

(VOTE FOR A FINAL TITLE ON THE LAST PAGE)

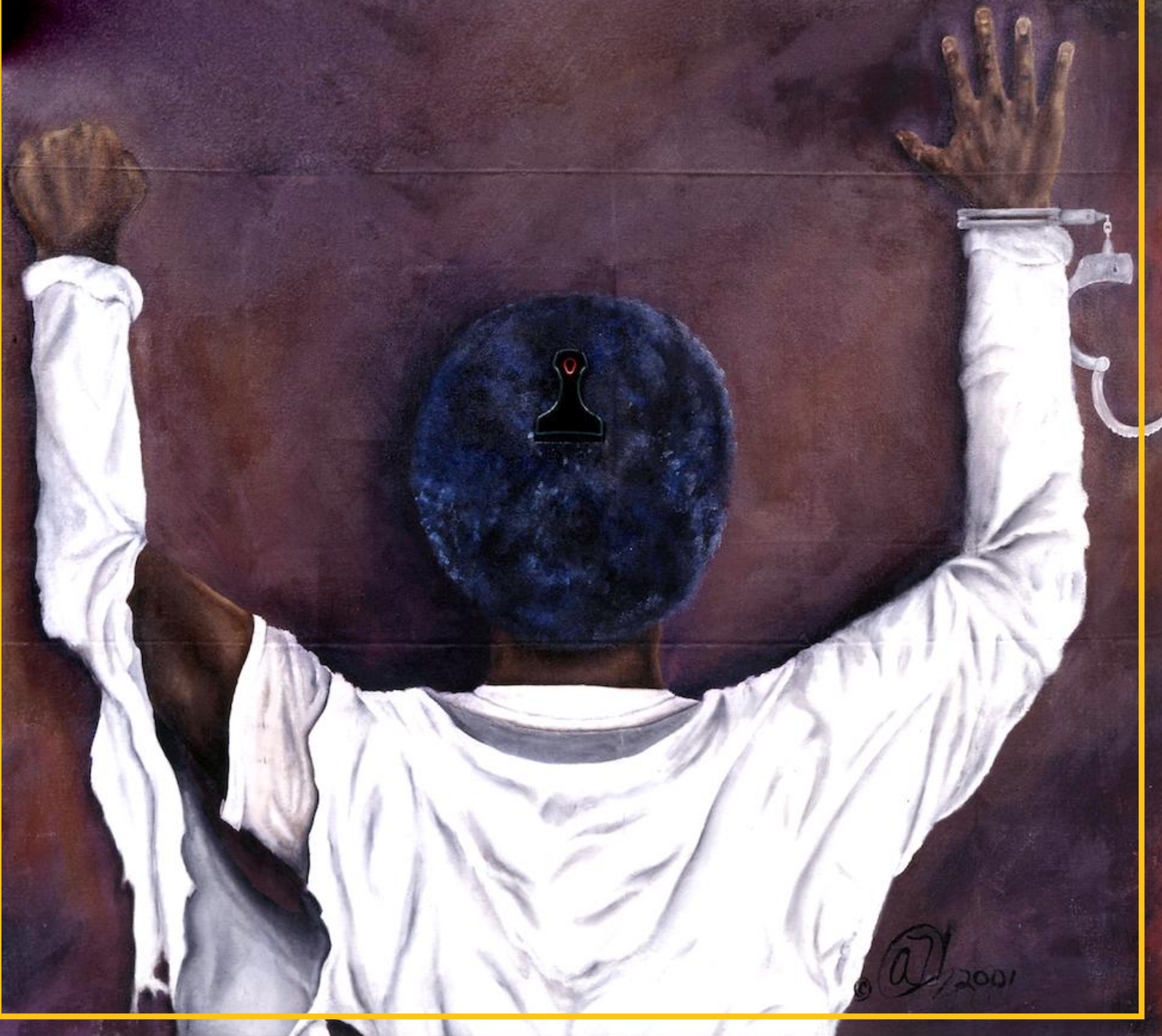
MAY/JUNE 2021

Cover Artwork By:

ANTONIO HOWARD

Released Juvenile Lifer

Read more on p. 6



TO: YOU
FROM: JEFF

Greetings! Summer is here and things are starting to open up! Our staff is all vaccinated and slowly stepping into the “new normal.” Thank you to all who responded to the last newsletter! We really appreciate hearing from you and want to get as much of your content in these newsletters as possible. Keep up the good work.

