



Spring 2019



"FAITH ... NO FEAR"

~Neem Karoli Baba

© '94

My very dear friends,
For several decades now, we've been writing to many of our friends inside on a little piece of note paper

which says "Faith...No Fear" —Neem Karoli Baba. Perhaps you've gotten one. We recently got this beautiful letter from a man who has been using those three little words as a spiritual practice for nineteen years. We hope that his story will touch you as it touches us.

I love you, Sita

Hello my friends,

Where has the time gone? For me, it seems like just last month I was writing to you from Napa County Jail, asking for a copy of *We're All Doing Time*. That was 19 years ago!

Included with the book was a little slip of paper that had the quote "Faith ... No Fear" printed on it and a handwritten message on the back from Sita. I took that little piece of paper and tucked it into the corner of the mirror above the stainless steel sink-toilet in my cell where I could see it each and every day.

After I was sentenced to more time than any three healthy people could do, I took that little slip of paper with me to San Quentin, where I stuck it to the side of the locker above my bed, where I could see it 23 hours a day, seven days a week for the next sixteen months. When I was transferred to the prison where I am now, I took that

little slip of paper with me, and again, it lived next to the mirror of almost every cell I was in, either by the

mirror or pasted just inside the edge of the locker across from my bed. For the last nineteen years, I have had the words of Neem Karoli Baba working their way into my mind, brain, soul and heart: "Faith ... No Fear."

As I looked at that message over the years, I have come to believe in certain things. First of all—Faith. This is not necessarily faith in some deity or some wanted outcome, but this is faith that no matter what—and I mean No Matter What—I am going to be okay. The part of me that we might call Godhead or Spirit, etc., is untouchable by anything that happens to me.

That discovery was earth shattering! I will be okay no matter what. Having this faith meant that naturally, I

didn't have to have any fear. Because fear comes from, among other things, the unknown. I know that I'm going to be okay, so there is no need or room for fear.

I started using "faith no fear" as

a mantra. Repeating it endlessly in my head all day, every day. The difference that made in my day-to-day



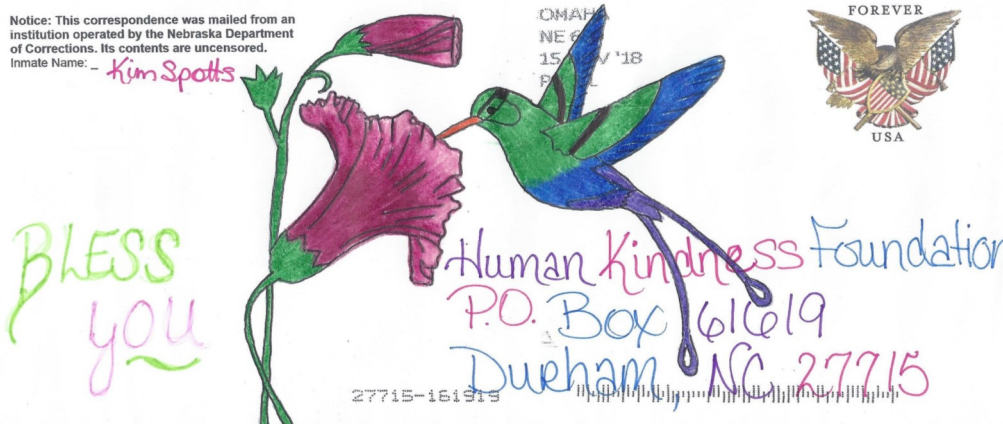
life was amazing. I no longer had the small petty little worries that had plagued me most of my life. I could actually look forward to each and every day, knowing that I didn't have to be afraid of anything.

I look at others before me who have lived a life of "Faith ... No Fear." People like Martin Luther King Jr. or Gandhi and even Bo. I think of Jesus on the cross, knowing that he was dying and asking for forgiveness for those who had just put him there. I think of Malcolm X and how his views changed over the years, especially after he went on the Haj. I think of the Buddha and how he completely changed the world during and after his lifetime.

