

THE WORD IS OUT

SUMMER 2018 | ISSUE #20

Hello loves,

Welcome old friends and new to the summer edition of The Word is Out. Why yes, thank you for noticing... We've had a makeover! This issue is designed by the wonderful Stéfanie up here in Montreal. Is this new colour working for us?

Now onto the important stuff. This issue's theme is Censorship. Thank you to everyone who sent us their anecdotes, declarations and musings about the topic. In these pages, you will find rants and raves, updates from the collective, gorgeous artwork, a forecast from the stars above, celebrity gossip and much more.

Enjoy, and stay cool!

In struggle and solidarity,

Your friends at the Prisoner Correspondence Project xoxo

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2018 So Far	p. 2
Theme for Next Issue	p. 2
A Night Out With Mother Cat	p. 3
Gay Celebrity Gossip	p. 4
News Updates	p. 5
Homoscopes	p. 6
Censorship	p. 8
Lavender and Red	p. 12
Crossword	p. 14

TO PRISON MAILROOMS:

If you are rejecting this newsletter, please send us a digital copy of the rejection notice to info@prisonercorrespondenceproject.com so that it is received within the appeal period.

2018 SO FAR

It's been a busy year as always here at PCP. In January, the collective spent a weekend snowed into a grand house in rural Quebec for our annual visioning retreat, bonding and plotting out plans for the Project.

In regards to our trans prisoner campaign, in January, Correctional Services Canada updated their policy to allow trans prisoners to be housed in institutions that match their gender. This is a step in the right direction, but we are concerned about how the details of the policy will be put into practice and will keep scrutinising the CSC and pushing for safer conditions, and prioritising alternatives to incarceration!

In March, we made and sent out a new and improved edition of *The Word is Out: Canadian Edition*.

We threw a wedding-themed party on the weekend of the Anarchist Bookfair which raised over \$1000 to help us keep our project afloat and keep mailing things like this to all of you. After a last-minute venue panic when our liquor licence was revoked the day before the party, the show went on as we paired up with a local queer drag night to pull it off together.

The media has been all over us this year, with articles appearing in *The Walrus*, *Briarpatch*, and *Vice* magazine among others. This has caused a big influx in outside folks looking for penpals!

And this month, we're gearing up to move out of our long-term space as QPIRG Concordia is moving across the street. So many boxes, so many zines, so much arm muscle to be honed. But don't worry - mail comes through the central mailroom so our address won't change!



Love and solidarity,

Béatrice, Ellen, Josh, Maggie, Mason, Olivia, Stevie, Adrien, Amber Fox, Catherine, Carlos, Cherrie Bomb, Dema, Gavin, Sara & Tiffany Joy.

THEME FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

YOUR FOOD WEAPONIZED: EAT AT YOUR OWN RISK

We want to hear from you about food in prison! What is it like where you are? What is it lacking? Have you run into issues with cultural or health-related dietary requirements and food on the inside? In what ways is food political? What kind of food revolution do you want to see?



A NIGHT OUT WITH MOTHER CAT

By Olivia & Kristin

In early June, we took a trip from Canada to Tennessee for some bourbon, barbecue, and bluegrass. As longtime current and former members of the Prisoner Correspondence Project, we also used this visit as an opportunity to meet up with Catherine Lynn Quick, a.k.a. Mother Cat, in Memphis.

Catherine was released last year, after 43 years of incarceration. Before her release, she was a member of our Inside Advisory Committee and the author of multiple publications for the project. Her writings include *G.L.B.T.? Going to a Federal Prison?*, *A New Perspective on Being a Transwoman in Prison*, and *A Cage Bird Sings*, a heartfelt zine from 2015 about her fears towards her impending release and her unwillingness to leave prison after four decades inside. Since getting out, Catherine has compiled her first post-release impressions and experiences into a new zine, *Out and Down*. You can order all of Catherine's zines from our resource list.

In Memphis, over tacos, we gave Catherine an update on the project and talked about her life after prison. Initially, Catherine wanted to stay institutionalized—in *A Cage Bird Sings*, she writes, "you stay locked up so long you can't function in the world that they throw you into!" So she requested to be moved to a mental institution. After just a short time there, her PO decided to deny her stay and expedited her release. Catherine was kicked out of the institution and dropped off in downtown Memphis with \$50.

It's been a year since Catherine's release. She was homeless for the first 9 months, but she held her own, applying her toughness from the prison

courtyard to become a respected figure in the streets. She told us, "The ability to deal with a-holes and adversity have come in handy out here!" Staying true to her reputation as Mother Cat, she took on new "children" and took care of the most vulnerable people who needed her help.

When asked about what helped her survive this time, she replied that it was "the knowledge that I still had people on the inside counting on me to get things done, and prove we can make it out here." After years of fighting for the recognition of her name and gender inside prison, she continued the struggle on the outside by refusing to stay at a men's halfway house. She eventually found her own place to live. Last month, she used her handiwork and ingenuity to land a job at a secondhand appliance store. She also got herself up to speed with the latest technology by using the computer at the public library. Now she's more tech-savvy than we are!

Even though Catherine was released against her will, she's found positive qualities to life on the outside.

"I have learned a lot since my release," she said, "and those who know me know how much I value knowledge, and I use that knowledge to continue helping others." Her words of advice to prisoners with upcoming release dates: "It won't be easy. Society never forgets or forgives, so perseverance is one thing you must put in your head. Don't give up or give in. Keep your moral code and be honest. It will gain you the respect you need to strive. The more they push against you, the harder you must try so YOU can win!"

GAY CELEBRITY GOSSIP: COVER-UPS, SECRETS AND LIES



Dearest most diligent homos and avid queers, welcome back to another mouthwatering edition of gay celebrity gossip column! It's a pleasure and delight to be here with you once again doing what I was born to do. You know, I just need to say upfront (and I do hope that this is obvious but just in case you are new to my column) that I live off of this stuff. I mean for real, if celebrities weren't pretending to be straight while secretly having homosexual affairs that then become public and completely ruin their careers leading to financial desperation and a dark twisted emotional spiral from which they could never recover as I sit on the sidelines consuming and reporting on it all with absolutely zero feelings of guilt or remorse or etc, well, I just don't think I would be happy! I wouldn't. That's all there is to it. Call me a stubborn old queen but that is just what I like.

