

# Solitary Garden Plant Book



Timothy James Young and Friends, Spring 2021

Perched on a slope at UC Santa Cruz overlooking Monterey Bay, *Solitary Garden* is a participatory public sculpture and garden project by award-winning artist Jackie Sumell in collaboration with Tim Young, who is currently on Death Row in San Quentin State Prison, fighting to prove his innocence in the California appellate court system.

The sculpture follows the blueprint of a 6'x9' U.S. solitary confinement cell similar to the one that Tim has been confined to for twenty-one years. The stark cell is surrounded by a garden which Tim designed via letters and drawings to students and volunteers, who cultivate it as his proxies.

[timothyjamesyoung.com](http://timothyjamesyoung.com)  
[barringfreedom.org](http://barringfreedom.org)



**Timothy James Young** is a writer, activist, and a wrongfully convicted prisoner on Death Row. He was arrested in April of 1999 for a crime that he did not commit and was subsequently sentenced to Death Row in April of 2006.

*Friendship is the  
pathway to freedom!*

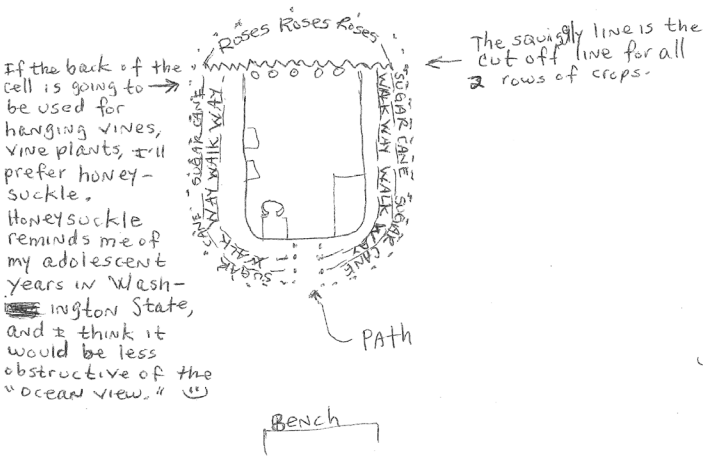
–Tim Young



jackie sumell, *Solitary Garden*, UC Santa Cruz, 2019-ongoing.



Students and volunteers at UC Santa Cruz planting Tim's garden in 2019.



Tim Young  
8.8.2019

Excerpt from Tim's first letter from August 2019.

## Revolutionary Greetings!

When award-winning artist jackie sumell selected me out of the 2.3 million prisoners there are in the United States to be the Solitary Gardener at UC Santa Cruz—I knew that I had hit the lottery! I will always credit her with having celestial judgment because pairing me with UC Santa Cruz has been a match made in heaven. My experiences of collaborating with jackie sumell and UC Santa Cruz on the Solitary Garden project, especially as the Covid-19 pandemic ravaged San Quentin State Prison, is a story worthy of sharing.

Since I first started working with jackie and the students on the garden, which sits overlooking the ocean on the UC Santa Cruz campus, I have been excited to have the opportunity to imagine being able to touch the soil and grow food, plants, flowers... I think I would be happy to even grow weeds. I have been in a cell for 22 years, and I have not held soil in my hands for all those years. I'm in San Quentin, right next to San Francisco Bay, but I haven't seen the ocean in all that time either. I felt like jackie had offered me a window out of my cell. I even designed the garden to have a veranda so I could better dream about having the view. And, it was amazing to work with students and volunteers to make my ideas become real.



Marisa Cornejo

What I came to realize was I was also being offered a platform. The mission of the Solitary Garden project is to get people to imagine a landscape without prisons. What I've learned is for people to want to abolish prisons, first they have to understand them and what it's like to be inside. And, Jackie has given me an opportunity to supply this information. I have a platform that allows my voice to be heard. The window Jackie gave me works both ways—through letters, phone calls and camaraderie with staff, students, supporters, and volunteers, people are also able to see me. They are able to see my attempts to prove my innocence and the corruption that led to my conviction, as well as the conditions in San Quentin. Through Solitary Garden, I am able to transcend the concrete bounds of my four and a half by ten-foot prison cell and reach levels of visibility that the downtrodden can only pray for.

