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# TWO ROADS



Passions & Aspirations:  
Narratives of Purpose



An honest chronicle of the stories and service of the incarcerated women and men of the Illinois Department of Corrections



# *ATTENTION* *READERS*

Although Two Roads e-zine is produced in Kewanee Re-Entry Center, it is a state-wide platform for **ALL** confined contributors and voices. Through sharing your personal stories, you enlighten, inspire, empower, grow and heal. One could argue that prison itself is trauma — silence, “falling back,” and being content with invisibility could be a symptom.

Therefore, flip the script by proudly affirming your humanity and maximizing this opportunity to narrate your resilience by contributing your writings and poetry. ***However, we strongly ask that you limit your personal expressions to the chosen topic and requested length.*** (See back pages for the details for upcoming topics: **Trauma**, **Truth & Sentencing**, and **HERstory**).

# *Two Roads*

## *Mission Statement*

*“We are committed to empowering those most impacted by harmful systems to become servant leaders and agents of change. Using the connecting, restorative power of stories, we hope to do our small part in bringing us all together to overcome societal ills such as violence, poverty and mass incarceration.”*

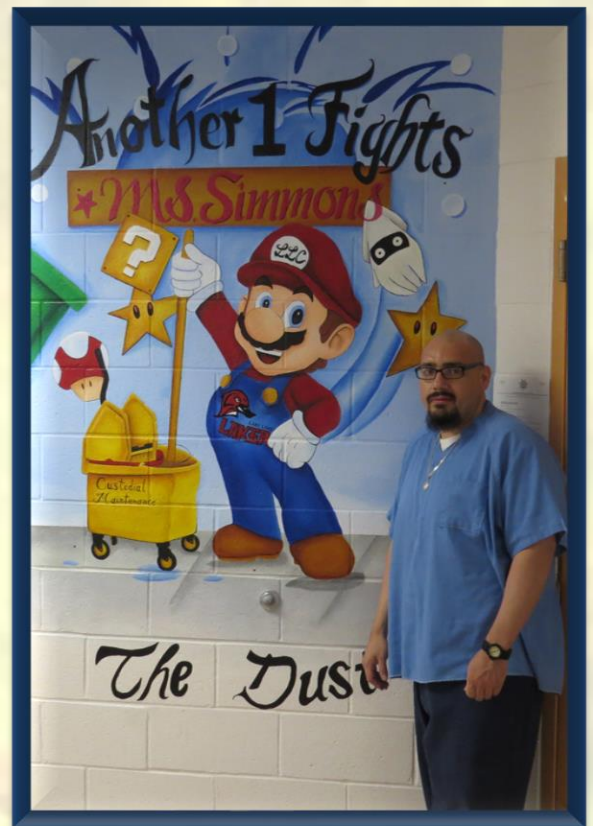


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Artist: Jose' Leal

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Courtesy of:  
Kewanee Black History Committee

# TWO ROADS

*(House Artist)*

**Charles Murray**





# Guest Contributor

## Educator Wilson

According to Merriam Webster, “passion” refers to a **strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement either for something or about doing something**. Another word for passion is drive. What drives you to do what you do? Is it your family? Kids? Spouse or significant other? Or is it internal? It should be.

Passion and drive are about an internal force within oneself. Those outside of ourselves may inspire us to do things, to work harder, to push further, etcetera, but they are not our passions. No one gives you a passion, people are not passions. You are either interested in something or not. Most of the time a person’s passion is something that is only about them and makes them feel like a “whole” person. This, for example, is why people are willing to take on levels of education and career paths that their families do not understand.

When we are children, we are taught that selfishness is a negative thing, we are told not be selfish and to think about others. However, the conversation that never happens is that not all selfishness is a bad thing. If we do not think about ourselves and look after our own needs, our personal well-being, mental health, emotional health, our psychological state is compromised; we can’t be whole people.

# Guest Contributor (cont.)

Therefore, so many of us are spending our adulthoods recovering from our childhood because we were not taught to feel or deal with anything in a real way. We were taught that our feelings, desires, and interests are not important, but others are. We are adults that can not get in touch with our own feelings, process our feelings, or regulate our own emotions because we are not taught not to.

So, how does this relate to passion? If you don't know how you feel, if you can't find enough space in your head and heart, if you have not yet figured out who or what you want to be, you can't identify what your passion is. If your identity is wrapped up in others, then you have no idea who you are. If you do not know who you are, you can't be all that you can for you or anyone else, and you will never find your passion.

Too many of us are worried about making our families proud. The truth is, there is not an adult alive who has not disappointed their family or parents in some way. You can have all the education, the good jobs, make good money, have a nice home, and still there will always be something that does not please others. STOP thinking about what others think, worry about you first. Thinking about others when you should have focused on what was best for you is a big part of why you are probably sitting there reading this.

## **Selfishness can be positive!**

Many of you are on a personal journey to become your best self, others have not begun that journey but when you do be selfish for the good, be selfish so that you can be better for those you love, but most importantly, be selfish so that you can figure out what is most important to you (your passion) and manifest that energy to become the person you were meant to be.





## Editor's Note

### Keith P. Talley

The entire *Two Roads* editorial team were excited to get to this issue: Passions & Aspirations. It is our hope that you will find these humble accounts to be encouraging enough to lean into your own current passion, inspirational enough to nurture your future aspirations, and insightful enough to begin the journey to find your own personal passionate space. As for my personal journey, being passionate about something or about any future endeavor has always escaped me . . . until recently.

I'm no cheerleader for Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center—my politics lean more towards prison abolition rather than prison reform, but boy, I sure am grateful to have this opportunity. Yes, the food is hotter, the water is wetter, and colorful rainbows radiate from the ubiquitous smiles of both staff and the confined.

