

Johnny E. Mahaffey
October 4, 2015 (my birthday)

The Novelist Portent

Reply ID: 382w

Dear jennifer07:

Thank you for reading my article. Sometimes I find myself somewhat dejected--given my circumstances--and end up questioning my own efforts at writing. I'm always brought back out of such mental funks by a comment on my writing. Thank you.

Right now, South Carolina (I'm not sure if you're in this state, or another; but if you're not, or those reading are not.) is under a state of emergency, due to flooding. We can't even drink the water! The prison's on a security lock-down. I'm stuck in the cell; I'm on my bunk--I have an odd way that I bend my legs to sit (double jointed my elders always called it)--and I'm using the time the best way I know how: writing. Of course, earlier I had to finish typing some legal motions for the Supreme Court concerning the jury tampering that occurred during my trial. I completely loath legal work.

It's like a screw being driven into my head.

slowly.

and.

without purpose....

Because every legal thing you can find, there's something to contradict it a hundred ways from Sunday; and even in cases that are cut and dry--you never know what to expect. I try not to let it leak too much into my writing--but it's hard to avoid. There's this article in the Sept/Oct issue of "Poets & Writers" magazine, by Sonya Larson (pg. 93) that I'd like to quote from:

Everybody has an identity--we all have to think about it. But there's this imposed voice up here, outside of me, that I have no control over, that's doing this additional defining. How do I interact it? Do I ignore it? Do I engage it? How do you do that and still get the work done?

Larson got that from the writer David Haynes during a panel discussion at Warren Wilson College on July 3, 2015. They're speaking of race and "Degrees of Diversity" (the name of the article) in MFA programs, and writers in general, in this "evolving culture" we have.

It applies in many ways to many writers. Prison, is part of my current identity--what control I have of it mentally, is pretty much zilch. I want to document it, yet not exactly embrace it. I want to write in earnest, but not immortalize my captors, legal oppressors, or those responsible for this mess. I do have control of ONE aspect--I will not let it embitter me.

Thanks for reading, and for the support.

Maybe I'll send a few essays your way....

Think: Vonnegut meets Dostoyevsky, in Sunnydale.

J.E. Mahaffey