

# **UTAH FREEDOM WRITERS**

The Chance to Be

SLCC Community Writing  
Center Publication

December 2011

*Utah Freedom Writers* is published by the SLCC Community Writing Center

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Cover designed by Nkenna Onwuzuruoha.

Utah Freedom Writers: The Chance to Be

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# *Everyone Can Write!*

## **Mission Statement**

The SLCC Community Writing Center (CWC) supports, motivates and educates people of all abilities and educational backgrounds who want to use writing for practical needs, civic engagement and personal expression.

We provide opportunities to enhance writing abilities through such programs as Writing Coachig, Writing workshops, the DiverseCity Writing Series and Writing Partners.

These services are open to all Salt Lake residents.

To get started simply stop by or visit us online at  
[www.slcc.edu/cwc](http://www.slcc.edu/cwc).

Join our mailing list to find out about upcoming workshops, events and other special projects.



# Introduction

Freedom Writers is a SLCC Community Writing Center campaign in partnership with the larger Salt Lake City Freedom Riders Project headed by KUED. The Freedom Riders Project celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement; particularly, the 400 Americans who, in 1961, got on buses and risked their lives in defense of Americans' Civil Rights. While we've come a long way, the question remains: are we there yet? Issues of human rights exist today in increasingly myriad and complex forms. Whether it is issues of sexual identity, religious freedom, or immigration, people experience discrimination daily.

When embarking on this project, we strove to foster healthy change in the community and inspire tolerance, kindness, and respect through shared stories of civil rights as they affect lived experiences or people's hopes to exact change. Writing has always been a revisionist tool that brings to light the progress people make towards the ideal and/or exposes the obstacles standing in their way. Through the Freedom Writers Project, all community members explore how writing can be used to challenge the status quo.

Community members were invited to contribute to this discourse by sharing written stories of civil rights as it relates to them or the change they want to see. Nothing was restricted in this writing campaign— writers were welcome to communicate any issue of concern in whichever format they saw fit: essay, story, poem, testimonial, etc. We would like to thank all our Freedom Writers for sharing their stories; moreover, we trust readers will walk away from this publication with a better understanding of the issues that exist in Salt Lake and the many people who compose this small western town.



# Acknowledgements

Foremost, special recognition must be given to the **Salt Lake City Arts Council** and the **Utah Humanities Council** for funding *Utah Freedom Writers*. Furthermore, this publication could not have been produced without the continuing sponsorship of **Salt Lake Community College**.

It was an honor working with all the organizations that formed the Freedom Riders Committee: **KUED**, **The City Library**, **SpyHop**, **Center for Documentary Arts**, **King's English**, **Utah Education Network**, and the **SLC Film Center**. We thank you for allowing us to be a part of such a remarkable celebration of civil rights and community.

Among the Freedom Riders Committee members, in particular, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to KUED Director of Production and CWC Community Advisory member, **Ken Verdoia**, for his commitment to our projects and the overall growth of the Center.

The **Sorenson Unity Center** graciously provided a space for our Community Writes installation and hosted our Freedom Writers celebration and reading—the Center's generosity leaves us very much obliged.

We would also like to thank **Linda Mathews** from Dale Young Community High School's Youth in Custody Program and **Shauna Brock** from Utah Independent Living Center for assisting their participants as they drafted a Freedom Writers story. These two organizations contributed 14 of our 41 submissions.

Thank you to the SLCC Community Writing Center staff for all their advice during the making of this publication and helping to promote the Freedom Writers campaign by creating prompts, facilitating Freedom Writer Workshops, and soliciting submissions from off-site programs.

As always, we have to thank our writers! It takes a great deal of courage to join a dialogue on such a powerful subject. We also received quite a few anonymous entries—while these pieces have been left without the author's name, they are by no means lacking the voice of their writer.



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# Preface

Like water, writing is essential. Movement can occur in both elements—a halcyon sea can soon metamorphose into a threatening storm, which only nature or action can pacify; likewise, a writer's piece can ebb and flow as passionately as any body of water.

Water played a role in the Civil Rights movement—iconic photos exist of “for white only” and “for colored only” placards placed above water fountains and policemen using high-pressure hoses to disperse protestors marching against the Jim Crow Laws of the South. Images like these inspired action—from them, marches, sit-ins, speeches, and literature arose.

Freedom Writers are not only encouraged to express what civil rights mean to them through written pieces, but to also listen—they do not have to relate to or accept the experience of fellow writers, but simply acknowledge their contribution to the greater community. For the Utah Freedom Writers Project, the goal was to provide a forum to write. This publication acts as an instrument to provide a cultural exchange by breaking boundaries that at times restrict a fluid exchange of thoughts, experiences, and perspectives.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said in his “I Have a Dream” speech, “No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Dr. King’s poetic comparison between rights and water would later be engraved in stone at the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. Our Freedom Writers, in a similar effect, have allowed their words to be etched in this publication as a visual marker of their thoughts and aspirations. This publication celebrates not only our writers, but everyone’s chance to be—the chance to be an individual, the chance to be understood, the chance to be a recipient of whatever may flow from these pages.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "McKenna Onwuzurumba".



# The Chance to Be



by Sunday Oda

I don't understand why people hate because of color and skin. All there is to learn about a person is how they act, not their skin color. My dad told me what his dad told him: stay focused, and you'll become a man. My name is Sunday, and I want to become the man that my dad never had the chance to be.

*Transcribed from SpyHop Navigating Freedom: A Utah Youth Perspective*

# Freedom of Speech and Fairness at Work

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by Jade Vo

We all know that we have freedom of speech and fairness at work; however, we do not exercise them. We tend to follow the orders and work assignments from upper management. Many orders may not sound fair or legitimate. We do not speak up or suggest the assignment may be too much for one person to accomplish, whereas two or three people could finish the task in one day. Some people constantly work on busy days and the weekends. Some barely work the minimum requirement of the job. If we show any signs of disagreement with the work assignment, we will be subject to receive unfair treatment such as heavier and more difficult tasks or even disciplinary action. We have to stand strong and fight for our freedom. We need to express our concerns with the authority in human resources; therefore, we might have more justice as well as an exuberant working environment.

*Transcribed Recording from a Two-Part Freedom Writers Workshop*

# Karen's Story



by Karen Hansen

I don't like the nursing home  
They won't let me go.  
I don't like the smell  
It makes me sick.  
There are four of us in one room  
My roommates are loud. Smelly. Messy.  
The food is just "ick"  
And doesn't taste like anything.  
I hope I get out of there before I'm sixty.

Before I went in the nursing home  
I had my own apartment.  
I had a live-in aide.  
I went where I wanted.  
I ate what I wanted.  
I was happy.

If I get my own apartment I won't mess up again.

*Karen Hansen is 51 years old and has cerebral palsy and a learning disability. She has been in a nursing home for over five years.*

# My Buddy

by Keith Kreuz

Your origins in Africa,  
wise man of many years;  
from Europe I descended,  
still one wet 'hind the ears,  
'hind the ears.

We sat out on the porch,  
or strolled down to the store;  
seems morning, noon, and night,  
us two would laugh some more,  
laugh some more.

But when life took a turn,  
thought I should leave a friend;  
not once in two full years,  
a letter did I send,  
did I send.

At last I came to know,  
true friends are hard to find;  
I traveled through to see you,  
but ... only in my mind,  
in my mind.

Sadness, grief, anxiety,  
one such as you had flown;  
my sorrow only overcome,  
to think of fun we'd sown,  
fun we'd sown.

Your life, a precious gift,  
Sir Sammy, yeah! – so funny;  
with God forever dwelling,  
you'll always be my buddy,  
my buddy.

# Ken's Story



by Kenneth Whitledge

No one has ever been mean to me because of my disability.  
In school, reading and writing were my favorite things.  
I still read books but I don't write very well.  
Sometimes, I get out a math book and do problems.

I started at the Independent Living Center when I moved to Utah.  
At first I didn't know it was there but  
I learned to sing and to act and  
Had fun doing aerobics.  
But the best part was going camping.  
I help them set up tents and carry stuff to the picnic tables.  
They say I am a good helper.

Now I work for Kroger in Texas.  
Bagging and cleaning and getting carts and  
I help people out to their cars with their groceries and firewood.  
My boss loves my work  
He knows I do a good job.  
Everyone is always really nice.

*Kenneth Whitledge is 47 years old and has a learning disability. He participated with the Utah Independent Living Center programs for a number of years before moving to Lewisville, Texas with family and returns every year for the annual campout.*

# Humiliation



by Shauna Brock

New York voted.  
New York voted and I, I celebrated.  
Sharing photos  
Of the Stonewall and the rainbow colored Empire State Building.  
We celebrated  
Like dogs lapping up treats for good behavior.  
New York voted and we thanked the benevolent gods granting  
rights that  
Should already be mine.

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Freedom Writers

13 years ago, I marched up Congress Avenue in Austin  
19 years old, angry that the State of Texas wanted to keep me from  
adopting children I did not then want. I marched with swingers and  
straights and drag queens. Transfolk and gays and lesbians and fel-  
low bisexuals with their dogs and their children and I thought then  
of my mother who was willing to be arrested as she fought for her  
right to enter a building the same way as any able bodied person.  
I thought of my mother who feared the state of New York taking  
away the child of a single woman with a disability.

New York voted.  
I cheered on twitter and I liked post after post on facebook.  
I paused NCIS to share the news with my mother.

Leaping for treats.  
Begging for a handout.  
But New York voted!  
Because equal rights are not spelled out in plain enough language  
in the  
Declaration of Independence  
And the 1st and  
14th amendments.

New York voted.  
And we celebrated.

With parties at the Stonewall  
And a rainbow empire state building.  
And turned our sights to California and other states that matter.  
Where else?  
Where else can we beg for rights  
That should already be ours?

# We Too Are Everywhere

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by Christine Lee

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Freedom Writers

I've always remembered a story told by my aunt about a time in her life when my uncle's military career took them to Biloxi, Mississippi during the early 1950s. Her Yankee background had not prepared her for what she observed as avoidance, "Black folk would walk on the opposite side of the street and immediately to the back of buses." She explained. "Once I stood to allow an elderly black woman a seat." Her good manners would have prompted this action regardless of the individual's creed or color. However, in this way my aunt broke the confines of her cultural environment simply because she didn't know any better.

I reflect on my upbringing with pride but also realize a need for change in future generations. As a member of the omni-sexual collective consciousness I too find myself maneuvering to the back of the bus simply by being invisible. If we don't see people of the same gender sharing affection in public openly and honestly, their intimacy becomes taboo and typified to orgies/polyamory; while those practices exist, they are not indicative of all omnisexuals. We too are everywhere, in schools, churches, workplaces and yes even on public transit.

Rather than limiting self-expression with signs that read NO PDAs (Public Displays of Affection) and black & white attitudes that devalue belief systems outside our own, we should be thankful for the privilege to differ from one another and find value in our humanness.

What a wonderful world it would be if none of us knew any better than to treat everyone with the same kindness and respect we all deserve.

# Are We There Yet

by Shad Engkilterra

Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Are we there yet?

Sitting in the back of the car, we know that we are not there yet. We ask the question anyway, hoping that the answer will signal a change from the previous miles of long travel.

If we are asking the Freedom Riders, “are we there yet?” We are asking the wrong question from the wrong place in history. The history of the Riders is in the past. Their time is waning; our time is waxing.

We are in the driver’s seat. As the miles drone on and we become mesmerized by the white line, it is time for us to get out of our car and take a break.

It is time for us to get out of our cars and back onto the bus. It is time for us to leave the safety of our homes and get back into our communities. It is time for us to stop being entertained and to start entertaining. It is time for us to stop being alone and start being with each other.

We need to build on the history of the Freedom Riders, and we need to know, why, after more than 50 years of fighting for equal rights, do we have to continue to fight? How do we win?

The answer is simple. We need to know more about each other. Knowing someone on a personal level reminds us of their humanity. It reminds us that we are like them. It reminds us that we could be them.

It was the dehumanization of the Jews and the apathy of good people that allowed Hitler to carry out his Holocaust. It was the dehumanization of black people that allowed the U.S. to segregate and treat them poorly. It continues to be the dehumanization of groups of people and the apathy of good people that allows our government and institutions, at the least, to ignore the plight of those in need, and at worst, to contribute to that plight.

Are we there yet?

As long as we have a dream and that dream includes equality, we are not there yet.

As long as we are discriminated against for any reason, the answer is “no.”

As long as we have to ask, we are not there yet.

# Ethical Argument for Accepting Homosexuality and Gay Marriage

by Anonymous

A refutation of all ethical arguments against homosexuality is exhaustive and impossible because there are so many different arguments against homosexuality. The strongest argument for homosexuality will be one that supports the ethics of homosexuality and not merely a refutation of all the arguments against it. It is worth refuting the biggest refutations of homosexuality; law and religion.

The law refutation will be easy to defeat. All of America's laws are able to be removed, altered, and amended. Anything that is of ethical value should be present within the laws; and anything that is not should be changed. All laws reflecting negative impact on homosexuality and gay marriage should be changed.

Religion justifies intolerance towards homosexuals through their holy books and their holy leaders. The bible is not a holy book or a decent guide towards modern ethics. There is no such thing as an intelligent designer or God. All leaders of the organizations are not under the influence of a God. Certainly religious leaders can use their position for good, but many of these leaders justify their intolerance towards homosexuals in the name of God. Any comments from people about homosexuality are not divine. All are man-made. All ideas on ethics, even in the name of God, should be questioned until an ethical conclusion can be met; and able to be reformed if necessary. Merely stating God says this is how it should be is a joke. There is a problem with presenting this argument to a religious person... A belief in God is irrational and a rational argument may not be accepted by one who irrationally believes in a deity or deities.