But seriously, the least restrictive environment and culture has liberated me from the spiritual, psychological and emotionally taxing parts of experiencing confinement. Consequently, as a result of not being weighted down and burdened with the questionably arbitrary “#\$(!@#” of daily prison life, my time, energy, and focus is now directed to using the meaningful resources available to me to acquire the tools for forging a self-directed future full of purpose, productivity, and service (shout-out to the mission-driven staff, peer facilitators and a host of change agents).

# Editor's Note (cont.)

I only share this to highlight the GOD-directed circumstances that contributed to me discovering **ME**, and thereby experiencing for the first time a sense of passion about an aspirational vision, including the critical small steps—fraught with setbacks, struggle and sacrifice—that are necessary to actualize it.

After being gifted with no longer being plagued by trauma-induced fear, entrenched self-limiting beliefs, and veils of informational ignorance, I now have a “keep you awake at night” passion for **entrepreneurship**. Not only is working for yourself rated the number one employment option for reentering citizens, but it is a conceivable and realistically attainable means of achieving financial and material independence.

Additionally, and more broadly, my personal independence will enable me to explore additional opportunities that will empower me to generate passive, residual and generational wealth—support organizations and institutions that align with my values—and provide viable employment opportunities for others who are ready to build a life of choices instead of chances.

**I am a 55-year-old re-re-re-repeat offender with a 1980's “N” number who has finally AWAKENED! And although I am in the latter chapters of the book that is my life, it is that very DESPERATION that serves as the fuel for propelling me with passion towards my DESTINATION!**





# Finding My Passion

## Byron Jones

Most of the time when you ask someone what they are **passionate** about, the answer results in “I don’t know”, or “I’m not sure.” That’s partly because we don’t give ourselves the time to sit, think, and reflect on what it is in this life that truly makes us happy. Being **passionate** is having a strong feeling or constant regard and dedication for something or someone. It’s that desire to see something all the way through with an enthused effort. It’s also when you go to sleep thinking about today’s accomplishment and how you can add to it, then wake up eager to fulfill that addition.

Growing up, you’re not taught to seek out what you’re **passionate** about because most likely our parents weren’t taught it either. As a kid, you see people struggle and do what’s necessary to survive, so you adopted that same mentality. Figuring out what you want to do with your life and discovering what brings you joy wasn’t in the cards. Such self-awareness takes time, and when you’re in a “survive by any means” environment, a false illusion of happiness takes precedence over what you truly feel internally. It’s only when you mature, gain wisdom, and have time to reflect on your experiences that you can determine what you may be **passionate** about. Such meaning is achieved by asking yourself **what is my purpose here on this earth?**

As a kid, using what I defined as **passionate**, I would’ve thought I was **passionate** about playing sports. If I had it my way, I would’ve played basketball every day. But through my father’s dictation of my life, I was forced to go to sleep and wake up with construction on my mind.

# Finding My Passion (cont.)

So, although it was forced upon me, after a while I developed a strong feeling for doing construction. So much so, when I was in high school, I took up carpentry for my vocational class and looked forward to going voluntarily.

Then, while incarcerated with the chance to choose a vocational, I took it again. This time I leveled up and was the foreman on a project that built five houses for **Habitat 4 Humanity**. I enthusiastically enjoyed that class, and it inspired me to dive more into the construction and the examination of Real Estate as a whole. It became my answer to what am I **passionate** about. Even with 10 years left, once I was released, I knew my career would revolve around Real Estate.

Before coming to Kewanee, I was around guys who exhibited what walking in your passion looked like. My brothers King Moosa and Shamiyah breathed, ate, slept, and woke up with creative expressions through rap, spoken word, drawings, and scripts on their mind. And when opportunities presented themselves for them to showcase their work (books, released music), they thrived effortlessly because they had already been walking in their **reality of unique purpose. They had already answered what they were passionate about . . . .**

Then I came to Kewanee. This experience opened my eyes to the reality of what I thought was passion but was once again a false illusion of happiness. Being around the energy of **passionate** actions on a daily basis made me sit, think, and reflect on what it is I'm truly **passionate** about. I watched the guys who created *Kewanee Horizons*, and the new editor-in-chief of *Two Roads* come down here and hit the ground running taking advantage of this place. And they didn't take advantage for themselves; they did it to open the eyes of the individuals here who couldn't clearly see the abundance of opportunities afforded to us.

More importantly, they did it to give back to a community they left months ago, so they could bring you this experience in some form and share it. All you see is the finished product, but I see the dedicated time, drive, sacrifice, and effort put in every day to bring you these issues, all because they are passionate about giving back. Indeed, these Servants of Humanity inspired me to revisit and re-access what I was passionate about, for I saw myself in them.

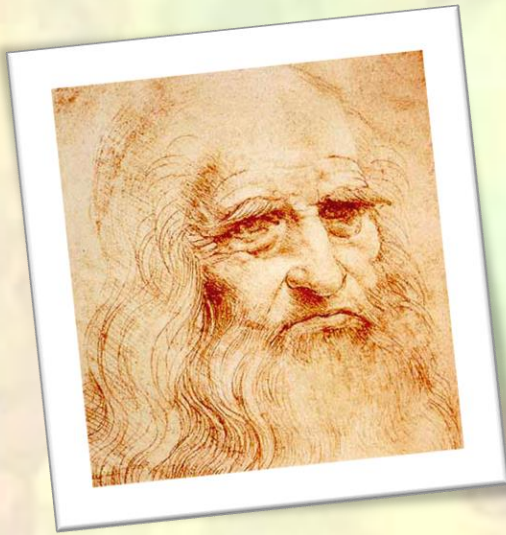
# Finding My Passion (cont.)

