

Spoon Jackson, B-92377  
Words Uncaged

## Deadlines

Today I prepare and gather my wits, thoughts, and hopefully wisdom to write an article and to teach my poetry class. I have two deadlines. Despite how dense the tension is in the cellblock, I must still prepare to go out and run my class. Despite almost getting into a fight with three other prisoners, only moments ago, I must create an article for *Teaching Artist Journal*. I have a deadline at the top of every month.

I prepare my article in the cell as I ponder my poetry lesson while not getting along with my cellie. We have been in this cage together for over seven years. We have never been friends and have gone months at a time without a words passing between us. Today our “not getting along” reached a high point when my cellie and two of his homeboys had words with me, right in front of the cell, as I came out to shower.

I stood my ground and made sure none of the guys circled behind me. I hurled invective back at the main cat throwing insults my way as the tower cop shouted, “What’s the problem?”

The incident died down, nothing else was said. We all went on our ways. I went back into the cell with the same cellie.

Silence inside the cell again became my mantra and way of being. Otherwise, I would have been consumed in darkness, on a dark road to the hole.

I use the energy and tension of today to create art, writing lessons, poetry, prose. Today I must transform the stress into an article about the importance of meeting a deadline. I’ll turn the core of today’s tension into a class lesson and discussion to write from. I’ll continue to run my class even though I am like a mountain climber going up the steepest part of Mount Everest.

I’ll speak on voice, on using whatever feeling or vibe you are in as the edge, or driving power, behind your poetry reading. Today I’ll do a poetry reading and the power of my reading is anger.