I am in no way comparing my life to any of theirs, but I can look to all of them for inspiration and strength. A life without fear is not easy. A life of faith is not easy. It is the letting go of a lifetime of fear and faithlessness that is hard. It is the letting go....

Again and again and again, I thank all of you for the work that you do. I know that I would not be here today—I would have taken myself out a long time ago—if it wasn't for the words of Bo, Sita and everyone else in those books. I am here writing this letter, in part, because all of you are there, because I found a little scrap of paper that had three words printed on it that kept me thinking, that gave me hope in a very strange way. That allowed me to see that there was something

Notice: This correspondence was mailed from an institution operated by the Nebraska Department of Corrections. Its contents are uncensored.
Inmate Name: — Kim Spotts



greater than my immediate pain, something greater than my self disgust, my hopelessness and helplessness. I am here because even though you didn't know me, you loved me.

Faith ... No Fear. I try to exhibit that in my daily walk and spiritual path. I work very hard at giving that same hope to others.

Faith... No Fear, as a mantra, changed my life and allowed me to live and actually have something that resembles joy and completeness.

Faith ... No Fear gave me back my mother. Faith ... No Fear has allowed me to do the very hard work of healing old wounds.

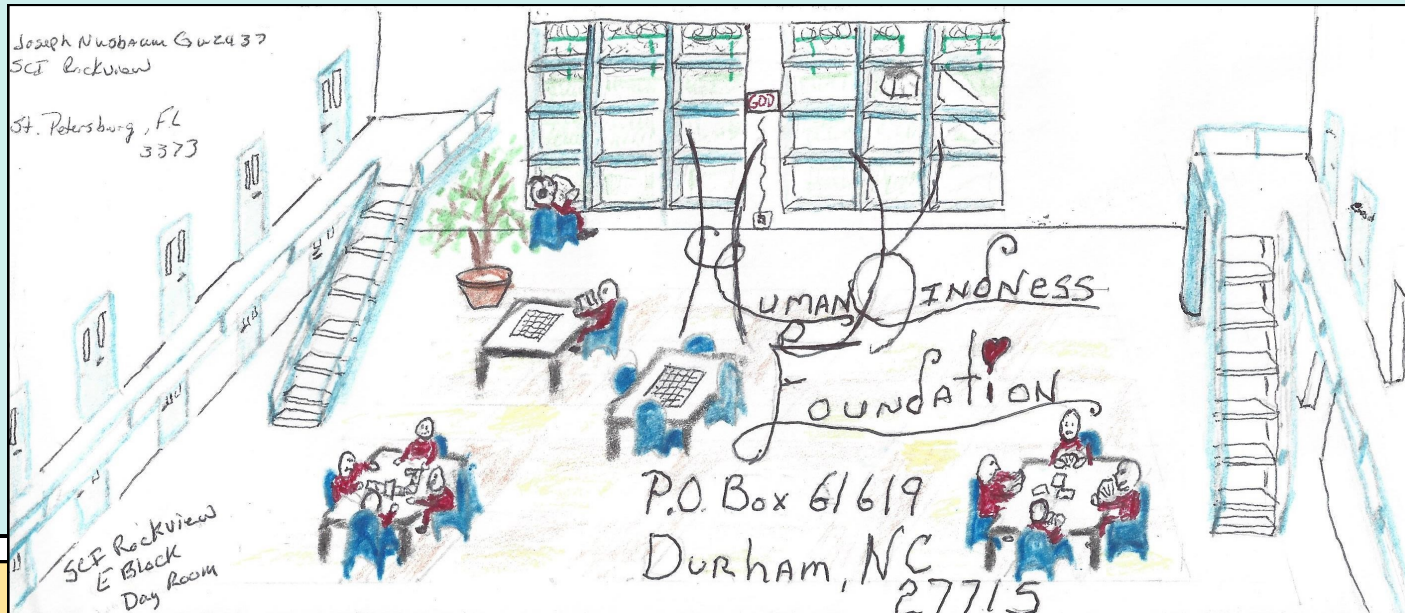
Faith ... No Fear is what I fail at each and every day, but somehow the promise of a life without fear, a life filled with faith allows me to keep on going, helping others when I can and loving others no matter what.

