

To: Prof Rachel Nelson, Et.al

Oct. 6, 2019

Dear Rachel,

Greetings, I hope this letter finds you at your best. I was pleased to receive your letter, and it is a honor, and a pleasure to finally meet you, if only by mail.

It's good to hear of your connection to Dr. Angela Davis, she has always been one of my heroes. And yes, I definitely agree that art is vital to the struggle, it can, and will always play a key role in social and political change.

When I was on the streets I expressed myself through music, since I no longer have that option, I began using writing as my conduit. Although I have a love / hate relationship with writing, it affords me a means of speaking truth to power.

Art is where my heart is at, but my talent in that area is lacking. I feel that art is the biggest facilitator of change, and I've often wished that I could speak through art, and use it to accompany my writings.

If I was able to paint or draw the ideas, concepts, and visions that dance around in my mind, I would be that much more effective as a freedom fighter, and facilitator of change.

I look forward to future correspondence, and getting the opportunity to hear from, and build with other members of the Solitary Garden Team (SGT.)

In terms of our collaboration, and my role in it, here are a few of my thoughts. Yes, I plan to use the garden to raise awareness about the struggle, the historical correlations between slavery and mass incarceration, etc, but I would also like the garden to serve as a metaphor, and a living representation of Timothy James Young.

I have a lot of concepts and ideas, and I look forward to articulating those in subsequent letters. Since we are dealing with snail mail, and incoming mail could take weeks to reach me, I plan to just write on a regular basis...

in terms of the garden project, and concepts relating to the garden, I would like to infuse my writings, as well as corresponding art, whenever, or wherever it is feasible.

The Solitary Garden Project at UCSC will be a 18th month endeavor, but for me, my struggle, my plight, etc, will continue to go on... That said, it is my sincere hope that people will be able to see the human, and the humanity behind the garden.

My goal, and my role is to make them see me, and in return, perhaps the universe will bless me with the type camaraderie that is not fleeting. I am reminded of something that Jackie Sumell wrote in *The House That Herman Built*, where she says, "Transform your trembling into action; move closer to those from whom you have averted your eyes; gift your eyes, your voice, and your freedom of movement to those who need them most."

In my 20 years of incarceration, I have yet to find the kind of solidarity, and camaraderie that Jackie Sumell so poignantly describes, but nevertheless, I persist.

4

If it's ok, I would like my
mantra for the Solitary Garden
to read as follows:

Do unto me
As you would do unto the
flowers, plants, crops, and seeds,
And I too, shall flourish.

To address some of your letter,
yes, it's perfectly fine to share
my letters, writings, etc, on the
website. I am enclosing a bio.
Hope it does for now? I'll send a
better one down the line.

Thanks for sending the link to the
website, hopefully it will get some
traffic. Also, thanks for the pictures,
UCSC has some beautiful landscape.
Yes, I can see the ocean view, and the
pictures will definitely aid me in
forming my design concepts.

As for Washington State, yes, lots
of similarities to Santa Cruz, and
the Bay Area. Lots of deer, wild life,
wooded areas, rivers, lakes, lagoons,
waterfalls, etc. Very lush, beauti-
ful landscape, loved living there.

You grew up in Tennessee? That's interesting! I lived in Millington, Tennessee for about a year, hated it though. I was only about 7, but my first memories of racism hail from there. I travelled around the South a bit myself, had a lot of family in Mississippi.

As for the crops, I am very flexible, I will include a few more selections, but feel free to pick whichever are suitable to the season, growing conditions, etc.

Radishes - French Breakfast variety if possible.

Spinach - Any variety, but Melody sounds interesting.

Onions - Bulb, if that works better?

Broccoli - Any variety

Cabbage - Chinese, Pak Choi perhaps?

Cucumber

Leeks

Garlic

* I don't care for artichokes or beets, but I'll add them reluctantly, just in case there is nothing else available for the fall/winter planting.

(6)

Oh, by the way, yes, I am interested in receiving additional info on gardening in Santa Cruz, also, if you have anything in relation to art? I'm like a sponge, I try to learn as much as I can, especially in areas of interest.

Speaking of art, I've read books, tried to pick up techniques and teach myself how to draw... wasn't very successful. For some reason, I think that I would fare better with painting. I hope to some day join the hobby craft program and try my hand at it.

As an alternative to roses, I'm wondering if Tulips, or daffodils are viable? How about iris?

I'm sitting here looking at the pictures, and the beauty of the landscape pushes me to do this garden justice. I want my concepts to really give people something to think about.

Ok, closing for now, but I'll keep the letters and concepts coming... In Solidarity and hope - always! Tom Young