Homosexuality is present amongst a significant amount of other species. Whether homosexuality is natural or a choice is irrelevant. Homosexuality is ethical in either case. No evidence has been found that shows homosexual parents have a negative impact on children. Homosexual relationships are an expression of love just as heterosexual relationships are. Those who choose to be in a homosexual relationship are not harming society or its well-being. Once the prejudicial barriers have been broken, a new view of homosexuals emerges; a view that shows homosexuals as human beings who deserve our respect and acceptance.

# Civil Rights

by John Wilkes

The topic of civil rights is so broad, and to me, at least, complicated. Too complicated, I was sure to write anything comprehensible or meaningful in a brief format, written in one week's time. But knowing my proclivity for making things more complicated than they are, perhaps that's the problem. And maybe so many other people that have thought the same thing for so long— can this be why there hasn't really been, in my view, any significant civil rights achievement in this country and certainly around the world in a good thirty years or more? But what if it's not all that complicated? What if every one of us has been fooled into thinking civil rights is this huge problem that we can't possibly do anything about?

Let's break it down. First of all, let's assume that we all know what "rights" are, and concentrate on the other word, "civil." That word has several definitions according to dictionary.com. Number one, of the ordinary life of citizens as distinguished from military, legal, or ecclesiastical affairs. Two, of or relating to the citizen as an individual. Three, of or occurring within the state or between citizens. Four, relating to the private rights of citizens. And finally, polite and courteous.

What stands out for me in these definitions are the phrases "ordinary" and "private" and "between citizens"; and foremost, I was struck by the words, "as distinguished from ecclesiastical, military, and legal matter." So think about this: why had civil rights become this monstrosity then built of laws and amendments defended with armies of lawyers and soldiers? Why are we concentrating all of our energies across the globe, when we haven't even yet perfected civil rights, but simple civility towards one another in our daily lives in our own country, in our own municipalities, and even in many cases, in our own homes?

Maybe civil rights aren't so complicated at all; maybe they are simply about individuals like you and me who have to live with one another and just be polite and courteous just like we'd like others to be towards us. Armies and laws and politicians, and governments will never be able to solve civil rights. They will never be able to do that because by definition, and certainly not in practice, they are

not civil, but people can be, and we must be if we are to survive and enjoy peace on this planet, in this world, in our lifetime.

*Transcribed Recording from a Two-Part Freedom Writers Workshop*

# Heroes and Activism



by Esther Kim

I've been thinking a lot about heroes lately.

I've been thinking about how heroes are brave in the face of adversity. How heroes make us feel safe. How heroes inspire us to think, act and see differently. How heroes make us want to be better people. But heroes are complex, flawed people, just like the rest of us. I would argue that the best superheroes are the ones with the most complicated histories. And the heroes we love the most are the ones we see ourselves reflected in. So why is it—for all the change we fight for, dream of, want to see in the future—that we work so hard to keep the ideas of our heroes static, unchanging, frozen in time?

On this trip, I witnessed a hero show their humanity by sharing a controversial but honest opinion about immigration in the U.S. As I talked to my fellow riders in hopes of processing, I heard many different responses, ranging from disappointment and frustration to apathy and excuses. I kept hearing that it was the age of the person that formed their opinion, as if age and ideology are mutually exclusive. This is a dangerous excuse because it assumes that ideas and opinions can be controlled and that we can control how we're affected by them. In fact, ideas do the exact opposite – they're able to seep into our minds and are impossible to remove.

It's a mixture of things that keep us from seeing our heroes as everyday people working in collectives to make change. Living in a world that can sometimes seem so ugly and hopeless and the ease with which violence, hatred and fear are used to oppress and maintain power is hard. The romanticized image of a hero helps us deal with the hard parts. But it also takes away that person's ability to be flawed and our ability to separate the great work accomplished from the troubling beliefs that we need to be critical of.

Just because you admire someone doesn't mean you must accept everything they say as truth. We as activists need to know the history of the Freedom Rides because the unheard alternative narratives empower us. But we also need to seek out and understand the experiences of other minoritized communities and movements.

The world we live in isn't just about us as people in the United States but as global citizens with a responsibility to see that our struggles aren't our own, but all of ours.

*Taken from the PBS American Experience 2011 Student Freedom Rides*

# Can Laws Affect Prejudice

by Anonymous

When thinking about civil rights, sometimes I inadvertently wonder “why do I care?” I mean after all, I am white, middleclass, and straight. The worst thing I have to deal with is a few catcalls from strangers as I walk down the street, some sexist comments about a woman’s place in the home, or someone condemning me for my lack of belief in a deity. But certain people will always be prejudiced, and no law can fix that.

I have never been afraid of leaving my front door, worried about how my coworkers would treat me, or whether I would be followed around in a store by security simply because of the color of my skin. When I go through security at an airport, I am never stopped, my bags never searched, and I usually get a smile from the TSA agents. I have never had to think twice about voicing my sexual orientation to a stranger. I have certainly never feared for my life, and never had the government pass a law that targets my beliefs or my lifestyle.

Thanks to those who came before me, I have never had to fight for the right to vote, the right to use any bathroom I wish, or even the freedom to own property. So if my civil rights have basically been secured by my ancestors, what inspires me to become involved the fight for civil rights today?

I think it comes down to the word civil. Civil means many things, but is sometimes used to refer to treating each other in a respectful way. You do not have to agree with someone’s beliefs or lifestyle to have respect for them. Despite our differences we all have the same commonality in which we strive to fulfill our basic needs. Everyone must eat, drink, sleep, have shelter and find what brings us happiness. Problems arise when we feel that what makes us happy is what should make everyone in the world happy. That everyone should all behave, think, and live in the way we personally have deemed “the right way.”

Laws can change processes and punish people for certain things, but laws cannot change someone’s frame of mind. It cannot annihilate prejudice or instantly make people tolerant. Change comes slowly, and it comes through education of future genera-

tions. When children are taught tolerance, and not taught prejudice, then they will have no reason to be intolerant, or prejudiced. Prejudice and hatred is learned, and not innately within us.

Even if you have never had to defend your civil rights, you can ensure that your future descendants will not contribute to the hatred, prejudice and intolerance of others. That is the gift that hopefully your predecessors gave you, and it is something you can give to the future.

# Cycle

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by Heather Vance

I was born to Richard and Barbara Averill on Jan 12, 1971. I am the youngest out of three girls. It seems that I always got picked on a lot. This one time I got spanked for something I didn't do. My older sister killed my other sister's rabbit. I got blamed for it. I am glad I got taken away from my mom when I was 8 years old and put into foster care for 10 ½ years. She shouldn't have been a mother. Mom always told me that she wished I never had been born. I felt that she never wanted me. I felt that she only wanted my sister Kellie. She could have tried to get all of us back but she didn't. Growing up I always thought she didn't love me. I wished that my mom had given me up for adoption. When I was 4 years old, my mom tried to kill me by smothering me with a pillow. That was the first time I was with social services. She was supposed to protect me but she didn't. I blame my mom for my learning disability; we moved around a lot because of my step-father. He didn't want his secret out that he molested us.

I grew up and became a mother of a beautiful little girl; I named her Rebecca Rose. She was born on July 12, 1998. She weighed 6 pounds and 11oz and was 19 inches long. She was the cutest baby. The day she was born the doctor laid her on my tummy. I touched her arm said, "Hi Rebecca." and she looked up at me.

I had trouble keeping my house clean. I had a mice problem. When I used my oven it smelled like mice. The social worker opened my oven door and there was a dead mouse in there. That is why I never used my oven. In court, the social worker and attorney went on and on about a baked mouse. Then I told the judge that I didn't use my oven. The first time Rebecca was taken from me when she 4 years old, just like when I was taken from my mom. I went into a deep depression. I did everything CPS wanted and got her back. They gave me the support I needed to learn better parenting skills.

My little girl was taken from me when she was 7 years old. She was staying with some friends because I was in jail for theft by check. I felt like someone had reached in my chest and ripped out my heart .I felt that I was forced to sign my rights way and that my

disability had something do with not getting her back. This time, the social worker said I couldn't raise her financially and CPS didn't give me any support.

Rebecca was put up for adoption. She just turned 13 years old. The hardest thing about losing a child is her birthday, Mother's Day and Christmas. I am counting the days I can get to see my baby girl again. In five years I hope that Rebecca will want to see me. I will explain to her that I had no choice. I will tell her I love her and always will and there is not a day that goes by without think about her or talking about her. Today I fight depression.

*Heather Vance is 40 years old. She has learning disabilities and a piece of her spine is missing.*

# Two Sisters Teach Me Somali



by Annette Weed

The classroom light and airy,  
windows open, a breeze rustles  
spider plants on the sill.

Ms. Ulli introduces me to the girls—  
black eyes, layers of pink, orange,  
brown and blue clothing,  
headscarves, smiles.

In the hallway, I read  
with the older sister—  
the text about volunteering—  
she studies my lips, teeth and tongue,  
repeats my words.

I show the sisters  
where to write their names,  
first, middle, last.  
We cover address, age,  
get stuck on phone number.  
I take my red cell from my purse,  
ask if they have one.  
Sisters shake their heads no.

Last of seven school hours,  
they reach toward every word,  
until fatigue touches  
the beauty of brown faces.  
It looks the same  
as fatigue on the white faces of my daughters,  
a drooping, a pinching.  
Time for a break.

I point to the older sister's names,  
stumble, saying all three.

She corrects me, my turn to watch  
her lips, teeth and tongue.  
I try again, know I'm way off.  
I want to say your name  
the way you say it, I tell her.  
For the last fifteen minutes of class  
she teaches me. When I'm close  
her fingers grasp my fore-arm,  
“Thank you, thank you,” she says.

They smile when I come in next week,  
our assignment: parts of the body.  
We must learn  
to tell the doctor what is wrong,  
move quickly through pictures—  
head, throat, shoulders,  
fingers, arms, knees—  
then on to ailments,  
sore throat, headache, stomachache.  
They are eager for it all,  
but when their smiles droop  
I turn the tables,  
ask for the Somali words.  
I point to my shoulder,  
wiggle my fingers,  
try the words they give me.  
They laugh and laugh  
at my attempts, and I laugh too.

The younger girl grows serious,  
takes paper and pencil,  
writes for me an English alphabet spelling.  
It helps, but they are not satisfied.  
I cannot yet hear  
what I am saying wrong.

New laws crack down  
on illegal immigration.  
Children in Somalia  
all bones and huge eyes  
somehow we cannot feed.

I understand a little Somali,  
look forward to autumn,  
when school starts again.

# Inequality

by Chris Ballard

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Freedom Writers

There is a terrible specter haunting the world. It is the ghost of inequality. There was a time when we lived in hunter-gatherer societies, and in those days, hierarchy was virtually non-existent and the average workweek was seventeen hours. Then along came agriculture, and with it came inequality. All the sudden there were big shots who were more interested in accumulating wealth than in helping their fellow man. These men fenced off large portions of land and called themselves kings. Then when these palace born nobles got married, they expected the rest of us to grovel at their royal weddings.

Inequality also led to the mistreatment of women. As patriarchy developed, women lost more of their rights. In some Asian countries, women's feet were bound so they were unable to walk and forced to be sex slaves. In supposedly civilized countries, women were considered too feeble minded to vote in elections or to manage their own money.

Then along came a fellow named Columbus— he was greatly admired in European circles for his ability to enslave people in the Caribbean. However, Columbus and his successors were so cruel to the American Indians that soon the indigenous population began to die off. So the European exploiters solved this problem by enslaving Africans and shipping these new slaves over to America. Talk about inequality— this new form of slavery was worse than Roman slavery; at least slaves in roman times had the chance of winning their freedom.

In America, slavery was absolute and inescapable. Nowadays, we think that slavery has been abolished, but we are mistaken. Instead, slavery has been globalized. When the Iron Curtain fell, sex slavery and prostitution increased. Today a slave is more cheaply valued than a Roman slave was. A woman in a Nike factory in Thailand would have to work for 50,000 years in order to earn what the CEO does in a single year.

Over in Africa, the Congo has won the sorry distinction of being the worst country in the world for women. Three million women in the Congo have already been raped, and seven million

people have been killed. Western nations really don't care about the brutality in the Congo; so long as the Congo keeps providing many of the minerals for electronic devices, western nations will ignore what's happening in that part of the world.

Inequality isn't just something that happens over there—there's plenty of inequality right here in America. In America corporations are people—how stupid is that? Now with the Citizens United court decision, corporations are allowed to spend unlimited money in order to influence elections. Corporations are like vampires, they are immortal and nearly impossible to kill. But unlike people, corporations are not required to take responsibility for their own actions. If the banks issue too many derivatives, they government will bail them out. After all, what's the point of being a banker if you can't grant yourself millions of dollars in bonuses while at the same time socializing your risk?

Sometimes, one feels like escaping from all the injustice, but how can you when all the land is already owned? You can't even go to the national park without paying money to visit land you already theoretically own. There's one group called the Rainbow Family that's consistently harassed by the government merely because they insist on spending several days each year communing with nature. However, if you lead an industry that is hell-bent of destroying the environment, our government officials will literally snort cocaine and have sex with you.

In the long run, poisoning the Earth affects all of us. However, in the short-term, the poor are the ones that pay the heaviest price. Chemical factories pollute poor countries and poor neighborhoods in America. Plastic from America is sent to China in order to be recycled. When plastics are recycled they exposed Chinese workers to toxic chemicals. Inequality is not only destroying our society, it is destroying the planet. Our world is at a tipping point. Many of the factors that have led to the globalization of inequality are vanishing. Peak oil, peak water, and global warming are three important trends that will lead to a de-industrialized and localized world. This is the ideal moment to return equality to humanity.

