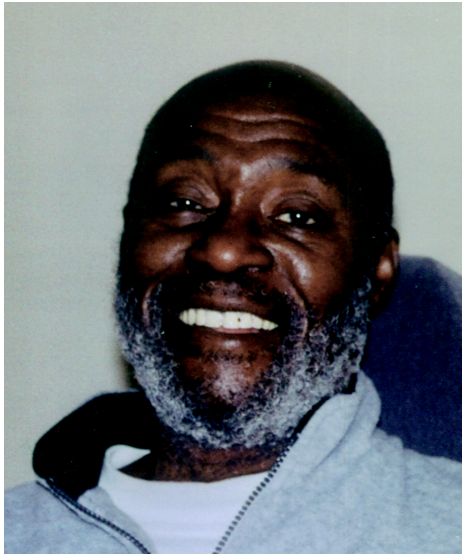


Bama Battle



William Stevenson "Bama" Battle (1941-2005) was part of the original discussion group, Think Tank, Cadre, and later Exodus. He was a founder and a foundation of the group for decades, until his eventual release. Bama's favorite scripture was Ezekiel 37: 4-5, "...O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord...Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live." For Bama this was a perfect metaphor for prison, the valley of the dry bones, and the redemption that could be realized through experiences like Exodus. Bama was the Gatekeeper for the Exodus groups from the beginning. Rev Muller relied on Bama to provide him with an "insider's" perspective on the prison population and culture and he had an extraordinary ability to negotiate with the administration for Exodus programming and on behalf of the incarcerated. Bama

relied on Rev for mentorship and the more conceptual aspects of Exodus. Bama had an uncanny understanding of the "human condition" as it played out in prison, while he experienced his own struggle for liberty.

The Struggle is Painful and Deep, It Holds Life, and Death...

by Bama Battle

Hello Rev,

Adjusting to my situation has consumed all of my time lately. I haven't been communicating with the outside world as I should. But I'll tell you Rev, I'm being tried by fire, and this trial by fire is the challenge of all challenges. I have never consciously been in a position where the urge to say the hell with it, has been so strong as it is now. I mean, it's like I sit and talk with myself, telling myself that all of this "we have to protect the public" talk coming from the parole board, is political. I tell myself, that sooner or later it will change. But then myself says to me, "Bullshit! This is about racism!" Were I a white guy, I would be out of here my first time to the board, if not my first, most certainly my second. The reality of the fact of racism, brings with it the ring of truth.

Throughout my experiences in prison, I have often listened to and participated with people in a search for truth, as if it is an end in itself. But this trial by fire is teaching me that the discovery of truth in one's search for knowledge, is not the end, but the beginning, especially in the struggle to survive bondage, and its effect on the human spirit. I am also learning from the wisdom that comes with aging, that this tendency of mine to look the situation of my imprisonment in the eye, and say to hell with it, is a big part of my personal problem. Along with the fact that I am a dinosaur, trapped in a jungle full of food my mind can no longer feed on. Struggling, to fight off the encroaching sense of lostness. Knowing full well that to become lost, is to die.

Recently, I've notice that thoughts of me never getting out of jail have been drifting through my mind, and, on occasion, creating some small discomfort, but never any real concern. Meaning, of course, that I am still coming to grips with my life, in spite of the parole board's efforts to convince me that I should die in prison. Rev, again, I find myself accepting the fact that the struggle is painful and deep! And life must go on. AMEN!

Rev, I need you to try to get a few addresses for me. I would like to have John's Brooklyn address, Lonnie's, and Eddie Ellis' home address. Also, Rev, try to get me Norma's, or her mother's for that matter. I really need to re-establish these and other contacts. Breaking contact like I did was a mistake. It amounted to me rendering myself lost. But fear not my faithful friend, I am in the process of rediscovering myself. Do what you can for me, Rev I need to get reconnected.

Your Friend,
Bama Battle¹

¹The letterhead read: William Stevenson Battle # 76A1380
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