But...dear readers...while it may indeed appear from the outside that I have an idyllic job of untarnished perfection, I must admit that there are darker sides to the industry that have taken their toll on me. Secrets you see, there are secrets that professionals like myself in the gossip world are aware of but collectively choose to ignore. Sick and perverse things that surface in the crushed velvet annals of gay celebrity gossip but you choose to look away,

you choose to not see it because in all honesty you can't understand it. Days go by, months, years, and these secrets sit deep inside you slowly festering away. You go about your life however, because, really, you must. You have invested your entire being in a certain understanding of the world which you refuse to abandon. You travel far and wide attending gay celebrity gossip conferences, sitting in on gay celebrity gossip panels, writing peer reviewed articles for respected gay celebrity gossip journals and all the while you say the things that you know need to be said. You walk onstage and look out over a packed auditorium of thousands, clear your throat and say: "There are a few straight celebrities who are actually straight. There are one or two gay celebrities who are out. The rest of celebrities are gay people pretending to be straight. That is the entire makeup of Hollywood in its entirety and there is nothing else that exists." You walk off the stage to a thunderous applause and even though you know that four weeks ago you drove out into the middle of nowhere Wyoming with a crate full of documents that you just couldn't understand, couldn't possibly believe the words written on those pages, and torched them in a bonfire while weeping and writhing around in the salted dust of the earth not knowing how you could go on....

But you do go on! You build an entire life, an entire world, a career, an ethos, a politic, a whole field of journalism on a foundation so rotten it's barely even there. Whatever, it's fine, you tell yourself, it's just an anomaly, it's not real, the vast majority of cases prove otherwise. You continue to spout the same flawed rhetoric in the same spaces and the accolades keep rolling in. You get a key to the city here, an honorary degree there, a statutory holiday named in your honour, a Pulitzer too. You put them all on a marble case and breathe deeply. You are doing the good work.

But then...one day...you crack. You crack!!! You split right down the middle and you say "I can't live any longer in this PARADIGMATIC EMPIRE OF LIES AND DECEPTION. That's right. I cannot! In case you are not following dear readers that day is today. I refuse to participate in this farce any longer and I don't care what happens to me after I speak the truth. Like my whistleblower comrades before me, people like Chelsea Manning and other ones I'm sure, I believe the truth can change the world and do what you will with me!

So here it is people. The world is even more complicated than we ever imagined. As a gay celebrity gossip columnist I have uncovered top secret documents pointing to the fact that Ellen Degeneres is pretending to be gay! That's right she's a straight celebrity pretending to be gay. How do I know this? Well... turns out she's vegan so...how could you even be a dyke and not be a leatherdyke????????? That's not even real. It's not. All lesbians are bad bitches you don't wanna fuck with in leather.

Thank you.

Art: Ruby Rose by Michael Reese

NEWS UPDATES

NEW POLICY ON HOUSING TRANS PRISONERS IN CANADA

Last year, we made noise with our trans prisoner campaign while Corrections Services Canada was in the process of reviewing their policies around accommodations and treatment of transgender inmates. They dealt with concerns of gender identity and expression on a case-by-case basis—and it was under this interim policy that the first trans inmate was transferred from a men’s to a women’s prison in July. On December 27th, 2017, CSC announced official changes to their policies to reflect Bill C-16, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression.

With the new policy changes, inmates can now be housed according to their gender identity in a men’s or women’s institution unless there are overriding health or safety concerns which cannot be resolved. Staff will use inmates’ preferred name and pronoun in all oral interactions and written documentation, and trans inmates may choose whether strip and frisk searches and urinalysis testing are conducted by a male or female staff member.

An individualized protocol will be developed for all offenders seeking to be accommodated on the basis of gender identity or expression.

Inmates will also now be permitted to purchase effects from the catalogue for men and/or for women, except when restricted for safety, health or security reasons—consultation with a medical professional is no longer required for this permission.

The official CSC Interim Policy Bulletin did not stipulate that there will be any compulsory training for staff in the area of gender identity or expression, but that training will continue to be made available.

LAWSUIT AGAINST CENSORSHIP OF BOOKS IN MISSISSIPPI

An organization in Mississippi that send books to prisons has filed a lawsuit against the Mississippi Department of Corrections, alongside Charles Owens and Jess Green, both doing time at Southern Mississippi Correctional Institute.

Since 2017, prisons have been rejecting deliveries from Big House Books, including educational resources. They were told by prison officials that they could send religious books instead, which would not be rejected.

The prison only allows inmates to receive books if they «have been purchased or if the books are religious,» excluding «novels, history books, GED preparation handbooks or any other secular books.»

«With this lawsuit, we seek simply to restore the prior practice at the prison so that prisoners can receive books in the mail whether paid or free, whether religious or secular,» said Beth Orlansky, a local advocate.



HOMOSCOPES

ARIES

Baby Aries, the first of all the signs, we have a lot to learn from you this summer, because you don't do things you don't want to. You don't submit. Unless you want to. You are the top of the bottoms. You are a force. It's hard when everyone looks to you for inspiration because who can you follow when you are first? Luckily, you don't even care about this problem because you are just doing it your way. The lesson for right now: if anyone tries to judge you for your will, remember that they are just envious of your ability to assert.

TAURUS

Taurus it's a hard time to be sturdy,

constant, dedicated. It's a hard thing to stay. Most of the flakiness and fakeness of bad times and dark moments can rub off. Most people, are awful. But you know what is good and you make us feel good by twirling around and shining and winning without moving

away from the things that are great. Also, you are very attractive, this is all very attractive, and summer will yield some of the appreciation you must receive simply for your showing up.

