PRISON PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS

OUR KIND OF TOWN

OCT. 6-8, 2026



PRISON Performing ARTS

WRITTEN BY COURTNEY BAILEY
FEATURING WRITING FROM ARTISTS
AT NORTHEAST CORRECTIONALCENTER

Special Thanks

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THANK YOU
St. Louis Shakespeare Festival

PRISON Performing ARTS

Prison Performing Arts involves system-involved youth and adults in the performing arts to inspire intellectual curiosity and personal development. We nurture the discipline, teamwork and communication skills necessary for successful re-entry into society. We encourage members of the larger community to connect personally with program participants, and we offer continuing programs for participants who have been released.

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From The Playwright

We are so pleased to welcome you to PPA's newest original play, written in collaboration with artists at NECC. *Our Kind of Town* is a tribute to a classic piece of American theatre, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. However, our play is not necessarily an adaptation. To take Wilder's play, which depicts the trials and triumphs of small-town living, and simply drop its inhabitants inside the world of a correctional facility would be an oversimplification of *Our Town*'s lasting impact. Thornton Wilder's play asks us how we manage to make a life on earth when our lives are so infinitesimally small, and yet our sense of our existence is so unfathomably *large*. What is going to be *enough* for us when we only have this one life that can only carry us so far?

This question shifts when our small town's boundary is marked by high walls and fences, and when the years of one's life are sectioned off by sentences and time served. Thus, *Our Kind of Town* tells a different sort of story about small-town living, one where the inhabitants ask, through the lens of confinement, "What is going to be enough for me?" As you watch *Our Kind of Town*, you'll notice that we've kept some key images from Thornton Wilder's play: a ladder, the moon, a narrator (in our version, he's the Mayor). We even have a graveyard. At the center of Wilder's *Our Town* is the love story between George and Emily; at the center of ours is a friendship between two men, Georgie and Emerson. We hope to show that the friendships forged during a long incarceration are also worthy of memorialization.

A major refrain you'll hear throughout *Our Kind of Town* is spoken by its wisest resident, Old Alfred, who quotes from T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": "*Do I dare? Do I dare disturb the universe?*" As you listen to Old Alfred's desperate recitation of these lines, consider how it takes great daring to show kindness and care in a small universe that privileges immediate obedience, conformity, confinement, and isolation from the world at-large. In such a universe, friendship among brothers is indeed a daring act.

– Courtney Bailey, *Playwright*

OUR KIND OF TOWN

A tribute to Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*
inspired by small-town living at Northeast Correctional Center (NECC)
in Bowling Green, Missouri
written by Courtney Bailey, featuring writing from artists at NECC
LaJuan M. Hayes, Jared Witthar, Ryan C. Simpson, Francis Gibson, Jason Brown, Kenneth "Ridhwan" Hardin, Dale "Bookman" Ginn, Jeff A. Zimmerman, Juan Delen, Jaren "Yodee" Hooten, Andrew Bostic, Eric Beishline, Lonnie Johnson, Timothy Foust, Jeremiah Devaliti

ACTING ENSEMBLE

THE MAYOR…….…….. Lonnie "Texas" Johnson
TOWN TROUBADOUR……..Denver Blackwell
THE NEWCOMER……...Keith Brown
MR. WEBB……Nicholas "Abdullah" Murphy
EMERSON……Ryan C. Simpson
MR. GIBBS…….David Donius
GEORGIE……..Jeremiah Devaliti
THE PROFESSOR……...Joseph "Panda" Barger
BENNIE……Timothy Foust
OLD ALFRED……..Dale "Bookman" Ginn
GRAVE DIGGER……...Lucas Dunn
GRAVE DIGGER'S ASSISTANT……..……..Michael Whitfield
THE VOICE…….……Daniel Wiggins
ONE OF THE DEAD……..Theodore "TJ" Sansoucie
ANOTHER OF THE DEAD……Dale "Southside" Poirrier
VARIOUS TOWNSPEOPLE…..Samuel Baker, Aubrey Burnside, Douglas Cross, Lucas Dunn, Francis Gibson, LaJuan M. Hayes, James Lindquist, Dale Poirrier, Theodore "TJ" Sansoucie, Michael Whitfield, Daniel Wiggins