*Transcribed Recording from a Two-Part Freedom Writers Workshop*

# Even-Handed

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by Samantha Highsmith

What happened? Oh, okay. I walked into school and I set down my backpack and my binder in my class that I'm going to. And I sit down at my desk, and I'm just doodling away. And on the inside of my binder I have a Human Rights Campaign sticker. And some kid that I don't really know comes and sits down next to me and he's like, hey, what's that sticker? And I was just like, oh, well, it's a Human Rights Campaign sticker. And I proceeded to explain to him that the Human Rights Campaign is all about equality for the LGBT community in our society. And then finally he was like, are you a lesbian? And I was like, no, I'm not a lesbian. He was like, then why do you care?

When asked why do I care, the answer doesn't come simply. I couldn't tell him in two words why it matters or how I came to understand why caring is important. And so I took time to sit back and to think. There isn't a time in my life when I remember waking up and being forced to hide myself. I've always had the right to be open about who I am. That freedom has become so common to me, and yet daily people are denied the ability to be comfortable in their own skin. Daily, people wake up and are criticized, alienated, and silenced. All the while, I go through my life, taught to be forgetful of the past, blind to the present, and indifferent to the future. I rarely feel challenged beyond high test scores and popularity contests. Instead I feel like the world around me wants me to be apathetic. To do nothing. Consumption fulfills my need for instant gratification, and Facebook provides me with the space to self-promote. I'm told that my emotions are juvenile and that I should grow up. But how can I get away from the constant text messages and Jersey Shore sound bites? I can't help but feel like growing up involves more connection with reality than reality television provides.

Reality is so much harder than what many of us live in. In this reality, freedom is sold to us in commercials and magazine layouts. In this reality, we aren't told about the struggles of the Malcolm X's and the Harvey Milks. In this reality, we demand freedom of speech, but don't have the words to speak up for ourselves. We don't know it really feels to be free, because freedom doesn't mean any-

thing more to us than our freedom to carry guns or sip our lattes. To me, freedom is being aware of what is around me and what I can do to change it. I realize that we deserve things that we are not all born with, and that I've been given what countless people like me never had. I realize my privilege. And I realize that I've been taught to ignore what should mean the most to me. My rights only exist because someone else made the choice to fight for them.

And now I have a choice. I can decide to be silent, live my life privately, and die knowing that I achieved my own goals, personally fulfilled and comfortable. But I want my life to amount to more than credit card debt and white noise. My choice is to step outside of the box I have been placed in. Remaining ignorant to the realities of this world is anything but life in motion. And being unconcerned is a misuse of the voice I was given. My responsibility is not only to me, but to those around me who are drowned out because of my indifference. My choice is to be a leader in healing the wounds left open by prejudice towards the unfamiliar. I choose to challenge the status quo so that everyone is granted an even hand. This is not just about gay and lesbian rights. This is not just about rights based on sex, ability, faith, race, age, gender, appearance, or class. I guess my answer to this question is that I care because this is about my rights, and my ability to choose for myself. My freedom depends on the freedom of others. And it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to solidify and claim that freedom. Condensed and simply put, in the words of Nelson Mandela, to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

*Transcribed from SpyHop Navigating Freedom: A Utah Youth Perspective*

# A Matter of Conscience

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by Steve Proskauer

Civil disobedience in the '60's? Well, I must have caught the fever early. My moment to defy the establishment happened in 1956 — the fall of my 14th year, would you believe— and it was about religious freedom of conscience, not racial discrimination.

Nobody would expect any trouble from a kid like me— straight "A" student, first winner of the newly established Citizenship Award in a school of 2,000 boys from all over Boston, the venerable Boston Latin School established in 1630, crown jewel of the Boston Public School system. Why, Harvard College was founded in 1635 just to educate the Latin School's graduates! Anyhow, maybe my squeaky clean school record was one reason I wasn't expelled from this temple of historic secondary school excellence for my act of peaceful protest. For a few weeks it sure looked like that's what would happen to me, though.

Latin School, like all Boston public schools of that day, included a compulsory ROTC program for all boys. I didn't like the idea of military training and certainly didn't appreciate marching in formation all around the cement courtyard behind the school, but my true objections to that program didn't crystallize until a certain weekend in October.

Though I had enrolled in Quaker Sunday School a year or two before, I was unprepared for the way my spiritual convictions intensified the fateful fall weekend I attended a Quaker youth retreat out in the woods of central Massachusetts. In that atmosphere of group support, I experienced an epiphany of pacifist conscience and bore public witness to it. I fell in love with a girl for the first time and declared my love. What courage! What passion! I was the hero of the camp and everyone supported me. It was my finest hour. I felt transformed by the uprush of adolescent energy that spun me into new feelings of spiritual and emotional power. I got my first taste of manhood.

Arriving home Sunday night, I sat down with my parents and patiently explained that as a pacifist, I could no longer participate in compulsory military drill – marching in uniform with the other boys to Sergeant Kelly's barked commands, balancing a wooden

rifle on my shoulder. All we were doing was preparing to march in the Memorial Day parade, but to me holding even a replica of a rifle and playing at being a soldier meant supporting war and killing. As intellectuals who had survived the Great Depression, my parents were nervous about my making waves over a religious scruple. And perhaps my quiet fervor frightened them.

Next morning I parked myself in the school counselor's office and presented the problem to Mr. O'Leary. I was refusing to put on my uniform and go to drill. He didn't know what to do. It was unprecedented. Nobody had ever protested compulsory military drill. I was sent to study hall while he informed the headmaster, Mr. John J. Doyle.

Later that day, Mr. Doyle summoned me out of class down to his office. He closed the door with deceptive calm. Once he had me alone, Mr. Doyle exploded. I recall to this day his paunchy body towering over me, ruddy jowls shaking, as he screamed that I was a traitor and a disgrace to my country to protest military drill. Frightened and in shock, I still managed to hold my own and explained patiently that I was sorry, but as a Quaker I couldn't violate my pacifist religious convictions. He threatened to have me expelled for my brazen lack of patriotism and sent me back to class. I trembled inside for the rest of the day.

When I told my parents about the encounter with Mr. Doyle that night, they were very apprehensive about my possible expulsion and wanted me to recant. By that point, I was so caught up in the clarity of my convictions that I didn't care. I would take the consequences, whatever they were. I knew that conscientious objectors had once been imprisoned and even shot. Being expelled was a minor price to pay. Once they realized my faith was unshakable, my parents obtained a letter addressed to the School Committee from the Secretary of our Friends Meeting attesting to the authenticity of my religious witness.

I went on attending study hall instead of military drill for weeks, apprehensively waiting for the School Committee to hand down its decision. Then one day I was called out of class again. A tight-lipped Headmaster Doyle again ushered me into his office and shut the door. I was prepared for the worst. With steam coming out his ears, red-faced and apoplectic with frustrated rage, Mr. Doyle apologized to me through clenched teeth for his previous outburst as if someone were holding a gun to his head. The School Committee had decided in my favor and would allow "alternative service" in

the school nurse's office in lieu of military drill.

Even in those distant days of blind social conformity, the School Committee surrendered before one schoolboy's act of civil disobedience. I learned that standing up and bearing witness to justice and unpopular truth always has consequences but we have to be ready to take the risks anyway, just as the Freedom Riders did. I was far luckier than many of the brave protesters against racial discrimination in the South. I could only be expelled from school for acting on my beliefs, not beaten, jailed or killed.

Reflecting 55 years later on my first moment of confrontation with outraged authority, I can see how clarity of conviction gives us strength to stand strong, even when we are small in stature or numbers and authority looms large over us. We are in touch at such moments with a profound level of truth that transcends any external exercise of strength. That is why authority may seem to win out at first but ultimately must buckle before the power of sincere and steadfast witness.

# Ten Commandments

by Tineke van Dijk

She had received the ten commandments of the non-violent movement.

She made the pledge.

## 1. MEDITATE daily on the teaching and the life of Christ.

It was May of 1961 and the Freedom Riders had arrived in Birmingham. Her father had said she could not board the bus. At sixteen she was much too young and had little experience with the notion of rage. Her father said, “Do something less dangerous, go to Kress with Pastor Davidson and do a simple sit in.” As her father put it, “Christ wouldn’t want us losing all our young. Those buses are being blown up and people are being beaten, it’s bad enough to go to Kress and have them call you a Nigger over a soda fountain drink.”

## 2. REMEMBER always that the nonviolent movement in Birmingham seeks justice and reconciliation – not victory.

Pastor Davidson wanted to see the Freedom Riders off by marching from the church to Kress on the corner of Lexington for a sit in at the lunch counter. “Has everyone signed their Ten Commandments?” Pastor shouted. “Yes!”

She held her pledge sheet as she began to march— knees shaking, one foot in front of the other, breathe shallow. She had seen pictures of marchers walking tall and proud, side by side. She had seen people like Papa and Pastor talk about justice and how the idea of it swells up inside of you until you can’t take it anymore. In that moment, just the thought of walking into Kress and asking for a soda made her proud to be a Negro.

## 3. WALK AND TALK in the manner of love, for God is love.

With every step she said the words, “Lord, make me strong so I can do your work with love.” She held these words as her mission cry for when she forgot them a slice of rage would slip in. The sort of rage that bumps up against her father’s insistence that you can do and be whoever you want. This rage was created by forbidden bathrooms, restaurants, drinking fountains and swimming pools.

4. PRAY daily to be used by God in order that all men might be free.

She could see the lunch counters empty in anticipation. She wanted to think about strawberry milkshakes, french fries, and holding a shiny slick menu. But all she could think of were the angry white men and women waiting – just waiting. The idea of running anywhere to escape the moment was quieted by Pastor sliding his hand into hers, “Are you ready?” “Yes, I’m ready.”

5. SACRIFICE personal wishes in order that all men might be free.

They walked into Kress with peace in their hearts, living their mission with every step. Pastor had talked about sacrifice. All she knew is that one spring morning in May had been sacrificed; it all came down to this.

6. OBSERVE with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy

The vinyl seats were slick and smooth as she slid onto the counter seat. She pulled the edges of her skirt down below her knees as if a bit of gingham could protect her from the splintered souls surrounding her at the counter. Pastor held a menu in his hand and passed it down so each person could look at the choices. Each person slowly turned the corner of the menu and passed it on as if the menu itself would jump out and attack. She remembered her father’s words, “Always say yes ma’am and thank you when you orderin’ from White people, they thinks that’s important. Show your manners.” She thought about the politeness of ordering a milkshake when the wetness struck her cheek, as the spit from the word “Nigger” flew out of an old white man’s mouth.

7. SEEK to perform regular service for others and for the world.

Her eyes reached upward towards Pastor for guidance. He hadn't noticed what happened to her for he was praying and calming an angry young White man holding a clean white bat and yelling his one-word taunt. The bat hit hard against the counter, shattering the metal siding.

8. REFRAIN from the violence of fist, tongue or heart.

She jumped up holding her skirt tight between her fists. Prayer jumped into her heart as she begged for the hatred to slow down, just slow down. The bat struck down again, Pastor was the one who led us here. He calms our souls so we can do Christ's work on behalf of Negroes everywhere. If the holy man could do nothing to slow the rage than surely one sixteen year old girl child could not.

9. STRIVE to be in good spirit and bodily health.

The bat came down a third time with unison taunting, "Nigger, Nigger, Nigger," sprayed out by angry white men, women, and teenagers. This time the bat broke away at a piece of the counter and the owner got really mad. "Stop breakin my counter, just strike that bat at the damned pastor's head."

10. FOLLOW the directions of the movement and of the captain on a demonstration.

The bat bounced off of the side of Pastor's head, white wood and the darkness of blood formed a bond between the two. The Pastor slid off the chair, twirling to the right as he landed on the floor. She jumped backwards off the chair onto the cold wet linoleum as she grabbed Pastor's head and placed it on her lap. The owner shouted again, "Damn girl, you better be ready to clean that mess up."

*Items in bold are from the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Pledge signed by volunteers for sit-in demonstrations to protest segregated eating facilities in Birmingham, Alabama.*

# The Hearing Dog Experience

by Chelle George

Since my early 20's I have been losing my hearing a little at a time. During stressful times in life, my hearing took big drops. Hearing aids help but they aren't called hearing miracles for a reason. As of right now, I have about 35% of my hearing left. I don't hear when people knock at the door. The only time I hear my phone is when it's under my nose. I go for hikes and people come up behind me, often scaring me half to death because I didn't hear them coming. Also out of my hearing range are timers and most house fire alarms.

I wanted help with all the above which is exactly what hearing dogs do. I applied to an organization and was approved to receive one. I was thrilled with the idea of having a hearing helper I could lavish love on. No more missed visits from friends who dropped by. I would be alerted to text messages and know when fire alarms went off. Having a dog would give me a more normal life.

Hearing dogs are covered under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) as service dogs. Service dogs are well known and accepted in society. I thought doors would be open for me, instead they seemed to shut. "What do you need a hearing dog for," I heard too often.

Benji, the hearing dog, was a sweetheart. He was a well behaved Poodle/ShihTzu mix. The organization trained him to touch me with his paw and lead me to the door or my phone. If the house fire alarm went off, he would find me, lay across me and nudge me with his nose and paws until I understood. When we went walking, I watched him for clues to find out which direction noises came from and if someone was behind me.

My hearing dog became sick within a few days after getting him which cut short training between me, the dog and the organization. The organization wasn't able to go to the assisted living home where I worked as a hairdresser to introduce the dog. My boss and I did not think it would be a big deal because dogs came and went with family members as they visited their loved ones in the building, plus I only worked two days a week. However, my boss didn't think to inform the building administrator about my

dog. It became a total breakdown of communication.