In May, we were excited to have Volume 1 of Creations of a Caged Bird endorsed by the PA DOC central offices and sent to CCPM’s (programming directors) & FCPD’s (head chaplains) in Pennsylvania prisons. If you haven’t seen it on your TV, ask about it! Encourage the staff to play it! Volume 2 was completed and shown to 175 people through an online Premiere in May. We hope to have it available in prisons later this summer. A small group study series based on the videos from Vol. 1 & 2 is being developed to help incarcerated men and women explore the ideas their peers expressed in these videos. We are working on getting this series out to other states too for more people to hear the messages of hope from their peers.

Our efforts to extend the reach of Shining Light programs and be prepared for whatever the “new normal” is in prisons took a step forward in the past few months. We brought our personal development and arts programming together to create the SL Academy. This consists of (26) 2-hour sessions designed to help people identify and use their strengths, develop resilience and many other aspects of personal growth. It also includes artistic segments and something new for us: W.R.A.P. training. We were contacted by the state of North Dakota and discovered that they are a very hi-tech state, interested in doing the Academy through video conference. We hope this starts soon and enables us to test the program. Then we will be working to expand into other locations. Stay tuned for more!

This newsletter is about “Honesty.” Being genuine, true to yourself & taking responsibility for your feelings and actions. My interview with Antonio (page 6), a juvenile lifer, who was in an SL Workshop for 2 weeks in 2018, up until the day he was released, was a beautiful example of “honesty.” He shared about the real challenges of re-entry after spending all his adult years in prison. But, while acknowledging the pain & barriers, he also saw the joys & opportunities. With this honest approach he is now a community leader & thriving. He serves as an example for us all.




FOUNDER &
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Enjoy the newsletter and please provide your input for
the July/August edition!*

EXPLORING THE THEME:

honesty

If this is your first newsletter, welcome! This issue includes a whole new mix of information, stories, activities and opportunities for engagement that were generated from fellow Shining Light community members, inside and out. Our goal is that there’s something for everyone, and that you are inspired to interact with us through this publication by sending us a response or a contribution of your own for future newsletters! (Keep an eye out for the )

HONESTY on the surface sounds pretty simple - it just means telling the truth, right? There are actually several other ways we’ve learned to consider honesty, which will be explored in the pages that follow. What does it mean to be honest with yourself, or present an honest version of yourself to others? What does it mean to be totally honest with God in prayer? Is there ever a situation when honesty is not the best policy?

One final note: As you saw on the cover, it is time to **cast your vote** for an official title for this newsletter! Please check out the options on the back page and let us know your favorite. (If you’d like to send a runner-up, that’s fine too.) Feel free to also include some cover art to go with your choice!

MAKESHIFT MEMORIAL

CREATIVE CONNECTION

Thank you to everyone who sent in contributions for the Makeshift Memorial! We continue to keep all those mentioned in our hearts and prayers, and we're thankful for the opportunity to support one another through the trials.

Unfortunately, my Father has succumb to this wretched disease and virus

*Many candles have lighted up my heart, and there isn't any shortness of happiness. Thanks to the two families that have entered my life, for the past 6 years
My Love to them -
Mary Lou Richards + Donald Richards
Alexia Zapp + Michael Zapp
They have turned my wounds into wisdom.*

Compassionate Release Please!

*Beloved Randy
MAY 14, 2020
You are sorely missed!*



JENNY
CREATIVE SERVICES

Dear Covid-19 you have touched the entire world. There is no one on this planet that hasn't been affected in one way or another. But through it all you've allowed us to see our resilience. As we adapt to a post pandemic world. We can look back and continue to see, that even in the midst of a storm. We were blessed exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or hope for. This challenge has not only humbled us but made us stronger. The exciting thing is, the best is yet to come.