SPOKEN WORD

PERFORMERS ……..... Anthony Jackson, Bernard Ward, Dom Burton, Douglas Cross, Jaren "Yodee" Hooten, Kenneth "Ridhwan" Hardin, LaJuan M. Hayes, Dwayne Shelton-Bey, Matthew "Roach" Jackson
TEACHING ARTIST …….…… Courtney Bailey

PRODUCTION ENSEMBLE

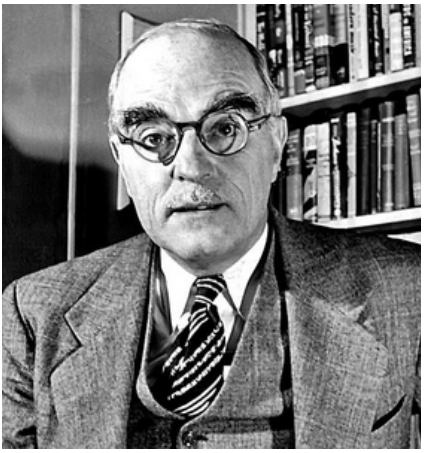
DIRECTOR…….....Rachel Tibbetts
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR…….....……Miranda Jagels Félix
STAGE MANAGER.....Theodore “TJ” Sansoucie
RUN CREW……. Keith “JC” Brummett, Donnie Fuller, Vernon Elders, Eddie Munoz, Dwayne Shelton-Bey, Cortavia E. Smith
MUSIC DIRECTOR…….....……..…… Paul Cereghino
SET AND PROPS DESIGNER…….……....Bess Moynihan
COSTUME COORDINATOR……..Tyler White
COVER ART…….Kenneth “Ridhwan” Hardin
MURAL ARTISTS……..Donnie Fuller and Jeremiah Devaliti
PHOTOGRAPHER…….Kayla Bush
VIDEOGRAPHER……...Brian Dooley

Setting:

Bowling Corners, Missouri.
A different kind of town, one created by the state on a renewable land lease of fifty years.
No fancy technology here. An older world.
Like how we remember small-town Americana in our dreams— but we only remember the good parts of those dreams.



About Thorton Wilder



Thornton Wilder (1897–1975) was an American playwright and novelist whose work explored the extraordinary significance of ordinary life. Born in Madison, Wisconsin, Wilder spent portions of his childhood abroad and later studied at Oberlin College and Yale University. Over a career spanning more than five decades, he became one of the most celebrated American writers of the twentieth century.

Wilder is best known for *Our Town*, first produced in 1938. Set in the fictional community of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, the play follows its residents through the seemingly simple rhythms of daily life, ultimately asking audiences to consider how rarely we recognize the value of our lives while we are living them. Its spare staging, direct address to the audience, and use of a Stage Manager as narrator helped make the play groundbreaking in its time and enduringly influential.

Wilder received three Pulitzer Prizes: for his novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and for the plays *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. His comedy *The Matchmaker* later inspired the musical *Hello, Dolly!*

Throughout his work, Wilder returned to questions of community, family, mortality, and human connection. He believed that theatre did not need elaborate scenery to create a world; it needed actors, an audience, and the shared act of imagination. Nearly a century after *Our Town* was written, his invitation to notice the people and moments that make up a life continues to resonate.

"Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute?"

— Thornton Wilder, *Our Town*

Meet The Cast

Samuel Baker (Townsperson) was born in April 1999. I enjoy helping those who can't help themselves. Always ready to roll. Prison Performing Arts is a blast! I grew up in Chicago and lived in St. Louis. Just want everyone to be happy.

