

W O R D S

# UNCAGED



Monthly Newsletter

November 2019

## Solitary Confinement vs. USC Football

Lashawn Taylor

While living through one of the most difficult and trying times of my life, I found solace and comfort in a hobby. My hobby is following all things USC football. I'm a life-long fan and incredibly passionate about my Trojans. This is a passion that runs throughout my family; we are a strong USC family and watching games is one of the few things we did together as I was growing up. I guess you could say USC football provides an emotional tie to my family.

This may sound crazy but my passion for USC football quite possibly saved my sanity, and maybe my life. I served many years in solitary confinement. This was a terrible existence. I use the word existence purposefully. Why? It's brutally simple—life implies living and an extended stay in solitary does not/cannot nourish life. Surviving long-term solitary confinement requires two goals be set and met, one strategic and the other tactical. In a solitary environment, the strategic goal is to maintain one's sanity by any means necessary. The tactical goal is to engage oneself in the activities that make the strategic goal realistic. These activities are mostly the same for all of the men in solitary. There are the traditional time-tested methods of study, exercise, introspection, and building connections to the outside world through writing. These are all very serious endeavors designed to distract, build, and fortify "self" against the harsh realities of existing in a cage devoid of nourishment—nourishment being "hope." Just as life cannot be sustained without oxygen, there are other building blocks of life that one is deprived of in a solitary environment like the loving embrace of family, or the subtle heat and light that can only be generated by the sun you are deprived of, or the soul-enriching but simple act of meeting new people. I learned early on that the traditional methods of existing in solitary simply was not enough for me. I needed more. If I couldn't have the most basic of human stimuli like touching other human beings, I needed to find or manufacture that intellectual and emotional stimulation somewhere, somehow.

The stimulation I most lacked is so fundamental to life it can easily be overlooked. It's joy! No,

it's PURE JOY! This is what USC football meant to me when I needed it most. I needed something that meant everything and at the same time meant absolutely nothing. I needed to make a mental and emotional investment in something that created joy and eager anticipation when things were good, concern and worry when things were bad and a retreat to seek refuge when necessary. This investment created a necessary distraction but also allowed me the consistent opportunity to truly feel the most basic but powerful of human emotions—pure joy and happiness.

This may seem like a very small thing, and in the greater world, where we are surrounded by external stimuli, maybe it is small. In a solitary world where external stimuli is purposefully minimal, the tiniest spark of stimulation must be seized and built upon for it is a precious rarity that could very well be the strongest brick in the weakest of walls separating sanity from insanity. This is what USC football did for, and meant to, me. It was something to grab onto, a beachhead on the shores of sanity. I didn't dare let go.

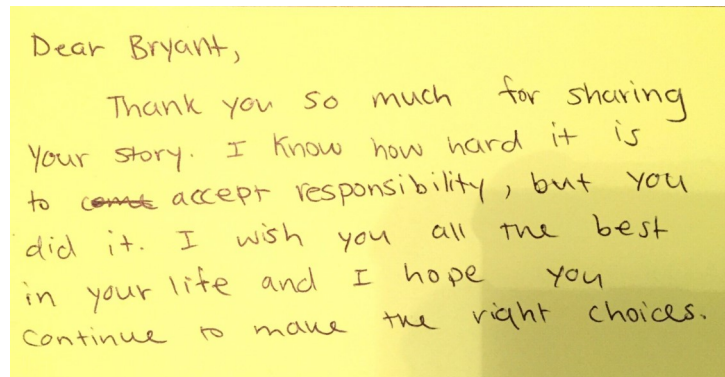
## Charlie Tells a Story: Words Uncaged Workshop at Cal State LA.

Jose Cubias

On October 23, 2019, Charlie and I conducted a writing workshop in the basement of the Cal State LA library in collaboration with the Center for Academic Success and Project Rebound. We planned to speak about Words Uncaged (WU) in general, slowly funnel our way to an explanation of the WU journal's collaborative writing process between incarcerated students and graduate students, and finally, ask the audience to read and respond to handmade postcards from the men at Lancaster. Unfortunately, due to scheduling issues and our location, not many people showed up to workshop, but the few that did show engaged with us in a thoughtful conversation thanks to Charlie's first-hand knowledge.

In the latter half of the workshop. I passed out the postcards. The few audience members read them silently. After 10 minutes, I asked the audience to respond to the postcards. The postcard were written

between 2017-2018. Here is a responses to Bryant Salas's card:



I asked the audience if they had any questions once they were done writing, and they did. "What do all the acronyms mean?" I looked at Charlie who then proceed to inform the audience about the history of Lancaster through the explanation of the many acronyms used in prison. Charlie has a wealth of knowledge on creating positive learning environments within prisons. I listened and I learned a lot about the material and physical struggles of wanting to learn. Charlie turned the workshop into an insightful storytelling event filled with anecdotes that outline a history of a group of men with a drive to educate themselves.