NEW

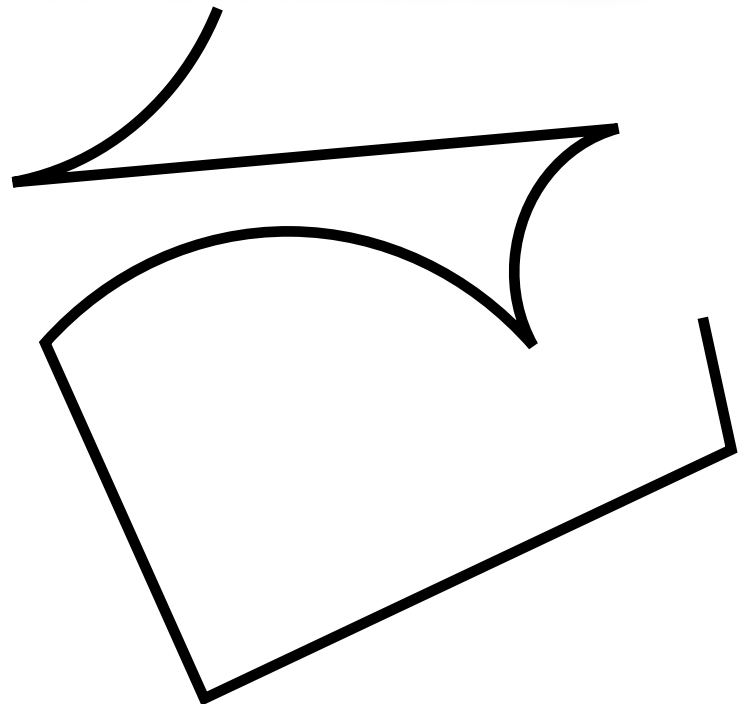
WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Some of you are probably familiar with the painter Bob Ross. He hosted a popular television show in the 80's & 90's and was well known for some of his iconic sayings, one of which was this quote: "We don't make mistakes - we just have happy accidents." In the process of painting, he would encourage people to make something out of their painting mishaps. If you put a line where it wasn't supposed to be, make the line into something else. So here's the challenge:



Use the line on the right (you can redraw it) to create a new drawing. And don't worry about what anyone else sees. Just be you. Go with the flow and let your imagination guide you...

Some staff examples can be found on the last page!





Naomi Blount-Wilson / Commuted Lifer / Commutation Specialist

“Lies change, but the truth always remains the same. When I was on the inside, being honest was really what got me through prison. One time I went to commissary when I wasn’t supposed to, because I passed by & my unit was shopping. And when I went in without a pass, the commissary lady said, “You have a pass?” I didn’t and told her so. And only because I was known for being honest and trustworthy, I didn’t get sent to the hole. As people say, honesty really is the best policy.”

Naomi
PROGRAM CONSULTANT

DID YOU KNOW? RE-ENTRY INFO

Q: How is being on parole?

NAOMI: Being on parole is really up to you how you are treated. If your parole officer feels that you are not going to be a problem, they will work with you. They help you more than I ever thought!!

Q: Will I be able to travel outside PA?

NAOMI: Not right away. You must stay in Pennsylvania, but if an emergency arises, then you will get permission to travel. *(If you’re in a different state, check your specific requirements)*



ASK MS. NAOMI

“Ask me anything you feel you need to ask - just don’t get too personal!”

In addition to the re-entry info Naomi will be featuring, this section is intended for any questions you want to ask about life inside.

All questions will remain anonymous, so don’t worry. Ask away!

Q: Anyone seeking to file for a pardon in PA on the ground of their innocence, do they use the same general application?

NAOMI: If you’re dealing with the integrity unit already, and your case is being reviewed, settle that out first before trying to take any other steps. Attempting to file pardon paperwork isn’t necessary if there’s a chance you’ll be released, and it creates conflict with the integrity unit & Board of Pardons.

Q: I want to work in the culinary arts when I get out, but someone told me I may have trouble getting licensed by the PA health board because of my record. Is this true?

NAOMI: That is definitely not true. Go ahead with your plans to pursue the culinary arts. Another inmate was just released a week ago, and she got licensed proudly. I’ll give you a play when you open your business!

Q: Do you know of any places that offer correspondence courses for Christian Counseling, or other Christian degrees?

