

## JULY: FS News: Smoke From Distant Fires Edition

Hello Fair Shake readers ~

I hope everyone is in reasonably good health and getting to spend some time outdoors. Fresh air is good for us, of course...but wow...how about those wildfires? They are sending smoke and particles, through the air, all over the country! Although the temps. were cooler and the forecast was for clear skies today, I was advised to avoid exercising outdoors because we have an 'air quality alert': a high amount of particles in the air from fires clear up by Hudson's Bay in Canada.

My tip to Montana was good but HOT. I left at the beginning of the heatwave (no a/c and no wing windows!) and endured it for the entire trip. It was good, though. It's important to think about what life was like, and is still like, without modern luxuries...including running water and a simple fan. I like to think about 'how far we've come'. It inspires me to think about what we're capable of becoming!

The Bubble Truck was awesome; it felt very good to be in it again. People can't ignore it the crazy look of it, and when they get closer, they see "UBUNTU! I am because we are." The back of the camper says: "Our prison system is broken. Who can we trust to fix it? We all deserve a Fair Shake!" and includes the Fair Shake website address. I had several great conversations with people - many of whom had strong opinions, and many of whom did not have strong opinions - about corrections. It's not an easy topic to discuss...but the bubbles and the ubuntu message, I think, offers an opportunity to just talk and ask questions.

Thank you, donors, for making this possible! The website is still up and running, thanks to you, and the newsletter is still being distributed...so all of you, your family and friends, and even the curious folks who saw the Bubble Truck can read it, if they want to. Thank you! Ubuntu!

I've received several READING AND WRITING OPPORTUNITIES to share with you this month:

### **From the PRISON JOURNALISM PROJECT**

"Our mission is to help incarcerated writers, and those in communities affected by incarceration, tell stories about their world using the tools of journalism: gathering and testing facts; writing with nuance, texture and insight; and reaching a thoughtful audience. We aim to increase the volume and quality of voices in the conversation about criminal justice and incarceration through access, collaboration and education. By bridging the gaps in information, we believe they can shift the narrative and help change the prison system. Journalism wields enormous power by choosing who and what to highlight.

We provide incarcerated writers with the tools and training to establish themselves as credible writers and journalists, so they can meaningfully participate in the decision-making processes that impact them and their communities. We are developing a correspondence-based curriculum, a journalism textbook that incorporates comics, and a framework for in-prison classes."

Interested? Write to them here:

Prison Journalism Project  
2093 Philadelphia Pike #1054  
Claymont, DE 19703  
<https://prisonjournalismproject.org/>

### **HAYMARKET UPDATE:**

Hay!! I got some great news from Haymarket! The AWESOME folks there came up with a better solution for you to request a free book. The only info they need is your full mailing address and a sense of what kind of books they are interested in reading. Their books are very radical politically, so not a fit for everyone, but they are happy to send in anything folks want to read on topics like Black Liberation,

history, sports and poetry. Just write to them with your request and your mailing info, and they will send you a free book.

Haymarket Books  
P.O. Box 180165  
Chicago, IL 60618

### BOOK REVIEWS REQUESTED!

Once again, I'm asking you all to share book reviews. The last time I asked, I set a 100-word limit, which, I know, was very tough. This request is different. It's for a bookstore in Madison that sends free books to incarcerated readers. Their project is called 'Booked with Books', and it will be a collection of book reviews by prisoners, and available to the public!

From their website: "Wisconsin Books to Prisoners (WBTP) is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster a love of reading behind bars, encourage the pursuit of knowledge and self-empowerment, and break the cycle of recidivism. Will send books in Spanish (enviar libros en Español)." They send books to Wisconsin prisoners only.

Books to Prisoners  
1202 Williamson St #1  
Madison, WI 53703

But an affiliated project received funding to send LGBTQ+ books to incarcerated readers in anywhere in the US! (except Texas...sorry) If you're in any state but TX, and want an LGBTQ+ book you can write to them here:

LGBT Books to Prisoners Project  
1202 Williamson St.  
Madison, WI, WI 53703

Back to the book reviews: If you're willing to write a review for them, please include your name, the book title, author and date of publication with your reflection. Feel free to email it to me, or mail it directly to the book store. Once I gather all of the responses and email them to the store, I'll ask them if folks can receive a copy of the finished review. I sent them the reviews we shared last year, and they said they are interested in the Project Gutenberg books, too, along with reviews for printed books ~ : )

An alert reader. David, shared his thoughts recently, regarding asking for information from organizations. I thought that now might be a good time to share it, since I've offered so many opportunities for you to contact organizations with requests!