### **“Convicts Reaching Out To People”**

Jerimichael Cooley

Convicts Reaching Out to People (CROP) is a youth mentoring program, which uses cognitive behavioral therapy. The purpose of the program is to share our stories with at-risk youth and help encourage better decision-making. Our program emphasizes past mistakes and how those bad decisions led to our incarceration. CROP, in turn, helps the youth learn how they can avoid making the same decisions and then helps them by positive affirmation of what they can become if they only make the right decisions. We help teach youth that they are not alone in their experiences or pressures and help provide them with the skills to positively resolve difficult life decisions. We give our messages then convey to the youth how we would have done it differently. The positive affirmations, experience, and our compassion for the youth are central themes of the experience.

The program is intense. The training is both physically and mentally exhausting and takes its toll on each member. The members are all directed to write out their life story through a thirteen-question format. This format is geared to elicit the most personal information of past traumas. Where did you go wrong? Was it family or friends? What was your catalyst or wrong decision that put you on this path to prison? This is very emotional and opens old traumas for members so they can not only share their truths but also heal old wounds. Then the members are required to memorize their life testimony. After this testimony is mastered and goes through the process of critique, then the member is allowed the privilege to share their testimony with the youth. All of those who have been involved with the program have exclaimed that this is by far the most sincere program that they have ever witnessed.

This program has changed my life. I thought I have done all the classes but this is not a class; it is a brotherhood of mending. I have been given a new level of transformation with not only my past but also my hope for a future. We were blessed to have Probation Officer White from the Concerned Black Men

Program bring some of the youth back that had previously been through the CROP program. Every one of these youth got up and said thank you to us for sharing our stories with them. All of them, in their own ways, expressed gratitude: "you have helped us to make better decisions and have changed the direction of our lives". This was the single most amazing experience of my life. I cannot put into words what that meant to me and what it has done for me. I have been given a hope for my future and for the future of our youth that has put a drive in my heart to stay actively involved in positive programming. because even us prisoners can make a difference in society and become positive role models for our youth. Imagine if you were only known for the worst thing you ever did! Then you used that 'worst experience' to be the positive hope for your future. These youth have not only changed my life but saved it as well, so I want to say thank you to them.

### **GEORGINA'S LEGISLATIVE COLUMN Senate Bill 439- Juvenile Justice**

Senate Bill 439 sets the minimum age juveniles can be adjudicated in juvenile court to 12 years of age, except where they are accused of murder or violent sexual crimes. Under Senate Bill 439, juveniles between the ages of 12 to 17 years of age can be adjudicated against in juvenile court. Those juveniles that are accused of crimes and are under the age of 12, will now be dealt with by using a procedure involving school, health and community-based services as alternatives to adjudication.

This is impactful as it seems to go hand in hand with Senate Bill 10. As Senate Bill 10 seeks to dispose of bail as a form of incarceration, the juvenile justice system is taking its own approach in using the same tactics when deciding how to deal with the most vulnerable of our population. There is a lot of controversy when deciding how to deal with juveniles who come into the contact with the criminal justice system, and this is the first step in dealing with the youth that have the power to change lives when they become responsible citizens.

P o e t r y  
U n c a g e d



**The Poet: Unspoken War of Words**

Kenneth Morgan

Profound poetry of poems is a treasure a pleasure a passion  
to the soul philosophy to the spirit  
embedded, embodied, embossed, love within inside the deep depth-bitter ends  
to the abyss of the heart  
...dumspiro...defines itself...with every breathing bathing breath life takes  
...when breath that you breathe becomes air while I breathe a breath I hope  
...Like the teardrop raindrops on a colorful rainbow,  
what an oasis an oblivious paradox  
...anointed, ordained sanctified like the rain  
the rains snowy white dew  
the daylight daytime dust dawn of the mornings yesterday tomorrow day after today  
yes in hope of a, a nightfall moon the holy host of the shining sun  
a fallen sunset sunrise a star has settled, fell dear and near to life future  
oh what a teardrop  
a spiritual baptism fate fortune has allowed nature to spring forward its tools  
tilt its titles and generational faith of life  
woe what a bonafide superior supreme sprinkle splendor of debonair love and honest humor  
that righteous right godly given gave gathered all together in warmth speed like the wet waters inside within the bubble of the rain,  
its body its bed its ingredients nutrient potency tailor-made talents  
that awesome golden gift to its own meet and greet to tattletale poll, toll, tally, life, love, loyalty,  
oh what a sapphire knowledge a wise witty wisdom  
bossily, boldly, bravely, said; life tell  
say to the living likeness likewise to men and women of mankind kindred  
oh woe wow what a heaven who whom God is  
...a valid velvet veil a virtue of true truth  
...in uttered closing, I completely discern much respect and love,  
love is given more is gave moreover soulfully spiritually said I say I love your essential essence  
...AKA platinum pusher B.K.A. spirituallabaptist Kenneth...I'm tremendous thunder right next to God throne  
...rich blue gem. Why is the earth so still?  
Such a mystical wonder.... Meticulously majestic...magnificent magnet marvelous miracle, significantly not of a mere image or imagina-  
tion, or a mirage....





