

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

September 10, 2014

A Rare Honor

I received a surprise in the mail a few days ago. I was notified that my poem(s) had been included in the annual Justice Arts Program held at the Kennedy Performing Arts Center in Washington, DC. I was pleasantly surprised and feel very fortunate that my poetry was selected to be part of that event.

The Safe Streets Arts Foundation has a website which they use to post books authored by prisoners. PrisonsFoundation.org. They will post any book written by a prisoner on their website at no charge. Last November, in honor of the anniversary of the completion of my 29th year in prison, I submitted a chapbook containing 29 poems, which they posted on their website.

The Foundation encourages prisoner playwrights to submit plays which they then perform for the public. I am not a playwright and did not write a play so I assumed that any public performance of prisoner-authored material would not include any of my writings. What I didn't know was that in addition to staging plays, the Foundation also presents poetry written by prisoners.

On August 30, 2014, as part of the "Page-to-Stage" festival at the Kennedy Center, my poem(s) (along with poems from other prisoners) were presented. On September 8th, I received a copy of the program for the event in the mail from the Foundation. I couldn't figure out why they sent me a copy of the program until I looked inside and saw my name along with 14 other poets and playwrights. I'm not sure which of my poems was read or if they read more than one poem. But I am very grateful that they included my poetry in their program and I immediately wrote to the foundation to thank them.

Go to PrisonsFoundation.org to read my poems and writings submitted by other imprisoned authors.