Joseph "Panda" Barger (The Professor) This is my first year in PPA, but I feel like a natural, having acted a fool most of my life. I was born in Lamar, Missouri, the same as Harry S. Truman, in 1986. I enjoy everything from art to music to literature; I enjoy it all. I love to read and study a variety of things, and I've taught in a homeschool setting in the past. It's been my pleasure to pour myself into this role and to work with this amazing cast and production team. I hope you've enjoyed this play as much as I've enjoyed being a part of it. God Bless! And a huge shout-out to Bill Nye the Science Guy for teaching me how to tie a bow tie!

Denver Blackwell (Town Troubadour) I am a proud father of two and grandfather of one. Family is what I value most. This is my second year in PPA and Spoken Word, which has been an awesome experience. Thank you for this opportunity.

Keith Brown (The Newcomer) As was foretold by the prophecy, I emerged from the blossom of a cactus in the desert of El Paso in 1987. The rest is history. Thank you for this opportunity.

Keith "JC" Brummett (Run Crew) I'm 44 years old. This is my first PPA play. After I watched *FrankenFathers*, which I enjoyed, I decided I would like to someday get outside my comfort zone and try something new. Thank you for this opportunity. I hope I can be a bigger part in the future.

Aubrey Burnside (Townsperson) This is my first year in PPA. I am 65. I am glad I took the opportunity. It's only a small part, but it's my start. The PPA experience is outside of my comfort zone, but I am extremely pleased that I took on the challenge to learn more and partake in such a rewarding program. Thank you to Courtney, Rachel, and Miranda.

Dom Burton (Spoken Word) Prior to incarceration, creative expression was an important part of my life. After coming to prison, it was something I suppressed. However, in recent years, after observing and participating in both PPA and

Meet The Cast

Spoken Word, I've allowed myself to begin to awaken my artistic side from its long slumber. I am very thankful for the encouragement I've received and for the dedication of all who sustain these activities.

Douglas Cross (Townsperson, Spoken Word) I am a creative spirit that has a curious soul that lives in an adventurous body... and we three enjoy the unity that PPA & Spoken Word bring to such a diverse place and culture... My three major passions are love... joy... and peace…

Jeremiah Devaliti (Georgie, Mural Artist) I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody about somebody who saved me, a kid from the Northside of Springfield that went down the path of bad choices and drugs, and I eventually got involved in a horrible crime that cost me twenty years of my life. When I first got incarcerated, I had no hope, and I was so lost and broken that I was consumed with all the wrong things. I spent several years in the hole for more bad choices. I had an encounter with Jesus down there, and it changed everything for me. I am four years sober, and I feel more freedom than I have ever felt in my whole life. I received my GED and got a college degree. My heart's desire has been changed, and all I want to do is glorify God and share with others how Jesus saved me and how He's willing to do it for anyone who will believe in Him. There is nothing in this world as powerful as the transformation power of Jesus Christ. Ask me how I know?

David Donius (Mr. Gibbs) I'm 39 years old. This is the first play I've ever been in. I hope you enjoy watching it as much as I enjoyed being in it.

Lucas Dunn (Grave Digger, Townsperson) I am 33 years old. I was born in Springfield, Missouri. This is now my second PPA play, and it has been fun and exciting watching it all come together.

Vernon Elders (Run Crew) I'm 58 and come from St. Louis, Missouri. This is my second play that I've worked in here, and I look forward to doing more. Programs like PPA are a blessing for us in prison.

Timothy Foust (Bennie) This is my third play with PPA. I have enjoyed all aspects of the class - writing, blocking, and acting. Rachel and Courtney do an

amazing job. They care about their work and also care about us. I will be forever grateful for them. They make a difference in our lives. So I want to say "Thank You!"