This has been especially important during the pandemic. On a personal level, the connections and the bonds that I have made through the Solitary Garden project have been invaluable. And the reason that I am still healthy enough to render these words is because of the love and support I received during the heart of the pandemic. As people may or may not know, I contracted the virus back in June of 2020. I had a very rough time of it but my saving grace came in the form of people who had come to know me through the project. It was my visibility that brought them in, but in return, it was their love, care and support that kept me afloat.

My experiences that I have shared through my Solitary Garden letters, which then are published online, have also given people a look at the inhumane workings of our nation's prisons. I never received treatment for the virus, along with most of the other prisoners at San Quentin (many of us have been sick as a result of tight quarters, overcrowding, lack of ventilation, etc.) and I still suffer from lingering symptoms. And although I have incessantly complained about brain fog, fatigue, and "long hauler" symptoms, my complaints have fallen on deaf ears. I also suffer from sleep paralysis, sleep bruxism, and other sleep disorders. These sleep disorders were exacerbated after having contracted the coronavirus, to the point of now disrupting the sleep of other prisoners.

Despite having sought medical help and requesting to be seen by a sleep disorder specialist to determine diagnosis and treatment, to date, the doctors at San Quentin State Prison refuse to refer me to a sleep specialist. Again, I am denied any semblance of adequate medical care.





## Ginger Vitali(tea)

This tea soothes ailments from sore throats to colds to tummy aches.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2-3" FRESH GINGER
- 1/4 MEYER LEMON
- 1 Tbs HONEY



### OPTIONAL

- 2" FRESH TURMERIC
- PINCH OF CAYENNE
- PINCH OF SALT



### DIRECTIONS

- Boil water.
- As water boils, peel and press fresh ginger and turmeric into cup.
- Add salt & cayenne.
- Add boiling water.
- Let it steep for 3-5 mins.
- Add honey & lemon to taste.

My Covid-19 story is not an anomaly; I'm sure there are a thousand other horror stories just like it. But just as prison officials have hid the true number of positive Covid-19 cases and the true number of outbreaks, so too will they hide the number of long haulers.

Case and point: I recently received a letter from my attorney (in relation to a mandatory Inmate Transfer Program) which stated that San Quentin is claiming herd immunity and alleging that they haven't had a positive test result in the prison since August of 2020. However, over 30 prisoners in my unit were in quarantine at the time that I received the letter. Hypocrisy? Yes! But it speaks to how low the prison industrial complex will go in order to sweep pandemic statistics under the rug.



Aja Rose Bond

In spite of the pandemic... In spite of the outbreak at San Quentin State Prison...And in spite of the shelter-in-place-orders and national lockdown, I marvel at how much we've accomplished through Solitary Garden. Perhaps we could've made more strides had we not encountered so many road-blocks and impediments, but when I hear from people who have been impacted by the garden, the concepts behind it, or my writings—it lets me know that our mission to bring about abolition is pandemic proof.

Thanks for being part of it!

In solidarity,  
Tim Young





Roma Devanbu

## - Solitary Garden -

Revolutionary Greetings!

1/31/2021

It's a new year, 2020 is behind us, and we now find ourselves in preparation mode for our spring planting. I would like to thank everyone who participated in uprooting the 2020 garden and helping to winterize it for the new year. I have been told that the winterization process was a success and that the soil is nice and healthy!

I have thought long and hard about the new garden scheme and I have decided that it should be about healing and restoration. I know that many of us are still traumatized by the pandemic and the Trump presidency so I have decided to focus on plants that have healing properties. I have also decided to focus on plants that are native to California, and that are drought and ~~resistant~~ deer resistant. Yes! I have spent many months trying to figure out how to outsmart the deer! They gorged themselves on the sugar cane and bamboo but I think I may have found a formidable replacement 😊

My first choice is Stinging Nettle. It is not necessarily native to California but it is a shrub that can be found worldwide. Nettles are used to relieve rheumatism, paralysis, pain and other ailments. It can be made as tea to help with inflammation, nutrients, blood pressure, and sugar levels. It can also be made into a tincture or used in culinary recipes.

I would like the Stinging Nettle to take the place of the sugar cane and the bamboo. I would like it to represent everything that the sugar cane did in terms of being a barrier, and I would also like it to act as our first line of defense in stopping off the deer. It should be noted though that humans should avoid contact with this plant just as much as the deer. I suggest this plant be planted around the perimeter of the garden.

