

# 'Lost Innocence of Christmas' and other Thought Provoking Poems by Donald "C-Note" Hooker

*Anna D. Smith Fine Art and Real Estate Broker gracefully shares C-Note's thought-provoking poems, enriching Christmas with deep cultural insights and meaning.*

SILICON VALLEY , CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, December 26, 2023

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Anna D. Smith Fine Art and Real Estate Broker is proud to release "Lost Innocence of Christmas" and other thought-provoking poems by Donald "C-Note" Hooker, the King of Prison Hip Hop, on Christmas Day. As a firm that appreciates the profound impact of art and culture on communities and individuals, we believe Christmas provides a moment of universal reflection and a unique opportunity to deepen the public's engagement with C-Note's powerful themes of struggle, hope, and redemption. His work, emerging from a place of profound personal experience, challenges and inspires. By choosing this day, we aim to highlight the relevance of C-Note's voice in our collective holiday experience, encouraging a thoughtful and empathetic dialogue that resonates with the season's spirit of understanding and community. We believe this release will not only enrich



American prison artist C-Note spoken word rendition of THE CRIMINALIZATION OF OUR AMERICAN CIVILIZATION (This Is Not A Manifesto)

the holiday experience but also amplify the important messages within C-Note's poetry, resonating with the conscious themes of Hip Hop and the transformative power of art.

## MPRISOND POETZ

In 2014, Darealprisonart, the largest multimedia source of prisoner news and art across multiple web platforms, created a new website designed to publish poems by prisoners. This website is called Mprisond Poetz, for those who find the pronunciation challenging, think imprisoned poets. The first poem it published was "[The Lost Innocence of Christmas](#)" by American prison poet, and The King of Prison Hip Hop, Donald "C-Note" Hooker.

### THE LOST INNOCENCE OF CHRISTMAS

SILENT NIGHT  
SLEEPLESS NIGHT  
HOLY NIGHT  
I AIN'T RIGHT

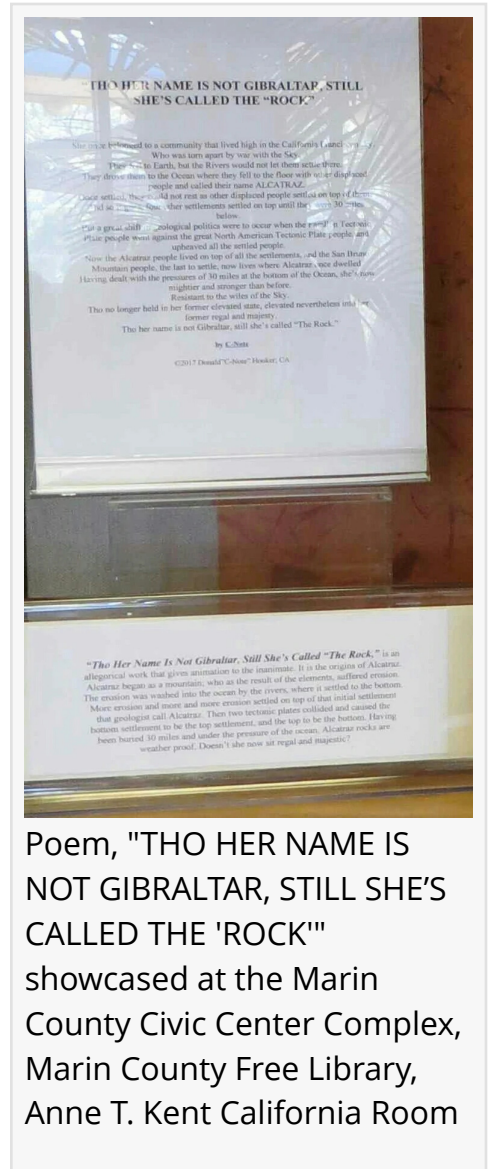
What makes this such a profound poem is its single stanza structure. C-Note is a master at crafting deep meaning and emotional impact within concise compositions. For those unfamiliar with his works, he is a playwright, performing artist, award winning visual artist, whose works have been exhibited, recited, performed, and sold, from Alcatraz to Berlin. In 2017, Google Search listed him first in their search query for America's and the world's most prolific prison artist.