Donnie Fuller (Run Crew) I'm 61 years old and from Moberly, Missouri. I'm a bond servant of Jesus Christ. I love lifting up my Lord and magnifying His Word. He is my passion. I also enjoy spending time with my wife and grandkids and giving back to the community by donating paintings and drawings. My hobbies can be seen on Wired for Impact with Peter King on YouTube and Jesus Christ Street Ministry Testimony of Donnie Fuller on Pando. A massive mural I composed is at the end of the interview.

Dale "Bookman" Ginn (Old Alfred) With each play, I see myself growing and maturing as a thespian. I hope to present this performance with a skill set and enthusiasm that others may enjoy.

Francis Gibson (Townsperson) I am almost 45, and I have a passion to create, whether it's in construction or writing short stories for tabletop games.

Tarron Gill (Townperson) I'm 25 years young, and this is my first year with PPA. I never attended a play, so I challenged myself to step up and play my role. This is different for me, and I'm excited to see how the performance goes. I hope everyone enjoys it. I want to thank all my fellow cast members, Ms. Rachel, Ms. Miranda, and Ms. Courtney. Everyone welcomed me with open arms and motivated me to do better. I appreciate everybody.

Kenneth "Ridhwan" Hardin (Spoken Word, Cover Art) is a 37-year-young Muslim American. Emerging from the Northside of St. Louis, he is a gifted multimedia artist who specializes in 3-D Art that always wows its onlookers. He designed the cover art for this play. He is a skilled poet with a knack for alliteration. He strives to motivate, inspire, challenge, and educate all who cross his path.

LaJuan M. Hayes (Townperson, Spoken Word) This is my first PPA play. I am 46 years old. I am waiting to be released in 2027 to do more creative writing outside of prison. This is my second poem I'll be performing at NECC.

Meet The Cast

Jaren "Yodee" Hooten (Spoken Word) is a magician, poet, recovering carnival worker, and cross-country traveller. He is very enthusiastic about Norse religion and spirituality and is currently studying Icelandic. This is Yodee's second project with PPA, but not the last!!

Anthony Jackson (Spoken Word) is a native of Kansas City and an original member of the four-time Stellar Award-winning group 'DeWayne Woods Featuring When Singers Meet.' His introduction to the art of theatrical expression began at the age of six with Joyce Todd Productions, a local theater troupe. Subsequently, at the age of eighteen, Anthony received the privilege of joining employment as a pit singer for the Kansas City, Missouri run of the stage play *Skeletons*, produced by David E. Talbert, at the historic Midland Theater. Over the past five months, under the inspirational guidance of Courtney Bailey and Rachel Tibbetts, Anthony has grown to reimagine what the next chapter of artistic expression will look like in his life and how he could impact the world around him.

Matthew "Roach" Jackson (Spoken Word) I was born in SLC and raised in Seattle. I have two sons, ages 21 and 16. Studying to be a paralegal. I know 20 origami, am among the best at hacky sack, and have been writing rhymes for 30 years, which drew me to Spoken Word. Shout out to Panda! Good job taking care of your invisible dog in the play!

Lonnie "Texas" Johnson (The Mayor) To be a part of PPA is to tell yourself that I am ready to build on all of those potentials that I know I've possessed. What happens next? Is everything. But this is where everything starts.

James Lindquist (Townsperson) I am 52 years old. I am from St. Louis, MO. This is my second play with PPA. I really enjoyed the process of seeing a play come together last year, and I'm very happy to be back again this year. I hope PPA will continue to have me back to be part of more plays while I'm here at NECC. A big thank you to Rachel and Miranda for making this a fun and creative environment.

Meet The Cast

Eddie Munoz (Run Crew) I'm 52 years old and from Moberly, Missouri. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I'm here to help out in any way I can. This is my first time being a part of PPA. I love the way it's being organized and directed. This is helping me come out of my comfort zone and do something different in my life. Thank you for allowing me to help out.