What I realized is . . . I wasn't passionate about Real Estate! I was more Passionate about what can be created through Real estate . . . . **GENERATIONAL WEALTH.** I go to sleep and wake up thinking about the avenues that lead to entrepreneurship. I go to sleep and wake up thinking about how can I impact the world, give back, and leave places better than they were when I came. My reality is: I'm enthusiastically **PASSIONATE** about creating a **LEGACY** in whichever form it comes.

“WHEN U GO HARD, PEOPLE TELL U TO RELAX; THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT **PASSION** MAKES THAT IMPOSSIBLE.”  
J.COLE

*As he transitions to the next stage in his journey, all of us here on the Kewanee campus thank Mr. Jones for his selfless leadership and service.*

# Mr. Crew Cut



## Leo Cardez

There is nothing exactly like living in Hell, but there is something close to it. In my Hell, where I lived for most of 2013, there is—as Dante understood—no hope. You wake up every morning realizing that your nightmare will continue into your waking hours. There is no healing, no improvement; but even more important, there is no possibility of any to come. The most unbearable thing about your unbearable life is that you will always be forced to bear it.

Now cut to Mr. Crew Cut, an elderly man from the greatest generation who volunteered to teach creative writing and journaling on my jail wing. He carried himself as if on his own weather event. When he spoke, people froze in their spots as if Jesus himself were in the room. He wore a beret, ascot, and handkerchief – matching and bold.

In other words, he was extra Air Force.

Writing was hard for me; my senses had lain dormant for so long I couldn't express what I was feeling. Jail always felt like a place where nothing happens. Life is elsewhere. When I did write I was angry. Trauma lived on the edges of every story.

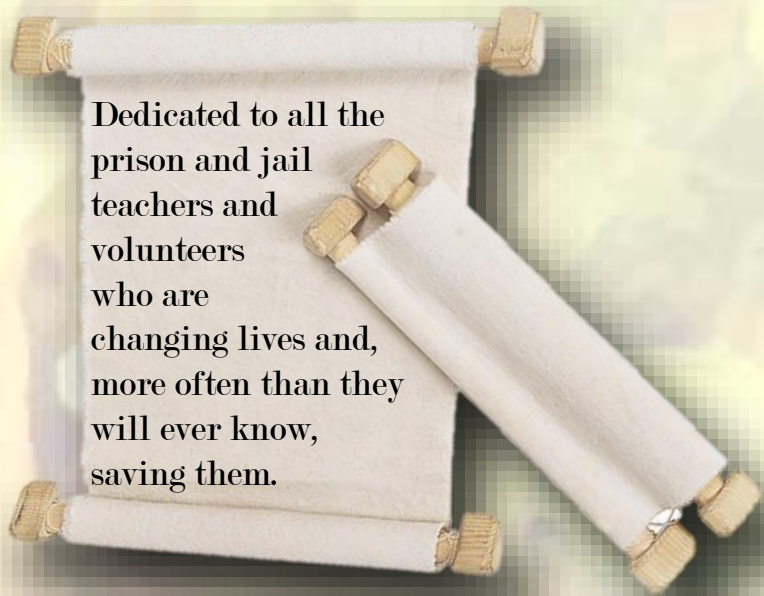
I didn't realize honest writing will tear your guts out. Like when I saw the pain and shame in my mother's eye when she came to visit me, knowing it was my fault—and worse, I could do nothing to help her. That feeling of helplessness was like being stuck in a barrel at the bottom of the ocean with no options. There was nothing worse. Keep writing, Mr. Crew Cut insisted to the class, cut deep, close to the bone. **And I did.**

# Mr. Crew Cut (cont.)

Fast forward five years. I was eventually transferred to prison, but I kept most of my early writing from Mr. Crew Cut's class. As I reread my earliest journal entries, I marveled at the hilariously flawed, petty, unhappy person I was. But Mr. Crew Cut never stopped trying to uplift me. Today, in retrospect, I can see that when I did my best to make things better—every now and then—I succeeded. Writing has helped me see and appreciate my circumstances in a whole new light.

**See, writing wasn't a diversion for me; it was my church because it offered salvation in the promise of change. Escaping Hell is difficult, but with enough effort, grace, and the generosity of spirit of angels that live among us, it can be done.**

When my parents wrote to tell me they were proud of me on my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, I wept. I wept again after reading a reader's note regarding an essay I had written about mental health in prison. They wrote, in part, "You helped me see that I was beautiful from the inside out and find what I had been searching for, though not in the places I had been looking." Writing, and specifically Mr. Crew Cut, has taught me how to look inward in order to look forward once again to the next chapter to my own life.

A scroll with text and two rolled-up scrolls. The scroll is unrolled and has text on it. There are two other scrolls rolled up next to it.

Dedicated to all the  
prison and jail  
teachers and  
volunteers  
who are  
changing lives and,  
more often than they  
will ever know,  
saving them.

The background of the page is a collage of US dollar bills, including a \$100 bill and a \$20 bill, arranged in a way that suggests movement and value. The bills are slightly blurred and overlap each other, creating a sense of depth and texture. The colors are muted, with a focus on the green and grey tones of the currency.

# Embracing Your Passion

**Kenji Haley**

When it comes to passion, there are many ways to embrace this definition. For example, a person can have a passion for love. At the same time, a person can have a passion for hate. Typically, when one thinks of passion, it comes from a place of dedication, strong desire and motivation.

One thing that I am passionate about is the stock market. Now, I'm far from the professional, but when I first opened up the book "Investing for Dummies" in 2016, I became hooked. I wanted to know all about what stocks were, why they mattered and how I could be involved in them. What I learned was far, far greater. I was brought into a whole new world, in which I was able to control my own destiny, become further educated and to create something far greater than generational wealth!!

My passion for finance taught me discipline. It led me to read multiple books on the stock market, day-trading, options, and index investing. I would take it everywhere I went: to work, gym, yard, and commissary (as I waited to be called). It taught me structure and it gave me insight into something that I didn't even notice: "Why wasn't I ever educated on financial literacy as a kid?"