I just wanted to say "Thank You."

In peace, Mark D., Ione, CA

Joseph Nusbaum Gu 2437
SCF Rockview

St. Petersburg, FL
33773



Many thanks to the artists: pg 1: Stephen Stoeltje, Beaumont, TX; Allen Arnbrister, Ione, CA; pg 2: Kim Spotts, York, NE; Joseph Nusbaum, Bellefonte, PA; pg 6: Lance Swann, Jamestown, CA; pg 6: Gary Farlow, Nashville, NC; pg 8: Christopher Fayle, Idaho Falls, ID.

Our 45th Anniversary Celebration

On December 1, 2018, we celebrated the 45th anniversary of the Prison-Ashram Project with a wonderful gathering of friends from all over the country. We wish you all could have been with us to share the love that day. On pages 4 and 5, you can read comments from people who were at the gathering. We are so grateful that the work Sita and Bo started in 1973 is going strong.



The HKF office

We asked “Tall Tom” Dodson to write a few words about the celebration to share with you. If you’ve been reading our newsletters for a long time, you might remember Tall Tom from 2003 and 2009, when we featured him in newsletters. [We’ve shared his words and an excerpt from one of those newsletters on page 4.] He traveled from Texas to North Carolina to share his spiritual journey with the group that gathered for the anniversary. He says he felt blessed by the time together, and we know that the group felt blessed by him.

As we share the joy and fun of the celebration with you, we hope you remember three things:

- 1) You are part of the HKF family. Remember that you are loved. The people in these photos care.
- 2) The people who came to the celebration didn’t get here by an easy path. Transformation takes effort. It takes lots and lots of practice, like Mark D. repeating his “Faith ... No Fear” mantra many times throughout every day. We hope you enjoy the smiles in these photos. December 1st was a time for joy! Don’t let that fool you into thinking anybody had it easy. They traveled their path one step at a time, or one breath at a time, just like we all can.
- 3) You may or may not ever be able to drive to HKF for a celebration, but you absolutely can take part in the more important part of the journey. The classic spiritual tools for transformation are available to you. If you need instructions, read *We’re All Doing Time* (you can write to us and ask for this free book).

Thank you for being part of the Human Kindness Foundation family.



Friends gather
at HKF to
celebrate the
45th
Anniversary



Tall Tom's Reflections

As I reflect on my decade of continuous freedom, it is hard to know what moments to share. I learned to just own the embarrassing moments like failing the driving test (after not driving for more than 20 years, I couldn't parallel park!), or being overwhelmed at all the choices in a grocery store. I didn't know how to buy a plane ticket for my trip to HKF's 45th anniversary. I have only flown in a passenger jet a few times, and two of those were in handcuffs while being extradited, so I had to ask a lot of questions about logistics.

I have had great experiences. I have worked for people who believe in second chances, and there are many of those people out here. All my previous employers are people I'm still friendly with.

Once I quit being an asshole in prison I found that I quit running into so many assholes in my daily affairs. And today if I think I've run into two or three assholes in quick succession, I know to look in the mirror!

For the past five years I have been working as a chemical dependency counselor. As a person in long-term recovery (I haven't used any drugs or alcohol since 1/6/93) this has proven to be a godsend. Yet initially I was skeptical that I would be worthy. I have learned to continually accept guidance from trusted mentors, be willing to take action even if I don't like it, and realize that the lunatic committee (those internal voices of criticism of myself and others) is alive and

well yet doesn't need to get a vote in my choices.

I do volunteer work in a multitude of ways. One is going back into prisons to conduct recovery meetings. Another is to pick up the phone and listen when someone reaches out for help, even if I don't feel like it, because that is what someone else did for me.

When I got the invitation to come to the 45th anniversary, at first I struggled. It might seem like a no-brainer to all you convicts to accept such an invitation, because I believe everyone of us has dreamed of coming here to hug and meditate with Sita and all the others who have lovingly corresponded with us for decades. Despite a sincere invitation from Sita, I still struggled with feeling unworthy and like I might just get in the way.