Nicholas "Abdullah" Murphy (Mr. Webb) I am a Sunni Muslim and a shade less than 50 years old. This is my first time to enjoy theatre, as it has never crossed my mind before. So far, I have had a great time learning the ways of the stage, and I hope to continue after my time in prison in some capacity. I am grateful for the opportunity Prison Performing Arts has extended to me. I want to thank all the little people for making my moment in the limelight happen. I also want to send a special thank you to Rachel, Miranda and Courtney for all the effort and wisdom they have contributed.

Dale "Southside" Poirrier (Another of the Dead, Spoken Word) I am 45 years young. This is my second time in PPA or doing anything like this… So, for me, I'm stepping out of my box. I want to see people laugh and have fun. I look forward to all the enjoyment.

Theodore "TJ" Sansoucie (One of the Dead, Townsperson, Stage Manager) I am 54 years old. This is my first play. Being a part of art is my passion. I paint, draw, and tattoo. Tattooing is my life passion, but anything to do with art in all media. Tattooing on an international level is the goal, for I've been called the Almighty Ink Layer. Look for the shop named Well of Ink Studios in the near future.

Dwayne Shelton-Bey (Spoken Word, Run Crew) is a very proud member of CASA in St. Louis who is working on doing more in PPA. I am also a known musician in the Blues & Jazz fields. Shoutout to my cast, my directors, and especially to my writing teacher, Courtney.

Ryan C. Simpson (Emerson) I am forty years of age. I have been in PPA for three years, and this is my first play with them. I love writing poetry, reading books, and drawing. I want to say thank you to my mother, for without her, I would not be here. And to my kids, I love you all. To the guests who have attended this play, thank you.

Meet The Cast

Cortavia E. Smith (Run Crew) I'm a 29-year-old singer/musician. Three years ago, I joined theatre because I wanted to "build a snowman!" Instead, I have been given a masterclass in acting. I have also learned so much within those three years of theatre. My autographs will be available after the play, as I am a famous singer/actor.

Bernard Ward (Spoken Word) From Chicago, where I attended grade school, finished high school, and worked at an early age at an insurance company. I became a father at nineteen and got married. I also worked in my community, started writing, and won poetry contests. I received an Associate Degree in Political Science and English Literature. Today, I remain a freelance writer, journalist, reporter, and activist. Let's not forget that there have been some dark areas of my life, such as my addiction to alcohol. Even today, I continue to struggle, though I pray every day. The more I continue PPA, it gives me more and more skills, which drives my purpose. In the last three years, I have also participated in *The Caverns of Wingwood* and *12 Angry Men*. I now acknowledge all things good and bad with a clearer focus.

Michael Whitfield (Grave Digger's Assistant, Townsperson) I'm from St. Louis. This is my second play as a member of PPA. I can say that I enjoyed every moment. I feel this is the opportunity of a lifetime. So, come one, come all. Thank you to PPA for having me.

Daniel Wiggins (Townsperson /The Voice) I am a 22-year-old St .Louis, Missouri native. This is my first PPA play. But I've always had a passion for acting. Since I was a kid in drama and speech class, I knew I wanted to be a professional actor. When I heard of PPA, I instantly signed up for the experience to be around like-minded people and to gain more skills for my craft. I would like to thank Rachel and Miranda for this opportunity and for being wonderful directors. I also want to thank everyone for their participation and hard work. The environment was full of great energy, and I can't wait to be a part of this again.