Many of his poems or visual works have symbiotic relationships to one another. One such work is the wax on paper drawing, "Lovers' Bliss". The drawing, while not depicted here, can perfectly be imagined from the single stanza poem by C-Note of the same title that inspired it.

### LOVERS' BLISS

Setting Sun  
The Lovers' Bliss  
Oceanic view  
Of more than a kiss

In a single stanza, he encapsulates the depth and intensity of romantic intimacy, skillfully



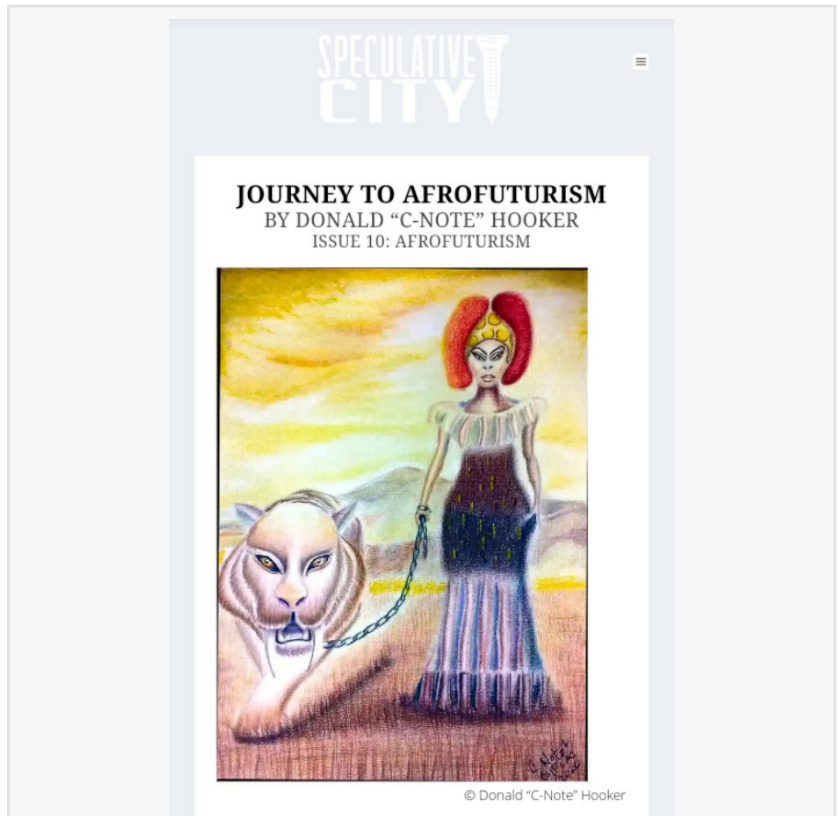
Poem, "THO HER NAME IS NOT GIBRALTAR, STILL SHE'S CALLED THE 'ROCK'" showcased at the Marin County Civic Center Complex, Marin County Free Library, Anne T. Kent California Room

portraying a scene rich in emotion and connection. Nor is he limited to single stanza poems. He is also known for the epics.