GEMINI

Gemini, as I write this homoscope, the sun is in Gemini and so is the moon. You twins like this doubling because this week, it all happens. You fall out of love while you fall back in it. You get totally broken but never feel more recovered. Your body becomes even more unpredictable leading to a sense of direction and reliability that you thought was permanently over. In this time of contradictions, make sure the pals and lovers around you get thanked for the care they doll out while you are transformed. I recommend a hug and a unicorn shaped sugar cookie, but any thank you note or genuine smile will do just fine.

CANCER

Happy birthday. While you soak in the tub of flower petals, rnb, champagne flutes, and feelings, I want to remind you that feelings are only one way of understanding the world. You can take your tears and make them into magic, stardust, songs, routines, sandwiches, and then other people will grow from them too. As your tendency is often to provide warmth, to cuddle, and to Mom, I recommend you share some of your own emotional wisdom as often as possible: keeping everyone else all mushed up will make your sad inner life, the beauty of your experiences, even bigger than you.

LEO

Oh boy! What is even happening with you? Who gave you the leather hat, the harness, those chaps. You look super! You are magnificent. This summer is most certainly your chance for promotion. That can mean many different things in many different contexts (for instance, in work, a promotion is money, but also, power) but one thing that's for sure is that you are moving up! Up on the dance floor. Up to your lover's gay arms. Up a rung, a skip in your step, level right up like the Princess. You have earned a big jump and a climb so celebrate this and us and you. Wahoo!

VIRGO

Virgo you seem calmer than usual, and as a result, you are getting some clarity that is often muddled by your vibrations, your vibrator, and your general movement. Now that you've slowed down, opened your eyes, and gained some perspective, you can actually take stock of what has happened for you as the seasons changed. Whose deserves your love and care? Who laughs at your jokes and comes through? Who is suddenly outside of your heart and do you want to keep them from coming back in? If so, how? This clear feeling might feel fleeting but it's not something passing through but something that will stay with you as Jupiter returns through your chart. This is a lucky feeling, so use it to clean up and wash clean of all the things that feel unhelpful.

HOMOSCOPES

LIBRA

Libra, sometimes in your charming beauty, your kindness, friendliness, thoughtfulness, and your general wish that we all just get along you become...well, bratty. Just because you know what's best for us, does not mean we want it. Just because you've thought it through and it makes all the sense does not mean we consent to it. And just because it appeals to you and you know we will like it does not mean it's welcome. This lesson makes no sense to you because to allow others to decline your invitations to perfection, to harmony, to fun, requires you center things that aren't about friendship. Or love. Or community. Not everyone wants what you do, so take your pleasure without the parade rangers but don't assume everyone will come with rainbow flags billowing or whatever.

SCORPIO

Oh dear. You are angry. You are sad. You have been crossed and it is wrong. The worst thing you could do right now, Scorpio, is pretend to be fine. Pluto is the furthest planet from the sun and it demands slow, painful change. With its influence this month, think about the ways that change can only come when things are exposed, when there is room to share you pain, to tend to shame, to wrap your body into another. To spoon it out. Letting others in, physically, emotionally, and otherwise (it's true you are a bit psychic) will heal some of this rage.

SAGITTARIUS

Sagittarius, you are a birthday cake. You are covered in frosting. You are rainbow sprinkles, fiery candles, toothaches, stomach aches, deep satisfaction, the smell of a lit match, a cute idea for a tattoo. You are sweet but filling. A marker of time passing. A dreamy taste of something that is better the next morning out of the fridge. I am telling you this because people will try to shut you down, make you diet, call you childish, squish you into paper plates in the trash can. But you are the best and you know it so they can just deal. I want to eat you.

CAPRICORN

Capricorns are serious children. They are worried about missing out on the tasks at hand so they tend to also miss out on some kinds of gay fun. The thing is, that as Capricorns age, they realize they have done their hard work and now they can sort of just love life. While for most signs, aging is a time of slowing down, mellowing out, and worrying more, for Capricorns, life gets most delicious as the lifespan continues, so you can really look forward to some total sweetness, especially right now, this summer. This is very good.

AQUARIUS

Well, Aquarius. You knew what you wanted. You asked for it. You begged and sang and mooned. You cooked stew. You ate out. You loved each other and everyone else and you felt pretty cool. Things cannot go well always. Happiness is not something you can be gay for, it is something that passes through like your favourite song which can only be played on a loop a finite number of times before someone gets over it. You will find this pure joy of springtime so precious, you will know how to get it and squish it and hold it in your hands. You will understand it cannot be jarred like jam or turned into donuts. And then you will lose it and cry for it and find it again.

PISCES

Pisces, you are very special to us. You are a flying dove in a Prince song. You are a puppy. A well-trained puppy who has those eyebrows. People think you are doing a really good job, even though they don't say it enough. Even though the kind of good work you do is invisible af. The transits through Mars right now demand that you follow through with what is important. That you get what you need and then spread it around. Lick our faces. Wag your tail. Show off your tricks and sparkle and shine. It's summertime and you are the fish at the end of all our rods. A total catch.

ON CENSORSHIP

MICHAEL J. DESMARAIS

Greetings to all the boys and girls out there. Special shout-out to Willie 'Divine' Craig Jr., Bellaboy, Ravyn Marie, and Lisa Strawn for their submissions to the Butterfly Effect in Issue 19.

A grievance filed in 2013 in a prison ended up in a Canadian Federal Court. The issue was the prison system cancelling TV channels that showed late night porn. One reason for the ban was female guards saying they were sexually harassed by prisoners after prisoners had watched porn. The federal judge dismissed that argument as unproven. And as recent news stories have shown, female staff in prison face much more harassment from their male counterparts. Based on the court's ruling, the TV stations in question were given back. The ruling was in 2015. Here in British Columbia, in October 2017, the stations again were taken away. Censorship. I have yet to hear of the situation throughout the rest of Canada. Nor can we get magazines - porn or otherwise. Lock someone up for an amount of time and through censorship, remove any means of proper, mentally healthy, sexual relief, and you create more problems.