In the story a girl weaves nettles. They pass over and under each other, shaping little squares like city blocks seen from the sky. This weaving hurts; it's for her brother. He's a swan, and can't come home until she threads many night-gathered nettles into a vest to ward off sorrow. When the girl's hands have been pricked many times in unreadable patterns, the swan will feel a small pain at the base of each feather. The wind will lift him then on its muttering voices.

Terri Witek

My second choice is Mugwort. It is native to California and it is deer resistant. It helps with joint pain, headaches, skin irritations, and has many healing properties. I especially like it because it helps to promote peaceful and healthy sleep. I suffer from a sleep disorder... and coupled with the noise, clamor and chaos of prison — I find that a good night's sleep is hard to come by. I also find that my sleep disorder has worsened and intensified since having contracted Covid-19 in June of 2020.

I have been denied medication and treatment for my sleep disorder, but I would like to think that if I had access to mugwort that some of my problems would be alleviated. For those reasons I am selecting the mugwort plant, and I would like for it to be planted around the structure / along side the bed so that people know that it's there to promote healthy sleep.



Louise Leong

My third choice is Bergamot. It is not necessarily native to California but it is native to the continental United States. Bergamot leaves have been used as a poultice to treat sore eyes, muscle spasms, fungal infections, and to slow bleeding. It also treats colds, flu, nausea, fevers, and more. I like it because it is similar to lemon balm and it is deer resistant. I think this would make a great addition to the garden, and I would like to see it planted in the area that I refer to as the "veranda." This is the back of the garden where the trellis is located.



Zaarin Mizan



My fourth choice is Lemon Balm. It is not necessarily native to California but it is naturalized in the Pacific Northwest states. Lemon Balm has a mild sedative effect and is known to reduce anxiety, improve sleep, and help with digestion and upset stomachs. It can also be made into tinctures, and the leaves can be drunk as tea.



Chloe Murr

The final choice I will be making for the spring replanting of the Solitary Garden is "Dudleya." Dudleya is a perennial herb (succulent) that is endemic to the Santa Clara area. It supports birds, butterflies, and moths and can be used to line the garden.

I look forward to seeing how these plants will match up with the rosemary, sage, daisies, and all the other plants that were held over from the 2020 garden scheme. I also look forward to growing a garden that is focused on healing and restoration, because at the end of the day it is the garden that gives us life and restores us to a state of wholeness.

In the dudleya dream the sky is a succulent. It doesn't need much. At dawn its tips pink up and touch world. You'd know these minutes anywhere: hummingbirds cross tiny sword beaks and even moths brush giddily.

Terri Witek

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

– Timothy James Young



The Solitary Garden on March 22, 2021 after the Spring replanting of dudleya, lemon balm, mugwort, stinging nettle, and new blooming flowers. Wild bergamot was not available at the time of planting but will be included later.