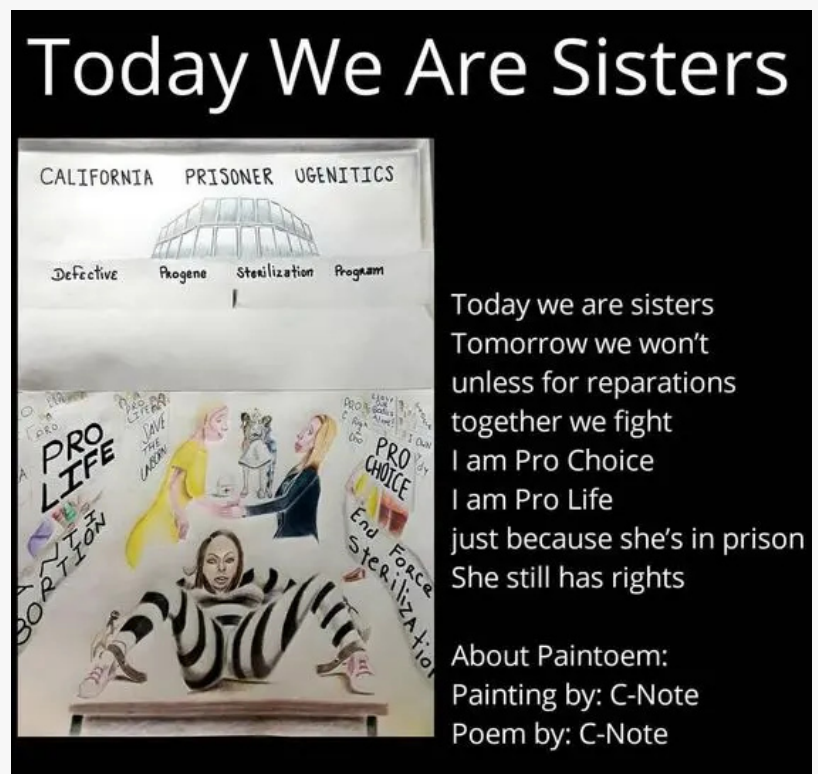
## THE CRIMINALIZATION OF OUR AMERICAN CIVILIZATION (This Is Not A Manifesto)

According to C-Note, sometime in the early 2000s, the defunct website Outlaws.com was having a contest for prisoners to create poems about prison life or the lifestyle that leads to prison. The goal was to create a collection for a book, and some cash prizes. A single poem could be up to three pages long. It being a contest, C-Note did not think someone would write a three page poem. He did, and his poem, "THE CRIMINALIZATION OF OUR AMERICAN CIVILIZATION (This Is Not A Manifesto)," did not meet the cut for the money prize, nor for inclusion in the book.

While the poem did not make the cut with the Outlaw publication, it was published in April of 2015 by MprisonD Poetz, and was cited by other websites located all across the globe. The 680 word poem pays homage to Homer's "Iliad," drawing inspiration from one of the most venerable epics in Western literature. This modern epic poem is not just a tribute but a bridge connecting the ancient with the contemporary, weaving the timeless themes of heroism, human nature, and the profound impacts of societal conflict into the fabric of modern American civilization.



Artwork Journey to Afrofuturism in Speculative Fiction Magazine, #10 Afrofuturism



Paintoem, "Today We Are Sisters"

"THE CRIMINALIZATION OF OUR AMERICAN CIVILIZATION (This Is Not A Manifesto)," while echoing the grandeur and scale of the "Iliad," delves deep into the heart of contemporary issues—incarceration, social injustice, and the complex layers of American history and identity. It's a bold reimagining of the epic form, using its rhythm and gravitas to give voice to the silent and to shine a light on the shadows of American society; is a testament to the enduring power of epic storytelling and its capacity to reflect the human condition.

In December of 2019, C-Note recited the poem in a riveting spoken-word performance in front of a crowd of invited guests. This being Los Angeles, this included professional actors and actresses. It was part of a play, "This Concrete Life" a single-day event featuring 90 minutes of both individual and ensemble theatrical acts by inmates at the California State Prison in Los Angeles County, Facility B-yard. This event marked the culmination of a 16-week intensive theatrical training program led by Fugitive Kind Theater, a Los Angeles-based collective dedicated to social justice through elevating the narratives of incarcerated individuals and those re-entering society.

In addition to his involvement in various ensemble acts, it was C-Note's delivery of his intricate and lengthy poem, "THE CRIMINALIZATION OF OUR AMERICAN CIVILIZATION (This Is Not A Manifesto)," which received overwhelming acclaim and a standing ovation from the audience.