When I was in the Oregon prison system there was censorship. Porn was frowned upon. Gay porn, most definitely. I could not get magazines of gay orientation. They would not allow individual pics of touching an erect penis (self-touch), much less any two-person contact. So I purchased a book by Thomas Eakins, a renowned photographer of male nudes. His works are not classified as porn, but as art. My purchase was approved. When it arrived, I was given the book, approved by the mailroom, I was not surprised to learn that everyone on my unit had "heard" that I had the book. Didn't care. I was fighting the system's censorship.

Put the book in my cell. Went to chow. Came back and the book is gone and a confiscation slip is on my desk. Ask the guards - they said it is porn. So, file for a review of the confiscation. At the review I was prepared. Art, not porn. I lost. Why? They pointed to one photos out of 100's in the book and said it suggested "child porn"!! The captioned photo was of a father and his son walking on the beach. Yes, they were naked... walking away from the camera and

the photo was taken from at least 200 feet from the subjects. Bullshit. The only straw they could use to censor what they did not approve of.

Now I admit to censorship of my own. I was extremely pleased at the letters I've received from all over in response to my Butterfly Effect letter. Thank you. I say "censored" because of the expectations of some writers. Some asked for money. Some sent me mag subscription cards for me to buy them. Some want me to set up Facebook pages for them. Sorry. Censored. Not going to happen. I am in prison! The address may seem "street", but in Canada we do not need to put a prisoner number or prison name as our address.

Many US prisons censor mail by not allowing prisoner mail. I still wrote to most who wrote me. I hope you get my letter (based on my non-prison looking address). If your prison does censor and disallow my mail, maybe you have a third party out there that could be used as a forwarder. Some states do allow it, so Mark in Oregon, sure hope you write. To all the gays, bis, trans, females that wrote - thank you. Yes, I did write back. And Canada - what the...?! Only one Canadian prisoner wrote. Reach out. As the line goes, "come out, come out, wherever you are."

Many, many thanks to PCP for supporting this avenue of needed and appreciated communication. Let's all keep talking.

BRANDON PIERCE A.K.A. AKASHA

In a previous newsletter published by PCP a single writer had quoted a law affecting the legal status of law enforcement punishing two consensual adults - specifically of the same sex - because of sexual activity. The law DOES make it unconstitutional for law enforcement to punish LGBT sex that includes two consensual adults. However, and this is very important: the Department of Corrections have managed to circumvent that law by relying on the 14th Amendment's privacy protections & that not all of these protections extend to those incarcerated in due process. The courts are currently accepting this argument's controversial claim because of the lack of privacy an inmate receives in prison.

Any individual who wishes to challenge the court's decision must create a new argument around privacy inclusion and exclusion that the courts have not previously heard and rejected. Of course, it would be extremely wise to find other constitutional matters to lean on as well because the Dept. of Correction will do anything and everything to keep us all down. Including hiring correctional officers who are vehemently bias against LGBTQ people that make derogatory remarks at "work" where everyone can hear it. And then there are those conservative whack jobs who get hired and tell inmates that "if it were up to me all of you would have to stay on your bunks 24/7 with only the Bible! No music, no TV, no email, no other books but the Bible." The same officer drinks until drunk and then drives. The city covers him because he is a correctional officer and at this prison they are short staffed because it's a shitty job with even shittier pay.

I can agree that a small amount of SOP/Policy is to protect the inmate but only because failure to protect the inmate can lead to court issues with the DOC. But they know some/most only harms the individual. In the Idaho Dept. of Correction I have constantly - repeatedly - watched the lesser crime-based "kids" come into prison at young ages - I was 26 - and learn to be "better" criminals. The lesser crime of buying meth every now and then winds up to be that individual left prison knowing how to cook meth and now has bigger connections. That's only one

example not including the same people being sworn into gangs.

Things get worse when President Trump makes screwed up racial comments that divide us and reveal how much division we already have. I would love to see the tyranny fall. I just do not know how it's possible. But I choose to be a part of the solution not apart from the solution.

In Amor et Levis (Latin)

In love and light

CHRIS RIDLEY

Here in North Carolina, censorship has been reduced by a federal lawsuit that the prison system lost. Some activist material is still rejected as detrimental to security. Some pornography is rejected as offensive to staff. Throughout this state's prison system, half of the staff are female. This state also forbids us to receive mail from anyone incarcerated in any state or federal prison.

The effects of this censorship is keeping society in the dark about what really goes on "behind the wall" and keeps the inmate population in the dark about issues that impact them. It allows the administration to push their narrative of how we are "less than human" and "society's undesirables".

I unsuccessfully challenged the prison system's restriction of our ability to receive hardback books. The current policy restricts the size of books we can receive, with religious material being exempt. What this does is restricts access to quality dictionaries and other life reference books. The state court threw my lawsuit out as frivolous. Just more proof that North Carolina deems education as frivolous.

ON CENSORSHIP

JON SCHILLACI

The Inside of Censorship

While it is certainly inconvenient - frustrating and annoying - when we are censored by authority, I believe that far more dangerous to the community is the censorship that we do to ourselves and to each other. The saddest censorship is not the message that was stopped or blocked in transit but the one that was squelched before it was ever uttered.

At least when I face a rejection from the prison mailroom, I can challenge it. A long line of options are in front of me, including appeals, grievances and lawsuits. Even if I lose, I am not helpless. Even if I am denied every step of the way (or if for whatever reason I choose not to fight in a particular instance), I still walk away knowing that someone, somewhere, was trying to make contact and that I am not alone.

But what happens when the community itself decides to never write that letter? There is no way to appeal the absence of contact; against whom would I file, if no one at all is trying to communicate? The community censors itself deciding, "We will not speak in that direction. We will not include in our message those people in those places. We wish to be heard, but only by convenient ears."

