

SAM BROWN P49627
WORDS UNCAGED
(POEM)

R.I.P.

INSPIRED BY: WORDS UNCAGED AND Dr. BIDHAN ROY

Ask yourself, is everyone that is NOT in prison, honest? Is everyone that is not in prison, law-abiding? Is everyone that is not in prison trustworthy? Is every person not in prison, a good person? The answer to each one of these questions is an emphatic No. Depending on your level of honesty and conviction to the truth, the answer may even be Hell No; or whatever expletives you feel compelled to place before the word no when you sincerely mean it. With that same honesty, answer this: Is everyone in prison dishonest? What about this one, are all people in prison untrustworthy? Okay, last one—is every person in prison a bad person? Of course not. Is that not the stigma? Of course it is.

My name is Samual, but I'll be frank. The fact the whole scandalous, despicable, no-good, scumbag reputation has been earned by people in prison is in no way lost on me. Many fit the bill. However, I know first hand that many do not. There is a Latin term, for fallaciously stereotyping people: Tu Quo Que. Prisoners are probably the easiest demographic to typecast and discriminate against. After all, prisoners are the new niggers. (Oops, did I say that aloud?) I mean that is what is meant by 'Orange is the New Black', right? In his classic work, *Miseducation of the Negro*, Carter G. Woodson stated that the "character assassination always precedes the physical assassination." Thus, the negative labels work well for District Attorney's Associations, Peace Officer Unions, Victims Rights Groups, and corporate interests that lobby for "tough on crime" legislation and wars against specific violations certain to fill coffers, coffins, and cots. Who cares about rehabilitation? They're just a bunch of low lifes anyway, right?

Wrong. You know who you cares about rehabilitation? Dr. Bidhan Roy, Dr. Ernest Uwazie, Dr. Dale Hamad, Dr. James McLeary, Dr. Pauline Nguyen. I intentionally left their titles on their names to make sure its understood that these aren't uneducated people or merely the family members of prisoners. These are but a few of the awesome people I have met that have had the courage and compassion to step up, say, and demonstrate that they care about rehabilitation. They care about humanity. I'm barely working on my bachelors degree, but I care also. In fact, I am on fire for rehabilitation right now; and on April 18, 2017 that fire was doused with high octane gasoline when I serendipitously became privy to the release of *Words Uncaged*. I was exposed to a host of other men who also cared about rehabilitation; not only in word, but in deed, and yes indeed – I was moved.

I am a prisoner and have been incarcerated for 20 years. Intimate is my understanding of the challenges that accompany a decision to refine ones thinking and subsequent behavior. Such challenges present themselves externally as well as internally and the latter is often more devastating than the external threat of ridicule and physical violence.

This is because many of us have learned that our negative behaviors will get 100% recognition; while our positive thoughts, words, and actions are not guaranteed to be recognized. Even when they are recognized there is a high probability of them being disbelieved, discredited, and ultimately discouraged; this can be disheartening. That is one of the contributing factors which makes 'Words Uncaged' and the people that worked together to create it so powerful.

The majority of the prisoners that contributed to it were sentenced to Life Without the Possibility of Parole. Allow me to place that into context: I was sentenced to Life with the possibility of Parole. Now after serving 20 years I am scheduled to appear before the BPH in 18 days from today in order to be assessed on the merits of my rehabilitative transformation. People who are sentenced to LWOP can serve 20, 30, even 40 years and still never get a chance to appear before the BPH for potential release. While people like myself have been sentenced to life, they have been sentenced to death. What incentive does a person sentenced to death have to rehabilitate? You'd be surprised. Who cares about rehabilitation? Ironically, the very same people that the courts deemed were beyond rehabilitation; or not worth the effort. Many of whom were merely juveniles when their crimes were committed.

These women and men are beautiful people. They are artists, musicians, nurturers. They have 2, 3, 4, and even 5 college degrees. They are Christians, Muslims, Buddhists. They are people who have refined their speech to the extent that you'll never hear them utter a profanity; People who put others before themselves. They are

altruistic, empathetic, peaceful, loving, and kind. They are people who have realized that they are much more than the bad decision that placed them in prison. They are people filled with sorrow and remorse for the pain they now realize that they caused. They...are...PPF. They are people. They are people who chose rehabilitation long before laws began to change, back when no one discussed the fact that there were good individuals in prison with no meaningful chance at getting out and provided no incentive to change.

As I sat in instructor Underwood's class doing my homework, men began to trickle in and fill the room. These were all men in the CSU-Los Angeles Bachelors Completion Program. These were the men whose photos covered all of the walls in the room. These were the men who came together to create the Progressive Programming Facility. A facility that there isn't any other like in the entire state. I had to exhibit super model behavior in the prison I was in before this one in order to be deemed eligible for placement on this facility. I've been here four months and haven't witnessed so much as a fist fight. These were the men that created 'Words Uncaged'. These were the men that society erroneously concluded were incorrigible; unsalvageable; beyond rehabilitation. After sitting amongst them, these were men to whom which I realized, I owed a great big debt of gratitude.

We've all heard arguments about the freedom of expression, but the truth is freedom IN expression. Expression begets freedom. Expression brings about freedom from the multitude of prisons in which the human spirit, mind, and heart so often toils. Some of these prisons include hate, anger, low self-esteem, misery, fear, and sadness, 'Words Uncaged' is teeming with powerful expressions of art and literature. These expressions have been crafted and drafted from the soul and as a result they kick in doors and knock down walls of prisons for prisoners worldwide. Not only for the men that offered them, but for the people that have the courage to open their hearts and receive them. After all, most prisoners aren't incarcerated.

This is one of the reasons why I am so thankful to these men and to everyone that worked to bring this vision into reality. You give me hope. You give me encouragement. You knock down prison walls for me as well as for a host of prisoners who may never have the good fortune of meeting any of you as I have. On behalf of me and all of these prisoners who have no idea about the good deeds that you are doing on our behalves – I THANK YOU. On behalf of our mothers, daughters, wives, sons, and all of those that are doing this time with us – I thank you. On behalf of the victims of crimes, the taxpayers, and the California Department of Corrections, who may or may not ever acknowledge the atom bomb of positivity that you have just dropped on all of humanity – I thank you. I can only pray that you take the time to really receive what is being said to you – you deserve it.

Finally, I decided that I would not allow myself to be defined by the way I once thought or by my current environment. I make the conscious decision to stand in the face of non-believers and show that I am a good person. 'Words Uncaged' helped to eradicate the little apprehension that I had about appearing before the BPH. The fact of the matter is I have grown, matured, and changed my entire perspective on life: That which I once thought was cool, never was. All of those prisons that I was once caged in by – anger, self-deprecation, hate – are no more. See, whether we were sentenced to life or sentenced to death, most people wrote us off as R.I.P. well I am R.I.P. and proud to be. I am realizing I'm Powerful. I am Relishing in Positivity as a result of realizing that Rehabilitation Is Processing old feelings thoughts and behaviors in order to Reset Internal Programming. As a result We are Rehabilitating the Image of Prisoners. Rehabilitating the Image of People. Because That's what 'Words Uncaged' does.

Thank you for such a

Really Important Present to all of humanity.

Samual Nathaniel Brown

Peace