As an incarcerated individual, I feel that it is necessary for me to have these tools as I prepare for the world. We live in a time of transactions. Money is moved through paper and plastic, and it is easy to spend it as quickly as you get it. So my passion has also taught me restraint.



# Embracing Your Passion (cont.)

For example: Is it important to me to have the next fresh sneakers? Should I spend all the money that my loved ones have sent me in the commissary, buying all the wet packs? Nope! I was like that, but six years later I have stepped into improved principals of finance. I buy things when I truly need them and not want them. I budget myself to have something just in case things get tough for those who are able to support me.

As for the stocks, I understood how to read the stock tickers. I know that the “VIX” stands for Volatility Index. I understand when they use jargon like “choppy” or “dry powder.” I have read books by Benjamin Graham, Peter Lynch, Dave Ramsey and Warren Buffett. I watch CNBC and read the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Barron's* (newspaper) or **ANYTHING** I can get my hands on regarding the stock market seven days a week! Lastly, I'm thankful for all the conversations I get to have with Robert “Bulldog” Kennedy (author of the *Kewanee Horizons* “The Market Corner”) as we go on for hours discussing what we love!!

My take home message to you is this:  
Whatever it is that you see as fun,  
educational, and you can't get enough of it,  
and is legal . . . then this is your passion.  
**Embrace it and do all you can to make  
the most of it!**

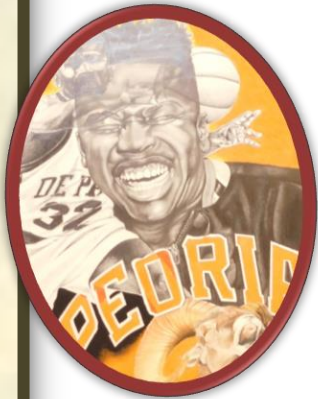
# A Heart for Art



## Charles Murray

I was inspired to draw long before I could ever drive. In grade school was when I figured out – detail. I’m just crazy about detail. I loved super heroes and being muscular. So I drew a lot of muscles. I thought I was cool, so I loved to draw the ladies.

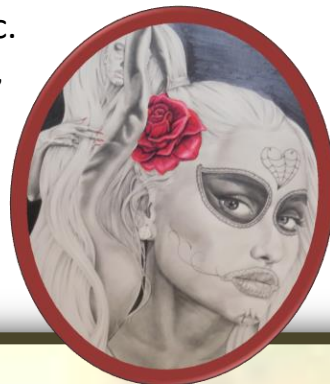
In high school was when I started to see that I had the heart for art. I realized how it made people stop what they were doing to see. I saw how happy people felt when they received a portrait, and I loved to make people happy with that. With art, it just feels good to cook up an idea and bring it to life. I like to make my portraits **BREATHE!**



Once I see something or someone describes what they want me to draw, my mind starts to flicker. I start thinking of things like . . . “what can I do here and what color goes here?” With art, you gotta “want to do it!”

What drives me is when someone says or tells me that I can’t do something. When I’m doubted, I can’t help but go for it. So when I was told that I can’t use color pencil . . . I did it! “You can’t do chalk” . . . I did that! “You can’t do oil pastel” . . . been there! I was told that I can’t paint, I only use pencil; in less than a month, I learned to paint – oil and acrylic.

All that stuff about the things that I can’t do, maybe it’s because I haven’t seen it. All that chatter gave and gives me the drive that I have. I guess that’s part of how I developed my passion for art.





## Aspire 2 Inspire

### Curtis Sanders

Growing up I never really had the same aspirations of most young men (doctor, lawyer, astronaut, first responder, or professional athlete). I'm sure that if I had attempted, I may have been successful, but for me, those would have been side accomplishments to my truest desires.

I simply wanted to be a good husband, father, and provider for my family. So much in fact, that when asked in my senior yearbook, "Where do you see yourself in 10 years?", I gave the same answer. I felt that such a life goal is what would make me happiest in life.

My parents were never married. I grew up in Roseland (Chicago) with my mom and three brothers, while my father lived in Harvey with my step-mom and sisters. I grew up very much loved and provided for. I had daily interactions with my father until he became incarcerated in my sophomore year in high school. He and I still had a wonderful relationship during his time away, and still do today. Now, I'm the incarcerated one, and he is free.

From what my wife says, I'm a good husband. My six kids say that I am a great father and grandfather. As far as a good provider, I was extremely good because I had learned over the years that being a provider is more than just financial obligations.

## Aspire 2 Inspire (cont.)

With all that, it seems that all the aspirations from my youth were fulfilled, but as with time, aspirations evolve. I now aspire to be the man GOD intended for me to be. Don't worry, I'm not about to get super spiritual on you, but the reality is that GOD has had a plan for my life before I may have even been a thought.

I have "did ME" for years, and because of me doing whatever I chose to do, a penalty is incarceration. Some might see it as a negative thing; however, I see it as GOD using whatever HE had to do to get my attention—and I accept that. I was out there bad, and prison was the lesser of the two evils that the street life provides as a penalty.

At times I'm amazed I'm still alive, but again GOD had a plan for my life. Who knows, this may be the reason for the way my life has played out, to inspire you or someone else that if Curt/Tron/Jr./Pooh can change, then anyone can.

All I know is that everyday I wake up, I have a chance to be better than I was yesterday. To do my part to add positivity to the world. So, I aspire to inspire change.

Be Blessed





# The Card Guy

## Jaime Hernandez

There was a time early in my bit where passion and aspirations weren't even thought of. Fast forward two decades, my passions and aspirations are what drive me. You see, I'm the "Card Guy" and I love drawing cards. So much so that it never bores me. I get a rush out of coming up with ideas for cards that nobody else has thought of. I love making cards for guys around the facility that are relatable to the lives we're all currently living. I know how important staying connected with your loved ones is, and sending out cards is one of the oldest and most reliable forms of communication for an individual in custody.

