

This morning I sat at a table in the dining hall and held a conversation with one of the most prolific writers I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. After ingesting what passes for breakfast in this place, I walked back to the cell I'm assigned to in deep thought. For years I've known that there are very talented people here; but this was the first day that I came to grips with a harsh truth. It's a little known fact that places like these (PRISONS) are filled with people that are full of potential, and very few will ever have an opportunity to share their gifts with the world. Why? Because they made choices that hindered, rather than nurtured their gifts; which eventually lead them to a place where hopes and dreams come to die. Those without a sincere relationship with God are consumed by the morbid mentality that comes from existing in a place that is literally the bowels of society. At some point all who are incarcerated, or have endured it goes through a stage of sensory deprivation. Subconsciously one becomes numb to things that would shock and horrify the average person. Another little known fact that so few ever come to realize is that when one is sentenced by a judge there is always an unspoken sentence. In time most in my current situation come to grips with the silent truth that an extended stay in prison will cause relationships of any kind to slowly deteriorate. Many that are forced to swallow that reality spend years doing whatever they can to repair broken ties with those that hold special places in their hearts. Others fade away into the haze of prescription medications. First they lose touch with themselves and become recluses, before losing a handle on reality. Some have strong support systems that they fail to fully appreciate because in their warped mode of thinking they believe that they are owed what their love ones so freely give them. Then there are the rare few like me, who refuse to engage in prison politics; The few of us that won't allow the weight of a lengthy prison sentence to crush our hopes and dreams. We are the few that in spite of the monotony that comes from existing in prison, won't conform to the oneness of this society. Against all odds we daily make the choice at all cost to hold on to our God given identity. We are the men & women that write songs to the melody that God has placed in our hearts. We produce stories that will captivate the minds of the most disinterested readers. When we write and recite our poetry, the cadence of our speech will wrap your soul in the warmth of a rhythm that will cause your heart to flutter. Some of us paint and draw portraits that can rival anything on display in Chicago's Art Institute, or The Louvre in Paris, France. Sadly, we are written off by people just like us because the bad choices we made relieved us of our liberties. If you're honest with yourself you have to admit that you know

at least one of us. It may be a male or female that is family or a friend that you have written out of your life because their choices caused you to experience more pain than pleasure. They may not have reached prison yet. They may still be in the land of the living; yet walking around dead because they're being held hostage by an addiction of some sort. In that case prison could potentially be a blessing for that person if the love and support of their family is ever present. The cold truth is that many won't reach out to help a person that's truly in need if it doesn't fit into their particular agenda. Many in my situation suffer from the cruel taunting that is delivered to us by those who claim to love them. "That's what you get!" "I told you so!" "I didn't put you in there. You did it to yourself!" Those are just a few of the words used by (LOVE ONES) to further break hearts & spirits. More times than most can count the following words have been uttered to prisoners across the country, "We talk about you all the time. We miss you so much. We know that you never hear from us or see us, but we love you." While in school I was taught that love was a verb. When you land in prison you learn that contrary to what you've been taught love is no longer a verb because there's no action to support the declaration of it. Since being incarcerated I've watched men mentally crumble due to lack of contact from love ones. Some of those men took their own lives because to them death is better than life without affection. The sad truth is that at some point all prisoners have secretly entertained suicide. I've watched others die inside and become a shell of their former self while waiting on their bodies to catch up with their long dead spirits. Faith in God, hope, and a steady diet of God's Word and prayer has kept me from being consumed by the darkness that can rob a man of his soul; But I understand the pain that come from being in a cage surrounded by hundreds of people, yet feeling so alone you can taste the sorrow in each salty tear that you cry. The part I haven't figured out yet is how an intelligent society could honestly see prison as a legitimate solution to crime. After all, prisons aren't designed to rehabilitate. They have no purpose other than to warehouse those that are deemed unworthy of living beyond the bars. There was a point when I almost allowed this experience to cause me to become callous & uncaring. I could literally feel my moral compass being destroyed by the blows delivered to it from the hands of time. It wasn't until I noticed that my anger was like a malignant cancer that was devouring my soul, that I prayed to be freed from the thoughts and feelings that were extinguishing the light in my spirit. That's a hard statement to swallow coming from a person in prison I know; But as hard as it may be to believe, prisoners are more that statistical stains on the fabric of society. Being convicted felons doesn't alter the

fact that we're Sons & Daughters, Siblings, Parents, Uncles & Aunts. Simply put, we are people that belong to the dysfunctional family that is humanity. Where we reside shouldn't be the determining factor on what what kind of relationship you'll have with us. Rather than focusing on what lead them into their current situations, try taking the time to learn who they are as people. You may be surprised to learn that they are truly gifted with a talent you had no knowledge of. For those of you that know urban music, imagine how much the world would have missed if the artist "Lyfe Jennings" had a longer prison sentence and was never able to release the songs S.E.X., and Statistics. For those of you that don't know him, look him up and read the lyrics to those songs; while doing so please keep in mind that they were written and performed by a convicted felon. Reach out to your people, and make it your business to express love without conditions.

It's been awhile since I posted anything, but I sincerely hope that those of you that actually take the time to read this gets something from it. Due to a lack of financial support I honestly don't have the means to post things as often as I would like to. Therefore when I'm afforded the chance to share something with the public, I do my best to make it as raw and honest as I possibly can. I just can't see using this opportunity as anything less than a vehicle to inform & educate society on some of the happenings in these places. With that I'll bring this to a close. Love a little more today. Listen to the whispers of your heart, and be true to your purpose in life. If you can feel these words please take a moment and reach out to me at,

Antwiane Sago 428132  
W.C.I. P.O. Box 351  
Waupun, WI. 53963-0351

Salt In A  
Flavorless  
World  
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God Bless!

*P.S.*

*Sorry about any mistakes.  
I write from the heart;  
so all of my imperfections  
are on display.*

*Sincerely  
Antwiane*