

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

August 18, 2016

SafeStreetsArts.org
PrisonsFoundation.org

I would like to talk about these two websites. I believe they are both part of the same nonprofit organization founded by Dennis Sobin. Dennis "spent 10 years in prison after being falsely accused of a nonexistent crime." Upon his release he became an advocate for prisoners, fighting "against injustice and over-incarceration in America."

I have become involved in 2 of his projects. PrisonsFoundation.org is a website that publishes uncensored writing by prisoners online. It is a way for prisoners to get their message out to the world at no cost to them. I have had 3 poetry books published on his website.

SafeStreetsArts.org accepts donations of artwork from prisoners. Based on the quality of the artwork, it is either given away to donors who help support the organization, or, it is matted and framed and put up for show and sale at various art galleries in the Washington, D.C. area. If artworks are sold, prisoners get half of the profit while the rest is used to fund the website.

In 2014, I stopped writing poetry and began to draw. I've never been able to draw but I felt the Lord speak to my heart and tell me He wanted me to draw. I gave my life to Christ in 2010 so when I felt Him urging me to draw, I laid aside my doubts, bought some books and supplies, and started to draw.

I sent some drawing to SafeStreets when I first started drawing but I knew they would be the ones given away for free. Fast forward to 2016 and unbelievably, I am now an artist (you can see some of the artwork on my FaceBook page). I drew 4 graphite portraits based on photos taken by Edward S. Curtis a century ago (he was famous for his Native American photos).

I sent them to SafeStreetsArtsFoundation as a donation. A couple of days ago I got an acknowledgement from Dennis telling me that my drawings would be displayed in their prison art collection at various galleries. I am amazed at the gift of art God has given me and I am thankful for the opportunity to share my art with others.
Thank you, Dennis Sobin

Harlan Richards/page two/August 18, 2016

There's one other thing I'd like to thank Dennis for. In 2014, shortly after I published my books on his website, one of my poems was used in a play sponsored by Safe Streets Arts Foundation and performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

Thank you, Dennis Sobin

I urge all of you reading this blog to visit the websites I've described. Perhaps you'll find something interesting to read or have a chance to see some of the great artwork prisoners have created.