The passion that I have for making cards has become more than just a side hustle or a way to pass time: it's turned into an aspiration of possibly becoming a business upon my release. The thought of turning my love of making cards into a business was just that, a thought.

I'm currently participating in **DEFY VENTURES** entrepreneurial program; this program is teaching me so much about myself, starting a small business, and what it takes to succeed. The tools I'm learning in DEFY are better equipping me to turn what I thought was just "a thought" into something truly achievable.



# Rock Steady

## Khaaliq Smith



### **AS-SALAAMU ALAIKUM (Peace be upon you)**

Hello sisters and brothers, one of my passions is holistic health and fitness. Over the years I have been exercising my mind and body; however, I haven't exercised my spirit as I should have.

Understandably, what good does it do for a man to have a strong muscular body with a limited intellect and filthy soul?

So, I started to exercise my mind just like I was exercising my soul. A balanced, God-fearing person should also take care of his body, and promote its good health and strength by eating with moderation and exercising regularly.

I currently find myself with a full workload. Since health and wellness is my passion, I thought I'd share my story about how to find time to stay active. So, despite my busy schedule including school, work, and Islamic studies, I am intentional in finding time to get my workout in. Throughout my busy day, I nurture my spirit by constantly remembering GOD. Without question, my ability to lift over 315 lbs. or pass my math test would not be possible without Allah's Grace.

"Rock Steady" is my motto, and balanced health and wellness is my goal. I'm sure, whether I'm confined or free, this will remain my passion, and help lead to my success in this life and the next.



# New Beginnings

## Ronnie Carrasquillo

Walking into the New Year faithfully, so that my passion for prayer continues to grow. That I live daily for GOD's Kingdom agenda of "Loving GOD first and Loving my neighbor as myself." As an intercessor, I pray over others; whether it's for their physical liberty, mental liberty, health, healing, family reconciliation, or overcoming their doubt/fear, I intercede so that visions can be seen of a positive future where a new walk begins in that higher spirit of Love.

The walk of faith takes COURAGE, for challenges will arise. It takes CONSISTENCY, because some battles will be won and some lost. One must be known as committed; there is no quitting! Doing what is right says CREDIBILITY—live up to your word. These are qualities of a CHRISTIAN who loves.

In my zeal to help (Love) others as I love myself, I aspire to change the INJUSTICES that plague our lives, injustices such as: Hate, Fear, Pride, Anger, Racism, Social Injustice, Judicial Injustice and Political Injustice.

**While keeping my relationship with GOD constant, I pray over interest groups that place their concerns for RESTORATIVE JUSTICE at the forefront—pray for those who believe in the practice to "Restore the Offender to Useful Citizenship"—pray for those who minister to transform lives so the better "Foundations for Life" can be built—pray for those in government who have the power to govern over the people. This is RADICAL PRAYER; this is to be aspired to. Amen**



## Parallels of Life

### Demario R. Brooms

It is extremely rare that a person's current passions and their future aspirations are in tandem, however, mine are. The reason behind this synchronization is that they both involve and revolve around family. My *family is everything* to me as is represented by the tattoo, "Familia Es Todo," that I proudly wear across my chest. These were always my feelings because of lessons taught to me by my great-grandmother, Helen Graine Faulk, a.k.a. "Mama". Her daughter, my grandmother, Vivian Covington, a.k.a. "Granny," instilled the same values as they pertain to loved ones; subsequently, producing the depths of loyalty I possess.

If you have not realized it by now, my current passion and future aspirations are family. My incarceration spans just shy of 21 years, with a little under 2 ½ years left to serve. Like everyone in my position who has served a lot of time, there are people that won't be there when I come home. "Mama," "Granny," and my dad ("Biddy") are just a few that I have lost during this journey. They are unable to see this version of me, at least not in the physical form.

Besides both my daughter, "Lady" (25), and my nephew, "DJ" (23), were toddlers when I left...I've been gone since she was four and he was two. Missing the majority of their lives and all of their monumental moments thus far hurts me to the core. I find some solace in the fact that they had me for a little bit and I'll be home to them soon. My family has grown a lot in my absence; I'm an uncle to one nephew and five nieces who were not born prior to my incarceration.



## Parallels of Life (cont.)

I've missed the entirety of their lives which haunts me. I am now a grandfather and "G-Baby" (short for grandbaby because I haven't come up with a better nickname for him), my only grandchild, will soon be a year old; he'll be three by the time I come home.

Then, there's my mom, she is hanging on by a thread, her health is and has been on the decline for some time now as she battles Alzheimer's and dementia. Watching your "Superwoman" deteriorate, becoming a shell of the woman she once was, brings about a hurt that you can't describe. Personally, it makes me think of all of the mental and emotional pain I caused her with my defiance as a child. Things got compounded when I was arrested in 2002 and later sentenced, in 2004, to 54 years in IDOC (to be served at 50%). I was the one son (of her four sons) that she could call on at any time, for anything. Selfishly, it is my hope and prayer that she hangs on until my release.

I'm seeking redemption. I failed my mom and the entirety of my family that needed me, in whatever capacity that may have been, as I sat and continue to sit in prison. I hate that the newcomers to the family have to know of me and get to know me while in prison. However, I am thankful for the relationships we share. I am not my worst judgment, but the product it produced. The cycle ends right where it began...with me! I will passionately carry the torch of my family, mending the pain (that that is mendable) with love, temperance, forgiveness, and grace.

