

LONNIE SMITH | AM I A PERSON?

Captive in this living hell my soul continues to be tortured for my worst day. I wake, I pray and see structured movements of bodies that look like mine.

I pick up a hand held mirror, the only device we can use to see a reflection of ourselves. I cannot see my whole face because I've grown old and fat in this cage. Our aging process is not that of others our age, because prison ages you like a K-9.

Hope is my only ally, but it is fleeting with each day, month and year of my incarceration. For over three decades I've seen relationships begin and prosper, then fall into ruin like an empire. Time unglues the strongest bonds coupled with death. Yet, I wake, I pray and see structured movements of bodies that look like mine.

Social death killed me from being truly free, now I live in a constant state of captivity. It's lonely, nasty, brutish and a shorter life span. This is the cruel and unusual punishment of death-by-incarceration. It's causing my spiritual death inside of this controlled and contained environment. Why wake? Why pray? To see the structured bodies moving to their graves.

Remorseful, repentant and rehabilitated, but nobody understands me because of my worst day: Society doesn't see me no matter what I achieve. Therefore, I wonder? Am I a person?

Lonnie Smith is an abolitionist, scholar-activist, writer, organizer, restorative justice and peace circle keeper, poet and lover of books, music, animals, and nature. He holds a master's degree in Christian Ministry and Restorative Arts from North Park University.

He has an eclectic taste in music and loves to blast his music and sing—it's therapeutic. Except, maybe not for others, who hate when he's blasting Patsy Cline.