From the moment I arrived, I have had the honor to meet with so many wonderful men and women. There were informal gatherings where I spoke with friends and volunteers from NC, NY, TN, IA, TX, LA, and IN. These were the kindest, warmest, and genuinely most peaceful bunch of people I have ever been around. We prayed together, we cried together, we meditated and held you in our hearts. —Tall Tom



From our interview with Tall Tom, Fall 2003:

Tall Tom: As I was beginning to open up, it was suggested to me that I pray for a deeper understanding of fear. I thought that sounded stupid, but I was willing to follow the suggestion of someone who was wiser than me. Strange things started happening. I came to realize that all the anger and resentments I had toward the criminal justice system, and toward certain people, were just different levels of fear. I had allowed fear to rule my life. Today, although fear still exists in my life, it's no longer the force behind the bulk of my decision-making. I can experience fear and anger, and if I can refrain from opening my mouth to say something antagonistically or confrontationally, the feeling will pass and I'll survive the experience. Whereas in the past, I thought that if I didn't say something or act out violently, I wouldn't survive whatever experience I was having. When I first be-

gan doing this, I ran up against my old belief system and my ingrained interpretation of what a man is, and how he should respond to those feelings. Those were my worst enemies.

Sometimes I'm surprised when someone tells me that I handled a situation so much better than I used to. When all I've done is just kept my mouth shut and not raised my hands. My thoughts might not always be the healthiest, but the main difference is that now, when I get triggered, I immediately start asking myself, "What is it that scares me about this situation?" I'd say that in the last 10 years, 99.9 percent of all the situations where I allowed myself to get angry, I eventually identified some form of fear at the root of it all.



Sita with members of the HKF board of directors, visiting at an art show during the anniversary celebration. This show featured artists who live on death row.

I can't imagine getting out without having done all the inner work I did. There's no way I could have made it. I practiced and worked with all those issues like drugs, lust, anger for years, and those are the same issues you face out here. I made the changes and it is paying off and I can face life without falling back into old ways and saying "screw it." —S., who has been out for 8 years.

"I felt like that would be the end of my life, if I had to serve 10 years in prison. I was out of my mind, I didn't care about anything, looking at all this time. I spent most of that year in and out of solitary confinement. I started listening to what Bo was saying. I started focusing on making changes...if I got out without making changes, I was doomed to repeat my old pattern."
—John, who was released more than 12 years ago.

hallowed grounds, stand in the room where the books are packed and letters written, and be asked to share how much HKF has meant to me was so cool!! But we both agreed the best part of our time with you guys was the LOVE we both felt!! And the connecting with others on a deeper level, it will change us forever. Also had to mention how several times I sensed Bo's spirit there, just as I've often heard his words that I've read at JUST THE RIGHT TIMES in my daily interactions. We look forward to keeping in touch with you both and seeing what the future holds. We Love you and thank God for you, Ty and Wendy

Dear HKF,

Just wanted to say that we had a great weekend connecting with all the amazing people that make HKF what it is today. Every conversation was filled with loving kindness and acceptance. It was quite fulfilling for us. We plan to do whatever we can to continue promoting HKF and its philosophies. Most importantly, I will work to embody Bo's, and in turn Neem Karoli Baba's, spirit always but especially when I'm with the incarcerated individuals that I work with every day. I feel so blessed to be able to work with and learn from these men. I do not take it for granted that they allow me in to their lives. They teach me so much and for that I am eternally grateful.