When Benji healed, I took him to work with me as the hearing dog organization suggested. I met the administrator with a well-behaved dog sitting at my feet and laminated cards specifying Benji as a service dog along with ADA cards for both federal and state laws regarding service dogs. She took one look at the dog and said, "No." I tried handing her the ADA cards and she refused to look at them. Even with the state and federal laws behind me, I was totally disregarded. Benji could not come to work with me. Her reason: there was one client in the building who was afraid of dogs.

Under the hearing dog organization's rules, I could not be apart from the dog for more than four hours at a time. That meant my two days at work were cut from eight down to four hours a day. My income took a hit. I filed a complaint with the assisted living's headquarters. Days went by and no word. I worked twice a week cramming as much work as I could into four hours which put pressure on both me and my co-worker. Days went by and there was no resolution for getting the dog to work with me.

In the meantime, I encountered negativity from friends and neighbors. As per the rules, Benji could not be around other dogs. He might pick up bad habits after extensive training and he might get hurt or sick. When friends came by with their dogs, I would scoop Benji up. Repeatedly, they asked if he was ever allowed to be 'just' a dog. Yes he could. At home Benji chased a ball and toys. We played tag and he had attention whenever he wanted it. Duty required me, however, to keep him safe and well-behaved.

Another thing I received flack on was maintaining a short leash and keeping him by my side at all times. Keeping him close to me created bonding. We needed to become a working unit. Another reason being, I could watch and learn his signals and yet again, to keep him well behaved and trained. Benji existed in the public eye and no one wants to see a 'service' dog run wild in grocery stores. I felt like I had to be on the defensive all the time.

After four weeks of waiting, the word came down from work. I could bring Benji as long as he stayed in a crate the whole time. That's no life for a hearing dog. During those four weeks, my hearing took another drop due to all the tension. I finally decided enough and gave Benji back to the organization he came from. I didn't want to chance losing my hearing altogether with the added stress of a legal battle. In that short amount of time he was in my life, Benji became family. Giving him back broke my heart.

Hearing dogs are misunderstood. Over a year later, I still think of Benji and feel guilty for not fighting it to the end. It was a chance to help others understand what hearing dogs were about but I never imagined forcing that understanding on to others. Someday I will try again now that I know what to expect but I will wait until my heart has fully healed from this experience.

# Forgotten

by Lucia McKeag

I am sitting, trying to block out all the other screeching sounds around me. I am used to it now, even though sometimes it drives me insane. I know why they cry, and why they whine. It is a feeling of loneliness they are tired of. Tired of being cooped up and forgotten. I was forgotten too.

I think quietly about that sweet old bed of mine. It was soft and fluffy, so fluffy sometimes I would pull on it with my mouth. It had a funny taste and it tickled my tongue. It was mine and no one else's. Now I share everything with others. I remember the cold water I drank every day. The shock of cold would hit my mouth and I would revel as it took away the dryness of my throat. Now I have only warm water to share. I think back on the food and the toys that were mine. The family that used to love me. Now I am alone. They no longer love me. They gave me away. I am alone.

I reminisce of the yard I had to play in, the happy memories with the children and their parents. Why can't I forget? Did they already forget about me? Do they regret leaving me here? What did I do to deserve this?

I have been here for months now. People walk past me and try not to look at me. I have heard them say they feel bad for me. I wish they would take me away and love me. That is all I want. I just want someone I can love and for them to love me in return. That would be enough.

There are too many of us here, but not enough homes. Each time one of them gets chosen, I am happy for them but secretly I feel so much envy I feel as if I could cry out loud. I don't have much time left. I will never find a true home. I know it in my heart.

The lady with the jangling keys walks to me and stops. She looks at me silently. I stare back, my eyes searching hers, trying to pour my soul out to hers in this one look. Tears pour out of her eyes and she crouches down and sticks her hand through the bars. She strokes my face and tells me she is sorry. Why is she sorry?

She opens the door and I get excited. Is she taking me home? Am I leaving for good? But then I can feel the sorrow around her, and I realize that I am not leaving; neither am I coming back. She

leads me through a long bright hallway into a room whose smell I recognize. I stop. I do not like this room. I look at her and plead with my eyes. This room never brings happiness. She is not looking at me now, and I know her face is wet with tears again. She tugs on me and I keep walking.

A big but gentle man picks me up and places me on a table. He pets me softly and tells me he is sorry too. He quietly touches the back of my ears, and I close my eyes enjoying the moment. The woman leaves, she says she cannot watch and she kisses me good-bye. She tells me she is sorry she never found me a home, and she is sorry that I have to go away forever. Suddenly I know what is going to happen and I begin to whine. Is it fair that I have to die? What did I do that was so terribly wrong that my life is now being taken from me? I try to picture my old home and the family that left me here to die. I wonder what I could have done differently so they would have kept caring for me. Did I not love them enough? Is that why I am here? I don't understand why I have to die. And then I remember the kennels and the loud noises and the other dogs that are just as sad as me. How many will be brought in here after I am taken away? I want to live, I want to be loved. I feel something sting me and I see the man softly holding me down as he pulls something sharp away from me. Every fiber of my being begins to fight the feeling because I know I am dying. The man gently pets me and tells me it will all be okay. One last whimper escapes from my throat and soon I have no energy and my eyes close as I feel the energy drain from my very soul. Gone forever.

#### Author's Note:

*I had decided I was going to write a poem and I had a vague idea in my mind of several options. I started out the night by trying to become inspired. I listened to Phillip Glass's violin concerto second movement to entice certain feelings to flow out of me. I listened to music played by Jon Schmidt, as he has always been a role model of mine. For hours I sat playing different music and reading various selections of poetry and quotes of my own creation and of fellow writers. I felt the creativity flowing around me in the room in which I sat quietly pondering. In the back of my mind was a story of a creature that wanted to be heard. I pushed it to the back of my head because I could not bear to write it. Subconsciously I refused to write it because it was going to hurt to put together his story.*

*I continued throughout the night feeling as if I had my own*

*muse sitting invisibly next to me. I was certain I was going to be able to write what I had determined to write, but each time I prepared to type the words onto my laptop, no word or thought came. I saw a post from an animal rescue center that I keep up with. They were being shut down and many animals were going to die because of it. I couldn't take it any longer. I had to write it. The story was going to burst out of me at any moment and I was finally conscious of the anecdote burning inside my very soul.*

*The moment my flesh made contact with the keyboard, the words began spilling out of me with almost no thought involved. Within minutes my heart was aching and I knew how the story must end. I had known it all along and it tore my heart into pieces. When I came to the end of the story, the part the reader and both the character come to a realization of what is going to happen, I stopped. My heart yearned and my soul ached as I silently wept for this animal. I quietly mourned the death of not only my character, but of all dogs that shared this story. My fingers were trembling now as they connected with the keyboard again. I silently pecked out the ending in hopes that this story would come alive in the hearts of others. His story had to be told. Even I could not bear to hear it because we as humans do not like to hear what makes us uncomfortable or somber. Which is exactly why I am submitting this piece. I only hope to touch the very core of the souls who read this story. It changed my heart and I plan to do whatever I can to make a difference. This is where I begin.*

# Christ

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by Betha Hudspeth

God had laid a path before us.

Why do some choose to ignore the warning signs  
or the gifts that are bestowed upon them?

Why walk down the road of destruction resisting  
his protection, his caring, loving, and trusting shield?

By surrendering, we yield to his will and salvation, and  
by his grace and mercy, putting faith through prayer, we're blessed.

The mighty one who got you're back all the time, twenty-four  
seven.

The father who sent his son who hung upon the cross for all sin-  
ners.

He paid the suffering price for our sin.

Oh, what power the father, to let the son's physical body die, yet the  
spirit lives.

Three days passed and the son lay within a cold, dark tomb; two  
guards slept outside. By early morning the son was seen walking  
and asked not to be touched. By word of mouth, it is said that they  
were sighting that son walking the earth. Why not trust in your  
faith— you'll never have a bad day. You can weather the storm.

Unexplained healing through the land, and it was said the son of  
God has risen from the dead, spreading the gospel throughout the  
nation.

Great teaching, if we just surrender all to the one who has forgiven  
our sin time again. Who gives the promise of his love and care.  
Holding on to his unchanging hand. The one to call on anytime,  
day or night. We can only pray for those who choose to travel the  
road of destruction: If he has ears, let him hear within my heart he  
lives.

# Voices of Choice



by Jonnathon Hardy

Why force people in clothes  
You who ruin are flows  
You who oppress  
Making me depressed  
Suppress our choice  
But you can't our voice  
What did we do to you  
To bring about your voice untrue  
We will riot  
Against your fascist diet  
We will tear down your kingdom  
To assert our freedom

# Since 1961

by Anonymous

Well, I think we have come very far since 1961. Why? I will tell you. Back then black people were not allowed to tell freely how they felt or their personal opinions. Today, black people have as many rights as white people and Mexicans do. It's crazy that back then they could not vote easily. They were almost just like slaves, still fighting just to make it into the polling places. Nowadays it is cool we have a black President who is good at what he does. In 1961 there is no way in God's name they would let a black man be president, and in fact they would probably have killed the black person if they wanted to run for President of the United States.

I also think that we have moved far on the schools. Back then, you could not sit in the same classroom as a black person. In the South, you could not even attend the same school. You also could not drink at the same drinking fountain. It has highly improved. Since then, to be honest, now blacks and whites get along. They also can go to the same school, use the same drinking fountain, and do anything that they want.

Back in 1961, blacks or browns could only sit at the back of the bus. Thanks to Rosa Parks she started a lot of people thinking. It is shocking to think they used to hurt people's feelings telling blacks to get to the back of the bus. Now it is extremely cool that black people can sit where they want to they don't get judged by anyone just because the color of their skin. I think we have moved far since then. Black people are equal individuals as Mexicans and whites and now. It is fair they got rights to vote sit where they would like too and can be in the same school.

In 1961, black people had very little rights. I personally don't like that they were treated. Black people are cool, in my personal opinion, and they can be good people. Some of them just do not make the right choices. Blacks are equal, and will remain equal. I personally do not like how they are still being treated, like they are bad people. I like how Martin Luther King Jr. worked to get blacks their civil rights. After he was killed, his wife Coretta Scott King kept working for civil rights, as well. What a great legacy from that family.

Martin Luther King and his wife were way good people— they cared about what other blacks thought, and what their feelings were. It was a slow process for 100 years, and people like Martin Luther King, Jr. saved blacks from continuing on with a terrible lack of civil rights. He and the others, people like the Freedom Riders of 1961, caused a great change to come to our country. I am glad we live in a time where people can enjoy their freedom. Have we progressed? Yes. Do we still need to look out for other people? Yes. There is always work to do.

# The Summer of '61

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by Stephen Proskauer

“Dad, where were you in the summer of 1961, the summer of the Freedom Riders?”

“Let me see... I was just nineteen, finishing junior year in college... I was a mess back then, Tim. I didn’t know if I was coming or going, who or what I was. I was having a big identity crisis.”

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“What’s that you say?... OK, wise guy, I admit it— I’m still a mess and I still don’t know who I am, but now I don’t mind. At my age you realize we’re all a mess and nobody really knows who they are—we only think we know. We believe we’ve got it all together—until life throws us the next curve ball.”

Freedom Writers

“Anyway, as I was saying, that was the first summer of the Harvard-Radcliffe American Indian Project. I was a charter member, you know, one of the first volunteers. That summer changed my confused life. It saved my sorry ass, you might say.”

“Three of us college volunteers took a bus across the country from Boston to Utah— yeah, we sat in buses too, lots of buses that summer, just to get out there to the Ute Reservation. Bus travel wasn’t so comfortable back then— smelly, noisy, hard seats that didn’t recline. Would you believe, I carried my cello in the seat next to me all the way, inside my sleeping bag! Looking back now, I think playing cello was an important fragment of my identity that I wanted to hang onto, even out there in the Wild West. People looked at me strangely in the bus. Maybe they thought I had a dead body next to me— like at the end of that classic movie, “Midnight Cowboy.”

“On the way we stopped off in Chicago for a national meeting on American Indian issues. I met representatives from tribes in every part of the US and heard lots of speakers. It inspired me enough to endure another marathon bus ride. I remember sleepless midnights with radios blaring on the bus and eating a greasy hamburger in the Omaha bus station during the wee hours that left a greasy grungy

taste in my mouth."

"The three volunteers headed for the Ute Reservation were traveling together at least, so it wasn't so lonely and strange. Here we were—an island of Harvard idealists in a sea of waving grain as we passed through the wide expanses of the great plains. Then the terrain changed as we approached and crossed the Rocky Mountains. Such grandeur under the wide open skies of the great Southwest!"

Once the three of us reached the Salt Lake City bus terminal all rumpled and red-eyed, we still had to back track by car 150 miles from Salt Lake to the Ute Reservation headquarters at Fort Duchesne, east of the green forests and cool breezes of the Wasatch and Uintah Mountains and down onto the hot dusty summer desert. That last leg of the trip seemed endless, as we anticipated with anxious excitement our first contact with the Utes.

After a brief orientation, and before I could get over even the beginnings of my culture shock, I was assigned to be the science counselor at Hill Creek Camp up in the high country near the Green River, eighty miles from the nearest town by slow and bumpy dirt road in the back of a pickup truck. I rode up there with the adolescent boys I was supposed to teach, my age and younger, all of them from a Native American culture embedded in a Mormon subculture—both cultures completely foreign to me. I recall breathing in the red desert dust as we drove out of the dry inferno of the lowlands up into the cool high country.

"Never seen a wilder place! Hill Creek Camp was situated at around 10,000 feet above sea level amid groves of aspens whispering in the cool breezes. Herds of elk roamed the pastures on the flat-topped hills above the camp. We were roughing it out there."

