Sosa Unshackled

Poetic verses originally written by Julio Sosa and edited by Kevin Gardner

Creative Concept:
Julio Sosa
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Artwork:
Black Vango

Writing featured on illustrated pages:

Kevin Gardner
(Inspired by thoughts and ideas articulated by Julio Sosa)
Sosa Unshackled:
The Creative Expressions Of
Julio Sosa

Edited by
Kevin Gardner
Introduction

The love for the arts is a magnetic force that can bring people together from various walks of life. For the circle of creative artists transcends race, ethnicity, nationality, language, age and gender. The bond it creates sometimes produces indelible memories and forms relationships that last for an entire lifetime.

It was through the love of the arts that I met Julio Sosa, an immigrant who was reared in a dangerous country located many miles away from the land wherein he'd been put in shackles and branded with the stigma of a menace to society. As he shared moments of his life and his passion for the arts he took on the challenge of taking a Creative Writing course that the correctional facility offered to the inmates. Although his grammar was not exceptional, his writing showed great promise and his deep thoughts, feelings and ideas were gems that the world needed to experience. Therefore, I encouraged him to put his ideas on paper and reveal his most intimate feelings for the enrichment of the literary community and to inspire the liberation of incarcerated voices throughout the world abroad.

Julio is an ardent proponent of Jazz, enamored of its proclivity for improvisation. Like Jazz musicians, creative artists in prison are often put in predicaments that call for them to improvise. They have to express their art through whatever is available to them sometimes, even if that means using scrap paper, request slips or a grievance, and this is the inspiration for the concept of this project- Sosa Unshackled. It's been a pleasure participating in this project, and I hope that
the literary audience finds joy in reading the unabashed poetic expressions of this emerging force in the world of the creative arts.

Who is this manchild from a distant foreign land who speaks with a strange accent and plays air guitar with his hands? Sometimes he struggles with the language but he understands rhythm very well. He speaks of his love of Hendrix, Morrison and Red Hot Chili Peppers. This stranger not even 30 years old but has that old-time Rock & Roll embedded in his soul. At night he dreams of Lucille and B.B. King and Bulls On Parade. Raging Against The Machine. Ask me not of his place of birth but of who he is! He is a poet, musician, lover of the arts, citizen of the world, servant of humanity. He is Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Santana, Chakino and Slash all in one man and even more. He is the genius seeking its source of creative power, exploring the innermost depths of itself, yearning to explode and liberate itself boldly announcing to the world its arrival and pronouncing that I AM!

Kevin Gardner
Musician

Musician is my name,
I dance, play and sing
with much fervor.
I was nurtured by the sounds
of the guitar and piano and drum
when I was still in my years
of vulnerability and innocence.
Novel modes of expression
attracted my attention
and opened and expanded
my imagination
as I lived out my existence
through my favorite songs.

I don't want to be admired
but I confess,
the applause of the audience
makes me feel loved and alive.
I was introduced to the guitar
in a small mop room
where I began practicing my craft
enduring many frustrations,
sometimes with tears.
But I learned how to wipe
my eyes and master the strings
of this instrument
that has captivated my heart.

Musician is my name
I dance, play and sing
with great passion
and my heart yearns to do so
until my time on earth expires.

J. Baba
Jazz,

so many chords,
so many notes,
making you levitate,
elevating your heart, soul, and mind.
Come, embrace the culture,
get a guitar, piano or saxophone.
Come now and sing along.
and get in touch with the sky.
Experience the love and kindness
of the universe
as you learn how to manipulate
the art
and discover that music will
bring meaning to your life.

The music will tell you
what to do
and listen to your heart's
greatest secrets
when nobody seems to understand
you.
Get in touch with your feelings
and let them be touched by
the feeling
of soul, spirit, class
that we call Jazz
as the sound of genius penetrates
and stimulates
the part of you that is forever,

J. Sosa
I woke up one day, and I saw my future. That very day when I attended the funeral service and saw my friend Travieso inside of a casket, I saw myself in him. There he was, pale face, holes from the bullets that pierced his flesh. He used to carry a pistol, shot the police, then he himself became a victim of gun violence, and now this violence be once inflicted hurts his own family. And I saw myself in his lifeless body, maybe in a not too distant tomorrow. Maybe someday soon I will occupy the same space.