THO HER NAME IS NOT GIBRALTAR, STILL SHE'S CALLED THE "ROCK"

This poem was specifically created for the Art Escape At Alcatraz, a prisoner art exhibit on Alcatraz island May-June 2017, curated by Leslie Lakes of Prison Art Touching Hearts. The exhibition extended beyond the island to include two additional locations in the Bay Area. The poem was featured at one of these external venues. Notably, it was showcased at the Marin County Civic Center Complex, the creation by renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright, within the Anne T. Kent California Room of the Marin County Free Library.

The poem itself is an allegorical journey that personifies Alcatraz, transforming from a majestic mountain to the iconic island, symbolizing resilience, transformation, and the indomitable spirit of nature and humanity. The significance of being displayed in such a revered space was multifold. It was an acknowledgment of the artistic and cultural value of C-Note's work, placing it within the broader narrative of American art and history.

It also reflected a recognition of the power of art to transcend barriers, connecting individuals from all walks of life, including those who are incarcerated, with the wider public. The display in this architectural landmark amplified the poem's themes of endurance and transformation, inviting reflection on the parallels between the physical and metaphorical structures we build and the legacy they leave behind.

JOURNEY TO AFROFUTURISM

"Journey to Afrofuturism" is C-Note's most critically acclaimed poem to date. It was specifically created for the 30th Celebration of African American Poets and Their Poetry. The event had two themes, one was the 2020 national theme of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the other was local, "400 Years of California, African American History." Upon research, C-Note had discovered that Spanish conquistador, and Governor of Mexico, Hernán Cortés, named California after a Black woman, the Calafia to the land of Black women.

"Journey to Afrofuturism", brings back the Calafia to our current times, as the nursemaid to the Afrofuturism movement. It embarks on a metaphorical and literal journey, exploring the concept of Afrofuturism as a long-sought destination, akin to mythical lands like Wakanda. It narrates the story of She, a student from an HBCU, who discovers that the essence of Afrofuturism isn't found in Africa but in California, a land of ancient majesty and modern innovation.

The poem weaves a narrative that connects the mythical Queen Calafia, ruler of a land of Black women, with the modern state of California, suggesting that the spirit of Afrofuturism has always been present in this region, from its ancient redwood forests to its rich farming lands. C-Note's work is a profound exploration of identity, history, and the future, suggesting that the true map to Afrofuturism lies not in the physical geography of continents but in the cultural and spiritual legacy of the African diaspora and its intersection with the world. This piece is not just a poem but a journey itself, inviting readers to reconsider history, myth, and the future through the lens of Afrofuturism.

The poem was recited at the event on February 1, 2020. When the event's curator Wanda Sabir told C-Note she's writing a book on the 30 years of the poetry event, he created a drawing to match his poem, and entitled it the same as the poem. Speculative City Magazine paid C-Note for a year of exclusive use of the poem and drawing. These works were published in their 10th edition, winter of 2020, Afrofuturism.

Speculative Fiction critic Charles Payseur of Quick Sip Reviews, had wrote about the poem, "For me, there's a sense that the piece could almost be saying something about the 'true' path of afrofuturism and how it exists in the West, how it's future is in California. But I feel instead that the poem is rather tracing not \_the\_ path of the movement, of afrofuturism as a whole, but rather showing how it leads not only forward, but also into the past."

In October 2021, the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) hosted the inaugural event of the 2021 - 2022 Academic Year, titled "Afrofuturism Then and Now," via Zoom. This global discussion and performance series kicked off with an exploration of the meaning and cultural manifestations of Afrofuturism. Panelists from diverse locations, including the Congo in Central Africa, Burkina Faso in West Africa, and various cities in the Northern California Bay Area, contributed to the conversation. The event culminated with Hip Hop artist and Hip Hop Congress Board Chairman Rahman Jamaal presenting and reciting C-Note's artwork and poem "Journey to Afrofuturism."

## PAINTOEMS (TODAY WE ARE SISTERS)

In 2016, C-Note was invited to craft poetry to accompany his artwork for the "Escaping Time, Prisoner Art Exhibit" on Governors Island, New York City, from July 26 to October 2, 2016. The combined image and poem are recreated as a single work of digital art. C-Note called these works Paintoems, and declared them to be Creative Commons licensed works, so the public can have free access and use.