There are many reasons why individuals might think this way, and many of those reasons sound plausible and sincere. It is hard to argue when "Our organization just doesn't have the resources..." or "We only focus on one subset of the community to which you do not belong." And there are completely reasonable concerns: prison inmates, after all, are in prison for something, and that means we are dangerous. Directly dangerous, on the one hand - "That guy is a murderer and if I bring myself to his attention, he might decide to murder me!" - but also dangerous to our reputations and to what we are trying to accomplish: "We're trying to gain mainstream acceptance for gay couples and transgender individuals, so we certainly shouldn't undermine our own case by locking arms with drug addicts, child molesters and robbers." So we censor the entire community to our convenience. Only these people count; only they get voices; only the well-groomed and well-behaved should be invited

to the meetings because after all, you never know who might be watching.

This censorship works in both directions, because at the same time inmates are not considered viable correspondents in the larger community, that lack of contact also means their voices are never heard by the larger community. It is simple availability: if no one will contact me, then when the moment arises that I might have something to say, to whom do I address the letter? I am more censored by the turned backs of our community than by the gathered prison officials waiting to pounce.

Of course, nothing is only one thing, and there are always exceptions to the best of praises and the worst of criticisms. There are organizations that try to reach out to inmates, but those organizations themselves are often victims of the apathy, discomfort or outright indignation of the rest of the community. Inmates may find an occasional voice in their newsletters, but often what they have found is a stoop from which to shout in their very own ghetto, a brief letter to the editor in a newsletter whose mailing list is almost exclusively other inmates. That is not to denigrate the efforts of these fine organizations - if it were not for these ghettos we would have no place at all - but it is to say that the argument, "See, LGBT inmates aren't being cut off and marginalized; after all, they have their very own newsletter!" is simply an example of censorship in action.

When I face censorship on the part of prison officials, I feel angry and motivated to fight back. This can be empowering even as it is frustrating. But when I face censorship on the part of my very own community, all I feel is hurt and alone. This is not empowering, it is devastating. Certainly I applaud the people who stand up to every level of oppression, whether from their next door neighbour or prison officials or the federal government. But I wonder if, even as we are standing together demanding that our voices be heard by those outside our community, we are simultaneously shifting many voices within our community. Censorship is not just an inability to speak; it is equally an unwillingness to listen.

Perhaps the intentions are good; perhaps it is the aforementioned bid for respectability (“The general public won’t accept us if we allow criminals in our ranks”) or an effort to show strength in unity (“We’re fighting for gay marriage, so clearly any gay who has different priorities has no place in our community”) or simply a desire not to spread oneself too thin (“I’m too busy trying to get funding for HIV drugs to worry about funding transgender hormone treatment”). But the question I am left with is: how can we make the best decisions for this community’s tomorrow if we are unwilling to embrace the totality of what it is today?

DARREN SEAWELL

Censor Me That

Censorship is not just about limiting your words
It can limit the way you move and sway
Dictating how you can live your life,
Love you love, and fly your colors
Censorship can protect children
And teach them lessons, on a good day
But unfortunately it’s usually used
To make people feel less
Than the norm.

I will dare to be weird
If I want to be queer,
Let me be queer
If I want to be gay, hey!



NIKIA ZYAIRE AKA STARR

Growing up transgender, I were always censored. I’ve been told I can’t do this or that. I had to fight in school, the streets, even in prison, with people who tried so hard to object to the life I were living. As I continued to stand up and be accounted for, not letting anyone tell me what I can or can’t do with my life. Only God could judge me, because he’s the judge over us all. I’m still being censored by the police of the prison system, but I’m only going to allow them to do so much before they are shut down. Our voices as brothers and sisters shall always be heard for what we stand for and believe in as a whole because our strength is enough for us to censor others and point fingers at them for the wrong that has been done to the LGBTQ community.

CATARINA WESA PATIENCE

Censorship, you wish to silence my voice, as if life gave me a choice. I am who the hell I am and for that I rejoice.

You say...

Keep quiet and don’t draw attention to how you look, you damn sure picked up the wrong book, the rough path seems to be the one you took. Shook you the fuck up too when you finally saw me.

That’s right,

Yes... me... the truest person that I can be. Not the normal image that you want to see. I refused to compromise, screw your censorship, my voice shall be free.

LAVENDER AND RED

Early resistance to state oppression (pt. 29)

THIS ISSUE'S INSTALMENT OF THE LAVENDER AND RED SERIES BY LESLIE FEINBERG IS ABOUT WHAT MADE THE STONEWALL UPRISING POSSIBLE. MORE FROM THIS SERIES ON LGBTQ HISTORY FROM A SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE IS AVAILABLE FROM OUR RESOURCE LIBRARY!

In the inhospitable social climate of the Cold War, struggles were taking root in the U.S. that would later flower in the gay and trans liberation movement of the late 1960s. How was it possible, some may wonder today, for gays to have resisted and organized in the 1940s and 1950s when state repression and a reactionary ideological offensive were at their height?

In the war between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, the relationship of forces may change many times, but those under siege never cease to find ways to struggle for their freedom.

Much of the history of the struggle for homosexual and gender and women's rights in the decades of greatest political repression has been buried under the reactionary weight of the Cold War propaganda machine. Understanding how the early stirrings of the homophile movement of the 1940s and 1950s began serves to arm today's movement, which has much greater opportunities for resistance against political reaction.

Also, the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion and the mass political wave of struggle it unleashed can seem almost accidental or episodic without a general overview of the acts of resistance and attempts to organize that preceded the four-night-long uprising.

The choice of language to describe these earlier decades is difficult. Similar words may be used to describe sex, love and affection with regard to different historical periods, economic classes, nationalities, ethnicities and regions. However, the ways people saw themselves and each other and the ways medical authorities, police, courts and military brass categorized and criminalized people and their behaviors have undergone many changes.

The world of same-sex love among many blue-

collar and oppressed people in the first half of the century in the U.S. was intertwined with gender and sex variance—or what today might be referred to as transgender and transsexual. It's also hard to separate bisexuality from the exclusive expression of same-sex love in early periods.

