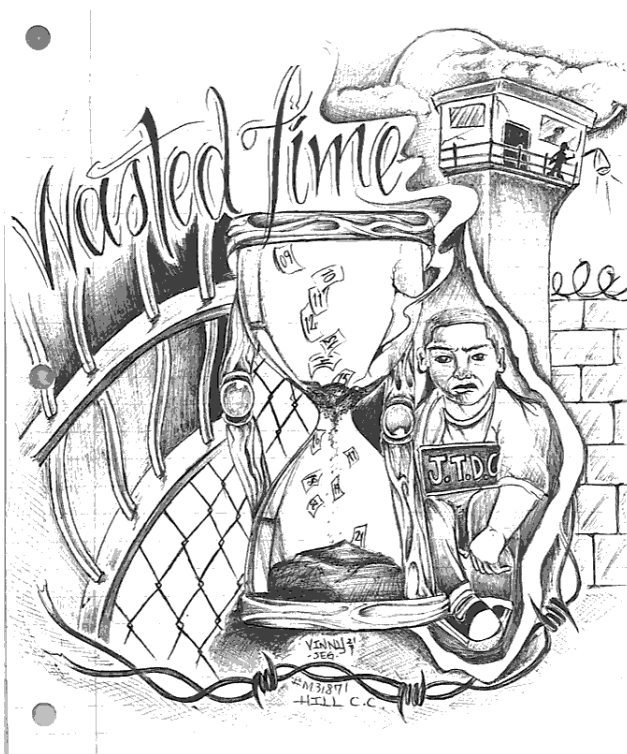
Lord, open their eyes because only time is
 borrowed.

Lord, lead the way, so in prayer they follow.
 My cross is the boss, fill these hearts that are
 hollow.

Create a new path, a road without a pothole.
 The older I get, the more I know.

Wasted Time

by Vincent B.



I AM

by Philip H.

I am naked before You, God,
Your child fully seen.
I wonder how I look through Your eyes, my King.
I hear a noisy world trying to drown Your voice out,
I see the devil and his army trying to cause me to doubt.
I want to live for You, my Lord,
Being a changed man, washed clean.
I am naked before You, God, Your child fully seen.

I pretend I'm a success, a great father,
A sports star, a Christian rapper with a beautiful wife.
I feel like a failure, so much talent, yet still a wasted life.
I touch the deepest part of my being, but he only pushes my hand away.
I worry if truly alone I will always stay.
I cry trying to figure out what this existence on earth really means.
I am naked before You, God, Your child fully seen.

I understand I can't hide from You,
Surely all You know.
I say "carry me" like that "Footprints" poem,
Be with me wherever I go.
I dream of the day I'm a success,
Known for more than just mayhem and crime.
I try daily to live for Jesus,
Even when the devil is lying, saying I'm just slime.
I hope the world sees me – the new, true me,
Forgiven by God and washed clean.
Because I am naked before You, God, Your child fully seen.

I AM

by Shania C.

I am a woman and I continue to stand strong.
I wonder when this man is gonna right his wrong.

I hear a lot of people saying
They're here and they're by my side.
I see something different,
The truth that they cannot hide.
I want this nightmare to be over,
And it's taking them so long.
I am a woman and I continue to stand strong.

I pretend to be somewhere else
Instead of this awful place.
I feel so alone, left without a trace.
I touch towards the sky, saying
This will soon be over.
I worry about what's gonna happen –
I just wanna crawl under the cover.
I cry myself to sleep at night,
Wishing I were at home.
I am a woman and I continue to stand strong.

I understand I'm here
Because they're trying to do their job.
I say I'm innocent,
And I know my life has been robbed.
I dream of being home
With my family and friends.
I try to do something meaningful until
All of this ends.
I hope my time comes soon,
And I can sit on my throne.
I am a woman and I continue to stand strong.

Beach Day with my Six Hearts

by Chevel D.



Season's greetings from all of us here at Kolbe House! We hope you enjoy this issue of **Blessed & Broken**. It includes several "I AM" poems, the interactive feature from our last issue, as well as poetry and art work on the theme, "True Liberation." Thanks to our featured artists and poets for sharing their creativity with us.

For the Winter 2022 issue, we invite submissions on the New Year's theme, "**All that has been, All that is to come.**" We invite you to create a poem or drawing that looks back on the past year and forward to the year ahead. For what are you grateful? What are your hopes for the future?

We want to hear from you! Tell us what you would like to read in **Blessed & Broken** and suggest a theme for future issues. Write to us at 2434 S. California Ave., Chicago, IL 60608.

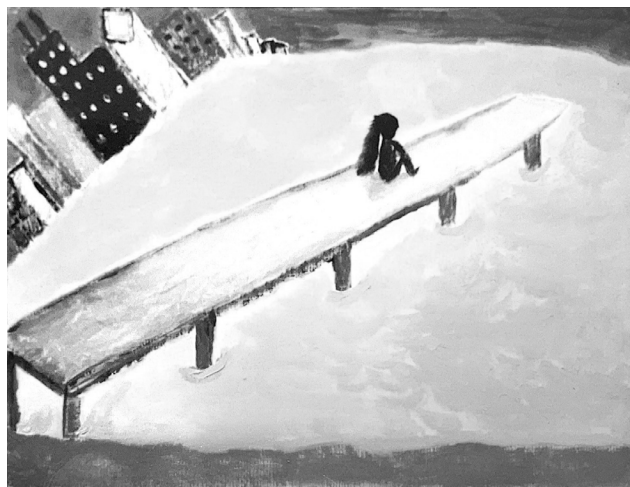
Know that you are in our prayers, especially during this Christmas season. God bless, The Staff and Volunteers at Kolbe House

Interactive Feature: Three Words from Pope Francis

Pope Francis has called the Catholic Church around the world to explore how God is calling us to grow in three areas: **Communion, Participation, and Mission**. What do these three words mean to you? What would you want Pope Francis and the worldwide Church to hear from families impacted by incarceration? Write to us at Kolbe House and share your ideas!

Solitude

by Samantha P.



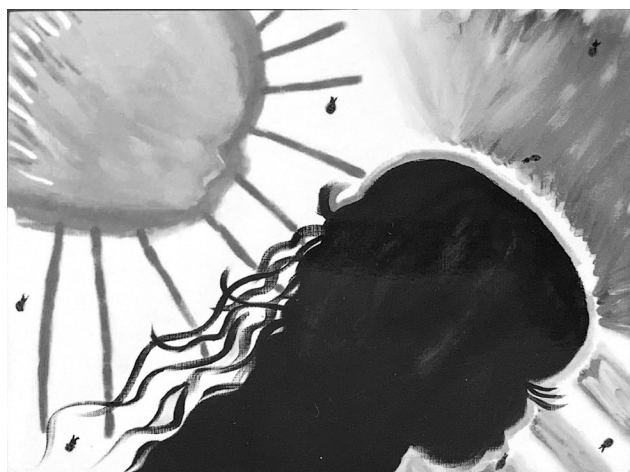
Te Amo Para Siempre

by Luis A.



Daddy Love - Guardian Angel

by Salimat C.



Editorial Statement

Blessed & Broken is a creative arts ministry of Kolbe House, the Jail Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago. It provides a platform for those who are impacted by incarceration to share stories of brokenness and blessing.

Blessed & Broken seeks to amplify the voices of people on the inside to reach their peers, as well as audiences on the outside. We encourage you to submit original poetry, short stories, and visual art for publication. By submitting your work to Kolbe House, you give permission for publication.

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