"Believe it or not, I somehow created a science lab in a rickety one-room cabin out in the middle of nowhere with very little equipment, but enough for hands-on teaching about the incredible natural world all around us—like looking at microbes in pond water under the microscope or catching, mounting and naming butterflies. I even played Bach Cello Suites out there for kids who'd never heard of Bach and never seen a cello before. They may not have seemed cultured by Harvard standards, but some of those

boys were pretty smart. One of them kept beating me on my portable chess set all summer long.”

“I have other snapshot memories, sharp enough after 50 years, imprinted on my acid-free brain— clear gurgling brooks, struggling to shave in the cold water (no electricity) and growing my first beard instead, the lousy cook who drank too much and had to be fired in the middle of the summer, the archeologists digging and sifting for ancient artifacts nearby— and those great boys, from a world far rougher and grittier than mine.”

“Who knows whether they learned more from me or I learned more from them... All I can say is, when I finally made it back to Harvard that fall, I’d decided to go into medicine and work with people instead of holing up in a lonely organic chemistry research lab for the rest of my life. I learned that the experience of helping a disadvantaged minority group across a cultural divide offers at least as much to the giver as to the receiver. While teaching science to some Native American kids, I had a chance to loosen my uptight Ivy League personality and engage with fellow human beings from another culture.”

“It was a pivotal summer for me... and I haven’t forgotten those boys. I wonder who they are today. Maybe I should take a drive out that way sometime...”

# A Black Triumph

by Anonymous

In 1961, four-hundred courageous men and women boarded the buses at their own expense of their lives to uphold a protest on the inhumane treatment and the opportunities that were stripped from their very being. This all occurred in the south of the United States. All of these people were known as the prestigious “Freedom Riders.” Life was not pleasant for many of the mistreated African Americans. Here are some of the atrocious acts that were performed against them.

The Freedom Ride departed from Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1961. It was intended to arrive in New Orleans on May 17. On Mother’s Day, May 14, the Freedom Riders split up into two groups to travel through Alabama. The first group was met by a mob of about 200 angry people in Anniston. The mob threw stones and slashed the tires of the bus. The brave men and women escaped out of town. They stopped about six miles away from where they had been attacked to change their damaged tires. That was a mistake because the group of bigoted people met up with them, only to fire bomb the group.

The other group did not fare any better. It was greeted by a mob in Birmingham, and the Riders were severely beaten. The public safety commissioner claimed to not have sent out response units to the crime because it was a holiday. The facts were later found by the FBI after a thorough investigation. They discovered that he had known about the attack and purposefully did not send out the police, because he believed that they were just rebels looking for problems. The bus drivers no longer wanted to drive for the Freedom Riders because they feared for their own well-being and the owners feared that their buses would be demolished. So Freedom Rider Jim Peck stated that it would be even more beneficial if they pressed onward to prove that non-violence could prevail over violent acts. The group instantaneously went on to New Orleans.

Shortly after, Martin Luther King Jr. went on to Montgomery and held an assembly to support the Freedom Riders. This assembly only kindled the ardor in the southern people’s hearts. They surrounded the church with insidious intentions. So MLK called

Robert Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy called Governor Patterson. He then sent out an order for “martial law.” He sent out the police and National Guard. The mob dispersed and the streets were placid. Robert Kennedy asked for a cooling off period and the freedom riders responded “We have been cooling off for three hundred and fifty years. If we cooled off any longer we would be in a deep freeze.” That was a mistake because they all got sent to the jail after being met by a mob at the bus terminal. They received a sentence of sixty days in the state penitentiary. A lot of the freedom riders who continued to move southward got arrested and toward the end, over three-hundred had gotten arrested. The Freedom Riders never made it to New Orleans. A lot of people were scared for the rest of their lives from the noxious beatings they received. They did not do these things in vain; they received recognition by Kennedy by taking their position under consideration and making a law stating that the segregation of public transport was to be outlawed.

So I have given you the facts, and here is my opinion. I believe that these people have more stature than many of us can even hope coming close to. They were treated as though they were non-existent. In my opinion, there was nothing counterfeit about their character, because they fought for what they believed in. The strength was prudent within their hearts and nothing they did was in vain. Every action that they took was crucial to the civil rights that were being pushed upon the constitution. They helped shape our country as it is today.

# Civil Rights Since 1961

by Anonymous

Have there been any improvements on civil rights since 1961? I believe so. I can even explain that my reasoning is correct in three easy topics. These three topics sit in a high regard in my mind. The points that I would like to make are specifically: physically, mentally, and emotionally. These three topics are the most important in my mind. They are the points that determine the whole layout and prosperity of a persons' life. All of these points have changed dramatically over the time span of 151 years. The change of these topics is very important to us, and all who live in America for their better and brighter future.

First, physically. Back during the slavery days we as Americans were totally blind to any fact that the people we were enslaving had lives and families. It had become such a daily occurrence for someone to walk into town or through town with a slave following along. In short, we were desensitized to the pain and suffering we dragged those men and women in, and out of. We, as Americans during those times, treated them like dirt. Women, children and weak slaves were sometimes incapable of working and tended to be beaten, traded or killed. Back in 1859, right around the civil war, it was a common thing to see a slave beaten and spit upon. Now, today, we are more accustomed to seeing a black person. They're not commonly beaten or battered in public anymore.

Second, mentally. I think that society has mentally accepted blacks as normal. Not completely! Don't get me wrong. Mentally when I think of slavery I tend to first feel angry and sad for all those who suffered and perished at the hands of slave owners. Then I think about all of the friends I've had who were from different countries, and who were black. Seeing a black person does not register in my mind as "not owned property." They are people to me. That is in my mind proof enough. I am part of the new youth in the country, and if I think there are many young people who think the same.

Third, emotionally. We as a community have news. The news comes and goes all over the world. Whenever we see or hear about something that happened to a black person, or to a person of a

different race, we tend to feel bad for whoever it is, no matter who they are. That was a very uncommon occurrence throughout the slave owner community. Think about Haiti. When they were hit by that earthquake, everyone knew. Look at how much support the people received. The Coast Guard, Navy, thousands of volunteers and basically every man and woman in the U.S. did their part to either empathize or support those thousands of people who were homeless, parentless, or even dead. We did not look at them as blacks, but suffering humanity.

In essence, we have come a long way. One thing was nagging at my mind while writing this though. America has a black president. Obama was voted in as the president. This last election made him the first black President of the United States of America. To do that is an amazing feat, because people voted for him because of his personality. The public took a second look and looked past the pigment in his skin.

So I ask again has there been any improvements on civil rights since 1961? Ask yourself that question daily. Wonder if we have come far enough, or do we still need to move on? If you think we need to please do what you think needs to be done. Don't wait for others to do it for you! Find that passion and change the world for the good. Then when you say 'I am too tired' think about civil rights, think of those people who were tired, yet they still fought on.

# Freedom Riders

by Anonymous

Since 1961, there has been a substantial amount of improvement in regards to civil rights. Blacks have been enfranchised and desegregated. Even before then, the slaves were freed. Being colored meant strenuous work and no promise of freedom or progression. Luckily, brave people like MLKJ and Rosa Parks stood up and fought without violence. Back then it was unspeakable to stick up for blacks even if you were black, especially if you were black. Down in the South there was no tolerance for blacks to speak to white folks especially the females. If you did something like that back then you were sure to get hung or beat up by the KKK.

Blacks are free to intermingle with the whites and a lot of rights have been given to Mexicans, Asians, and Tongans. It is hard to believe that only 60 years ago I would have to have been with blacks only, and I'm not even black. I am Mexican. So let us inquire exactly what these 400 men and women and white people did.

Rosa Parks stood up against the white man by sitting on the front row of a bus and refusing to give up her seat to a white man. At the time this type of behavior was not tolerated and, she was arrested on the spot. This was only the beginning of a series of uprisings against the white man's tyrannical rule. She and MLKJ led the civil rights to a triumph.

I think that tolerance for black and colored folks has increased dramatically. I personally have never experienced any significant racism, and I am colored. There may be some racism in the South, and there is always the skin heads, but they are a minority. With Obama as the president I feel like there is no more room for excuses with black people. Before the black folks used discrimination as a tool to take a victim stance. Oppression, slavery, and poverty were a thing of the past and although there was some segregation, there were a fair amount of blacks who were successful. Anyways, blacks used crime and still do and then acted like that was their only opportunity. Our nation has progressed and flourished.

The only problem I find today is with Mexicans. I feel like Americans reject them without realizing that we are a nation of im-

migrants. I can understand that some people may feel like perhaps we are taking over, but I think we should be a tad bit more permissive. In my study of 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey), I have learned to practice synergy, and that we have to celebrate differences. There have been stories where a child is born in Mexico and brought to America, and then raised so they speak perfectly in English. Then they find out that they are illegal and their whole family gets deported. I think that as Americans, we should lighten up a bit on the immigration policies. America is the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Becoming a legal citizen of the United States of America is quite an elaborate in its process. I am very truly grateful for those who have suffered and fought for the rights of Americans, especially my brother Martin Luther King, Jr., but I also feel that blacks act entitled and sometimes act even superior to white people for what they have done in the past. Although many blacks were severely mistreated, they have no right to mistreat others.

Now I have a few things to say about the Civil War and why blacks should not feel so entitled to superiority. A majority of soldiers in the Civil War were white. There was an abundant amount of blacks as well. President Abraham Lincoln was white and started the Civil Rights Movement. So although there were farmers in the South that needed the slaves to keep the economy afloat, the North was fighting furiously for the Blacks' freedom. Therefore, any black who feels that their rights have been infringed upon is justified in that, but a black who feels that whites are below him is not.

So, in conclusion, a final word: no man is less than, or greater than the others. We are all equal to each other, whether we are black or white, even blue.

# So All May Be Free

by Alonzo Douglass

Last year I had the permanent job of picking my son up from his high school. I always parked on one side of the building. Every day I saw the same couples. Young love is beautiful to watch. Here were people discovering what it is like to talk to a soul mate, share common experiences, place a hand on her shoulder, wrap an arm around his waist, hold each other's hands, hug, and kiss. The trouble was some couples were missing. I did not see boys with their boyfriends or girls with their girlfriends.

What year is it? Why it's 2011. The first Freedom Riders boarded buses in Washington, D.C., May 4, 1961. Today government-sanctioned and -legislated discrimination based on people's skin color is illegal in all fifty states. Not only that it is socially unacceptable for people to talk about race the same way Bull Connor, the Commissioner of Public Safety for Birmingham, Alabama, and other diehard segregationists did when the Riders entered their states and their communities. However, it is still OK to disparage LGBT people and to use social pressures to make them hide their love.

We need new Freedom Riders. This time they need to be on the side of love. The new rule is LGBT love is as acceptable as hetero love in public and in all other facets of our social and professional lives. If this does not happen, if LGBT youth do not see trailblazers and do not have role models, they might try to deny their true natures. In doing this they will have a high probability of making the same serious mistake past generations have been making for thousands of years. Gay men might marry hetero women, and lesbian women might marry hetero men. Then what? When they rediscover their true selves, they will certainly hurt the person they promised to "be loving and faithful to in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, and in sickness and in health for as long as they shall live." How do I know? I did this, and several of my friends did this.

How could such a thing happen?

I knew my true nature when I was two or three years old. This may sound sensational, but my family has pictures of me being

myself around those ages and I have one enduring memory that has always been with me. I had one person in my life I wanted to be like. That was my mother. Everything she was, I wanted to be. Everything she did, I wanted to do.

The people around me let me know my behavior was not acceptable. Those closest to me didn't vocalize everything they thought. Their messages came in scowls, sideway glances, hand-covered smiles, smirks and snickers, and half-audible words. The kids I grew up with were more straightforward. They used ugly and hate-filled words. Faggot. Queer. Fairy.

Here was too much pain.

My entire family—from parents to grandparents, from aunts and uncles to cousins—belonged to the same faith. Most of my neighbors were steadfast members. These people taught me my true nature was a sin. Not only that, it was repulsive and detestable. Men who were attracted to men and women who were attracted to women were sick. They were perverts. They were molesters. The high and mighty of my church said people who acted on these types of desires committed offenses that were equivalent to murder and forcible rape.

I loved these people. I respected these people. The two things I wanted from them the most were their continued love and respect for me.

To get rid of the pain, to keep my family's love, to be on the right side of God, I put the “real” me away. To do this I put him in a compartment. The floor was solid rock, the walls were slabs of thick concrete, the rafters were heavy hardwood timbers, and the roof was impregnable tiles. This one-room cell had no windows, and the door was made of high-strength steel and held shut with bars, chains, and burglarproof locks. I took that compartment and buried it deep inside my mind.

After many years, when I thought the compartment was lost forever, I made the greatest mistake of my life. I asked my best friend, my dearest pal, my buddy of all buddies to marry me. I did this even though I had a peculiar habit, one I refused to acknowledge. When I looked for beauty, I looked at men.

After I got married, I quickly discovered all was wrong. The form was wrong. The sensation was wrong. The idea was wrong. My wife desired me, but, on my side of our bed, she was a chore. As with most chores, here was one I wanted finished as quickly as possible.

About ten years later, I found the compartment I buried in my mind. I didn't open it. Some time passed, and, because I kept thinking about it, the door cracked open. I looked inside, but there wasn't enough light to see what was there. More time passed and, as if the sun was rising and just a sliver of it showed above the horizon, muted light entered the cell through the partially opened door. Inside was my true self. I could describe him with one word, but I couldn't make myself say it. More time passed. The door of my compartment swung wide open, and, as if the sun stood at its apex in the sky, the room was flooded with light. Because my life was in flux, probably more than it had ever been before, I finally said the word. Then I put it in a sentence. Before I could accept the truth, I had to say the sentence out loud, "I am gay."

