



Skyline, Fall - 2016

Earthlines

By Diane Pendola

Wax to Burn

*God permit that the symbol of my life be a candle,
that spends itself, that consumes itself while there is still wax to burn.*



Dear friends,

On August 18 the Lioness Tale Prison Project (LiT-uPP) celebrated the third graduating class of advanced inmate leaders. They are the light in a place of many shadows. They are not the light source, none of us are. We are not the light. But the light needs them, needs us. In order to be seen in such a dark place as a prison the light needs our participation.

In order for the light to be seen we must show up. We must give ourselves; give our minds and our hearts; our courage and our compassion; and yes, even our failures and our mistakes. All of this is fuel for the light. All of this is wax that burns.

But what is the power that lights the wick? It would seem that the Source is invisible. Though it shows itself through us, it is something beyond us... or something invincible within us. That's how I like to think of the light within these women who are so marginalized in our prisons; so forgotten, some actually condemned to death by imprisonment through the LWOP (Life without possibility of parole) sentence. I like to think of them with this invincible source of fire at the core of their beings. This fire can light up that dark place by the sheer force of their Yes, of their assent, of their affirmation to allow their lives to be the wax that reveals light.

Not only do I think of them in this way, this is how I experience them. Through their Yes the light becomes pervasive. To paraphrase the words of George Bernard Shaw, they find that *the true meaning of Life is to live for something recognized by themselves to be a mighty cause... to be a force of nature... a splendid torch... that they make burn as bright as they can before they hand it on to other generations.*

That's what these graduates are about: handing the light on to other women, who are also imprisoned with horrendously long sentences. They act as elders, offering the next generation of LiT-uPP women a compassionate hand and guidance toward that invincible center—that breathes invisible light into visible flame.

*God permit that the symbol of my life be a candle,
that spends itself, that consumes itself while there is still wax to burn;
when nothing more remains to be consumed,
that my flame, yet an instant,
dare to remain alive and afoot, to rumble after,
happy in the conviction that one day the force of Right
will conquer the pretended right of force."*

~Dom Helder Camara~

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Dom Helder Camera was known as Brazil's archbishop of the poor. This is one of many famous quotes from this advocate of liberation theology and non-violent action on behalf of voiceless and marginalized people.

George Bernard Shaw was an Irish playwright, critic and polemist. You can read the full quote I paraphrase here: http://www.elise.com/quotes/george_bernard_shaw_-_a_splendid_torch

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