We enjoyed our time meeting and getting to know so many bright lights. I believe it was someone in the *A Course in Miracles* community that said, "We are all lights remembering we are lights at the rate of which we can remember." This weekend helped

Kristina and I remember a little bit quicker than usual. Blessings to you all, Justin [staff member at a prison]

Dear Friends,

Well.... we are FINALLY on the road from Michigan. Had hoped to leave early this morning but Life in Life's terms strikes again!! Oh well we will drive through the night. This is a trip I have wanted to make since Sept. 9th 2005, the day I was released from prison. My life has changed so much since then! Thank you Sita and Catherine for continuing to answer your Calling. I have never looked at reality/Life the same since the 90 days I spent in the hole in the old Jackson prison with Bo and God (Bo's books were all I had in there besides a Bible). Wendy and I wouldn't miss this for anything even though she's 7 months pregnant and I'm running on way too little sleep! Thank you for all the notes, letters and books all those years ago. I never imagined back then I'd have an office of my own with a desk full of letters from other men seeking that same Love and encouragement you gave me. May Bo's spirit live on through this great work we get to do."

—Ty

...and this was written after their visit...

Wendy and I want to thank you for a wonderful weekend! I was incredibly humbled by the simple fact that I was even there. To hear Sita's stories, have dinner at the original Kindness House, walk the



Letters



Dear HKF,

I'm really starting to get down within myself. I will not let it break me, but I feel like I am just so sad all the time. I have been meditating doing my best to look at my situation with honesty and courage, but I feel very small and helpless sometimes in this situation. Very alone. It hurts, and I don't really know what to do with it. My family seems to have deserted me, and I am starting to think that maybe my friends never really were friends in the first place.

Are all of these feelings coming up because I have been meditating and I am more aware of my self and environment? If you can lend some insight, I will be grateful. Thank you all so much for always being kind to me. May God and Life favor you,

Respectfully, E

Dear E,

Thank you so much for your letter and for reaching out to us. A lot of feelings can come up when you start meditating, and that is normal. Once you start becoming more aware, things may seem like they are getting worse for a while, but it's really just noticing the feelings that have always been there, but you used to distract yourself away from feeling them.

At the silent meditation retreats I've attended, it was always really intense for the first few days as people started getting in touch with their real feelings that they normally are too distracted to notice. But the good news is that this is how real and lasting change can happen. An old spiritual teacher of mine used to say, "you have to go through the darkness in order to find the Light." I found that to be true for me. When I

first started really meditating, so much crap from my past came up, and it was heavy and intense for quite a while. But I stuck with it—clearing out one feeling or emotion and then the next.

A lot of amazing insights can come to you as well, like little miracles to help clean out the past and bring us to the present, so do stick with it and ask Spirit for the insights you need to help you clear this out.

Sometimes these insights can come during meditation like out of nowhere, and sometimes

those insights can come while you're going about your day—it's all a part of the unwinding of the mental traps we have been addicted to, and peace will come a little bit at a time. Sometimes we even get amazing experiences of absolute bliss, but most of the time, they come and go. As time goes by, you'll notice that you are travelling lighter over life's terrain with whatever life has in store for you.

Keep trying, accept it when you seem to fail, and try again. You will not be disappointed. We're all in this together.

Love, Donna (HKF volunteer)



Dear Catherine, my new sister,

I'm still here at the jail, and it doesn't look like I'll be going anywhere soon. I am having these nightmares almost every night where I get killed for what I've done. I'm starting to feel like I am going crazy over guilt, I guess. I hate this feeling that if someone would try to kill me, that I don't even know if I'd defend myself! I am by no means weak or scared. On the street I'd fight all the time, but I have even got to the point where some days I want someone to kick my butt! That's probably crazy and all, but it's driving me nuts, being too much of a coward to admit to everyone that I did this! Should I tell them? Why is this so hard to do?

I'm 24 years old with three children, and I don't know what to do. Am I a piece of crap now that I've done this, or

is it just a mistake and something to learn from? I am scared to look inside and see if this was some stupid crap that will never happen again or am I a sick weirdo. Can't wait to hear back from you.

Your new friend, D

Dear D,

I'm glad to hear from you. It's totally understandable that you're worried about a lot of stuff. You're facing some really difficult feelings and situations. You need some powerful tools to help you through.