Production Staff

Courtney Bailey, Ph.D., (**Playwright/Spoken Word Teaching Artist)** is a St. Louis-based writer and theatre artist who teaches among the justice-impacted and incarcerated communities of Eastern Missouri. She is the only playwright in the country whose body of work is evenly split between works for her community and works for incarcerated artists. *The Riverfront Times* named her the 2023 Best St. Louis Playwright, and her play *Brontë Sister House Party* earned the St. Louis Circle Award for Best New Play. She's been privileged to work with the support of organizations such as the Folger Shakespeare Library, St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, The Bechdel Project, the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis, Prison Performing Arts, SATE, and Equally Represented Arts (ERA). Many thanks to the incredible Rachel Tibbetts and all of the PPA Family. www.courtney-bailey.com

Paul Cereghino (Music Director) is a St. Louis-based musician, theatre artist, arts educator, and comedian. He has worked locally with Shakespeare Festival, SATE, Metro Plays, and many others. He won Best Actor in a comedy for *Souvenir* with Max & Louie Productions. As an educator, he has worked with COCA, Stages, GCPA, Parkway North HS, and Sumner HS (Go Bulldogs). He has scored and written original music for SATE's *Classic Mystery Game* and Young Liars' *Titus Androgynous.* He graduated from Boston University with a BFA in Theatre Arts. Paul is grateful to PPA and thankful to have worked with every artist in this production!

Miranda Jagels Félix (Assistant Director) is a St. Louis-based theatre artist who enjoys finding creativity through experimentation and collaboration. She holds an M.A. in Theatre and Performance Studies from Washington University, and a B.A. from Saint Louis University, where she was first introduced to Prison Performing Arts in 2017 through *Antigone*, a year-long collaborative project between SLU and PPA. Since then, Miranda has collaborated with PPA participants at NECC on several theatre productions. Some of the work includes her performances as Patricia in *A Memory of Two Mondays*, Mollie the horse in *Animal Farm*, and Miranda in *Hag-Seed*. Miranda is a firm believer in the healing power of theater and is very proud of PPA's mission.

Production Staff

Bess Moynihan (Scenic & Props Designer) has been a versatile Theatre Artist in the St. Louis region for over 18 years. In 2019, she began her work as a Teaching Artist for PPA at the Transition Center; now she teaches and directs at the Missouri Eastern Correctional Facility. She has designed scenery and lighting, as well as acted and directed for a variety of regional professional theatres and has received 8 nominations from the St. Louis Theatre Circle Awards for various roles and designs. Along with her work for PPA, Bess has been a proud Resident Artist at SATE Ensemble Theatre for the past 9 years. Bess is the Operations Manager for Edison Theatre at Washington University. Congrats to this amazing cast on all of their hard work, and thank you for coming to support the dedicated artists of PPA!

Rachel Tibbetts (Director/Artistic Director) celebrated her 20th year with Prison Performing Arts in 2025. Prior to PPA, she worked at the Delaware Theatre Company and Young Audiences of St. Louis. Recent PPA credits include co-directing and producing *First Impressions* with the Alumni Theatre Company and directing *Brontë Sister House Party* at Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center. Rachel received her B.A. in Theatre from Oklahoma State University and is a graduate of the CAT Institute. Rachel is co-producer of SATE and works in the community as an actor and director. In 2023, Rachel received the Saint Louis Visionary Award for Community Impact Artist. In Memory of my Mom. "There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being." - Thornton Wilder

Tyler White (Costume Coordination/Program Coordinator) is an artist who's been seen onstage with COCA, Metro Theater Company, The Black Rep, Mustard Seed Theatre, Washington University, Bread and Roses, and St. Louis Shakespeare Festival. She's also worked behind the scenes with Union Avenue Opera, COCA, PPA, and The Black Rep. She now serves as Program Coordinator and Teaching Artist at Prison Performing Arts. She graduated from Southeast Missouri State University with a Bachelor of Science in Human Environmental Science. Tyler is grateful to God for his many blessings in her life.

“13698”

by Kenneth “Ridhwan” Hardin

This land, this place.
I heard it used to be a landfill.
That fence, those gates,
where time is at a standstill.
We’re criminals and convicts,
each with our sentence to serve.
Some violent or drug addicts,
we all get what we deserve.
These walls and doors and locks.
The wings are shaped like a coffin.
Living in an 8x12 box.
Some guards treat us like nothin’,
but then some are friendly.
They are part of the solution.
Their jobs, they do them kindly.
Working in this institution,
we’re all doing time,
just for some, it’s just a shift.
And as I read this rhyme,
I hope that I can lift.