**FAMILIA ES TODO!**



# Passion & Ambition

## Marcus Harris

We all have eager desires to achieve something. That's our ambition, and it differs from person to person. It correlates strongly with our passions. A person whose passion is drawing may have ambitions of becoming a famous artist. A person whose passion is sports may have ambitions of becoming a sports analyst. **My passion is teaching.**

In the summer of 2009, while in college, I got into some legal issues. I bonded out of Cook County Jail and returned to school continuing my education. I graduated a year later with an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts but chose not to pursue education further because my future was in limbo. I didn't know when I was going to prison and for how long.

During my incarceration, I completed several print-based and online courses from Ohio University and Adler University, and soon discovered that I wanted to pursue my education by earning Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English. I enjoy learning and educating others, and English is my primary language. With a Master's, I can teach English at the high school or collegiate level. Did you know that only **2%** of educators in America are Black men? I want to increase that number. I taught myself how to speak proper Spanish; therefore, I don't have to limit my teaching and location options. I can teach English and Spanish in America or abroad.

During the interview process, I'll need to show the interviewer how ambitious I am. They should believe after the interview that they **NEED** me because they know my passion will change the school's culture and atmosphere. My passion for teaching will be so infectious that the armed robberies in my background shouldn't affect their decision. But if it does, there's Plan B.

# Passion & Ambition (cont.)

Being ambitious, one has to have multiple plans, or several smaller plans building up to the grand one. If my criminal history blocks my teaching plans, I'd give Plan B my full attention.

When I'm transferred to a work-release center, I'll become a car salesman for a year to earn money. I'll use that money to invest in myself. I'm learning about the stock market from a buddy of mine, Robert "Bulldog" Kennedy, and how I need to take risks while being smart and patient when investing.

Earning money from the stock market will be a second source of income. I'll complete a course to earn a real estate broker's license. Using the money saved from selling cars, I'll purchase foreclosed homes and renovate and sell them. Every tenth property purchased, I'll keep after renovating and rent to tenants; whether it's a single or multi-family home, condo, or an apartment building, it's another source of income.

After moving on from the car dealership, I'd have three sources of income: flipping houses, renting property, and the stock market. The money earned will be used to start a daycare center for children 6 weeks-13 years old. I'd be a silent partner while my future wife handles the day-to-day operations.

Once the daycare is flourishing and we're in the green after expenses, the money earned will be used to purchase a local fast-food restaurant like Wendy's or McDonalds. Only **6%** of fast-food franchisees are Black. A franchisee is a person who's granted a franchise. For example, if you're a Domino's Pizza franchisee, you don't own the entire Domino's Pizza Corporation, just the store front. I want to own several fast-food restaurants, and I want to increase the number of Black franchisees.

The money I'll earn will be used to purchase a hotel like Best Western or the Holiday Inn Express. Out of the 120,456 hotels in America, only 523 are Black-owned, which is **.43%**. That's less than half of 1 percent. Yes, I said **LESS THAN HALF OF 1 PERCENT**. That's unacceptable. I want to increase that statistic as well.

# Passion & Ambition (cont.)

I'll use all my sources of income to build a private school called Marcus Academy of Higher Learning (grades 1-12). I want to develop a curriculum where all M.A. students will be tri-lingual, financially literate, technology literate and business savvy—learning about how different cultures, not just one, built and shaped America.

My Plan B is separated in phases because it's a 30-year plan that consists of six different sources of income. It may sound outrageous, but it's achievable. Everything I'm learning about planning and financial literacy from family, friends, other individuals in custody, and Mr. Price (Financial Lit. instructor here at Kewanee), will help me build credit and wealth. When I learn something, I want to teach others about it. Credit and wealth aren't built in a day, and I'm patient, persistent, and ambitious. Not to mention, I have major self-control and self-discipline.

*Some of us have a reputation of being a bug because we're passionate about something and can't stop thinking and speaking about the master plan. Embrace being a bug. The same people, who labeled us bugs and thought our passion and ambition was comical, will tell everyone how they knew us once we're successful.*

**Give YOUR life, your ALL.**





# “Moore” Fitness

## Daniel Moore

For some time, I have nurtured a passion for becoming a Personal Trainer. I would love to be a motivating force in the lives of those who are striving for strength, health, and beauty. At a young age I discovered how to sculpt the body from being out of shape – to getting into shape.

It was sort of by force when I first started working out. I started my journey of incarceration at a young age by going in and out of I.Y.C. as a bony lil’ youngin’. I realized quickly that I had to get my weight up; during that process, I fell in love with seeing the results and feeling a sense of empowerment.

Now that I’m a more mature individual, I take my fitness and health very seriously, and I want to use my knowledge, technique, and passion by training, demonstrating, and giving others the proper tools and wisdom to reach their personal health goals. Although I have a distinctive and unconventional style, I will guarantee results over time.

My perspective about fitness is that 60% is mental and 40% is physical; fitness is a numbers game. It’s not all about how much you can lift, squat, and pull. Nor is it merely about how many miles you can jog, or the pull-ups, sit-ups, and crunches you can do, although those factors do play a major part in physical development.

# “Moore” Fitness (cont.)



There are other factors that have to be considered, like your calorie intake, the amount of water that you drink daily, the type of proteins and carbohydrates you put in your body—not to mention your oxygen level, blood sugar and diet. Lastly, the mental discipline to control how much and when you eat is just as pivotal.

Throughout our community, I have worked out with some of the best of them, they know how seriously I take my health and fitness. They know how passionate that I am, but I want to take it to another level by educating myself properly. Consequently, I am working to get enrolled in a correspondence course with the International Sports and Science Association (ISSA). As I make progress, I'll keep you all posted.

I hope that I have inspired you all to go for whatever it is that you're passionate about. May the Blessings of the MOST HIGH be with you all.