Those tools are what Bo writes about, so I hope you have *We're All Doing Time* with you. The best advice we have is to work with that book (or the pamphlet version, "Getting Free") every day. Take it seriously, D. This stuff that's driving you nuts? Dealing with this stuff is your job right now. You can't be any use to your children or yourself until you develop the strength to deal with the big stuff that's happening in your life. That takes courage, and it takes time. I really hope you'll give it some time every day, using meditation and other practices that Bo teaches.

I don't know whether you'll want to tell others about what got you to this point. Please be cautious as you make that decision. Being private is not the same as being cowardly. Give yourself some time to calm down, to get used to what you're living with and where you're living.

There's one question you asked that is very easy for me to answer. You asked "am I a piece of crap?" No, you are not. You are a human being. You are a child of God. You are a father who cares about his children. Now you're part of the Human Kindness Foundation family. You are many things, and of course you're not perfect, but you are definitely NOT a piece of crap.

You're going to need to go deeply into your spiritual journey if you want any peace, D. What has already happened is going to push you. Like you said, it could drive you nuts. It could make you start fights just so somebody

will kick your butt. It could make you believe that you are worthless and deserve to be killed, like in your nightmares. But it doesn't have to do all those things. If you use your courage to do the spiritual work—and believe me, some of that work will be harder than any street fight you were ever in—you can find peace. Your life can have meaning. You can be a blessing to your children. We know people who have done it. You can too.

If you choose to stick with a spiritual journey, we'll be with you all the way, brother.

Peace and blessings, Catherine



Dear Sita,

I haven't written in a while. I was doing great for a while, but then I messed up. I ended up stabbing someone because of something they said to me. I just got off disciplinary segregation after doing six months. Now I'm back on administrative segregation which has no release date. I try living a path of peace and justice, because I know if I don't, I'm going to end up killing somebody.

How do I get back on track? I know that I really must become a different man in spirit to overcome this affliction. I tore my beautiful mother up inside after committing a triple homicide. She's forgiven me, but she still has been left with a shattered heart.

Now my 17 year old son is in trouble, trying very hard to follow my footsteps, which breaks my heart. No matter what I say to him, he will not listen, and there's nothing I can do. I can't be his father. I'm incarcerated.

So if you can offer me any advice that can be beneficial to me in any way, I'd greatly appreciate it. I also send my love to all HKF staff & volunteers, and to Jarvis Jay Masters—you're a comrade, brother. Stay strong my friend. Peace & love, J

Dear J,

I'm glad you wrote to us. Sita asked me to respond to your letter and to send you her love.

I hear your pain about being in ad seg and about being away from your son. I disagree with your statement: "I can't be his father. I'm incarcerated." You are his father, J. And he needs you. It's true you can't do some of the

things you want to do for him and with him. But you are his father, and he will keep trying to follow your footsteps. So make sure your footsteps are something you want him to follow. Right where you are, you can be the man you want him to have as a father. In your situation, it takes enormous courage and strength to walk a path of peace and justice. You've told us in this letter that you're already doing that. We hope you will stay with your practice and get even more full-time about it. Your son may take awhile to notice, but we fully believe it will matter to him.