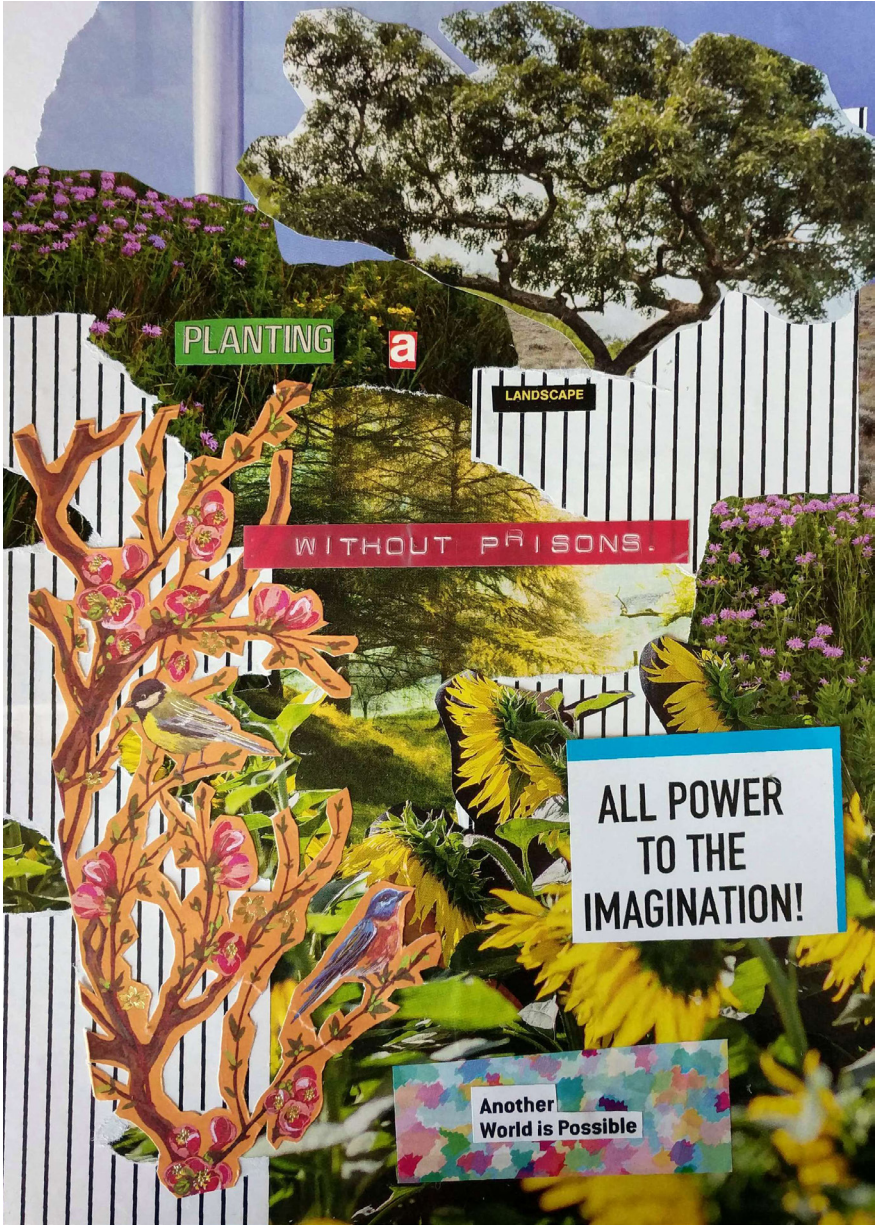


**We will plant irises for Tim.**

Shelby Graham



Zaarin Mizan



Louise Leong



Nafi Mizan

## Freedom for All Political Prisoners

I was at the solitary garden with company walking calmly and comfortably  
To something special we made our way from the city to come up and see  
To stop and breathe and smell the ocean breeze from the sea until we-  
reached our location.

And the view was from UC Santa Cruz  
An institute of higher education  
this garden replicates the  
Tight spatial relations  
Of a solitary housing unit arrangement  
In other words its a cage.

Six feet by nine feet  
A toilet, chair, bed, desk and sink  
a hard place to be  
For 161 hours a week.

But around it is a garden  
Full of colors and natural beauty  
Where roses grow out of the earth  
Surrounding the cold concrete.

Are prisons obsolete?  
Im standing on the campus where Dr. Huey Newton got his PHD  
Where Angela Davis mastered her studies  
And Ethnic Studies department still struggles to get funding  
Where prisoners like Timothy Young design gardens from Death Row  
Practicing abolition against the very system it exists in  
And sometimes it feels distant but *we know it's so close!*

Meanwhile on the east coast  
Mumia studies remotely from his cell  
A graduate student as well  
Reading the few books that they allow  
plus 12 minute phone calls and reading mail  
23 hours a day locked down in hell