NAOMI: You can look into ETA classes - Evangelical Training Association. Or write to the International Christian College & Seminary. P.O. Box 530212, Debary, FL 32753

There is an online database of resources for re-entry that can be found at: fairshake.net

CORNY CORNER

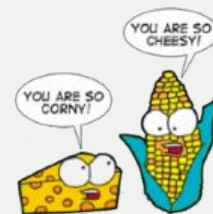
WE HEARD YOU. THESE ARE REALLY CORNY. BUT IT IS WHAT IT IS.

Why do you think the sailor grabbed a bar of soap when his ship started sinking?

Because he thought he would be washed ashore!

Did you hear about the man that took his mobile phone back to the store because it had no cord?

Yeah, he just got out!





*This might be my year
to taste freedom after 25 yrs*

BRO [Signature]

AFTER 21 YEARS OF BEING INCARCERATED, THERE WAS EVIDENCE RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN MY CASE THAT CAN PROVE MY INNOCENCE AND EXONERATE ME FROM A LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE SENTENCE.

Shawn

I currently have 60 days until I am paroled, possibly a little longer as I wait for a Bed at a Halfway House. But I see light at the end of the tunnel, finally.

D.L.

The last time we met I was about 280-300 pounds. On 4/20 my jail had a contest called the biggest loser. The prizes were \$100 for first place, \$50 for second place, and \$25 for third. And although I did not win any of those prizes, I lost 45 pounds and came in fifth place out of 70 some people. I ate three times a day, breakfast being the biggest, lunch was any type of veg I could find or soup, and dinner was a pack of fish with green tea. I worked out every day. Long story short, the only thing I won in two months was a better and healthier me.

Ernesto

"My strength to go on and not give up. My knowledge grows everyday." - Eurart

"My health, mindset, jovialness is rising everyday...I remain totally focused, staying away from negativity, drugs, getting into confrontations that have no validity whatsoever with my situation." - Henry

CREATIONS OF A CAGED BIRD - VOL 1.

Our first DVD has now been approved & distributed throughout our partner facilities, so if you haven't seen it, please ask around.

If you have seen it, we'd love to know!

CREATIONS OF A CAGED BIRD - VOL 2.

175 people attended our live premiere last month & it was a huge success!

Thank you to all those who participated!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ANTONIO HOWARD

At the age of 15, Antonio Howard faced a mandatory life without parole sentence for murder. After 26.5 years at SCI Huntingdon he was released in April, 2018.

Three years later, Antonio is described as a “rapidly rising painter of note” in Erie, PA. He is also a spoken word artist and has written and published three books. In 2020, Antonio completed two public art projects in Erie. He was recently selected to provide the art for two *City of Erie bandwagons*, which are regularly deployed at more than 40 events each year. After being awarded Erie Arts & Culture's Emerging Artist Fellowship in 2019, he is now an artist in

residence with the organization, helping to re-envision bikeways and public spaces around the city. Antonio is the President of Chroma, an organization that advances opportunities and access to resources for creative and cultural professionals of color in Northwestern Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of the Jefferson Leadership Academy, and employed as a paralegal at the Federal Public Defender's office.

What were keys to your successful re-entry?

“While there were many people who didn't want me to succeed, there were all these people, even some leaders of the community, who looked to embrace me. They looked beyond my past and helped me in ways I didn't initially think I needed. I chose not to sit around and blame others for my problems (abusive relationships, lack of opportunity, etc.) ...those things were true.... I made the decision to be there for myself in the way that I tried to be there for others. I wanted other people to give me opportunities, but I had to be willing to create some for myself. I had to learn to listen to my own inner voice rather than turning my voice off and listening to somebody else.”



Credit: Erie Reader / Lifethrusic

Looking back today, is there anything you would have done differently when you were incarcerated?

“I would have slept less & studied more. Also, learn to recognize the next person ready to give me a chance, I often overlooked that. My story was told through the lens of individualism. But I needed other people in ways I did not realize.”

What would you like to say to those inside?