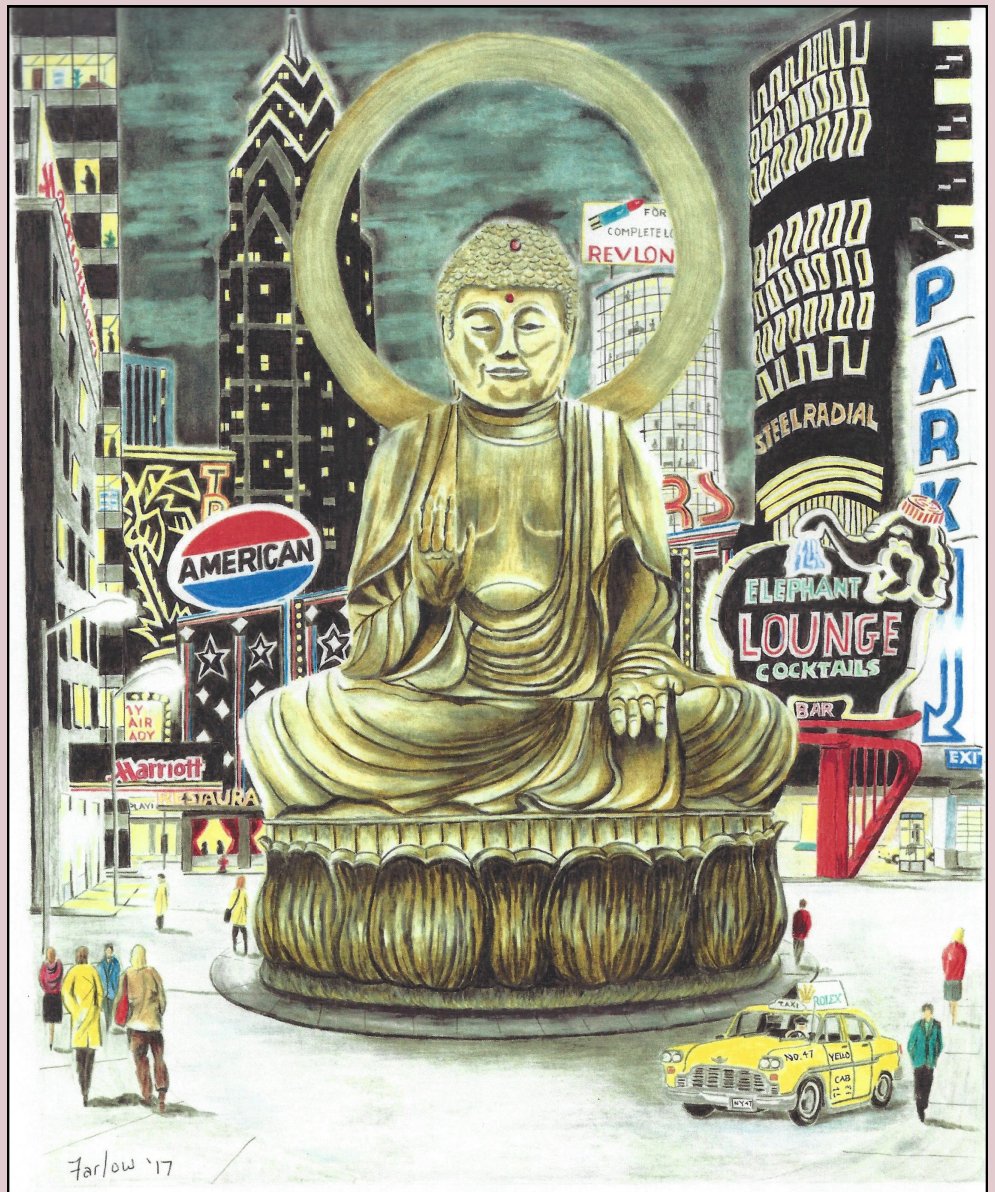
You say Jarvis Jay Masters is a comrade. Maybe his lifestyle is a clue to the path that is pulling on your heart. Even in his extremely confined situation (on death row in San Quentin), Jarvis finds ways to be of service to others. He acts with courage. Work

with his book again. You might want to read a few pages every day and reflect on what those few pages have for you that day.

Sita and I know that you're in a really hard environment. We don't take that lightly. You didn't get the easy route—your spiritual journey goes right through some of the very toughest places. If we could make it easier for you, we would. But our job is to remind you of people like Jarvis and ancient spiritual practices like meditation. To remind you, crazy as it sounds, that you can find Peace right where you are.

"The Peace that passes all understanding," as the Bible describes it, truly cannot be understood by our logical minds. But we're here to remind you that it exists. We hope you'll keep going for it.

Love and blessings from all of us at HKF, Catherine





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"Bo's books have not only changed my outlook on life, they have changed my life altogether. Instead of this experience making me bitter and angry, thanks to these books, I am about to leave here happier and more content than I have ever been before. I'm a better man thanks to you and your organization." —David S.

—Art by Christopher Fayle, Idaho Falls, ID—