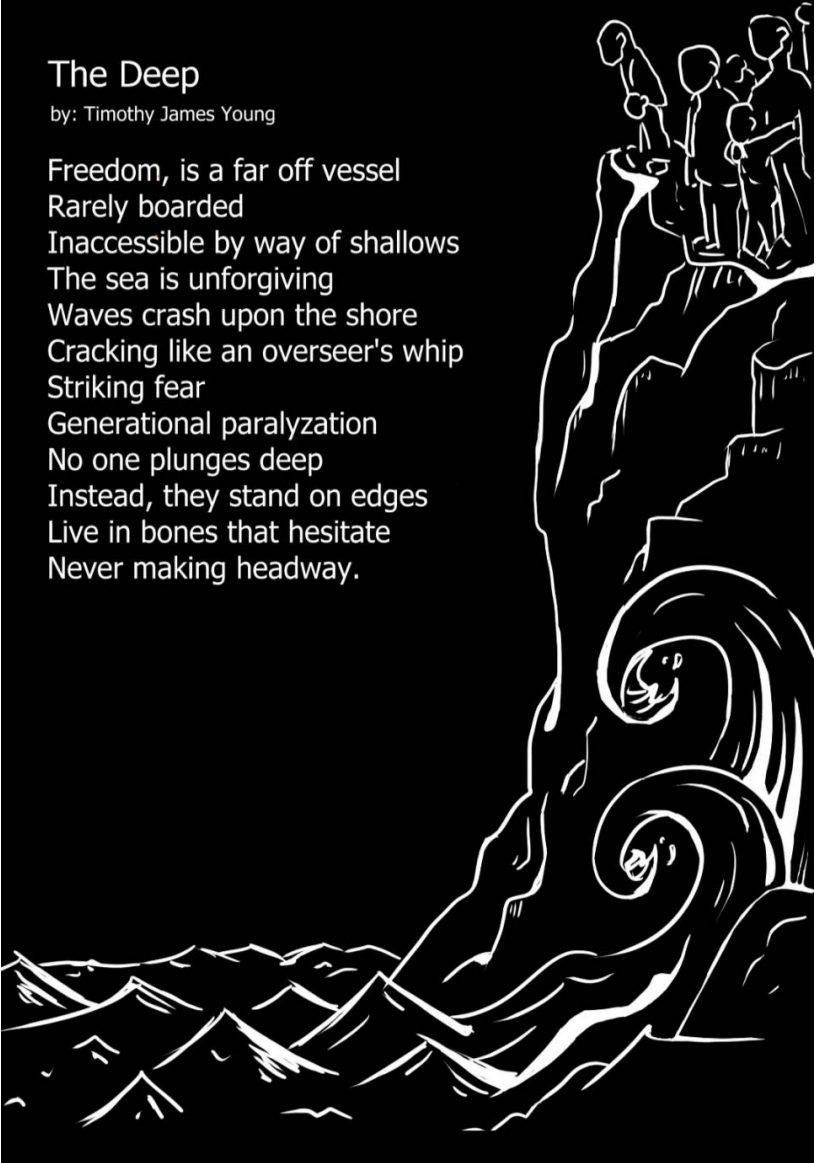
(continued on page 26)



## The Deep

by: Timothy James Young

Freedom, is a far off vessel  
Rarely boarded  
Inaccessible by way of shallows  
The sea is unforgiving  
Waves crash upon the shore  
Cracking like an overseer's whip  
Striking fear  
Generational paralyzation  
No one plunges deep  
Instead, they stand on edges  
Live in bones that hesitate  
Never making headway.



Golnoush Pak and Tim Young collaboration

they say prisons are full of failures  
but society has failed

To say that the department of corrections corrects anything is absurd  
That's like the police saying they protect and they serve  
Euphemisms that keep youth in the system  
keeping them from achieving their visions  
of liberation and healing  
After being convicted  
this systems wicked

On proportions that are hard to wrap your head around  
Until I layed down on the tiny metal bed  
thinking damn this shit is hella cramped...  
They tell you that prisons are full of murderers and pedopiles  
But it's mostly non-violent, petty crime  
out of necessity or inability to pay when you catch a fine

We're here to challenge crime  
We're here to burn the institution  
From the inside and the out  
Because we know that there's a war  
On the poor and the Black and brown  
This is serious but they laugh out loud

And I'm standing on a campus where this is studied and documented  
Capitalism's appetite is endless for more bodies in it  
That means people locked in prison  
Those who have no pot to piss in  
People who have darker pigments  
And communities poverty stricken

it's a slow war but awfully effective.

Thats why we build community  
and its often we check in  
They try to break our unity  
With cops intervention.