In 2018, he created the paintoem "Today We Are Sisters." The poem was inspired by a local public radio episode that discussed California's attempt to provide reparations to victims of its 70 year forced sterilization law, 1909 - 1979. Part of the discussion were women who had been forcibly sterilized within the California prison system after the law had been repealed in 1979. However, these women were not included in the discussion in finding them, and to provide them reparations.

### TODAY WE ARE SISTERS

Today we are sisters  
Tomorrow we won't  
unless for reparations  
together we fight  
I am Pro Choice  
I am Pro Life  
just because she's in prison  
She still has rights

"TODAY WE ARE SISTERS" is a poignant and thought-provoking poem that explores themes of solidarity, change, and the fight for rights and reparations. It speaks to the transient nature of sisterhood and alliances, suggesting that such bonds are often contingent on shared struggles and objectives. The poem emphasizes the importance of unity in the fight for reparations, highlighting that differences, such as being pro-choice or pro-life, should not hinder the collective effort for justice. It brings attention to the often-overlooked rights of women in prison, asserting that incarceration does not strip away their fundamental rights. The poem is a call to recognize and support the rights and dignity of all women, regardless of their circumstances, urging a united front in the broader fight for justice and equality.

The poem employs a straightforward and direct style, using clear and concise language to convey its message. It is short and structured in couplets, which are pairs of lines that may or may not rhyme. This structure gives a rhythmic quality to the poem and emphasizes the duality and contrast within its themes.

The language is simple yet powerful, devoid of complex metaphors or intricate vocabulary. This directness makes the poem accessible and its message clear, allowing readers from various

backgrounds to connect with its themes. Its use of repetition ("Today we are sisters / Tomorrow we won't") to emphasize the fluctuating nature of alliances and relationships, highlights the conditional aspect of the sisterhood mentioned in the poem, suggesting it's contingent upon the collective fight for reparations and rights.

"Today We Are Sisters" contrasts differing viewpoints ("I am Pro Choice / I am Pro Life") to underscore the idea that despite individual differences, there is a common ground in the fight for rights, especially for those marginalized, such as women in prison. Its theme revolves around solidarity, rights, and the fight for justice. The tone is assertive and calls for action, urging unity despite differences for a greater cause.

While the poem is straightforward, "sisters" can be seen as a symbol of unity and shared struggle among women. The mention of "reparations" invokes a sense of historical and ongoing injustice that needs to be addressed. Overall, the poem's style and technique are characterized by its brevity, directness, and the use of structural elements and language to emphasize its call for unity and action in the fight for rights and justice.

Today We Are Sisters is the first known work of art to raise awareness of this issue. Along with other groups and the documentary, "Belly of the Beast," \$7.5M in reparations were made available to these forcibly sterilized California women prisoners by the state.

On November 1st, of 2023, Sally Jane Brown (formerly Deskins), wrote on LinkedIn, "[Championing Reproductive Rights and Arts Leadership: Anna D. Smith's Inspiring Advocacy & Artists Response](#)," it featured "Today We Are Sisters, and other works by women artists who used their art to speak to women's reproductive rights, in particular what is currently going on in California and its looming deadline to end the reparations application process on December 31st, 2023.

C-Note's profound and thought-provoking body of work, spanning from the deeply reflective "Lost Innocence of Christmas" to the socially conscious "Today We Are Sisters," represents more than just poetry and art; it is a clarion call for awareness, understanding, and action. Through his unique Paintoems and poignant narratives, C-Note not only captures the essence of the human experience but also challenges us to look beyond our perceptions and engage with the deeper truths of society and our own humanity. As we unveil these works, we invite readers and viewers to embark on a journey of introspection and empathy, to find within these lines and colors a resonance that transcends the boundaries of art and poetry, touching the very core of our collective consciousness, and Merry Christmas.

To read "The Lost Innocence of Christmas", and over 100 other poems by male or female prisoners, be sure to check out the website [Mprisoned Poetz](#).

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