## SO ON WE BREATHE: PHOTOS FROM AN INCARCERATED LIFE

OPENING RECEPTION: SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 7TH 6-10PM

EXHIBIT RUNS SEPT 7-JAN 7 2020

INTIMATE STORIES OF PRISON LIFE, AS TOLD THROUGH THE PERSONAL PHOTOS OF INCARCERATED MEN AT LOS ANGELES COUNTY PRISON, LANCASTER. THESE NEVER BEFORE PUBLICLY VIEWED PHOTOS OFFER A UNIQUE LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA PRISONS FROM THE 1970'S UNTIL THE PRESENT DAY, AS WELL AS INSIGHT INTO THE HUMAN COST OF MASS INCARCERATION.

CURATED BY RUSSELL SALMON



THE MEDALLION BUILDING (LOWER LEVEL)  
334 MAIN ST UNIT 5016  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90013

**Editors and Contributors:** Elanor Carpenter recently earned her master's degree in English at CSULA. She has been involved with Words Uncaged for the past three years. Lizette Toribio is currently earning her master's degree at CSULA. Erik Vargas also earned his master's degree in English at CSULA. Jose Manuel Cubias is a graduate student at CSULA. Lashawn Taylor, Kenneth Morgan, Jerimichael Cooley, thanks for the contributions this months. Georgina is a native of California, She attended Brentwood Science Magnet Elementary, Paul Revere Middle School, Palisades Charter High School, Los Angeles Pierce College, Los Angeles Mission College, and is currently finishing up her Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice at California State University, Los Angeles.

**Special Thanks to Bidhan Roy, Tobias Tubbs, and Ray Adornetto and our board members.**

Make sure to check out the radio show **Think Outside the Cage**. Words Uncaged hosts the radio show on the 2nd Saturday of the month on KPFK 90.7. Also listen to **Sentences Podcast** this month for content featuring writing from Words Uncaged alumni. Find it on iTunes or SoundCloud.

Don't forget to follow us on Instagram for update on upcoming events @wordsuncaged

**LLAMA SI VES LA MIGRA / CALL IF YOU SEE ICE:**

**1 323 894 1504**

**HELP KEEP KOREATOWN ICE-FREE!  
IMANTENGA KOREATOWN LIBRE DE LA MIGRA!**

The Ktown Rapid Response Network  
La Red de Respuesta Rápida de Ktown

FACEBOOK:  
Koreatown Popular Assembly





# WE WANT YOU!

## Now That You Are Released, Labor Finders Wants To Be Your Employment Partner

We offer work opportunities for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled positions.  
We pay daily (in most offices) and have short and long-term assignments.

### This Is Your Opportunity:

- To get paid work experience
- For a new start
- To learn a new skill
- For employment

*Call Us Today!* →



WE ARE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER, DEDICATED TO A POLICY OF NON-DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ON ANY BASIS, INCLUDING RACE, CREED, COLOR, AGE, SEX, RELIGION OR NATIONAL ORIGIN.

- Bakersfield**  
3801 Buck Owens Blvd., Suite 108  
Bakersfield, CA 93308  
(661) 396-8162
- Escondido**  
1305 Simpson Way, Suites H & J  
Escondido, CA 92029  
(760) 480-2300
- Fresno**  
4325 N Blackstone Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93726  
(559) 221-2023
- Hawthorne**  
13030 Inglewood Avenue, Suite 105  
Hawthorne, CA 90250  
(310) 675-7900
- Modesto**  
1800 B-2 Tully Road  
Modesto, CA 95350  
(209) 551-6201
- Palm Desert**  
77682 Country Club Drive, Suite F3  
Palm Desert, CA 92211  
(760) 324-2014
- Paso Robles**  
2727 Buena Vista Drive, Suite 103  
Paso Robles, CA 93446  
(805) 221-8044
- Riverside**  
7209 Arlington Avenue, Suite C  
Riverside, CA 92503  
(951) 549-8884
- Sacramento**  
9739 Fair Oaks Blvd., Suite A  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628  
(916) 961-1475
- San Diego (Metro)**  
8055 Clairemont Mesa Blvd.,  
Suites 104 & 105  
San Diego, CA 92111  
(858) 492-5162
- San Diego (South)**  
310 3rd Avenue, Suite A-1  
Chula Vista, CA 91910  
(619) 691-0058
- San Fernando**  
16151 San Fernando Mission Blvd.  
Granada Hills, CA 91344  
(818) 894-6851
- San Jose**  
1560 N 4th Street, Suite 101  
San Jose, CA 95112  
(408) 262-2423
- San Leandro**  
14780 Wicks Blvd.  
San Leandro, CA 94577  
(510) 678-3461
- Santa Ana**  
2525 N Grand Avenue, Suite Y  
Santa Ana, CA 92705  
(714) 769-7046
- Santa Maria**  
1782 S Broadway  
Santa Maria, CA 93454  
(805) 346-6083
- San Francisco (South)**  
10 Rollins Road, #115  
Millbrae, CA 94030  
(650) 231-8250
- Vallejo**  
1621 Tennessee Street  
Vallejo, CA 94590  
(707) 559-8686
- Victorville**  
14368 Saint Andrews Drive, Suite C  
Victorville, CA 92395  
(760) 951-7800

**LABORFINDERS.COM**