Spoken Word

“Places”

by Dom Burton

A Town. A Bakery. A Temple. A Salon. A Garden. A Classroom. A Square. A Restaurant. A Home. An Orphanage. A Clinic. A Street. A Lounge. A Farm. A University. A Mosque. A Garage. A Cinema. A Legislature. A Jail. A Studio. A Cemetery. A Workplace. A Shack. A Stadium. A Boutique. A Corner. A Menagerie. A Gallery. An Office. An Amphitheater. A Chapel. A Laboratory. An Arena. A Bar. A Hotel. A Commune. A Porch. A Mortuary. A Café. A Shelter. A Factory. A Church. A Library. An Enclave. A Playground. A Tenement. A Bodega. A School. A Subway. A Workshop. A Stage. An Observatory. A Roadhouse. A Market. A Spa. A Barracks. A Gazebo. A Synagogue. A Gym. An Asylum. A Park. A Dive. A Hospital. A Bridge. A Zoo. A Shrine. A Dock. A Den. A Diner. A Courtroom. A Bank. A Marina. An Inn. A Patio. A Museum. A Cloister. A Warehouse. An Armory. A Lobby. A Constabulary. A Boulevard. An Encampment. A Carnival. A Kitchen. A Beach. A Mall.
A Landfill.
A Prison.
“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”
“One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.”
Divine Providence calls to the human spirit.

“The Journey”

by Jaren “Yodee” Hooten

The journey starts like any other.
I am escorted into my old-but-new town.
The people are strange, the food has no flavor,
and The Voice is very, very bossy,
telling us where to go. Telling us what to do.
That’s not even the worst part. There is a
group of people who do not live in our town, but
come around just to observe us. Sometimes they even
parade us around town and think of us as impetuous.
It’s not all bad, though.
We have plenty to do. We play sports, go to the
gym, and get some “gooder” education. Some residents
are nice (others not so much), but I suppose that is anywhere.
My time here in this town won’t be forever. It only feels
that way. There is no telling where this journey will take
me, but I know one thing: It. Won’t. End. Here…

Spoken Word

"The Tears"

by Dwayne Shelton-Bey

Tears of a dying world
lost forever, growing up
isn't easy, shattered dreams
of joy and happiness. It don't
take a whole lot; give it what
you got.

Through time comes a change,
a change will reveal. This life
that we live, the pain we still feel.

Dreams were lost as children
played, growing up isn't easy anyway,
but to have a life then lose it all
from a gun that shot big but yet
is small.

We all cried together now the
love has went away, now on
our knees we pray that this
change would come someday.

Listen to the tears.

Hoping for the best in life,
planning to be true, we visualize
our future; our skies are gray,
not blue. We cry.

We cry the tears we do,
we cry the tears just for
you; we cry to live another
day, we cry for the love that
has strayed us away from
Him.

All those tears.

“Lost but not Found”

by Bernard Ward

Traveling and traveling
faster than the speed of sound
come to find out nowhere around
could this be my old Town!
Somewhere a clue was established
with the help of the sunlight
that soon produced a Beautiful
Sight. Magnitude which
helped generate the power! that All
was to be seen within
one hour! As time
approaches my deserted town
The winds whispered heavily,
shuussshhhhh.
Lost but not found!