### TIPS WHEN WRITING FOR INFORMATION:

At some time during our incarceration, it is inevitable that we will write to more than a few organizations (usually some form of non-profit) requesting information or some type of material resource. Here are some things to consider from a fellow inmate.

**BE SPECIFIC** - Always indicate "why" you are writing and state the specific information/material being requested. If you are merely seeking "general information" from the organization, then say so.

**BE COURTEOUS** - Never be rude or demanding with your request. Remember these two basic rules: (1) No one "owes" you anything; (2) You are "entitled" to nothing. You are asking a complete stranger to use their own limited resources to provide you with (usually) free information and materials - be grateful. At the end of your letter, always thank the recipient for their time/ cooperation/ assistance/ consideration. Good manners go a long way, even in prison.

DON'T BE A SCROOGE - If you have the funds to purchase ANYTHING from commissary then you have the funds to enclose a SASE (Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope). Most non-profits are very small and have limited staff and even more limited funds. Postage normally takes up a very large portion of a very small budget. Your stamps help, and, a SASE will often get you a quicker response.

I can verify what he says. Many of us work long hours with little support. Kind words go far, and an SASE greatly shortens the turnaround time because I, for one, can put my info flyers into the envelope without going through the rigamarole of using the computer to make labels! Which reminds me, if you'd like my 'usual' packet of flyers, please write to me – with or without the SASE, and I'll send them out to you! (you can write to me via snail mail or just reply to me here ~ : )

Also from an alert reader: A Message from Mississippi Library Commission  
If you are not familiar with them, you can email requests for resources to [MLCReference@gmail.com](mailto:MLCReference@gmail.com).

Here's their message:

"Due to the pandemic, requests are delayed." (it took over a month for me to get a reply to my query, which is highly unusual for them) Additionally, they are discouraging inmates from sending in "follow-up" questions at this time as they continue to struggle to get caught up with all the incoming requests.

Thanks MLC, for your generous resource support! And thank you, alert reader, for letting us know! The reader goes on to say "they offer a WONDERFUL service to inmates. Thanks for passing them on to us all!"

Finally, I found some VERY interesting reentry news from Florida:

GAINESVILLE is offering a GUARANTEED INCOME PROGRAM. (This was in the paper on July 15<sup>th</sup>) From the paper "To help formerly incarcerated people succeed, the city's guaranteed income pilot program would pay 115 formerly incarcerated people around \$600 a month for two years to address the obstacles returning citizens typically face following release."

Perhaps this can become a trend? Let's hope so!

Book Recommendation: HISTORY BOOKS

I don't have one specific book in mind, but just want to remind readers that history is important. While I was traveling, I immersed myself in history...from petroglyphs, to Pompey's Pillar (named during the Lewis and Clark Expedition), to Three Forks, Montana, to the huge open mine in Butte, to the Anaconda copper smelter, past the entrance to Yellowstone and thinking about all the crazy stuff going on there, to the Little Big Horn Battlefield and the Battle of the Hundred-in-the-Hands site, and several museums with oodles of memorabilia. There is so much painful, complex history in the US; it's important to remember and reflect on the past and how it has brought us to where we are today: both good and bad. I recommend reading any history books!

QUOTES:

"A value is like a fax machine: it's not much use if you're the only one who has one." - Kwame Anthony Appiah

You didn't get educated in school, you got indoctrinated at school. Use what you learned in school to educate yourself. – Jane Elliot, teacher and creator of the Brown Eyes / Blue Eyes exercise

If I can get you to believe there's something wrong with you, I own you - because I can 'help you'. - Peter Block

The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life." - Muhammad Ali

"Do not argue with an idiot. They will drag you down to their level and beat you with experience." - Samuel Clemens, writing as Mark Twain

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad. - Miles Kington

" A wise man once said nothing." - proverb

Last, but not least, CONGRATULATIONS to all of the 2021 graduates!!!!

Thanks for joining me readers, as we explore now and build the future.

To our successful transitions ~

Ubuntu! ~ sue

Fair Shake PO Box 63 Westby, WI 54667

Remember these resources can be found in your phone-gizmo: 2-1-1 AuntBertha.com  
Fairshake.net HelpYourselfTherapy.com

You can share the Fair shake newsletter with folks who have access to the internet here:  
[www.fairshake.net/fair-shake-newsletter](http://www.fairshake.net/fair-shake-newsletter).