Here "LGBT" will be used, not to stamp the past with a modern acronym that has come to symbolize a united front coalition of sexuality, gender and sex minorities, but to show the inability to parse the population into distinct categories.

CENTRALIZING FORCE OF CAPITALISM

The rise of the 1940s and 1950s homophile movement itself is hard to fathom without taking into account the awakening of LGBT people in the 1920s and 1930s. Material developments in life under capitalism made this not only possible in those early decades of the 20th century, but necessary.

By the end of the 19th century, Northern industrial capital and banking had consolidated its victory over the Southern slave-owning landed aristocracy. The overturning of Black Reconstruction through lynch "law" and Jim Crow fascist conditions had brought a violent end to an unfinished revolution. This created huge shifts in the population from agriculture to urban areas in search of jobs. In these vast, anonymous cities and port towns, with same-sex boarding houses and parks and piers, nascent LGBT subcultures took shape.

U.S. capitalism, unable to satiate its hunger for profits through domestic expansion alone, emerged as an imperialist power, exporting war for empire and profits to Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines in 1898. A decade and a half later the world's imperialist powers dragged the workers into a gory struggle over redividing the world's colonies in the first World War.

The military deployment and wartime industry also pulled massive numbers of women and men from rural areas, small towns and cities into same-sex living conditions and new social conditions that broke down the old order.

It was workers' revolution that scared the imperialists into finally ending the war. The Cold War really began in the U.S. after the workers and peasants of Russia rose up in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and established the first lasting workers' state. The revolution reverberated around the globe, lifting the heads of laboring and oppressed peoples in every part of the world.

The communist government in Russia immediately struck down the anti-homosexual laws. In the U.S., however, the capitalist government made LGBT people one of the early targets of repression, along with communists, anarchists, trade unionists and immigrants.

MILITARY WITCH HUNT

In the spring of 1919, the brass at the Newport Naval Training Center covertly sent a group of young enlisted men into the base and the nearby community to lure "sexual perverts" and bring back evidence about "immoral conditions." After entrapment had provided the necessary "evidence," naval and municipal officials rounded up more than 20 sailors and 16 civilians. They faced naval and civilian trials. It was one thing when the dragnet ensnared enlisted sailors, mostly from the working class. But when a prominent minister from the Episcopal Church of Newport got caught in the nets, and civilian and later military officials forced him to stand trial, all hell broke loose.

"Protests by the Newport Ministerial Union and the Episcopal Bishop of Rhode Island and a vigorous editorial campaign by the Providence Journal forced the Navy to conduct a second inquiry in 1920 into the methods used in the first investigation," historian George Chauncey Jr. wrote.

"When the inquiry criticized the methods but essentially exonerated the senior naval officers who had instituted them, the ministers asked the Republican-controlled Senate Naval Affairs Committee to conduct its own investigation." The Republicans agreed, eager to attack the Democratic administration.

The Senate committee issued its report in 1921. It exonerated the minister. Although the report, Chauncey noted, "expressed deep anti-homosexual loathing, it condemned the conduct of the highest naval officials involved, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, President Wilson's Assistant Secretary of the Navy and the 1920 Democratic vice-presidential candidate." ("Homosexual

Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era")

SMOKE, LILIES AND JADE

The mass migrations to large cities, port towns and military bases in the 1920s and 1930s had created the basis for larger and more concentrated subcultures. Chauncey provides evidence that LGBT life flourished more in the first third of the 20th century, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, than it did after World War II.

He described same-sex love and gender variance in New York, one of the capitals of LGBT life, as "a working-class world, centered in African American and Irish and Italian immigrant neighborhoods and along the city's busy waterfront, and drawing on the social forms of working-class culture."

The most visible, organized and eloquent LGBT expression in the pre-World War II era came from the Black movement in the United States.

As the Great Migration from the South to the North burgeoned into Black urban capitals, LGBT expression became a part of their histories. Thousands attended LGBT balls in Harlem, Chicago, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., which were widely reported on in Black community newspapers.

In New York the balls were held at the Rockland Palace, the Astor Hotel and Madison Square Garden. The most famous was the annual Hamilton Lodge Ball in Harlem, which dated back to 1879. The majority of those who attended were working class. About 800 took part in 1925; 1,500 in 1937. Attendance peaked at 8,000 in 1937 before police raids shut it down.