“Say ‘yes’ to opportunities that you wouldn't ordinarily say ‘yes’ to. Often your blessings are in the lessons that you glean from those experiences. Out here, I have said ‘yes’ to all opportunities that have come before me, paid or unpaid, and as a direct result of that, it has led to the next opportunity. My friends call me a ‘rockstar,’ but I didn't do anything but say ‘yes’ to the opportunity that they said ‘no’ to, because it wasn't enough money, or prestige. I said ‘yes’ and as a direct result, I met someone who referred me to the next opportunity. There is remunerative value in just saying ‘yes’ for the purpose of the experience.”

Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people in the US. The holiday was first celebrated in Texas on June 19, 1865, when slaves in that state were officially declared free under the terms of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862. Today it is also known as Freedom Day, Liberation Day, Jubilee Day, and Emancipation Day.

HOLIDAYS/SPECIAL EVENTS COMING UP:





WELLNESS & CHARACTER

NEW EXERCISE: "REFLECTION WRITING"

As a way to exercise honesty, we are going to go through a reflective writing exercise. One way to define honesty is presenting oneself in a genuine way. Try to follow the steps below and let us know how it goes!

PREVIOUS EXERCISE RESPONSES: "ANCHOR BREATHING"

Last newsletter we reviewed "Anchor Breathing" and how intentional breathing can be helpful with managing stress and fostering positive emotions/behaviors. Heather shared an example of how she used this exercise to manage a stressful situation!

The SL newsletter came right on time! My housing unit was just placed on enhanced quarantine status - 14 more days of lockdown - and I was stressed out. I put some ocean waves sounds on my tablet and practiced Anchor Breathing. It instantly took my mind off the stress of being locked in my room and put me on a boat in the ocean. Feeling the rhythm of my breathing in sync with the crashing of the waves on the shore transported me to a peaceful place where I was able to stay for a while.

Heather L.

What are some other ways you keep your mind and body healthy?



1. Write about how you would like your life relayed to someone you admire either on the inside or the outside.
2. Set your writing aside for a day or two.
3. Re-read what you wrote and consider the following questions:
 - Was this a genuine way of presenting myself?
 - If not, do I need to change what I wrote or work toward being the person I wrote about?
 - If I want to be more like the person I wrote about, what strengths can I use to make it a reality?

[☆1]: Exercise adapted from the book *Character Strengths Interventions: A Field Guide for Practitioners*. Niemiec, R. M. (2018). *Character strengths interventions: A field guide for practitioners*. Hogrefe Publishing.



Let us know what you think! We would love to hear about your experience!

SPEAK FROM THE "I"

One aspect of the character strength of honesty is "taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions." That's the concept behind this Community Code. When you share an idea, opinion, emotion, or response, speak for yourself. Avoid generalizations like "we" that assume others hold the same idea, and accusatory statements like "you" that place the responsibility on someone else.

Pay attention to your comments this week and note how often you use the words we, you, and I.

What patterns do you notice?

How many times did you catch yourself saying "we" or "you"?



VIA CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Last newsletter we introduced VIA Character Strengths, 24 positive traits that reflect an individual's personal identity and have the potential to result in positive outcomes for ourselves and others, and contribute to the collective good [☆1].



- Take some time to explore the full list of traits below.
- Review each one and circle 5-7 that best describe who you are. Be honest with yourself.
- Let us know what you discover! What might you do differently to play to these strengths?



CREATIVITY
 Original & Adaptive.
 Clever. A problem solver. Sees and does things in different ways



CURIOSITY
 Interested.
 Explores new things. Open to new ideas



JUDGMENT
 A critical thinker.
 Thinks things through. Open minded



LOVE OF LEARNING
 Masters new skills & topics. Systematically adds to knowledge



PERSPECTIVE
 Wise. Provides wise counsel. Takes the big picture view



BRAVERY
 Shows valor. Doesn't shrink from fear. Speaks up for what's right



PERSEVERANCE
 Persistent. Industrious. Finishes what one starts



HONESTY
 Authentic. Trustworthy. Sincere



ZEST
 Enthusiastic. Energetic. Doesn't do things half-heartedly



LOVE
 Warm and genuine. Values close relationships



KINDNESS
 Generous. Nurturing. Caring. Compassionate. Altruistic



SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE
 Aware of the motives and feelings of others. Knows what makes others tick