Spoken Word

"Brothers Forged"

by Douglas Cross

Do I dare disturb the universe?
Do I dare do what has been speaking to me?
What if no one agrees with me?
Will I have changed my path, or should I remain in this whirlwind?
I can't deafen the thunderous cry of peaceful exhilaration…
So I disturb the universe!
I put to the test my inner ear…
As I lay my hands on Maliq…
While saying… "Stare into my eyes."
And as my heart speaks through my words,
"Spirit of addiction, LEAVE NOW."
Suddenly… Peace subdues captivity
Joy overflows through his eyes like rivers of Living Water!
Our FATHER'S kiss cultivated culture and
opened the prison door of the universe…

“The Narrator’s Vision”

by LaJuan Hayes

Walk with me as the troubadour plays.
“Our community is appealing,”
The Mayor might proclaim.
“This is the Eden of our time.”
While birds fly over,
minds wonder at the landscapes
from green lawns to fruit trees.
Blissfulness is the tool of choice
used on the newcomers in search of brotherhood.
Sounds of fellowship can be heard
coming through the building walls.
Omnipotent is The Voice above,
directing the spirits of the townspeople.
Credit the writer’s hand
making the roles played reach out
beyond the living.
For even the graveyard in Our Town
is a place to share leftover feelings.
Heart hardened to their feelings
until the light came on
in my own reality
of how attached I am to this storyline,
being awakened by the yell saying,
count time.

Spoken Word

“More Than This”

by Anthony Jackson

I never thought much of gated communities.
The icy stares and haughty dispositions,
intrinsically intertwined into a cultist flow of madness.

I often thought it strange to live in a town like this.

A place where walls absorb the coldest winters,
and pillows muffle the guttural cry.
The cry of men longing for more.

More than this.

Wheelchair Joe said a man can become anything in this town.
Chain him to an idea and let him wrestle with it ‘til Sunday.
See what revelation comes.

So if you chain me to anything,
chain me to a love and a hope
that tomorrow will come.
A day of liberation and reconciliation
through a grace that’s sufficient for all.

Not just the people in your town.

“To See What I’m Sayin’”

by Kenneth “Ridhwan” Hardin

C’mon! Circumvent the constitution, sure sinner, crimes committed.
Cops, cuffs, get captured, court cases, incarceration, consequences.
Concise contemplation, slight compunction — in conjunction with this
male function to malfunction.
Components of corruption compounded by conditions, confounded by
correction, coerced by contempt, consumed by assumptions, coated in
superstition, caused by a conscience in remission.
Quarter century of reconditioning — repetition — recollection — stir crazy —
close off, I’m claustrophobic — kept in petri dishes — A cough infectious —
convicted citizens crammed in confined spaces, crowds of
them overcharged me cause it’s cost-effective,
when I plead for my individuality, they beg to differ — that’s a callous
code. Same clothes, same colors — cookie-cutter.
Coveted correspondence clearly how I cope with the current chaos.
Aye, I’m frozen in time, could be the reason why I’m so cold when
I came out. Copyright my confidence so that the copycats can’t
commandeer my collection of compliments. Corrosive common sense —
if I’m comfortable in this circus my circuits could be compromised.
Inner thoughts convoluted with crosstalk. Right and wrong crisscrossed.
My wires crossed — fingers crossed as I crawl across the crossfire.
I’m at a crossroads. Double-crossed by the recourse — A choice
of a course, that, of course could prove to be a challenger —
The Courts weaponized time — I’m being killed with days, months,
years. My coffin will be constructed with calendars. Catch me
going Coo Coo. They cleaned my clock. I’m chastised by circumstances.
Kinda cryptic. If I recall correctly, kick it with Crypt keepers in
our kinda town — it’ll click, if you just kinda listen. Christened
with Chitter Chat of criticisms, credibility get chopped, choked,
cracked, cooked, I gotta castle, Move my rock — still they check
my checkered past, as I pass every checkpoint — Move out of check
I’m playing chess — check your tone — checkmate — All it cost was to
cut the check. Recoil from relapse — Covered by my recovery.
Still quite crippled by how causally the creation of
Causalities is crafted by the certainty of the duality of the
uneventful and eventualities. C’mon — Maybe that could be
enough for you?

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