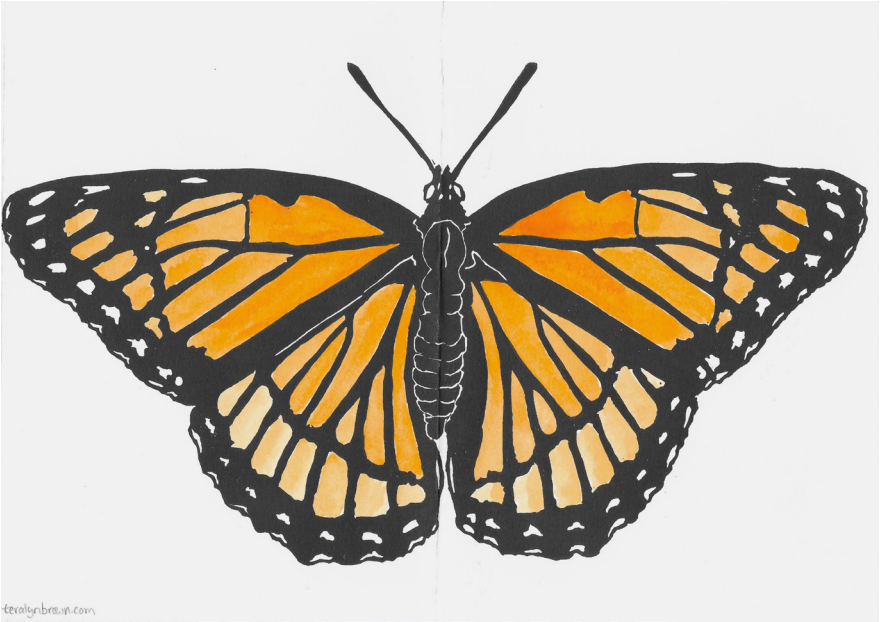
But we have the solutions  
That have all been written  
In the futures that continue the lineage  
Of radical living

Free Timothy Young  
Free Mumia Abu-Jamal  
Free Russell Maroon Shoatz  
Free Rev. Joy Powell  
Free Leonard Peltier  
Free Dr. Mutulu Shakur  
Free Jamil Al-Amin  
Free Em All.

By Santiago Alvarez



Joss Borys



Teralyn Brown and Tim Young collaboration

## **Butterfly of Freedom**

By: Golnoush Pak

Somewhere between consciousness and dreams  
In hues of purple and green  
I touch the butterfly's wings  
In my dreams  
The worrisome protection  
In our consciousness  
A fight for liberation  
Lost in between the moments  
I saw a shadow of a hawk  
And even the sound of a raven  
People passing by  
Some walking, some biking  
And the butterfly flies  
In and out of my reach  
The suffocation of cement walls  
Evaporate as the sunlight  
Peaks through from a nearby tree  
Where the raven is resting  
Flowers of freedom  
Blossoming in my hand  
Housing the butterfly of my dreams  
I take a deep breath  
And watch the raven take flight too  
I grab my lunch  
And go for a walk.

## Wings of Friendship

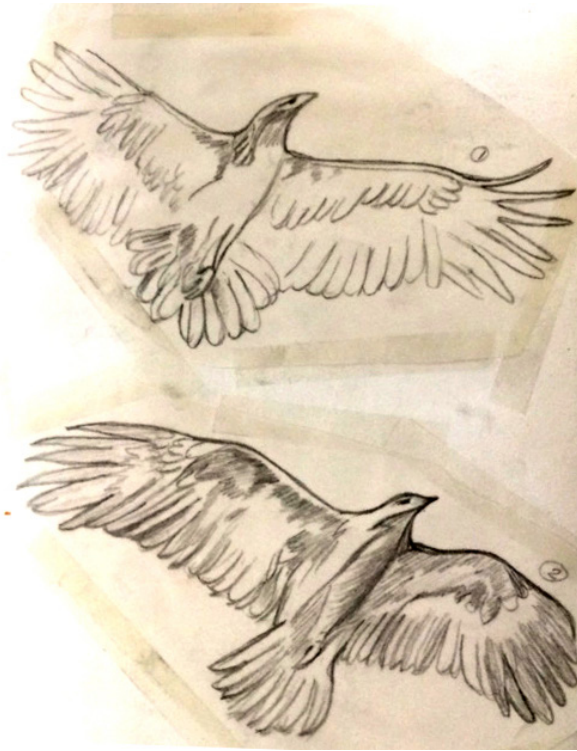
Here in the dungeon  
Amid condemned men  
The weather of life  
Is often inclement  
The winds of misery  
Blow relentlessly  
Fortunate is he  
Who dares to transcend  
Rising above it all  
Fortunate is he  
Who can spread his wings  
And find friendship beyond the walls

Timothy James Young

[timothyjamesyoung.com](http://timothyjamesyoung.com)



Teralyn Brown and Tim Young collaboration



## **I Rise To Freedom**

See me  
Hear me  
Feel me  
My spirit rises high  
They shall not contain me  
My home is in the sky!