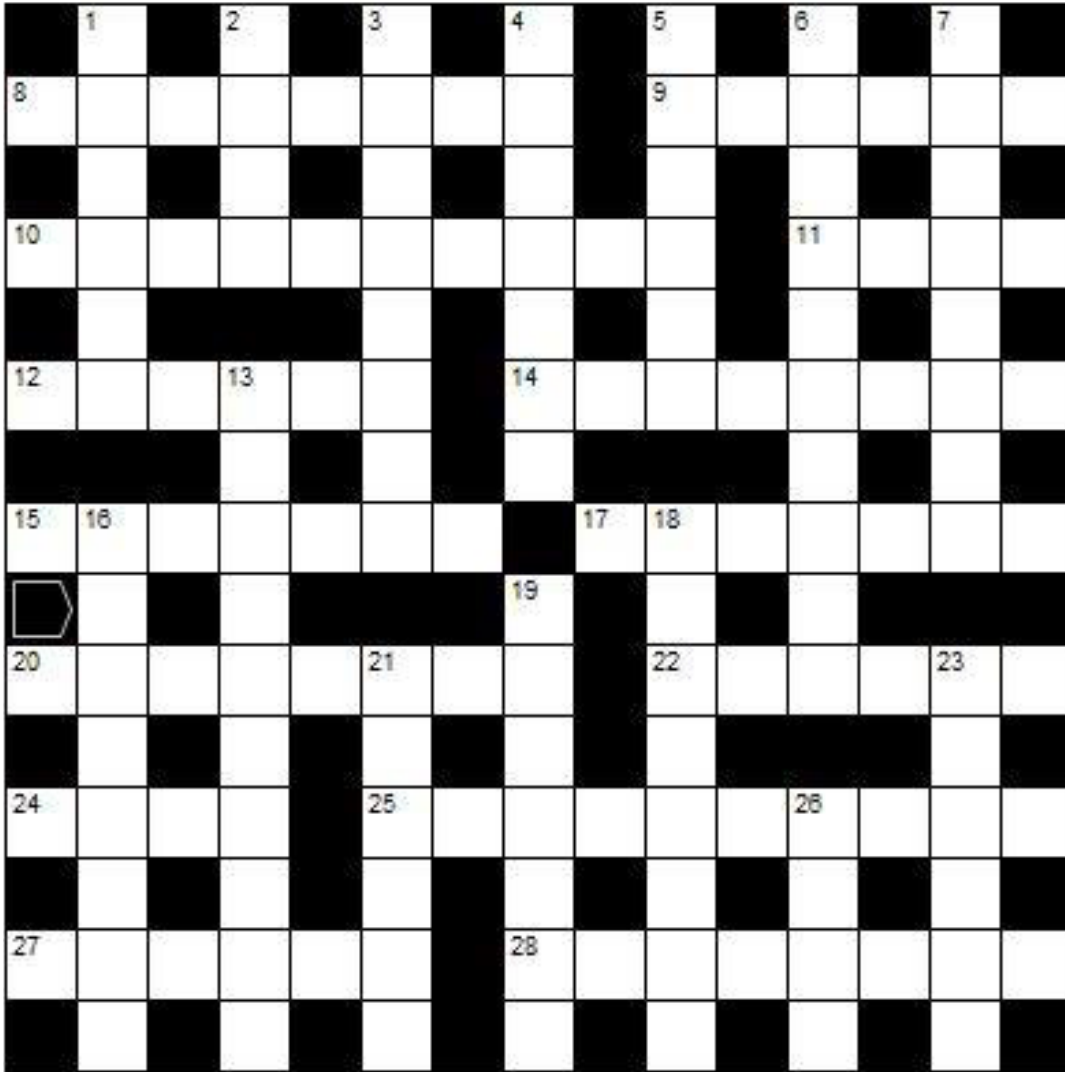
Harlem was the heart of one of the great cultural and political high-water marks of U.S. history—the Harlem Renaissance—which ran from the end of World War I in 1918 until the capitalist depression. This flowering of literature, art, music and political organizing—all of which was influenced by aspirations for national liberation and hope for an end to dreams deferred, sparked by the socialist revolution in Russia—also gave voice to LGBT concerns.

Richard Bruce Nugent, a self-identified gay man, published the classic "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" in 1926. It was the first known work by a Black author clearly about same-sex love. He said about LGBT life in Harlem during that period, "Nobody was in the closet. There wasn't any closets."

CROSSWORD

THEME: BANNED BOOKS

Hot Tip for Crossword n00bs: If a clue lists several items, that means they're usually examples of the answer. So the clue Donatello or Michelangelo could mean the answer is painter (it could also mean the answer is ninja turtle, but that's for you to figure out). If the clue uses <and> instead of <or> that means the answer is plural: the answer to De Niro and Pattison could be actors (or Roberts). 20 Across and 26 Down are this type of clue. Answers on Page 16... no cheating!