This explained it all. Here was the source of my mistake. From the time I sealed my "real" self in a compartment and buried him deep inside my mind until I thought the word and then said it in a sentence, I was married and had three children. These are the relationships—the people—that are hurt when someone like me denies his or her true self. One person is always hurt more than the others. That is the wife or the husband. My wife will always believe I knew, I always knew, and I lied to her.

My generation should be the last to make this type of mistake. To make this happen, we need new Freedom Riders. Instead of riding buses, they need to be open about their love. LGBT young adults need to see examples of what they can have. What is that? The same type of relationship their hetero friends have. That is to say love that completes them.

For many, including me, showing our love in public might be difficult. Making it known in all aspects of our social and professional lives might be more difficult. Yet, could it possibly be worse than what the Freedom Riders of 1961 and later faced? In Anniston, Alabama, a group of residents still dressed in their Sunday best crippled a Greyhound bus and then firebombed it. They stopped the Trailway bus that arrived shortly afterward, pushed the Riders to the back, and beat them up. In Montgomery, Alabama, a mob surrounded the bus terminal and beat the Riders with baseball bats, iron pipes, and bicycle chains. In Mississippi the Riders were arrested, tried, sentenced, and put in Parchment Farms, the worst prison in the state.

Today African-Americans enjoy more freedom than any of their ancestors who were brought to or who were born in the

United States. The same is true for all People of Color. LGBT youth need to have a similar promise. When they are given their freedom to love and be loved, others will be given their freedom. Hetero women need to know they are married to hetero men, and hetero men need to know they are married to hetero women. The wrong match is bondage. The right match is freedom.

So all may be freer, we need new Freedom Riders who are on the side of love.

# Rage of the People

by Jonnathon Hardy

The chains of society  
quell all variety  
why let the man  
have the power to ban  
we have much religion  
while people's hate is the main provision  
they make us a slave  
to the money we crave  
for bits of paper  
don't make us safer  
we call our state democracy  
I only see conspiracy  
conspiracy of rage and hate  
what a sorry state  
it may be too late  
to quell this hate  
we all might just dissipate

# New Era

by Flow

The new era  
new people  
new things  
I flow  
seen so  
many faces  
but I feel prehistoric  
because the way  
I see  
new people

# Madness, Homelessness— Is It That Bad?

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by Donald Zeiger

I will always argue that I do not have an agile mind, but that I have a pondering mind. Here is some food for thought.

I remember the month of March of 2007 vividly. I was in the midst of a terrible depression. I had reached the stage where I felt positive that if I would so choose, my life would come to an end in the next two weeks. I had lain in bed for the last two and a half months only arising to feed myself or take the occasional shower. I had quit my job at the beginning of January and just gone home and lain down. My weight was up to 385. My blood pressure I knew was out of control. Later when I did see a doctor, it was found to be at its highest point ever at 248/136. Edema had stretched the skin of my lower legs to the point where oozing ulcers had appeared on both legs and were giving me constant pain. Pleurisy was also a problem. I could hardly breathe when I would sleep, and when I awoke, it was always to a splitting head ache.

On a given day of that month, and I cannot remember what the date was, just that it was toward the end of the month—I made the decision to live. The next day I went to the Meliheh free clinic on 3500 south. The clinic would not let me leave until they had significantly lowered my blood pressure. The medical practitioners there said that if they did not get it down they would have to call an ambulance and I would have to go to the hospital. It took them several hours, but they did find a mixture of medications that got me down to 167/102 and they released me. This was the first positive step I had taken in a long time to take control of my life and personal health issues.

My marriage had come to an end in 2005 after a difficult divorce which took four years to bring to fruition. I started gaining weight at the beginning of 2000 going from 238 lbs to 350 in just 2 1/2 years (being the son of a mother who was an ex-New York model did not help my outlook). My weight gain started the day my wife told me she had slept with another man. Something broke inside me. I am not blaming my ex-wife for my weight gain, it's just I felt I was between a rock and a hard place. Stress enveloped me. I was guilt-ridden over my children—I kept asking myself how

could I have let this happen? How could I let my marriage fail like this? Not giving enough credence to the fact that my wife had made her own decisions in regards to our relationship.

After my divorce, two children, my youngest daughters, remained with their mother who had kicked out our third child (another daughter— eighteen) because Jessica had argued on behalf of me with her mother. Jessica now lived with her boyfriend's family (I never liked that idea). Our fourth child, Michael, was living with me, but I was guilt-ridden because he was watching my life unravel. My two oldest children were both living out of state. My oldest, Tasha, was living in Hawaii where she had finished her studies and gotten her bachelor's degree. Nathaniel, my second child, was in the Air Force in Texas. I knew that they were both glad to be away from the drama.

Depression for me, and I believe this is true for many people, brings about a constant dwelling upon all the bad that has happened throughout one's life. Visions from the distant past haunted me. I watched my brother die before my eyes on a sidewalk when I was eleven and he was twelve after he was hit by a car. I watched a son die of cancer as a little boy, eaten away by the disease. More recently, now I had watched my marriage come to an end with all its dirty laundry thrown about by both me and my wife. Guilt ate at me over feelings I had failed my children. These subjects, and others, with their many horrific and hurtful details personal to me were, and to some extent still are, in constant convolution in my mind's eye.

When I quit my job in January 2007 I wanted to die. However, two and a half months later on that day of which I refer to in March, I heard a voice. Yes, I hear voices in my head. Call me insane if you want, but I will defend myself, by calling what some would define as madness as being my first rate madness.

The voice said, "I will take you if you want, within the fortnight. However, you have much to live for, but I will give you the choice."

I made my choice to live... And no, I am not going to identify that voice as the voice of God. You, my reader, can make that choice for yourself. I just know that impressions have guided me many times in my life and have helped me—as those words did that day.

I cannot say that my life has become easy since that point. However, I can say that quitting became not an option, and I am certain that I "have much to live for."

At the age now of 54 my health has improved since that March to the point that I have worked as an OTR driver with two different companies and as a telemarketer for another. However, in each of those instances stress has cut short my time working because of resulting health problems. The last time was this past April of 2011 when I had what was recognized as a diabetic episode while making interstate deliveries. I'm glad nothing bad happened and I made it home alright.

Being diagnosed with diabetes, however ironical, I will refer to as a God send. I was told it had been developing over the last ten years or so. It was a surprise to me, because I had been checked before—several times in fact—yet I had never been diagnosed. Why do I call it a God send? Because over the last five months I have lost over forty pounds. I am now down to 285—100 pounds less than my weight at its highest point—and the weight is still coming off. I went on insulin for a short time and a couple of other medications, but now I am on just one—metformin.

For some reason the metformin balances out my metabolism and evens out my energy. I seem to be losing weight very naturally now—my blood pressure is going down too. This has really helped in reducing my depression. However, there is one other thing that has helped in my efforts to rebuild my life that is worthy of mentioning.

During my down times when I was recovering my health I wrote a book—a 530 page fantasy novel. I am trying to get it published now. It felt like the right thing to do—and I followed through. It took me nineteen months to write and revise the novel to the point where I was satisfied. Being a first book, I tinkered and tuned, I figured no one would read it anyway. The effort took my mind off my problems—let's call it a manic effort of creativity to defend myself from depression—an exercise of complex, integrated thinking. Those who might know a little about psychology can smile—I give you permission.

Since I have finished it, I have had “The Werewolf Angel Chronicles, A New Beginning” read by several writing coaches at Salt Lake Community College. They have loved it, extended me accolades, and encouraged me to get it published. I wish with my whole heart now to follow through and write several other books that I know I have in me.

I have been homeless now since January 2009 with one stint of driving truck (living in an interstate sleeper) for five months—

but I have never given up. Stigmas would categorize me as a weak link in the strength of society. After all I have admitted to being homeless, depressed, hearing voices, following impressions, and have shown signs of manic creativity. However, I will argue that I can make society stronger.

Winston Churchill who regularly got liquored up before noon and was known for his times of great melancholia made famous his statement “Never ever give up. The pessimist sees the problems in every opportunity. Whereas the optimist sees the opportunity in every problem.”

“Never give in, never give in, never; never; never— in nothing, great or small, large or petty— never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense.”

I find it ironic that some of our greatest leaders have suffered from depression and some of these have come from poverty. Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King to name a few.

There are 3500 homeless people within Salt Lake City alone. That's a whole lot of depressed people. Who knows, perhaps one of our leaders one day will have been a homeless man or a woman. Aristotle thousands of years ago noted that the most creative of people had suffered or were suffering from melancholia. The only downside to this is that Hitler was known to suffer from depression and at one time was homeless. We definitely don't need another one of him.

Where am I going with this? I'm saying that we should lift each other up. Strive to seed hope in even those we might judge as hopeless.

Remember, our savior was born in a barn.

I am grateful to the Salt Lake City Mission, to the Road Home, The Salvation Army, The Catholic Community Services, The LDS Church, The Salt Lake City Rescue Mission and many others that work tirelessly to help the poor and the unfortunate. Where would I be if not for the Meliheh Clinic and the Fourth Street Clinic? Probably dead.

One last thing, food in the belly will always help to digest food for thought.

# Truth about Pornography

by Nick Hicken

I have struggled with addictions for almost half my life. For so long I saw my struggles to overcome my addictions as embarrassing and shameful defects of my character. It hurt every time I gave in to these addictions because it felt like I was allowing myself to let go of the things and people that mattered most to me in order to satisfy a selfish desire. I so often felt that I had lost control of my life and wondered how I could ever fully gain it back. In a very real way I was living under the conditions of slavery.

It's my understanding that the goal of our nation or the "American Dream," is to be a free people. We all want the freedom to live our lives as we choose in order to find our own personal happiness and fulfillment. I believe without freedom there can be no real happiness but with the freedom we do have comes the challenge of willingly choosing to live responsibly.

I know that my personal choices will affect others whether I intend them to or not. Because what we do does affect others, either for better or for worse, we have to consider how our personal use of freedom can affect the freedom of others. This to me is the basis of civil rights and the key to a successful civilization.

What do you believe is the greatest problem we face as a people today? What do you feel poses the most serious and immediate threat to you, your family, and our civilization? Many things may come to your mind such as an economic recession, drugs, gang violence, identity theft, terrorism, racism, pollution and so on. But how many of you would think of pornography as the greatest and most immediate threat to you, your family, and our entire civilization? I want to share with you why I believe that the greatest issue of civil rights in our time will not be so much over skin color as it will be over skin cover.

First I would like to ask you what is pornography. While you think of what your personal definition of pornography is and perhaps to what degree you feel something becomes pornographic (but don't dwell on it too long it, just joking), here is the way the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines pornography:

## PORNOGRAPHY

- 1: the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement
- 2: material (as books or a photograph) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement
- 3: the depiction of acts in a sensational manner so as to arouse a quick intense emotional reaction <the pornography of violence>.

According to these definitions, how often do you see pornography in your daily life? How often do you see material with the depiction of erotic behavior intended to cause sexual excitement in the TV you watch or in signs and advertisements that come into your view?

Before I move on, I invite you to keep track each day for one week of how many times you see pornography come into your view.

We can all see how sexually appealing content is being used far more often and in more powerful ways than ever before. But how serious of a problem is the growing use and acceptance of pornography to you?

While we've looked a tiny bit at what pornography is, I want to focus more on what pornography does to those who view it. First of all I want to address the act of looking at pornography as what it really is: Voyeurism.

"Voyeurism is a psychological disorder in which a person derives sexual pleasure and gratification from looking at the naked bodies and genital organs or observing the sexual acts of others."

Do you see how by openly showing sexually gratifying and enticing images, we are feeding the desires for voyeurism instead of honoring and feeding people's desires to work towards having families? Do you see how people, especially children, become more and more exposed and desensitized to images and messages objectifying others for sex? Can you understand how this causes people to lose touch with reality in many ways including how to view and treat others of the opposite sex? Can you believe how quickly we grow accustomed to the increasing grossness of sexual exploitation in the advertisements of companies we continue to shop from and endorse?

I know I'm getting personal in my feelings and may come off pretty biased but let me tell you things I've experienced and noticed about how serious this problem is. As I said, I've struggled with addictions and it led me to attend an addiction recovery group at my church which I have gone to for over a year. In these meet-

ings the level of honesty between a group of people who start off as strangers, is so unlike anything and anywhere else I've experienced. These are men who have been so deeply wounded by their addictions and have come to realize that they cannot overcome these problems on their own. Your heart goes out to each of them for the losses they've suffered because of their choices and at the same time it is baffling to see how many of them are people you never would have expected to struggle and lose so much.

The number one addiction between each of the many people I have seen come through the program is in fact and without a doubt pornography. Pornography seems to be the ultimate gateway to all addictions and it also seems to be the greatest and last battle people fight once they've overcome other severe addictions. I've heard time and time again people in the group attest that pornography has been much tougher for them to give up than intensely addicting drugs such as heroin; think about that. I've never done or been addicted to heroin, but that really helps to show how seriously people are enslaved to the enticements of pornography.

Think about why that is. While you could say heroin is obviously something that we don't need and is easy for most people not to get into, pornography deals with a natural desire or appetite that is essential in our lives. It is also one of the strongest appetites within us and probably the hardest to control. This is why pornography is so confusing to a person's sexual appetite because it seems to set the person free to experience unbridled passion in lusting after a fantasy of pleasure.

This brings anything but freedom into the person's life however. The sexual appetite is like any other appetite in how it grows and needs more and more to reach the level of satisfaction reached in the first experiences. I've learned through my own experience with addictions that you never know how big a monster has become until you stop feeding it.

This is why we see in our society such unthinkable crimes committed. I don't believe any one is born evil or with the desire to hurt others. I think that the viciousness and the apathy manifested in the terrible crimes we hear about does not suddenly and unfortunately come into these people causing them to do the heartless things they do. It is built up over time and is born and nurtured through seemingly small and simple ways.