TEAMWORK
 Team player. Socially responsible. Loyal



FAIRNESS
 Just. Doesn't let feelings bias decisions about others



LEADERSHIP
 Organizes group activities. Encourages a group to get things done



FORGIVENESS
 Merciful. Accepts others' shortcomings. Gives people a second chance



HUMILITY
 Modest. Lets one's accomplishments speak for themselves



PRUDENCE
 Careful. Cautious. Doesn't take undue risk



SELF-REGULATION
 Self-controlled. Manages impulses and emotions



APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE
 Feels awe & wonder in beauty. Inspired by goodness of others



GRATITUDE
 Thankful for the good. Expresses thanks. Feels blessed



HOPE
 Optimistic. Future-minded



HUMOR
 Playful. Brings smiles to others. Lighthearted



SPIRITUALITY
 Searches for meaning. Feels a sense of purpose. Senses a relationship with the sacred

VIA DEFINITION HONESTY

- Speaking the truth, but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way
- Being without pretense
- Taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.



Travis

PROGRAM DEVELOPER

An important consideration in regard to using strengths is the idea of underuse, overuse, and optimal use. These terms acknowledge that different situations call for the use of different strengths to different degrees and there are ways that we can underuse, overuse, or optimally use a strength within a given situation [☆2]. One way to reflect on this idea with the use of honesty is with the Triple Filter Test. We have seen this exercise attributed to the Greek philosopher Socrates, but in the nature of honesty, we thought you should know we have not actually found any research articles to validate this claim! However, we do find it helpful in reflecting on how to find the optimal use of honesty.

Consider the following three questions when going to share information with someone

IS IT TRUE?
IS IT KIND?
IS IT NECESSARY?

Adapted from <https://exploringyourmind.com/socrates-triple-filter-test/>

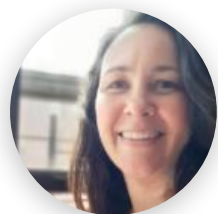
We would love to hear what you think about this idea of optimal use! What might it look like to overuse or underuse honesty? What role does the environment or context play in determining the best use of a strength? What role does kindness play in being honest?

WHAT'S LIFE

WHAT'S LIFE WITHOUT PAIN AND STRIFE; WHAT'S LIFE WHEN YOU HAVE TO STRUGGLE TO DO RIGHT. WE RUN ALL DAY WITH NO END IN SIGHT, WE GROW UP ONLY KNOWING FIGHT, STRUGGLE, FIGHT WITHOUT ANYONE TO UNDERSTAND OUR PLECT. WHAT'S LIFE I ASK CAN ANYONE TELL ME? LIFE IS ABOUT HOPE, ABOUT BEING TRUE TO ONESELF. YET IT'S THE THINGS THAT'S HARD TO SEE THAT LIFE IS ABOUT; THE THINGS WE FAIL TO SEE, SINCERITY WITHOUT PRETENSE, THINGS WE NEED TO STAY STUMBLE-FREE, INTEGRITY. WE TAKE LIFE FOR GRANTED. YET HOPE WILL ALWAYS BE THERE. LIFE IS FULL OF IT, SOMETHING TO DREAM FOR. IN ORDER TO SUCCEED YOU HAVE TO BE AT AN DISADVANTAGE THAT WILL BREED HOPE, HONESTY, INTEGRITY AND ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE LIFE AUTHENTIC. IN THIS TIME OF ISOLATION WE NEED TO COME TO TERM WITH WHO WE ARE AND BE HONEST WITH OURSELVES.

HAYZEAL

[☆2] Niemiec, R. M. (2019). Finding the golden mean: the overuse, underuse, and optimal use of character strengths. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 32(3-4), 453-471.



Kelly
PROGRAM
DIRECTOR

REFLECTIONS FROM FATHER JAMES MARTIN: “The Examination of Conscience (Examen) is a review of the day. One of the pieces of it is gratitude, and for people who are going through tough times, that’s very helpful because we tend to focus only on the difficulties. And this is not to say that you deny or ignore them, but that they are side by side with the good stuff. The pain is still there, but the difficulty is that when we’re in these moments - and this is natural, it’s human - we often don’t focus at all on the blessings.