## Discovery

### Carlos D. McDougal

My passion is writing. The thought of me becoming a writer was so far-fetched I didn't believe it myself—it wasn't until I was going through my mother's things that I even considered writing. You see, I found this book of poetry that I thought was written by a professional, but to my surprise it was in fact my mother's writing. This amazed me to the point that that night I sat down and tried my hand at writing my first poem. I didn't show it to anybody, but I didn't like it, so I continued to write until I felt it was good enough to show my mother. I remember being extremely afraid; this was new for me, and I desperately wanted her to like it. I walked into her room calling out her name, voice shaky, hands trembling, but determined to get through it. I told her that I wanted to read this poem I wrote, and she said, "Boy when did you start writing poetry?" I didn't answer her question, I just recited my poem, and when she wouldn't immediately respond I thought it was horrible, but her lack of a verbal response was because she was crying. She hugged me and told me that it was beautiful, and to be honest I don't even remember what I wrote, but it gave me the courage to continue writing in secret. Of course, I couldn't let the fellas know that I write poetry—I would have been ridiculed, called soft, and at that time I was more afraid of the opinions of my peers than the opinion of my mother.

# Discovery (cont.)

I continued to write, and if I'm being honest, I continued to get better and the feeling I got from it was so intoxicating I couldn't stop—that was until my older cousin found one of my notebooks and put on a show for my entire family, and as I walked in the room the words I'd written from my heart were being mocked. And as they laughed, the angrier I became, and it was in that moment I decided to put up my poetry hat for good. Four years later while incarcerated in the county jail the fire that I thought my family had extinguished was relit and grew bigger with each poem that I wrote. I would write when I was bored, I would write to release anger, I wrote to show the people I loved how much I loved them and so it began that the passion for writing poetry grew into my passion for writing period.

Since that day I found my mother's poetry, I've discovered a world I didn't know even existed within me. The power of my words has taken me to the precipices of the beginning of my new life after shedding the skin of the old one. Now that I've found my voice within my writing, I aspire to become one of the greatest if not THE GREATEST who ever touched pen to paper and to honor my mother and grandmother who pushed me to always believe in myself. To My grandmother who is my reason for living, literally, I hope you're proud of me, because I now know and believe I'm smarter than what I thought or ever gave myself credit for.



# The Social Aviator



## Antonio Aguirre

As a child, I used to dream about flying above the clouds alongside the eagles and the falcons. I thought, *wow, this has got to be the truest form of freedom*. Unfortunately, the realization that I was never going to fly sunk in. So, I focused my attention on a more attainable strategy for pursuing my passions and aspirations.

In the mid-80s, a “Break Dance” revolution began, and when I saw kids of my own age doing head spins, helicopters, windmills, and all kinds of gravity-defying stunts, I thought, *now this is as close to flying as I’ll get*. So, I immediately began practicing, and to my surprise, I really sucked! I see now why, they called it break dancing, because every time I fell, it felt like I broke something. I fell so many times on my head my friends started calling me “B-Boy Lumpy”! But the more I failed, the more I was determined to get good at it, so I stuck it out and eventually I became a formidable break dancer; I was able to execute many different styles of acrobatic moves, like the spinning crab walk and the lazy aviator.

After a while, our crew began battling other crews for recognition and respect. All of this was extremely exciting and fun, not to mention that our hood-celebrity status was making us a very hot commodity to the ladies. But like all things that start good, it all ended too soon and badly. My mom and I found ourselves homeless again, and I needed to help pay for food and rent.

Although breakdancing was one of my first passions, it did not provide us with the financial security and the leisure time needed to pursue those dreams. My days as a flying acrobat were put on the back burner. It’s funny how reality always seems to take priority over everything else, right!

# The Social Aviator (cont.)

As time went by and I became an adult serving in the armed forces, I found myself moonlighting, after-hours, as a night club promoter. I admit, at first, it was just a ploy to make it more convenient for me to hook up with chicks. But then I realized the profitability factor of my ventures. Most importantly, I began to notice how much I really enjoyed hosting events, Dance Crew Face-Offs, DJ Battles and celebratory parties. It started to become quite clear to me what my true passions were, and before i knew it, I had succeeded in becoming a very successful event producer and planner in a short amount of time.

Even now, so many years later, I still wish nothing more than to be of service to others by providing them with a wonderful and celebratory event that brings family, friends and/or business associates together to share joyous moments, memories and the possibility of a life-changing opportunity that may only come once in a lifetime, from going to a social networking event.

In conclusion, I sometimes find it very hard to understand how the universe works and how every phase, good or bad, is just another moment to acquire skills to be utilized at a later period in your life. But regardless of my ups and downs, I am certain that one of my main purposes in life is to bring people together to share joyous memories that will last them a lifetime. This will now and always be one of my truest passions and aspirations.



**Meh**

## A Contributor

I am suspicious of passion. Frankly, I don't trust those who have it. Passionate people tend to be eager to sacrifice just about anything in service to their passions, and I tend to rate pretty highly on others' scales of expendability.

I have no real passions. I cannot sustain that degree of emotional energy. I do have enthusiasms and have been fortunate to discover an activity that encompasses several of them: computer coding.

Code is language, and I like language. I have fun using it and have an eye for its intricacies. I appreciate lexical precision. I enjoy proofreading and copyediting. Coding demands these aptitudes. Unlike most publications, code will not run with errant apostrophes, mangled syntax, or misplaced truth statements. Coding language interpreters (the code that runs code) are finicky and unforgiving readers. They are punctilious about punctuation. They read only what I write. There is no telling the computer, "You know what I was trying to say," because to the computer, there is no trying—there is only doing.

The strict demands of the interpreter do not prohibit play or creativity. So long as I adhere to its rules, I am given infinite latitude for solving problems. Some solutions are more efficient than others, or more effective. A few are elegant. (Though, sadly, the most elegant are sometimes the least efficient.)

