

Ora et Labora

JOURNAL



Pray and Work – *A Journal of Liberation*

Issue No. 1 | August 2025

MISSION

Ora et Labora is a journal rooted in dignity, justice, & transformation. Latin for “Pray & Work,” we amplify the voices of those directly impacted by the American criminal legal system. Our mission is to cultivate a space for healing, advocacy, spirituality, resistance, & labor toward a freer nation. This newsletter is rooted in the belief that the balance of reflection & action—prayer & labor—is a powerful path to personal growth & collective healing. Whether you’re returning home from incarceration, supporting those who are, or simply striving for balance & purpose, *Ora et Labora* is your companion in the journey.

THE REBIRTH OF ORA

Ora et Labora started behind the now-shuttered gates of Mt. McGregor penitentiary. Up the mountain & behind those *gates*, there was a chapel. A historical landmark.

SPEAK OUT

Prison Leaves An Impression On Your Face.

The moment your nose hits that air,
Eyes stretch
A shot of the purest
Your skin.
I was a lucky one.
Captain Constant gave me a firm handshake,
Talked some upstate trash
Thanked me &
wished the best.

For years, I watched.
There was a window in Shaka & I's confinement quarters
We watched
Men released
no trash talking
Just back spins & wrist & ankle
shackling

I thought Constant was just trash-
talking,
Nahhhh....there was large up-north January snowflakes
fluttering
& no unmarked vehicles

I was a lucky one.

{in a slight surreal sense}

So much life was spent,

Like bitcoin,

Political investors sucking blood &

Sweat equity

For the chair.

~Seán Martín Dalpiaz

Racoon Man

~you aren't alone Joe L.

A KIND SPIRIT JOKES OF A PAWLESS RACCOON,
AS IF TO SILENTLY AGREE OUR LIVES ARE NOT THAT SERIOUS.
ALL HE WANTS TO DO IS TO SPEND TIME WITH A SOUL.

GLIMPSES OF A HIDDEN LOVE SPARK & DIZZY HIS STANCE
ANIMALS DO HAVE SOULS,

JUST ASK THE MAASAI ABOUT THE ELEPHANTS OF THE OPEN
PLAINS

19 YEARS FROM THE HAND OF HIS WIFE,
LIKE FLESH FROM THE BONE,
HE SLURPS HIS STYROFOAM COFFEE, LIKE COCAINE TO THE NOSE,
IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIS 21-YEAR OLD DAUGHTER.

A MATRIARCH FORGING HER OWN WAY,
HE SQUEEZES HIS EYES TRYING TO REMEMBER
HER NAME, LIKE THE ONSET OF A MIGRAINE
TEARS SEALING TOGETHER THE TORN PICTURES OF A HEART.

HE RECALLS SHE IS A BEAUTIFUL GIRL,
THE WAY 4TH OF JULY BLUES, REDS, & YELLOWS EXPLODE IN THE
MIND OF THE BLIND

FROM THE TOUCH OF A MORNING ROSE PETAL.

HE DIDN'T DECIDE TO LEAVE HER BEHIND.

THE MIDNIGHT STARS AS CELESTIAL LURES WANTED HIS
IMMATURITY,

THE WAY TEENAGE GIRLS FALL IN LOVE, THE WAY THE SUNSET
IMBUES

PROFANE VISIONS INTO THE WINDY MINDS OF BOYS DODGING
APPROPRIATE

NOISES OF RANCH HOMES, THE WAY STEEL FLUORESCENCE
ABSORBS SCREAMS & SHADOWS

CROUCHED PREDATORS, THE WAY MATINEES ARE TASTIER THAN
SUNDAY'S BRUNCH, THE WAY HIS WIFE

WANTED THE MAN SHE KNEW HE COULD BE.

JOE TRIED-

HIS THICK THREADS HANGING FROM SUBTLE LIMBS,

BOOTS WORN FROM SALTY CONCRETE,

GLOVES JAMMED INTO HIS COAT POCKET,

HIS HAT HURRIEDLY AFFIXED.

HIS 18B HURRIEDLY AFFIXED A PLEA,

THE COURTS WANTED THE PRISONER THEY KNEW HE COULD BE.

IN A HOUSE OF GOD,

I FEEL AT EASE TALKING TO

JOE. MY INSIDES ABLAZE

SINCE I AWOKE THIS MORNING, A MAN SHUCKED TO THE SIDE

BY SO-CALLED PEERS & COUNSELORS HAS IGNITED

THE TRUEST POEM OF THEM ALL-

A STEADY PRISON HEARTBEAT.

AS HE TURNS & MURMURS ABOUT THIS & THAT,

THE BLOODY ENGINE OF MY CHEST SHIFTS GEARS.

YOU WOULD THINK THAT THIS HOUSE OF GOD IS SEDATIVE
ENOUGH.

HOWEVER {YET}, UP IN NORTH COUNTRY, WHERE SLOGANS LIKE
“WORKIN’ HA’D OR HAD’LY WORKIN” ARE PERSONIFIED
YOU LEARN TO WORK HARD, LIKE MOTHER THERESA,
TO ESCAPE THOSE HAD’LY WORKIN’.

~Seán Martín Dalpiaz

Indocile

Flags

Religion

and

Culture

How fowl. Why revere
the incision of the fangs and the talons
called government and false pride
that has decimated
hope and impaired the impairable
recognized as God's design.

Handed down, like hand-me downs
shabby ideals and illusions of
equality.

In mixed matched
colors

sick with patriotism.