There was a time when I was lost, didn't know who I wanted to be. I asked myself the same question repeatedly, but all along it was there in one old man's hands. One day this old man was moving pieces around on a board, they call it a game of chess. Right there I discovered the strategy of thinking as I observed the old man manipulating the pieces. I set out to copy what he was doing in the game and apply to my experience in this world. I was 14 then. Now I am 25, not dead but still alive—understanding that thinkers rule the world.
Life

Life, you only live it once,
try not to make it too complicated.
The problem is trying to live it
too sophisticated.
The problem is trying to live it
without following the rules.
Now mistakes are normal.
They are what make us human,
for nobody is perfect,
and I know that already.
Just remember,
the life of the one you love
is only once too.
Try not wasting your time
not loving them.
Do what you love,
but at the same time,
do the right thing.
And when you do it, make it good,
make it happen, make it appear.

I want to make my dreams
a reality.
I want to succeed
and go to the grave
with a sense of satisfaction,
a sense of pride and dignity
after seeing the fruit of my
life's labor.
Finally manifest itself
out of the realm of dreams
unto the plane of the Flesh
The body is the temple
and with it we serve God
by working and loving religiously
on this journey that we know
called life.

J. Daza
Teacher

I am my own teacher.
The cosmos appointed me
to teach myself.
My self ordained For me
to teach myself.
I taught myself to walk.
I taught myself to sing.
I taught myself to confront
the worst moments
with faith, courage, and intuition.
I never dreamed I'd make it
this far.
To my surprise,
I am very much alive,
For I could have died a long time ago.
Even under the worst circumstances,
I taught myself how to smile.
I no longer take my days for granted,
For I have learned
that the days I live on this planet
are not really mine.
All things seem to come from
and return to the same place.
This was something I could not
ever seem to ever understand
during my infant stages of knowledge.
But now I sense that there is
something gigantic,
something righteous,
something without flaw,
something divine
everytime I go to that place.
And everytime I go to that place,
I don't come back the same
on a plane of power
that the human language
cannot completely explain.
Still, I am both apprentice
and teacher of myself.

J. Doe
Thoughts

My mind is constantly flooded with thoughts. Some of them are good, some are bad. I try to concentrate on the good ones and disregard the ones that are not healthy.

I learned a long time ago that thoughts can lead to actions, and if I am not mindful of my thoughts, then my morals can be compromised and result in behavior that I will one day regret.

Some thoughts are loud, others are whispers. My mind can perceive them all. I ask God to intervene and push me in the direction of the things that are righteous, true, beautiful and just and to strengthen my will during my darkest moments and most trying times.
This is the end,
the end of trouble,
the end of faith,
the end of love,
the end of vanity.
No more sadness,
no more pain,
no more music,
no more hue and color.
It might sound frightening,
but death is something I don’t comprehend.
My ancestors too went through
the gates where things are brought
to finality.
that is why I will try not to be
too afraid.
After all, the universe is my home.
Ain’t no way I can escape
from omnipresent fate.
I am very positive I will exist somewhere,
maybe as dust,
perhaps as a ghost.

Yes, this is the end.
THE MYSTERY
Love.

Love—Four words—thousands of expressions and interpretations. Who can define this word? Can tell and feel in its fulness that which is a magnificent part of our lives?

Love flows through the body and soul like a river, becoming a kiss, becoming a touch, manifesting as a poem, a song, an intimate dance as the mystic current moves in our feet.

Love is ageless, beyond time, penetrating every dimension in the universe. Love is the great mystery living as a memory in the human brain.

Love is a guitar player playing the right notes, plucking the right strings so that the ear of his beloved can receive the waves of passion projected from his loins as an unending desire to be wrapped in her loving embrace.

What is love? It is a laugh. It is God. It is family. It is beauty. It is music. Love is good words and good actions; being anything that makes us feel worthy and of great value, anything making us feel appreciated. Yes, that is Love.
Be with you

My soul is like a bird,
My body is like the sky
in which my soul has to learn
how to fly.
Look at me
and try to see it
through my eyes.
Maybe you can see
the type of wings I got.
Maybe you can fly with me,
kissing my mouth.
Maybe you can rest your eyes
with your face buried in my chest.
At the horizon we will meet,
together with a purpose.
Our mutual love in our hearts
make us feel alive.
The words I Love You
are just a phrase
that have a small meaning
compared to what I feel for you.
All I know,
all I know
is that I only want to be with you.

J. Daria
You and Me

I'll tell you how much I love you,
I'll tell you how much I care.
You are the one who captured
my heart
the very moment you appeared
before my eyes.