The voice of God is the voice of hope, and uplift and encouragement. And the voice of the one that pulls us away from God is the voice of despair and hopelessness. And despair and hopelessness make us ignore the stuff that’s good.

Life is difficult. But if it’s only focused on the negative, it’s kind of false... If you’re gonna present your life to God, can you present it in its totality - not just the stuff you’re annoyed by? If that’s the only focus of your prayer, then in a sense that’s actually not being totally honest with God.”

EXAMEN

(Prayer/Meditation)

St. Ignatius Loyola's Examen invites us to find the movement of God in all the people and events of our day. The Examen is simply a set of introspective prompts for you to follow or adapt to your own character and spirit.

Find a restful posture and begin with a slow, deep breath or two; try to become aware that you are in the presence of the Holy.

1 - **Thanksgiving:** What am I especially grateful for in the past day?

- The gift of another day...
- The love and support I have received...
- The courage I have mustered...
- An event that took place today...

As you prepare to review your day with total honesty, ask for the light to know God and to know yourself as God sees you.

2 - **Review...**

- Where have I felt true joy today?
- What has troubled or challenged me today?
- Have I noticed God's presence in any of this?

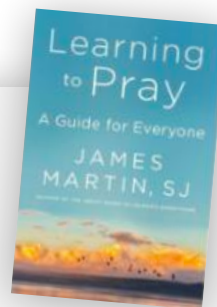
3 - **Response:** In light of my review, what is my response to the God of my life?

4 - **A Look Ahead**

- As I look ahead, what comes to mind?
- With what spirit do I want to enter tomorrow?

FUN FACT

In February, Father Martin released a New York Times Bestseller



GAMES & ACTIVITIES

T	P	A	A	P	O	L	O	G	I	Z	E	T	L
I	A	E	S	E	L	F	E	S	T	E	E	M	P
Z	G	N	I	T	A	I	C	E	R	P	P	A	R
F	S	L	D	I	L	F	E	E	L	R	C	R	O
O	G	N	I	L	I	A	F	E	T	T	M	C	M
R	E	D	I	O	I	Y	T	S	E	N	O	H	I
E	A	R	F	E	G	O	P	O	L	I	C	Y	S
S	N	E	A	E	L	B	A	I	L	E	R	X	E
P	O	R	G	A	N	I	Z	A	T	I	O	N	S
E	E	Y	X	T	A	M	T	V	O	T	L	E	I
C	D	E	L	I	V	E	R	A	S	L	E	T	S
T	L	F	X	T	A	U	U	O	E	G	D	U	J
E	X	P	E	C	T	A	T	I	O	N	S	E	I
T	E	L	A	X	I	F	H	Y	A	D	M	I	T

- ORGANIZATION
- TRUTH
- FIX
- RELIABLE
- FAILING
- APOLOGIZE
- PROMISES
- RESPECT
- APPRECIATING
- POLICY
- EXPECTATIONS
- SELF-ESTEEM
- JUDGE
- HONESTY
- ADMIT
- FEEL
- DELIVER

JUST FOR FUN



Angelina

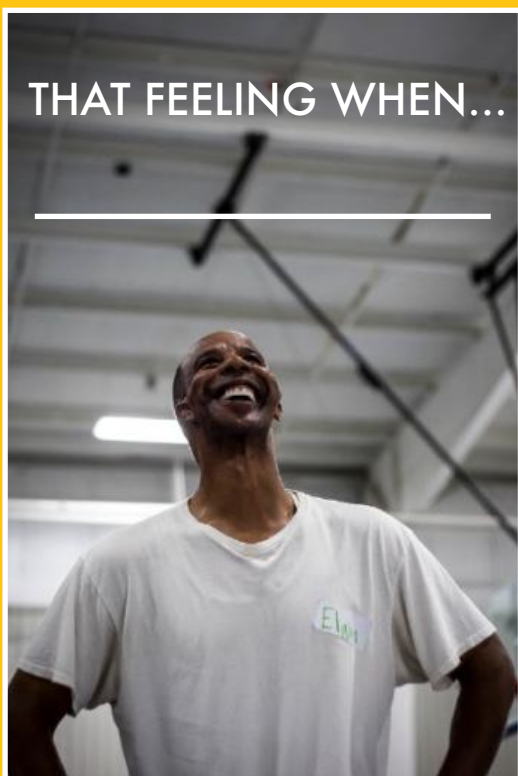
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Send us your own puzzles to include in our next issue!