Charming lost souls
in the name of God, country, dogma
and riches.

To processions of early manicured mass graves
decorated with ribbons
and tin metal symbols
of cynicism.

How fowl. See what I see
is the prayer
of little hands not being reached
and the
tears of stained heels of little children, not being wipes
screaming for their mommies
and daddies
coming home in pieces
to no peace.

See, I can see
the empty bags of the Red Cross
and
no Salvation for any
Army,
being brokered by any God, that's
any good.

But what I
Kant see.
is flags
that promote
peace.
True religion
that promotes
God,

and most importantly

(a) culture

that promotes

unity,

that we call

civilization.

So what

have we

learned?

Indocile.

~ Dereck Anderson

Wal nut St.

New gate superparent handcuffing {G}god's

Youth, wasted,

{On the young},

to upstate section eight penitentiary radiators.

Rainbow scarves of snatched breath from

Necks of hooded prodigal fathers &

Sons subjected to Scarlet Letter correction-

al interventions of offender processing by

Hands muscled to the barred-face \$20 bill-

Auction of Auburn, auction of Pennsylvania

To well-dressed townsfolk sick, like Washington,

Of limp humanity hanging from the gallows

As if clean concrete & flesh technology are made

Easier on the eyes, like brunettes in Central Park,

Like the penitentiary was a paragon

Excavated to purchase a mask,

Like Maybelline.

~Seán Martín Dalpiaz

DREAM NOT FOR TODAY

LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW,

WHAT DO I SEE?

I SEE REFLECTIONS OF THE STATUS QUO:

METAPHYSICAL WINDSBLOWING AGAINST THE GRAIN.

NIGHT LIKES THIS I WISH IT WOULD RAIN.

DISENFRANCHISED AMERICANS,

WE DREAM NOT FOR TODAY.

IF BARAK OBAMA EPITOMIZES THE AMERICAN DREAM,

WE, STILL, DREAM NOT FOR TODAY.

"I, TOO, AM AMERICA," LANGSTON HUGHES WOULD SAY.

IF NOT FOR HUE, WOULD WE ALL BE BLUE?

EXAMING THE TENETS OF A DREAM A KING ONCE SEEN

CROSSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC LINES, MOST SAY,

WE ARE, STILL FAR BEHIND;

THE PACE OF OUR TIME IS DISILLU\$IONED.

MOST EYES ARE CLOSED LIKE BIRDS FLYING THROUGH WINDOWS.

NO MORE THAN AN UNTHREATENING HANDFUL,

QUOTAS REFLECT THIS GOVERNMENT'S SCANDAL.

THE AMERICAN DREAM HAS BEEN A FAILURE, THAT IS,

ONLY A FEW CAN RALIZE IT.

IN ITS FULLEST SENSE, WE MUST MOVE BEYOND IMAGES
BECAUSE WE'VE PAID AN EXORBIDANT PRICE,
WHILE BEING DEPRIVED THE KNOWLEDGE OF CONTRIBUTIONS
MADE TO AMERICAN LIFE.

LIKE FORTY ACRES AND A MULE, WE ARE TOOLS.

I SEE A BENIGN PICTURE:
THE DANGLING CARROT IS HER'.
WE HAVE HOPE?
NO, MY WILL MAKE ME HOPE FOE; I WILL HOPE NO MO'E.
GANGSTA' IMAGES KEEP SOME WHITES IN THE DARK.
HERE ARE THE INTRACACIES OF RACE RELATIONS:
IN OPPOSITION TO WHITENESS, BLACKNESS THUS DEFINES;
A LITERARY SYMBOL REFINES THIS CULTURIZATION.
STRIPPED CONSCIOUSNESS MOVES BLACK INTO THE MIND.
GOING BACK IN TIME, THERE'S NO SUCH WORD TO RELATE TO
ONE KIND.

THE COLOR OF MY CORE:
SOME MAY SEE BLUE; OTHERS MAY SEE RED.
THOSE OF THE RACIST MIND MUST SEE THAT
WE ARE PURPLE PEOPLE: NEITHER RED, NOR BLUE.

LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW
WHAT DO I SEE?
I SEE REFLECTIONS OF THE STATUS QUO:
METAPHYSICAL WINDOWS BLOWING AGAINST THE GRAIN.
NIGHTS LIKE THIS, I WISH IT WOULD RAIN.
DISENCRANCHISED AMERICANS,
E-DREAM-NOT-FOR-TODAY.

~Arthur Logan

Criminal Psychology

My work doesn't come with "Parental Advisory" but it does come with
"Reality Advisory!"

So if you are tender heart, or tender skin than this is not where you want to
be. So buckle up!!!

Criminal Psychology

Since I met you
balls & chains,
whips & twisted lips.
handshakes filled with handcuffs
has been our introductions.
Yet, we haven't
exchanged not one
civilized word.

Criminal

The psychology of our rehabilitation
has been your recreation
from paycheck to paycheck.
Even with a little overtime.
No thanksgivings were given
at your kitchen table
over your last supper. Thank you.

No blessings and prayers were in order for
our remediation.

To redefine, redirect and self correct
misguided means
that's led to an undesirable
beginning and end.

Your creation and our incarceration.

~ Dereck Anderson

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Submit Your Story or Art – We accept letters, poetry, essays, & photography from currently or formerly incarcerated individuals as well as anyone who has been impacted by the criminal legal system.

Sponsor a Subscription for Someone Inside – \$10/year funds printed copies to correctional facilities.

Let us know the work being done in your community.

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