

What Can a Flimsy Pen Do?

By Christopher Louis Romaguera

What can a flimsy pen do, when you read “They’re everyday people behind these walls,” and when every day there’s more people behind these walls.

What can a flimsy pen do, that softens in your hand like a solitary soggy spaghetti trying to feed the incarcerated masses, as you teach people who will teach you more than you could ever teach them.

What can a flimsy pen do? When it melts in your hand and your wrist starts to burn, the same hand you’ve punched walls with cause it was the only legal readily accessible thing you could punch. Back when the only way you knew how to deal with your pain was more pain. Your self-destruction was with more destruction.

What can a flimsy pen do when the past and future king of oh so many says, while the cops restrain you, while the mob yells and surrounds you, as you’re removed from his “rally,” “Louisiana, I’m disappointed in you, in the good ol’ days, you’d have him out on a stretcher by now.

What good is a flimsy pen, if it’s just writing like filming a man being killed in front of you, but not trying to actual help, what good is a flimsy pen if you try to help, but end up dead too? What good is saying or writing a name only after they can’t respond, what do words do against the walls and darkness of despair? “Lights out...”

What good does a flimsy pen do, when tourists leave your bar and comment on how clean the streets are after last nights party, them not knowing how incarcerated folks were picking up/eating beads like Mr. and Ms. Pacman, chased by ghosts and hooded creatures who never let them escape the box. What good does my flimsy pen do, when the cruelty is the point, and it is oh so usual.

What can a flimsy pen do that would bend and break against a breath of air, when its supposed to hold up against the hurricane force winds of mass incarceration.

What good does a flimsy pen do, when the incarcerated only see loved ones through telecom visits, but we all know not to trust what we see on screens.

What good can a flimsy pen do, when you have the flimsy pen in the first place because guards think Bics break bars, bodyguards, like the unarmed are the ones who should be feared.

What good can a flimsy pen do, if I’ve lost all my ability to help people, after one bit of trauma, feeling a heart beat still in my hands on the street, did I ever leave that street? Losing one meaning I’m useless to all, useful to none?

What good is a flimsy pen if all I inherited from Cuba was a fear of being tonto util, of being no use to anyone, or anything, for fear of being used by the worst of the worst? “Louisiana, I’m disappointed in you...” and the crowd goes wild

Don't blame the trauma, Chris, the inflation of pain has made it worth damn near nothing in this world, maybe my flimsy pen isn't good because I've always been lazy, the privileged prevail over nothing, after all.

So I'm saying, I don't know how a flimsy pen can fight off a nation that won't ever deal with its original sins of slavery, or our continuing sins of mass incarceration.

I don't know how my flimsy pen will fight off a nation that has over 5000 nuclear bombs, a nation that has about 4,900 more nuclear bombs than needed to end the world.

I don't know how my flimsy pen will fight off a nation that elects a president that talks down to a restrained man to make him (and his tiny little hands) feel bigger.

I don't know how my flimsy pen will do good for a nation where 75 million people voted for a person, who the day after he won, the biggest stock increase was private prisons, 75 million people who can't be bothered to be bothered because they think they'll get a dollar off on some cage free eggs.

So what good can a flimsy pen do? Not a damn bit if it's quieter than the voices of the incarcerated that are muffled by the distance, walls and chains of our government.

But maybe a good a flimsy pen can do, is let the incarcerated break some barriers, and find some love, some I loves you, on the page, in the world.

Maybe a good my flimsy pen can do is write a little something to share with you, and you can share the space with me, for a movement begins with one flimsy pen, one passage, one poem, one person at a time, for me, for you, for the ghosts, both the dead and the living, that they want us to forget, but that we can never afford to.