

JAMES M. HEARD
CDCR # H-96500/5-8Y-48
S.O.S.P. - Death Row
SAN QUENTIN, CALIFORNIA
94974



Prison University Project
P. O. Box 492
SAN QUENTIN, CALIFORNIA
94964

APRIL 27, 2020
9:20 AM

DEAR FRIENDS,

I PRAY THAT ALL IS WELL WITH YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES...

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY! WE WERE GIVEN OUR CARE PACKAGES MOMENTS AGO, AND EVERYONE IS VERY GRATEFUL... I KNOW I AM!

I AM 67 YEARS OLD, I'VE BEEN INCARCERATED FOR ALMOST 30 YEARS ON DEATH ROW. I AM A WIDOWER, AND I HAVE TWO DAUGHTERS WITH 7 CHILDREN (MY WONDERFUL GRAND-KIDS!!) BETWEEN THEM. I'M SURE THEY LOVE ME VERY MUCH, I KNOW THAT I AM VERY PROUD OF THEM AND I LOVE THEM WITH ALL MY HEART!

HOWEVER, WE DO NOT GET TO VISIT MUCH... MY OLDEST DAUGHTER VISITED ME ONCE, IN 1998, JUST BEFORE SHE MOVED OUT OF STATE WITH HER MOTHER. MY YOUNGEST DAUGHTER WAS JUST A BABY WHEN I WAS PUT IN JAIL, I ONLY HELD HER, AND CARET FOR HER, A SMALL NUMBER OF TIMES. WE HAVE NEVER HAD A VISIT. I HAVE NEVER MET MY GRANDKIDS IN PERSON.

I HAVE BEEN BLESSED THOUGH, DURING THE MANY LONG YEARS I'VE HAD PEN-FRIENDS AND EVEN A FEW THAT CAME TO VISIT (ONE FROM GERMANY!).

IN RECENT YEARS MY SUPPORT HAS DWINDLED, I DON'T EXPECT MUCH FROM MY FAMILY BECAUSE BOTH MY DAUGHTERS ARE SINGLE-PARENTS AND THEY MUST STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE.

MY BLESSINGS COME FROM THOSE PEOPLE WHO CHOSE TO HELP ME, AND OTHERS WHO ARE INCARCERATED LIKE ME. I AM CONSTANTLY SEEKING FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT... SOMETIMES, PEOPLE SEE MY POSTING ON THE INTERNET AND THEY WRITE ME... I PRAY THAT I CAN MAKE MORE FRIENDS AND MAYBE EVEN GET THE SUPPORT I DESPERATELY NEED.

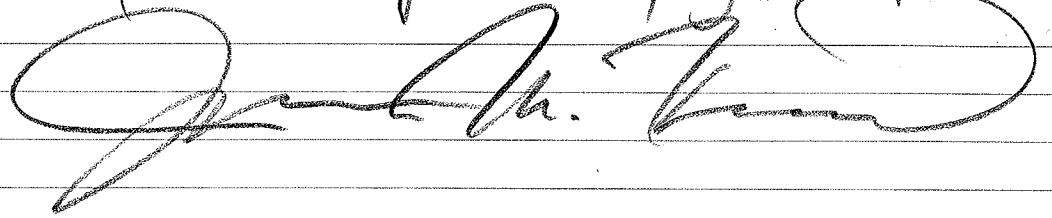
I REMAIN OPTIMISTIC AND HOPEFUL ABOUT MY FUTURE.

It is fine with me if you wish to share my letter with others. Also, I Am enclosing some of my poetry, along with my letter. Feel free to use it in any way you wish.

Again, thank you for your efforts on our behalf!

PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE AND GOD BLESS YOU!!!

Sincerely and Respectfully Yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James".

Enclosed: 13 PAGES of poetry AND my writings from YEARS AGO...

PEACE + Blessings! James

James M. Heand
H-96500/5-EB-86
San Quentin Death Row
San Quentin, California
U.S.A. 94974

I am imprisoned on Death Row. I have had the unfortunate experience of viewing broken and confused men firsthand... I fully realize what it is like to be disconnected from your family and your friends, to have your hopes and dreams shattered.

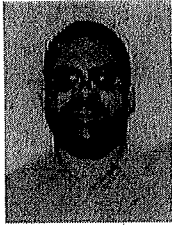
The stories that you hear in prisons about the judicial system and how it functions are extremely disturbing. The public will never hear these accounts, because the defendant usually has no means to reach society. Also, you must take into account the indifference that most people have to our desperate situations! Unless you have been touched by the prison system in some way, you can never know. A person who has been incarcerated (especially on Death Row), becomes just another statistic... trapped in the system, alone and indigent.

The prisons are full of talented people. More often than society is aware of, these persons are railroaded into prison by way of a seriously faulty legal system. A person who is locked away in such a place has their humanity slowly eaten away, day by day. Being locked in a cell erases your smile and your happiness is replaced with fear, sorrow and hatred. Where you once saw a warm and loving individual, you begin to see a sad shell of a person with little or no hope.

