

Cliffen Nichols

HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT THE PRISON WRITES INITIATIVE?

WHEN I FIRST HEARD ABOUT THE CREATIVE WRITING CLASS BEING OFFERED AT UNIT 30, I WAS SOMEWHAT APPREHENSIVE ABOUT JOINING IT. I WAS ALREADY FAIRLY BUSY TEACHING AND TUTORING LITERARY ON THE ZONE AND IN THE (ABE) SCHOOL. HOWEVER, BY THE TIME I DECIDED TO JOIN ALL THE FIFTEEN STUDENTS HAD BEEN CHOSEN. IT WAS A MONTH LATER THAT THE ADMINISTRATOR MR. MURPHREE WOULD MEET WITH ME AND ASK THAT I BE IN THE SCHOOL. IT SEEMS AS SOME STUDENTS HAD DROPPED OUT AND THERE WERE OPENINGS TO BE FILLED. I RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO ATTEND AND THE ONLY RESERVE BEING THAT I WOULD BE A MONTH BEHIND EVERYONE ELSE.

I ATTENDED MY FIRST CLASS, MET THE OTHER STUDENTS, MET MR. BOURGEOIS, THE INSTRUCTOR, RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FOR WHAT AND HOW TO WRITE AND TOOK OFF. I EAGERLY AND PASSIONATELY APPROACHED THE WRITING ABOUT MY LIFE AND AUTOMATICALLY WROTE 20 PAGES THE FIRST WEEK. IT STIMULATED MY MENTAL PROCESS IN SUCH A WAY AS NOTHING ELSE HAD IN SO LONG, A LONG NEEDED IN-ROAD AND OUTLET FOR MY LIFE'S FEELINGS. I WAS AT THE LEAST FEELING EXHUBERANT AND LIVELY AS MY MIND DANCED IN ALL MOMENTS OF THE DAY ABOUT PERSONAL SUBJECT MATTER. A GREAT RELEASE!

THIS WOULD ONLY BE ACCENTUATED BY THE MONDAY AFTERNOON CLASSES WITH THE ADDITIONAL READINGS OF OTHER AUTHORS AND THE READING WITH OUR OWN WRITINGS, WHICH WOULD BE CRITIQUED BY THE OTHER CLASS MEMBERS. THIS WAS NOT AT THE LEAST TO SAY AN EXHILARATING EXPERIENCE FOR ME TO HEAR FIRST

HAND THE OTHER INMATES PERSONAL STORIES OF THEIR PRIVATE LIVES BEFORE BEING INCARCERATED.

I WAS MENTALLY INSPIRED BY THE INSIGHT OF OUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR AND HIS VAST KNOWLEDGE OF WRITING. BEING ABLE TO DRAW FROM HIS SUPERB WRITING WISDOM AND ABILITY WAS TO ME KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS CLASS AND MY WRITING.

THE CHERRY TO THE TOP OF MY CAKE OF WRITING, MY DELIGHT WAS TO HAVE A WRITER FROM ANOTHER PRISON WRITING PROGRAM TO SPEAK TO US. MS TENEBALM WOULD BURN AWAY ANY REMAINING DROSS OF MY WRITING INHIBITIONS THROUGH HER PERSONAL WRITINGS AND HER WISDOM IN PRISON WRITING.

I HAVE ENJOYED EVERY MEETING, DESIRED IT IMPATIENTLY ALL WEEKENDS, AND HAVE GROWN CLOSER TO THE OTHER INMATES. I ANXIOUSLY AND IMPATIENTLY AWAIT ANOTHER PROGRAM TO BE OFFERED.

MY THANKS AND HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO MR. LOUIS BOURGEOIS FOR HIS LOVE FOR WRITING. HIS DESIRE AND VISION TO SEE THIS LOVE SOWN INTO THE LIVES OF THE INMATES AT PARSONS PRISON.

CLIFTON NICKENS