The story of Ted Bundy is one of the greatest manifestations of how the seemingly small beginnings of viewing pornography

led to an insatiable addiction. That addiction progressed until Ted became ultimately powerless in restraining himself from feeding his hunger for pleasure that led to the rapes and killings of over 50 women.

Is it extreme to use Ted Bundy as an example like many people believe it is an extreme to relate the growing use of violence in the world to the growing violence in video games and entertainment? I won't get into that matter, but I believe you are what you eat. The desires we feed are the ones that will succeed.

I hope it is somewhat clear to you as it is to me of how destructive the influence of pornography is to individuals and to the foundations of a moral and progressing society. So what can be done to fight such a wild and consuming fire? Who can stand up to such a large and wealthy industry?

Can the government do it for us?

It's difficult to regulate free enterprise and freedom of speech because regulations seem to be a contradiction to "freedom." But we need to consider the reason why we need and have government in a free society.

John Stuart Mill said, "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."

I've expressed already how I've seen in my life and in lives of so many others how harmful the powerful influence of pornography really is. Many others, perhaps including yourself, also feel it has and will continue to cause terrible harm to our people. Because so many see clearly the harm caused by the spread of pornography, can we then expect the government to take action in preventing companies from using pornographic images and materials to prosper their business?

I don't feel it's good to depend on our government for anything. I'm grateful to live at this time and in this country with the magnificent structure of government we have to protect and maintain our land and promote our freedom. However, I think trying to get something done through the government is like trying to write and send a report using a computer that overloads from sorting through more information than it can handle just to boot up. I'd much rather use a typewriter and go deliver the message myself.

I know in my heart there are enough people in our country who will take a stand against pornography to halt and extinguish its influence from spreading into future generations. That might sound

like an impossible dream to a lot of people, but I stand by it and will live my entire life dedicated to the fulfillment of that dream.

I know it is possible and I believe it all comes down to whether we (who feel the desire to stand against pornography) will stop fanning and fueling the fire. Unfortunately it is not only the 'addicts' and the 'indifferent' who widely feed the furtherance of pornography.

In the words of one of my greatest heroes, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.,

"Non cooperation with evil is just as important as cooperation with good."

What seemed to really lift the incredibly successful civil rights movement off the ground were the untied and unyielding boycotts of the major industries and services that cooperated with the attitude of racism.

How can we hope that our kids will be able to resist the enticements of pornography if we ourselves give in to supporting companies and places that use it to make business?

I invite you to think about whether the effects of a society being flooded with pornography is any less serious than a society filled with racism. If it was so important for those committed to the causes of freedom to fight for their rights then, is it not as important to recognize oppression and fight for freedom today?

I invite you to think and search in your heart whether you feel it would be right for you to continue shopping at and supporting places that use sexually enticing images and messages to feed their business. Once you feel in your heart what you believe is right, I encourage you to commit yourself to stand for what you believe and not let anyone or anything influence and persuade you to do otherwise. When you stand for what you really believe in, you help not only yourself but everyone else.

The only way to help someone else is through example and sacrifice. We must do and be in order for others to see. That's what this is all about right? What we want to be seen in our community. Instead of having my future kids see the corruptive, spoiling, desperate, exploitation of sex around them, I want them to see the unyielding values of their parents who will not be bought.

"By small and simple things are great things brought to pass." My hope and plea is that those who see the seriousness of this enemy will stand up to fight the battle now before we end up having to fight a war.



## The Fear

by Betha Hudspeth

82

Freedom Writers

I have two full-time employees that I'm teaching how to strip and wax floors now that they have to take on more responsibility. Where in the world did I get that harebrained idea from? I had three labs and a dark room to strip— either I train the ladies and get it done in three days, or I do it by myself for a week. Quite naturally, I took the three days to train the ladies to get the four rooms done. That's where that idea came from; either one week by myself, or train the ladies that way they're trained. You bet your bottom dollar I took the easy way. I knew from the moment when I thought of the fact that it would take three days to a week or maybe longer... well yeah, those three days looked good to me, although knowing it was going to be three days of HELL— mine you, the ladies don't speak English well, yet understand what I'm saying. Try wearing a hat like that and I don't think you'll hang on for long. It's the truth—I'm beginning to think that my boss has a vendetta against me. It took me two weeks to explain what the hell we all were going to do; those are my days every day, and that's why I take it a day at time, I have too.

Addressing the project with Soe, she looked at me with her big brown eyes and told me, "I scared, I afraid" before she had a hand on anything. Her way of getting out of it, my way you get it. That is now one of your new standards, and I have to find out if you know how to run a buffer strip and wax a floor. If not, then I have to train you.

"New?"

"Yes new."

"I have to do now?"

"Not right now, sometime next week or two."

"Ok when?"

“About two weeks I have four labs and a dark room to do, and I need you and Susan to help me.”

“Ok I do before. I do how you say strip floor; what’s this strip floor?”

“Don’t worry, I will be right there to show you.”

“Before I think me and Susan go do now that why I scared.”

“No I will be right there.”

Ten minutes later I ran into Susan and mentioned that sometime the following weeks or so I would need her and Soe’s help stripping sand waxing floors to show and train them at the same time. She responded, “I work put trash, mop halls, me do me work.”

“You have eight hours days, I need you and Soe to help me with the floors.”

“But I be late go home. It take all day.”

“Not if we start Monday morning at six am.”

“Oh, I thinks it at three when we go home.”

“No it must have been a miscommunication on my part, sorry about that.”

“You say next week maybe.”

“Yes.”

At this point in time, I can’t help but think that my boss has a vendetta against me. It’s his way to make sure that the work is getting done and crack you at the same time, daring a person to speak up because of the way HE HAS BEEN TREATED. And the real person unveils that he carefully manages to do what snakes do best without incident. I’m not poking fun at anyone, it’s the truth— life is life, people are people. Every person on earth needs to work, and the world can do without people who have nothing else to do but to

sit in an office and come up with someone harebrained idea to push a person out of work. A cold-hearted person having their way with ladies that may have a language problem. They may be hard to work with, but give it some time; they will soon pass, at least we'll get the work done.

Monday morning all the equipment was on the floor in front of the room that was going to be stripped. ONE FLOOR T-H-A-N-K Y-O-U that was easy. All we had to do was get started. I look at it like this: we get right into it that way the sooner we start the sooner we finish and safely get in and out. We got the stripper down, waited fifteen minutes, and I begin by showing the proper way to strip the floors without injuring themselves. I show the ladies how to start at the door and work inward to avoid injury. A person may never have enough skill; people can get hurt, so at all times keep both hands on the handle, never trust yourself, be very aware of the machine. After going over the safety tips, I stared with Soe, and of course, "I scared no-no-no- me afraid no."

"You have to start sometime, and today is your lucky day, so show me how you would run a buffer."

"Ok I do."

We should have been on America's Funniest Home Videos when Soe took the buffer and started to push the buffer like someone pushing a lawn mower. The buffer got caught under the counter, and after a few episodes of tug of war Soe got the hang of it. Susan was standing with a look like, "me know to do." As I had Soe step back, "Your turn Susan."

"Me I Do."

"Yes your turn."

"Ok me do now."

They began to strip the floor very carefully. Soe needed a little more practice. We finished at nine-thirty and got the floor rinsed. Not bad work, Susan showed great determination. The three days went well, and the ladies showed me that they can get the job done

THANK YOU LADIES.

# Removing the Screen: Turning Civil Rights Debate into Dialogue

by Karen Findlay

Paradigm. It's the web of philosophies, values, morals— it's the screen through which an individual or group sees the world. A good dialogue about civil rights can only begin if individuals take into real consideration the philosophies that oppose them. It's not enough to befriend people who are different from you. Real consideration requires removing your "screen," and looking through someone else's.

Journalists and bloggers and speakers at expensive conferences to cry out, "Hey you! Stop being racist, and sexist, and homophobic!" The soapbox is tall, the microphone is resonant, but the audience we're hoping to change isn't listening. I believe there are two primary reasons individuals have closed their ears to the contemporary message of civil liberties activism.

1. They start off with a belief that the essential problem civil rights activists want to solve is fabricated, that it used to be real, but that that's all over now, and it doesn't exist anymore.
2. The activists often use inflammatory, accusatory rhetoric. It offends the could-be listeners, and they never return.

Here's a charming example. An Orange County Weekly blogger posts an article with this title: "Racist Orange County Republican Email: President Obama and His Parents Are Apes." Marilyn Davenport, a local Republican figure, had sent out an email with an ape family photo, featuring President Obama's superimposed face. She responded with incredulity to the enraged public when she offered OC Weekly this explanation over the phone:

"Oh, come on! Everybody who knows me knows that I am not a racist. It was a joke. I have friends who are black. Besides, I only sent it to a few people— mostly people I didn't think would be upset by it."

She said she had thought of President Obama as a chimp only because of his policies, not because of his race, and that she "doesn't think in racist terms," "doesn't look at Obama as a black person," and,

"In no way did I even consider the fact he's half black when I sent out the email. In fact, the thought never entered my mind."

The article started with this zinger:

“Orange County might be a beautiful oceanfront locale, but it’s also home to Holocaust deniers, vicious anti-gay bigots and freakish big-haired televangelists.”

These titles weren’t applied to anyone in particular, but the author’s language seemed to suggest, “If you’re not on my side here, then you’re just another ignorant, right-leaning jerk.” The article set the tone for the angry, heated reader conversation comprised of 1,371 comments. Many writers could spark respectful civil rights dialogue, but instead go for controversial headlines, and gutsy hooks. They incite readers to segregate themselves, crouch behind their screens, plug their ears, and attack.

The comparison of blacks to primates is historically-charged. As a justification for slavery and Jim Crow laws, several nineteenth century scientists perpetuated the idea that blacks were an evolutionary step down from whites, that they were more closely related to apes. This thinking trickled into pop culture (e.g. racial slurs like, “porch monkey,” and old children’s cartoons in which black characters looked and acted like monkeys ). While historical context makes it clear that any Obama-primate photo is indisputably racist, what’s unclear is Davenport’s intention. Is she lying to save face, or is it possible that she honestly believes that she “doesn’t think in racist terms?”

She might just be unaware that she’s blinded by her screen, her belief in colorblindness. I think Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva would agree with me. In his book, White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era, before Bonilla-Silva goes into his famous “central frames of color blind racism,” he suggests that many people are unknowingly blinded by paradigms that perpetuate current systems of social power:

All groups build ideologies to rationalize social inequality... Analyzing ideologies is not a matter of finding good and bad people, but of examining the collective understanding and representation produced by social groups to explain their world. Doing ideological analysis about race then is not a matter of finding “racists,” but rather an attempt to uncover the frames ... that help lubricate a racial order at a particular historical juncture.

Marilyn Davenport sees things through a frame Bonilla-Silva calls, “Minimization of Racism.” That is, she fails to see that racism is a societal structure, a system that still empowers whites over others. She sees racism instead as limited, sporadic, and declining.

To her, “racist” probably means a person involved in housing or employment discrimination or in violent hate crimes—she knows that she’s not that person, so she’s offended that others are using “racist” to describe her. She didn’t suppose that a picture of a black man as an ape would be racist, because she didn’t know that racism includes the language, the images, the concepts, the stories, and even the jokes that uphold the system that favors whites. She didn’t realize when she said she “doesn’t look at Obama as a black person” that she was suggesting that to look at a person as black was bad. Many people who adhere to the philosophy of colorblindness don’t realize that pretending to ignore differences strengthens the standard idea that difference is wrong, or at best, annoying. I wonder if anyone cared to just explain that to her nicely.

Whether we’re talking about racism, immigration, gay rights, or other important areas of activism, we need to be aware of our tendency to vilify when we should be teaching. We also need to try to understand the other’s point of view to the point where we can empathize, care about what they value. Until we are willing to get close enough to see more than the whites of their eyes, to put down our rhetorical weapons, leave the trenches, and find some common ground—until we try this, we are just slinging mud, and everybody’s getting dirty.

# Behind the Bus

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by Annie Jolly

On a brisk foggy evening I trudge onto that rickety old bus  
Blank stares made their way back to me, no one did discuss

Was it my dark skin color, or the tired look on my face

Unsettled was I, surrounded by a Caucasian race

I sat down without a word, and took a look at the viewing

Until a loud voice came in “What are you doing?”

“You’re in the wrong seat, you’ll have to move

This here’s for white people, and we disapprove.”

What I heard I couldn’t bear, I looked up to him confused

I will not move from this seat, I absolutely refused.

Alone and helpless, I had lost my fight

I knew deep down inside that this wasn’t right

That day I knew it the moment it untwirled

My self-expression was about to change the world

I was tired of being pushed, and wrongly accused

There was a fire within me ready to diffuse

I didn’t know my punishment or where it would lead me

The stand on the bus was bigger than I thought it would be

Self-expression is the key to acceptance, everybody shouldn’t fuss

I am Rosa Parks and this is the story behind the bus.

# An Experience to Remember

by Anonymous

Do I believe that people have gotten all of their civil rights? No, I think a lot has changed, but some people still have unfair treatment and lack of opportunities. Everybody from different races and colors get treated differently all depending on where you are at in life.

Schools, for example, have a lot of unfair treatment. Sometimes the mistreatment is by the teacher, but mostly by the students. I would like to share a story about a boy who received unfair treatment in a school. I knew this kid who was a Mexican. He got along with his own race and most other people, but when he played basketball at the school, he would get in fights at practice because he was the only minority in the gym. The coaches didn't care. They would let them fight and the Mexican kid would always get jumped. Don't get me wrong, he still got his playing time, but he hated going to practice. He had to go, or he wouldn't get to play. One day he got tired and got a lot of Mexicans to go fight and back him up. That day, at school, there was a huge fight. When he went back to practice, no one ever wanted to fight him anymore, and the basketball team then did much better. That is something I will never forget because that kid was me.