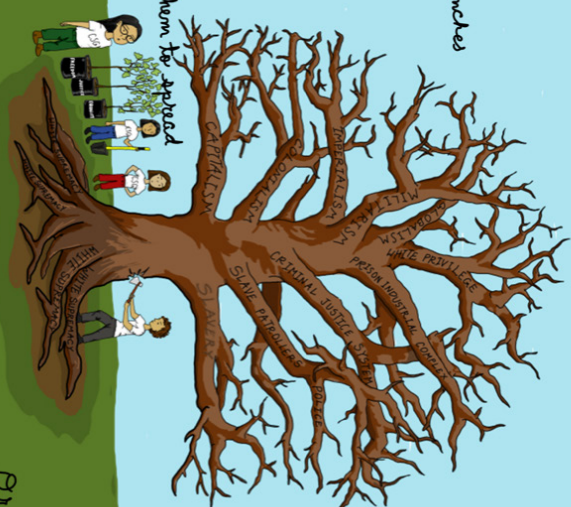
Sunni Gibbons

# Root of the Matter

"Struggle" begins a thousand branches  
Spreading from a tree  
Each limb an "Ism"  
Products of the same seed

"Branches resistant  
to racism still prevalent  
Racism evidently not dead

Complicit are those who allow them to spread



"Ism" is a plague  
Rage at its ruined  
Uproot  
Plant anew!  
Uproot  
Plant anew!  
Uproot  
Plant anew!  
Uproot  
Plant anew!

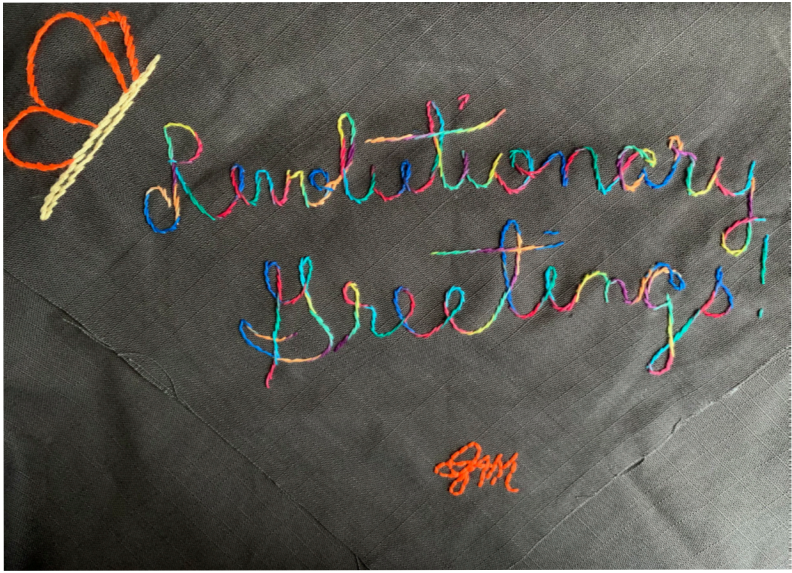
The abolition of slavery  
As illusory,  
For while it ends  
A prison nation begins

Mangled history  
1863 to the 21st. century  
No migratory  
Orange jump suits, Black misery.

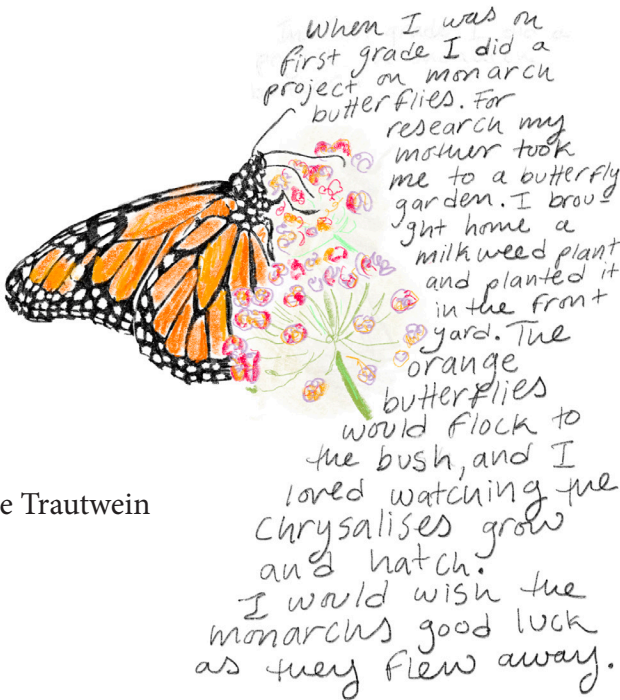
\* Slanza from: Citizen, In Shades of Antebellum Blue