# Meh (cont.)

Coding requires algorithmic problem-solving. This procedural, step-by-tiny-tiny-step approach is powerful. It lets me take huge, seemingly intractable problems, and untangle them strand by strand. Sometimes I need to pick at the problem awhile before the strands reveal themselves, but when they do, a solution is all but guaranteed. (If Alexander had had a coder with him when he encountered the Gordian knot, he wouldn't have needed his sword.) Watching a coding problem unravel under my fingertips is one of the most satisfying experiences I have had.

Though I would not call my enthusiasm for coding a passion, I would be thrilled if I can find a way to do it for a living, to find some niche where I can gainfully apply my admittedly meager skills. I would be astounded to earn a paycheck doing something I enjoy so much, even if it turns out to be the coding equivalent of dishwashing or ditch-digging.



# These Eyes of Mine

**John Williams**

Look into these eyes of mine,  
tell me what you see.  
Can you see the burning flame  
that burns inside of me?

Can you see my heart & soul?  
Can you understand?  
Can you see the love I have,  
for my fellow man?

Can you see the light that shines?  
Can you see the peace?  
Can you see the Path I've found,  
that makes my struggle cease?

# These Eyes of Mine (cont.)

Look into these eyes of mine,  
what is it that they show?  
Can you find that place in time,  
you'd someday like to go?

Look into these eyes of mine,  
tell me what you see?  
Can you see the ghetto kids,  
just trying to be free?

Can you see their broken hearts?  
Can you see their pain?  
Tell me can you see their tears,  
just falling like the rain?

Look into these eyes of mine,  
Can you see my soul?  
Can you see my outstretched  
hands,  
waiting for you to hold?



## My Affinity For The Next Generation

### Tyrone Delaney

**Hope** can be a fleeting wind for some, varying in degrees of intensity according to the season in which it blows. It can also be crafty, eluding capture like a hunted animal trying desperately to survive.

All too often, this is the condition that our children and their children (our grandchildren) face day in and day out. I am sure that not one of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with the effects (prisons) and does not grapple with the underlying causes (the environment).

It is my aspiration to be a mentor and community activist for at-risk youth. I aspire to be able to provide one-on-one mentoring, while supporting the critical social and emotional development needed to help build resilience and promote mental health in our violence riddled communities.

**Compassion grows out of empathy and being able to walk in someone else's shoes. I've felt the same pain that they feel and refuse to allow those that come behind me to suffer my ill fate – INCARCERATION.**

***FIRM EMBRACES***



# Two Roads



**Two Roads Tech Guru**  
Leondus Carter

## ***Two Roads*** **Mission Statement**

*“We are committed to empowering those most impacted by harmful systems to become servant leaders and agents of change. Using the connecting, restorative power of stories, we hope to do our small part in bringing us all together to overcome societal ills such as violence, poverty and mass incarceration.”*



# HERstory

(The Female Only Issue)

Kewanee's Two Roads e-zine is a restorative justice platform for marginalized voices, grounded in the principles of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Therefore, in honor of WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH, we invite all our sisters in confinement to share their unique perspectives, concerns, creative expressions and voices about WOMANHOOD, RESILIENCE & BECOMING with our thousands of confined and non-confined readers.

Mail Submissions AND Photos NOW, by:

**March 15, 2023**



**DO IT BIG  
LADIES !**

## Without staff support:

Mail submission, photo with name and title to:

*Attn: Ms. P. Rowan – Two Roads*

*Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center*

*2021 Kentville Road, Kewanee IL 61443*

*\*please note: we are unable to return photos*

## With staff support:

Have staff member electronically send submission and photo (if possible) to:

[penny.rowan@illinois.gov](mailto:penny.rowan@illinois.gov)

# TRAUMA ISSUE

Trauma is a response to a deeply distressing or life-threatening situation that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. Unhealthy responses to recognized or unrealized trauma could cause a person to embrace thinking, attitudes and behaviors that can lead them to prison, as well as cause them to be a traumatizing force in the life of others. For many of the confined—**MEANING US**—it's less about "What's wrong with us?" but rather "What happened to us?" **Please come and join the conversation as we shift our focus from merely looking at our traumatizing experiences to sharing our experiences of RESILIENCE AFTER TRAUMA.** No doubt, right now, there is someone who is struggling who would be encouraged and empowered by your story of taking personal responsibility for your recovery and moving beyond mere surviving, towards a life of purposeful thriving. We invite all men and women to submit.

Mail submissions NOW, or

by:

**March 15, 2023**

**With staff support:**

Have staff member electronically send submission and photo (if possible) to:

***penny.rowan@illinois.gov***

**Without staff support:**

Mail submission, photo with name and title to: *(please note: we are unable to return photos)*

***Attn: Ms. P. Rowan – Two Roads***

***Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center***

***2021 Kentville Road, Kewanee IL 61443***

# TRUTH & SENTENCING

The Two Roads e-zine's mission is simply to serve as a platform to tell our stories on a wide range of topics; indeed, our stories have value and power! We would like to share your unique story to our confined and non-confined readers, concerning the human toll, impact and trauma that the **Truth and Sentencing** law has had on the lives of you, your family, and your community. *Your family and friends can then share the link to the special issue with lawmakers, advocacy groups and other power-wielding stakeholders* (idoc home page → about → news → two roads [Name of Issue]).

***Although your insightful analysis, strong feelings and creative policy suggestions are real and deserve to be considered, this humble opportunity is limited to just compellingly relating your human story to other human beings, so that they may make courageous human decisions with our humanity in mind.***

**Mail Submissions NOW, by:**

**April 1, 2023**

**With staff support:**

(250-350 words max.)

Have staff member electronically send submission and photo (if possible) to:

***penny.rowan@illinois.gov***

**Without staff support:**

Mail submission, photo with name and title to:

***Attn: Ms. Penny Rowan – Two Roads  
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