Prisons are not designed to rehabilitate, they are no more than a zoo! Made to house people like animals... often turning them into something other than human.

Incarceration is a cold slow death that creeps into its victims from within their bodies and minds... and then eats away their souls.

I wrote this around 1997



James Heard



Writings From Behind The Walls Death Row San Quentin, California

Writings By James Heard

Writings by James Heard from Dead Man Talking

James Heard - Penpal Request from Cellpalls

Attention !!! Attention !!!

I am a prisoner on Death Row... There are over ⁷⁰⁰500 of us on Death Row at San Quentin, California . . .

I have compiled this letter in an effort to communicate with all concerned parties, on all levels. I am speaking for myself and many others on Death Row. Our hopes are that we will be able to establish positive concerns with the public. We would like to dispel the myths about incarcerated people and create meaningful & friendly correspondence with whosoever wishes to write us.

Many of us do not have any family or significant others to support us, or with whom we can relate to.

The government tries to instill hatred, distrust and indifference in the public through the media. Very often, most people do not even think about the lonely and completely abandoned persons behind bars... we are sort of like; out of sight, out of mind. Truthfully, we are real people with hopes, fears and feelings. Yes, most of us have made grave mistakes and some are guilty... However, contrary to what the establishment would have the public believe, some of us are actually innocent!! The bottom-line is, we all are Human Beings!

In developing channels of communication, by way of a Pen-Pal program, you can help to foster, encourage and promote the improvement of incarcerated individuals. Also, you can assist prisoners to maximize self-realization, enrich their lives and enhance life-fulfillment for all concerned.

Originally written in 1996 or 1997

PLEASE WRITE TO :
James M. Heard
P.O. BOX H-96500
San Quentin State Prison
San Quentin, California
94974 U.S.A.



(From: Peoples Tribune, Sept 1999) original at:
<http://www.Irna.org/league/PT/PT.1999.09/PT.1999.09.10.html>

Incarceration is a cold, slow death

I am imprisoned on Death Row. I have had the unfortunate experience of viewing broken and confused men firsthand. ... I fully realize what it is like to be disconnected from your family and your friends, to have your dreams shattered.

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Incarceration is a cold slow death that creeps into its victims from within their bodies and minds ... and then eats away their souls.

written around 1996

THE WAY

Life is hard... and then you die,
We all keep right on going, never knowing why?

It can be one hell of a struggle... from beginning to the end,
Of course there are some bright spots, like when you find a friend!

Yes, a person's life can be hard... even more so for some,
Seems like we're always fighting, many will (fight) for a tiny crumb.

I know a way... that leads past all this madness,
A really easy way, for us all to find some gladness.

It's so very simple... yet it often is not found,
But it's guaranteed to lift you up, when life has got you down.

I use it all the time... almost every single day,
And guess what else... it's something you can say!

You can say it to yourself... or say it to a friend,
If you happen to have an enemy, your quarrel will mend.

Are you ready to hear these precious words... if you knew them from the start,
Just say "I Love You" loud and clear, from the bottom of your heart!!

James M. Heard

11/17/99

Bittersweet Moments Of Life...

I cry within,

Loudly.

Trying to learn, trying to change,

Trying to love, trying not to die,

dying.

In Retrospect:

I always searched for fulfillment,

But Why??

I never had a clue...it was there already,

But How??

Maybe I will be reborn,

But When??

*James M. Heard
1999*

"THE PEACE GARDEN"

I have a friend,
who helped to make a Peace Garden...

She has told me about it's flowers, trees,
and all of it's plants.

I'm sure that it has birds, butterflies, bees,
and perhaps a few ants!

I create a picture in my mind,
of this beautiful place.
Created with friendship and love,
for the whole Human race.

I pray that all the people of the Earth...
Can one day, realize this Peace Gardens worth!

Dedicated To: Marya Shirky

By: James Matthew Heard
May 2002

I DREW A CHESSBOARD ON MY BED

I drew a chessboard on my bed,
to help keep the demons out of my head.

Everyday I struggled against
depression and sadness, is there anything
that can defeat this madness?

I drew that chessboard on my bed,
because of my situation...
which I deeply dread!

I've been confined many years behind bars,
and the state wants my life,
I drew that chessboard to
help me get rid of the strife.

I try not to think about
time...I mean the short time I've got
left, but I can't shake the ugly specter
of death!

The state has armed guards to
keep me here, so they can carry out the
death penalty which they think I fear.

I watch the armed guards walk
by each hour of everyday,
And I wonder why they smile
as they point their weapons my way?

I drew a chessboard on my bed,
and I'm ready to play, but I fall
to my knees and begin to pray...for
some damn chess pieces!

James Heard
June 1996

- EXIT STRATEGY -

Adversity surrounds mankind in countless ways,
Many of us encounter negative things through most of our days...

It is a struggle, from birth to death,
What a pity that some people must fight for life until their last breath...

A few form thoughts of escape because they do not want anymore pain,
There are a multitude of things that could go wrong in one's life that cause stress and strain...

Certainly there are good things in store for us too,
Compared to those with troubles, that goodness only reaches a select few...