A mural design by Color Study Group

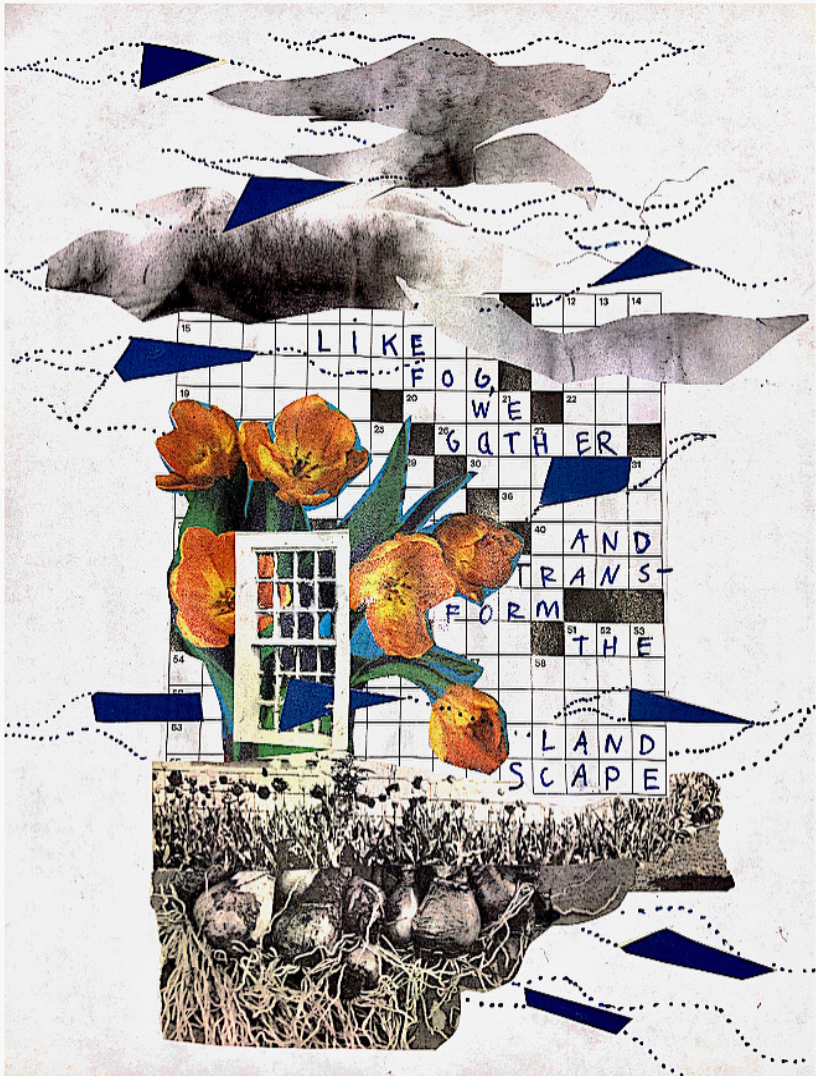




Embroidery by Geraldine Magarelli



Eddie Trautwein



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## Contributors

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Edited by Timothy James Young, layout by Louise Leong

To everyone who is looking to shed the traumas of 2020, I hope that you will get a chance to revisit the garden and breathe in a little bit of the healing that we will have blooming and on full display throughout the rest of the year. Yes! We continue to grow seeds of infinite possibilities!

Sincerely In Solidarity  
Tim Young

### Write to Tim:

Timothy Young, #F23374,  
San Quentin State Prison,  
San Quentin, CA 94974

Emails, funds, images, etc, can be sent electronically at [jpay.com](mailto:jpay.com)

## Solitary Garden

By Timothy James Young

*Dedicated to Herman Wallace and Jackie Sumell*

## Solitary Garden

Is not just a plot of land

On the campus of UC Santa Cruz.

To the contrary,

It is an installation

An iteration

A destination worthy of gander.

Riddle it a spot

A spot where we grow crops

A spot where we grow thoughts

What kind of thoughts you ask?

Thoughts of freedom and abolition

Thoughts of tearing down walls

And shutting down prisons.

Will into existence

A Green New Deal

Revolutionary in hue

Justice driven

Interdependent

New landscapes

No prisons