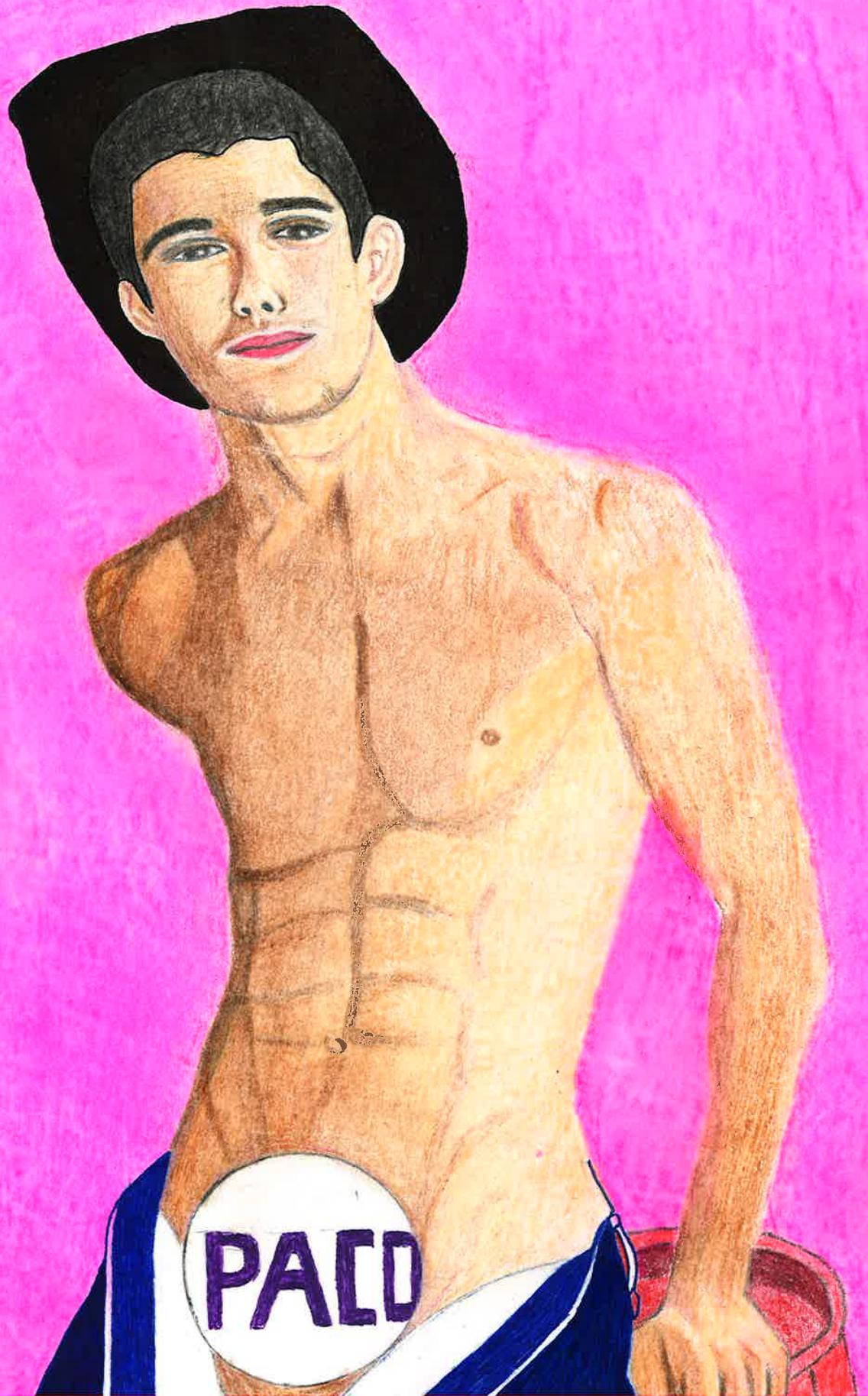
Across

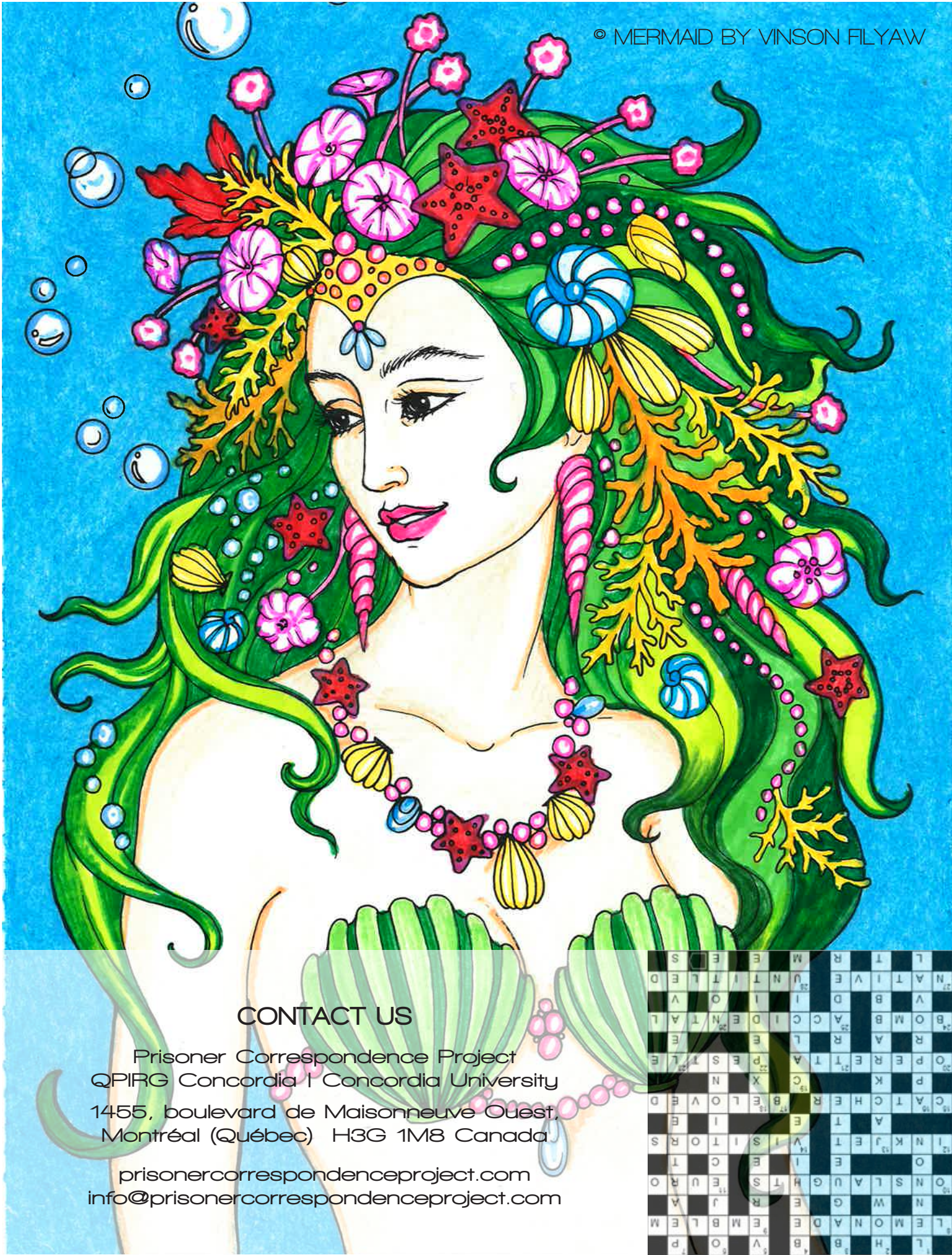
- 8. 2016 Beyonce album
- 9. Symbol
- 10. Devastating attacks
- 11. Dublin dollar
- 12. Printer type
- 14. Guests
- 15. _____ in the Rye (JD Salinger)
- 17. (Toni Morrison)
- 20. HMS Pinafore, or Candide
- 22. Mortar and _____
- 24. Fail miserably at stand-up comedy
- 25. By chance
- 27. _____ Son (Richard Wright)
- 28. Nameless, for a poem or painting

Down

- 1. Ono's first husband
- 2. (Allen Ginsberg)
- 3. Parisian loaf
- 4. Marge Simpson's signature hairdo
- 5. The Satanic _____ (Salman Rushdie)
- 6. Speak these now, or forever hold your peace
- 7. Where you might find a partridge come December
- 13. Prairie hare
- 16. Validation
- 18. Speed up
- 19. Ca for short
- 21. _____ Joe's (American grocery store)
- 23. _____ Of Grass (Walt Whitman)
- 26. A or A flat

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