Most of us concern ourselves with our present condition,
We do not think about the end of our days or about death's transition...

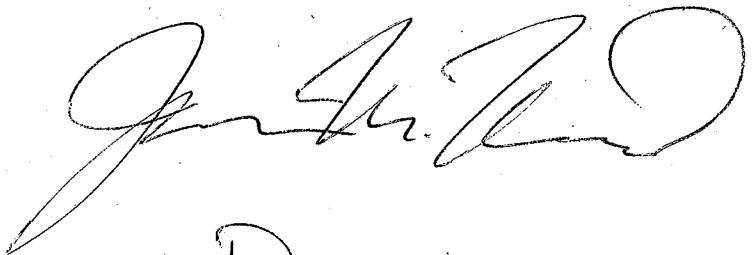
Death often comes to us quickly - before we are prepared,
Often there is no chance to think about what to do or about those for whom we cared...

I am on Death Row along with many others and we see a different side to the experience,
For days and months and years we, face death each day and measure out each breath before death can commence...

We ponder our lives and our death for days on end,
We can speak our minds to our friends and our kin...

Death still comes quickly and it's not as welcome as one might surmise,
Dying is the same for everyone and every life ends no matter what plan you may devise...

I suggest that each of us on death row or those who are free end their lives in a state of propriety,
Make peace with yourselves, your loved ones, and put faith in God - live your lives with an exit strategy.



December 2010

ONE OF MY PRAYERS

I want to become as patient as the Earth is...

My hope is to use this earth - patience to allow me enough time to understand myself and my fellow humans...

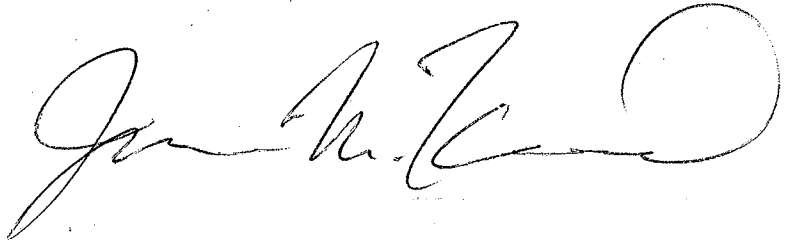
To listen, patiently, to others...

To see / realize as much beauty in this world as I possibly can...

Please God, bless me with patience and understanding!!

January 2011

James Matthew Heard

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James M. Heard", with a large circular flourish at the end.

TRUE FRIENDS.

True and trusting friends
Are the ones who when
The path was rough and stony
Helped me start again.

Who never tried to interfere
Yet made their presence felt,
Who when their friend was feeling low
on future dreams they dwelt.

They never asked the questions
Of why or how or where,
But I knew that I could count on them;
I'd call and they'd be there.

True friends are like a blessing,
Sent when times are bad,
To help their friends take on new life
And cheer when times are sad.

How much this friendship means to me
When I have been so low,
So when in turn you need my help
I pray you'll let me know.

The National Library of Poetry

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VIP #P0457065-026

June 24, 1996

*Wonderful verse!
Select James Heard's poem
for the 'Sound of Poetry.' -- CS*

James Heard
San Quentin Prison
San Quentin, CA 94974

Re: Portraits of Life

This publisher's proof represents your poem as it is now scheduled to appear in print. Please carefully review the publisher's proof . . . check carefully for typographical errors . . . indicate any changes directly on the proof, and return it to us in the enclosed envelope. If your poem is correct as is, please initial the proof and return it without changes. Please note that you must certify the accuracy of this proof by making appropriate changes. Only initial the proof if everything is correct. By returning this proof, you authorize us to publish your poem with corrections, if necessary, as indicated below.

NOTE: *This proof must be returned postmarked no later than July 26, 1996, so we can make our scheduled publication date. Poems must be 20 lines or less. Only one entry per contestant.*

Letters

Your letters are like the dazzling sun
They help to guide me till my days work is done;
The words are wonderful and shed much light
A preservation of my thoughts in my struggle for life.

The words on each page seem to always say.
"I have you in my heart each and every day."
Each letter I've read have added to my strength.
In your next one add just a little more length.

James Heard

DEATH ROW LAMENT

What's wrong with this picture?

Let me describe it, so you will see.

There is a man, sitting in a small cell.

His head in his hands, looks like he's going through hell!

He sits there motionless, with hardly any light.

One could only imagine, what could be this man's plight.

He looks very depressed, but there is no sadness on his face.

He just sits there-quietly staring at empty space.

I wonder what this man's crime might be?

Hey! wait a minute!! That poor man is me.

James Heard

IN LOVE WITH DYING

We humans smoke cigarettes,
drink Liquor or use some type of
drug...We humans kill ourselves
or anything else, without so much as
a shrug.

We humans send our young
off to war in order to kill an
unknown foe, why are we humans
preoccupied with DEATH... I just
don't know.

From the moment of our
birth and on throughout Life, we
become accustomed to the gun
and the knife.

Sometimes we humans kill
without even trying... I think that
we humans are in Love with
dying.

James Heard
August 1996