This kind of stuff happens every day and everywhere. That is just how life is. Like I said before, it has gotten better. Before, different races or colors couldn't go to the same school, or couldn't ride the bus together well. Nowadays a lot of people get along even if they are different races or colors. There's always going to be civil rights problems for people.

For kids, it happens at school, adults at work, and even in the jails and prisons. In jail, it's race with race. If you're Mexican, that's who you are going to like most. If you are Tongan, you are going to be with Tongans. Whites with whites, and that is how it is.

People nowadays don't have to drink from different water fountains, and go to different schools and stuff like that. Back then, it was worse than it is now. Today people all have rights, not like before. Blacks were slaves and now we have a black president. A lot has changed from early on until now.

So to me, people that are different from me may or may not be treated differently. Some will get unfair treatment or lack of opportunities. It happens everywhere and can happen to anybody. For kids and teenagers it will mostly happen in school. I hate discrimination, hate racism, but it happens. I will always stand up for what I believe in, and hopefully we can keep changing. I hope one day there won't be racism and discrimination, but we still have a long way to go to reach that day.

# Life

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by Anonymous

This is my thoughts and feelings about civil rights. I am all for it, but to tell the truth, I don't really understand most of what it did for us, maybe because I didn't pay enough attention in school. I feel they should teach more about it and make it more clear.

I believe a lot of rights have been given, but not to all the right people. There is some out there that still believe they are better than anyone, and to me, that is not right. I believe everyone should be looked at the same, no matter if you are white, brown, black, or whatever color. I still will always think of everyone as the same. I don't look at people for their skin, but for the things they do that make their lives worth living.

Yes, I do believe that civil rights have gotten better over the years, but we are still not as good as we should be. Who knows how long it will take before we all come to realized that we are all the same on the inside.

The government says we have all the rights in this country, but they don't want to let others come into the United States to try to make their lives better. If we want to make this place better, then I believe we should let people come here and live their lives. If they want to later on go back to their own country, to try to make their own place a little bit better, that is good. There are still too many white people in that old way of thinking. I'm not saying that every white person out there thinks the same, but I think that there is still some racism left. It is now focused towards illegal aliens and immigration issues.

For me, I would say I am color-blind. I do not see them for the color in their skin. They are not bad because they are black or white or even brown. We still have a way to go, but I believe that the day will come when everyone will be looked at as the same, no matter what you are or where you come from.

I am going to do all I can to try to make that dream come true. The world can be a better place. I would like to see the people not be so full of hate, just learn to love and feel the peace.

# The Melting Pot

by Anonymous

The civil rights movement was going through a hard time in the 1960's. I feel that African-American men, women, and children were treated horrifically. In the early 1960's African-American men and women were standing up for what they knew was right and shunning the things they knew wouldn't help them, such as prejudice, racism, and even sexism.

The white population at the time was exponentially higher than that of the blacks, so it made it much easier to segregate the blacks from the whites. They were segregated in not only schools, but also in bathrooms, drinking fountains, restaurants, and even in buses. Sometimes mobs went would severely hurt or kill blacks. I not only know this from the school books I read, but also from my own grandma and other relatives that were going through this hard time. My grandma tells stories of how she participated in the Bus Boycotts, and the free-day of school when the African American children left from schools there segregated for one whole day, and marched along side of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blacks in the south were not going to stand any more for how they were being treated. So, great words and speeches from Dr. King kept my people moving and also made my people realize that violence was not the answer. They proudly did non-violent protests. Never did the black man or woman fight back, they took the beating if it was delivered, making white people look like monsters.

Why the people were doing all these things to blacks was because it was just how it was. It was how they were raised. They brought up whites to think that their way of life was the only way it was or could be. They hunted the blacks for nothing but their skin color. They segregated and shunned them for their differences. It was so bad that a middle aged woman named Rosa Parks working hard at work came home on the bus, sitting in the front of the bus because she was so tired. A white man confronted her and told her to move on back to the back of the bus. He was making racial slurs like calling her "nigger," "coon," and other hateful names. But she politely said, "No, I am not moving back to the back of the bus." They escorted her off the bus and threw her in jail. That is when the

Montgomery Bus Boycotts started. The blacks wanted their rights and their freedoms back, and they were willing to do whatever it was to get them.

My personal opinion on Civil Rights is that I have never found it right for the whites to hate and be prejudiced against the blacks and other colored people. The things that happened during those times with the Bus Boycott and bus bombings were horrible. It took a lot of courage for the whites who stood up for the blacks, because if they were caught, they would be the ones more severely beaten. It also took courage for blacks to try to live Martin Luther King's dream. They preached non-violence, organized sit-ins and marches that took place in the South even though Jim Crow laws were still in place.

When I think about all the experiences my people went through, it makes me wonder how they could have stayed calm, because if someone was throwing stuff such as food or drinks all over me and calling me racial slurs, I would have been the first one to react. So, I take pride in my people for doing all the things that they did to earn freedom for their brothers and sisters. If I had had a major role at that time in America, I would've put my neck out on the line to help my people because I think it's the right thing to do. I would have done it to show that no matter what color of skin, or color of eyes, everyone deserves to be treated like a human. I would have fought side by side with Dr. King, marching and protesting my way to my people's freedom.

When Dr. King was assassinated, my grandfather was in the same building working with one of his bodyguards. My Grandpa would tell me stories of how he was and what he stood for.

I think the world has changed a lot since then. Now I think the world is using synergy and accepting everyone's differences. Everyone is becoming more open to each other really losing their prejudice. That is why America in today's time is called the Melting Pot. Varieties of different races, skin colors, hair colors, and languages have come together as one.

# Dad Discrimination

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by Anonymous

Discrimination goes on. It comes in many forms, and can be found in many places. Growing up in my home was sometimes a big pain but there wasn't really much I could do about it. Would I like to remember it? Yes, because I learned from it.

My dad always took care of me when I was a kid. At the time, he showed me what a true father was like. Our relationship was as good as I could have ever wished it to be. We used to do a lot of things together. We went golfing, fishing, or just go out to eat. I enjoyed it for the most part, but increasingly but very gradually our relationship started to fade.

Eventually it was just my mom, my uncle, and my sister supported me in the things I did. I did fairly well in school and with that advantage I was able to play sports. My uncle, my friends, and I used to go out and either shoot hoops, play baseball, or go golfing. I enjoyed playing, whether it was for fun or when I was on a team. At those moments I always thought to myself: "Where's dad? Why isn't he here?" Even mom didn't know where he was. Though he wasn't there, he still asked, "How was the game?" Most of the games we won. I would say, "We won and the coach took us out to eat." Dad always appreciated when I did a good job at something.

If only he was more involved in my life, but then again, it was kind of my fault for not letting him. For the past two years, my dad and I hated each other, or so I thought. To me, at the time, I hated it so bad. I told my mom, "If he's not going to leave me alone, then I am moving out." And so I did. I didn't want to have to put my mom in that situation, but at least she could understand where I was coming from.

When I moved out, I did fairly well taking care of myself for the most part. Even though I dropped out of school, the environment I was in helped a lot, especially some of the support I received from others. Soon though, something happened to me. I started hating myself, and everything around me. I blamed my dad for all of this. Especially when I started to become depressed and almost suicidal.

After that, I went completely out of my way to please other

people and do what they asked of me. I said “yes” to everything and “no” to nothing. Then soon I was doing things to help a friend that was breaking the law. I did whatever I could do for him because he was going through a really rough time, and he was like a brother to me. I was thinking of running away altogether so I wouldn’t get into trouble. I told him, “We should just get this all over with.” I was tired of hiding out and I was getting in trouble.

We left and started camping in my parents’ back yard. A couple of days later, two police officers came and asked us some questions. We answered them with as much confidence as we could find. Next thing I know, my friend is being taken away to the detention center, and it seems like he had more charges than we thought. He returned two days later and was placed under house arrest. The guys from the probation office came out then and placed me under house arrest for the same things. Was I mad? NO. I knew it was coming!

My friend and I set up a plan to meet, and then executed it. My dad confronted me and said, “I know you’ve been sneaking out every night and going off doing things.”

I said, “What’s it matter, it’s not like you care!”

His answer to that was shocking to me. He said, “Son, you know I’ve always loved you.”

I started laughing.

He said, “What’s so funny?”

I said, “That you said that! I can’t recall the last time you’ve said that to me. It must have been years. I remember that!”

When I come home, he wants me gone. I go away, and he wants to know everything I am doing and where I am at. It doesn’t make sense.

The next day after this confrontation, an officer shows up at my door.

“I am here to transport you to Detention.”

Since that day, May 21, I have been locked up. I still keep wondering every day, “Why me? What could I have done better?”

# My Generation

by Anonymous

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Freedom Writers

When most kids learn about the struggles in the civil rights battles nearly fifty years ago, they do not realize how far we have come. Fifty years is not a long time. For the most part, the injustices of the past are still fresh in some of our parent's memories. I am a young African-American of Nigerian and Jamaican descent from Ogden, Utah. I am 17, and I represent the first generation on my dad's side here in America. My view on the progress of civil rights is that for the struggles, losses, and overall lack of morals shown from the events of the past show that there is not an adequate amount of progress made.

Throughout the years of my life, I have grown up learning about the things that have been done by people to other people. I have trouble comprehending all of the things I hear about. It's hard for me to understand that just because one man didn't like the way a group of people did things, he actually convinced whole countries to start wars and torture people for their differences and their way of life. Of course, I am referring to the Holocaust, and how America stepped in and put a stop to the sick things that one man's hatred allowed him to conjure up. At the same time, I wonder when America was supposedly based on the foundation of equal rights and freedom for all. How the concept of slavery still seemed to find a place for itself in the history of our country. What also doesn't make sense is that if the pilgrims came to America for freedom of religion and freedom from all of the injustices the British king imposed on them, then why did they find it fit to unrightfully incarcerate other human beings and make them suffer for hundreds of years? I am speaking of the Native Americans.

At times, when I am in certain places where I do experience discrimination, I see the stupidity of the hardships and crimes committed all because of the color of one's skin. What? Why would there be such a problem for the whites, who feel a certain unquenchable hatred for those of a different pigment? Although, as I look at the races of those who do exactly this, I feel a deep confusion mixed with a deep hatred. I know that hate will only bring me down to same level.

"He's a N@#%\*!, don't talk to him!" says the white man to his children.

They are not born with his prejudice, but simple curiosity. As I mature, I see the crimes of the past for what they really are: senseless, primitive, and stupid. One can only wonder what progress could have been made in the human race had we spent more time advancing than wasting our time trying to prove superiority.

In my own honest opinion, I do love my country. I am grateful for the few men that took the initiative to change for better, but a lot of fights were fought. Recently, I heard someone saying to another student that they should write about how we don't have drink out of separate water fountains. Can one please give me a solid, concrete reason why we had to do this in the first place? I do appreciate the fact that we have come a long way from the nonsense that those of the past called "life," but I feel that we have not made progress. We have simply made the necessary moves to be where life is supposed to really be centered at to begin with.

Everyone is equal, but we still have a long way to go.

# Today

by Anonymous

I truly and honestly believe that we have come a great way in the problem of slavery and civil rights movements. I'm so glad that it is this way. I'm glad that we have been able to come this far so that all men, women, and children can be treated equally. In this day, there are only a few small groups of people that still protest their rights, but everybody has come to an agreement that everybody deserves the right to do all things equally. There are no more separate lines, or buses, or drinking fountains, which I believe has indeed made our country a better place. It has made our nation a wonderful place for all sorts of diversity and unity with all the different cultures and racial backgrounds.

One of the huge improvements that we have been able to make is the fact that everybody of the legal age can vote. It doesn't matter what racial background or what ethnicity they are. I know that has made our government that much stronger because now. All sides of the people are heard and are accounted for in the elections of new candidates. It used to be only the whites could vote, but now anybody that wants to and meets certain standards can partake in voting and elections. That is a wondrous achievement for our country and the people that live in it.

Another thing that has been completely shutdown is the fact that blacks and whites had to use separate bathrooms and water fountains. They couldn't step into a "White Only" bathroom due to the fact that it was against the laws of that day. Now there is no difference between which restroom is to be used by a person of different skin color or racial background. I know that this alone has made it so nobody is individually alienated in that sort or manner. It is just nonsense to separate it by colors. Now to separate them between genders makes sense, but not between the color of someone's skin that they can't help being born with. There is no difference in somebody just because their skin is a different tone of color. Our restrooms can be used by people of different skin colors and that's the way it should always be.

The issue of where people can sit on a bus was a huge one, but now has been greatly improved on. It used to be the segregation

problem was a big ordeal on the buses. Colored people had to sit at the back of the bus away from the white people. This just made them feel less important and of lesser value. I know for me that would be very downgrading and would make my self-dignity go down. There were numerous acts of people yelling or even turning to violence because of someone not wanting to sit at the back of the bus. Rosa Parks, for instance, is a famous African-American lady who sat at the front of the bus in the "Whites Only" section, and bunch of people started telling her that she had to move and that she had to go to the back of the bus. She refused to move and stood up for herself. Thank goodness now anybody can sit anywhere and there aren't arguments. If a colored person would like to sit at the very front of the bus, then they may do so without second looks from anybody.

Above listed is just a few ways on how our country has eliminated or reduced the problem of racism. Now there is no racial profiling by the government, or by any type of transportation company, or business. People can do as they will and drink from whichever water fountain they want or sit where ever on the bus they would like to sit. This problem being reduced has made our nation a binding and united nation. People come here to chase their dreams and to have their freedom. That's something that should never be forgotten about the U.S.A.