MEME MAKER CONTEST

Caption this image by completing the sentence...



TABLET MIX-TAPE

Submit your recommendations for best song to:

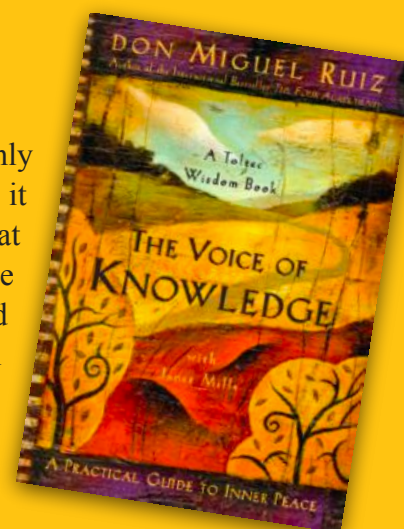
- Wake up to
- Sing-along to
- Workout to
- Groove to
- Meditate to
- Unwind to

BOOK REVIEW BY SHAWN

The Voice of Knowledge
by: Don Miguel Ruiz

This book is a true treasure because it not only gives a practical guide to inner peace, but it gives a clear picture of seeing reality for what it is, from your own perspective. One of the interesting ways that he helps the reader find their own perspective is an example of an artist that paints or draw a picture of art. Life is the canvas that every person uses to draw or paint their vision of what they see, learn & observe. And just like art, people will judge, criticize, and some will appreciate what they see.

But an artist learns to observe other people's art (version of life) from their eyes, which in turn develops humanity, love & empathy for other people's walks of life.



FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

FINAL TITLE VOTE

Thank you to everyone who submitted a title suggestion! They were all so thoughtful and creative and after one round of voting, these are the top five - Please vote for your favorite!

○
SHINE!

○
SPEAK LIFE

○
CAGED & FREE

○
THE LAMP STAND

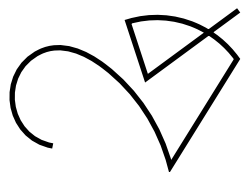
○
CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?
VOICES FROM WITHIN

WE NEED COVER ART!

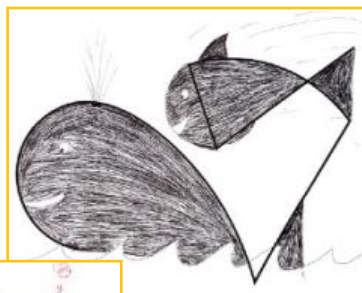
SEND IN YOUR DRAWINGS FOR A CHANCE TO BE FEATURED ON THE COVER!



Look for this icon to remind you of all the ways you can interact & share content!



*“What Do You See”
examples from our staff
using the line above.*



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

You are always welcome to write to us and share whatever’s on your mind. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter specifically, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Our goal with the newsletter is to “Speak Life,” so submissions should have a positive feel, which may include creative expression, encouraging words, or a constructive release of negative emotion.
- Remember to be inclusive of people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds. We have a really diverse community!
- If you submit a longer piece, please try and keep it to one page.
- If writing a submission, please try and be as legible as possible so we can all read it!
- Avoid details of your case or criticism of the institution/DOC.
- If there is anything in a letter you do NOT want to be shared in a newsletter, please note that clearly.
- Published submissions will be credited with first name, unless you specifically request to remain anonymous.
- Submissions for the next newsletter should be mailed to us by **JULY 10**

INVITE A FRIEND TO SUBSCRIBE!

Give them our address and let them know we’d love to hear from them! Make sure they include:

- Name/#
- Facility
- How they heard about us.

Thank you to all who contributed to this newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from you soon with new artwork & messages, encouraging comments and stories!

Shining Light | PO Box 267 | Annville, PA 17003