I couldn't resist the sheer force
of your beautiful aura.
I couldn't will my mind
from spending all of those hours
thinking about you.

Every love song seemed to sing
your name,
the song of songs.
Sounds like a fairytale,
the story of you and me.
If I stop loving you,
I will get lost in time and space,
but we're ok,
because like clockwork
I fall in love with you again.

J.Sara
Special to me

From the moment I saw you,
I knew you were the one
for me.
Many hours we spent together,
time that felt like we were
in paradise.
Moments we fought I can hardly
remember,
they probably couldn't amount
to the number of fingers
I have on one hand.
You made me feel special and loved,
and with you by my side,
I felt as though I could face
the whole world
with no fear or shame.
Your tender kisses were like fuel
and like a rocket
bursting through the clouds
in the sky,
I soar so high
when you are with me,
because you are so very,
very special.

J. Sosa
I Miss You

You are my deepest thoughts.
You are my other half.
You are my strength.
You are that which I have discovered
without even searching.
You were like a marvelous painting
which beautiful colors
and ingenious strokes got my attention.
The shapes and forms captivated me
as my eyes absorbed your loveliness
in the gallery of love.
In my mind, I can remember
clearly the scenery of that room,
my senses flooded with vibrations.
You were with me
and I was with you.
Unexpectedly you disappear
and I am alone,
only surrounded by concrete blocks
and walls,
asking myself where did you go?
Then I found myself
with this paper and pen
writing something that resembles
the taste of you.
It is a poem,
and it says something like this,
"I miss you."

J. Sosa
When I least expect it
the image of you appears.
I see you there,
sitting in a chair
listening to me,
eagerly paying attention
to the words coming out of
my mouth,
the thoughts spilling out of
my head,
smiling at me
as though my very presence
gives you great pleasure.
Yes, I see you there.

Though you are not here
in the physical,
I can see you there
next to me, kissing me.
So tenderly,
the touch of your hands
so delicate and gentle;
your embrace so soft
and full of love.
I see you there.

I don't know how I got
so used to you
that I thought I couldn't
live without you,
but now that you and I
are separated,
I've somehow learned how
to live without you.
Somehow I got used to it,
but from time to time
I conjure up the ghost of you
in my mind when I am lonely,
and I can see you there.

J. Sara
Grandfather

Old man with gray hair,
wisdom in abundance
spills from his lips
as he makes powerful gestures
with his hands.
No one knows all that he's
been through in this lifetime,
but the many hardships have lead him
to become a loving man.

When he sees you down,
he tries to lift you up,
and when he cries,
the water wells up in your eyes too
as you become one in emotion and spirit
with this ancient creature
whose soul has endured
many unspeakable moments.

J. Sara
I stare at the stars in the sky, and I wish I could fly and see what is out there.
Unfortunately, I can only contemplate from this little sphere called Earth the infinite space beyond my head.
I kinda have a sense, an intuition, but I long to fully understand the realm of planets and the shining stars that I can see through the iris of my curious, shining eyes.
Fake People

Fake people displaying smiles on their face, but they are only a facade, a surface of lies, a surface of hate. These type of people are usually insecure themselves, waking up with motivations to ruin the day of the person they claim to hate. Even if they succeed in destroying one person’s life, they remain restless, for they are not at peace within. In their own ignorance, in their own stupidity, they believe they are without error, opening their mouths to utter nonsense towards the ones they envy. In the end, they will be alone like an old statue, dwelling in the shadows of their own absurdity.
Time Travel

What is this I feel today?
Oh, it is pain.
It makes me feel worried.
It makes me feel pressure-
300 pounds of sadness
on top of my neck.

I travelled a great distance
in my mind,
and I discovered people
who were great to me,
and now that they are gone,
I miss them.

Time and place collapse
inside my mind, vanishing
until they are no longer present.
Now that was just the journey
for today
and soon the world and its demands
will have my members of my body busy.
Yet I know that remembering
the good people in those good places
in distant spaces
will make me feel fine.

J. Sosa.
Darkness to light

Such a waste
of energy and time,
this thing called hate.
It corrupts the heart,
it plagues the mind,
the mind that possesses
so much beauty and light—
with hate it becomes very dark.

Tumor of lies,
illness of the soul,
creator of wrong thought
and wrong action,
creator of failure.
I sometimes wonder,
was hate the root of evil,
the beginning of sin
and crime amongst humanity?
Yet for all this hate
there is a remedy—
knowledge, wisdom, and love.
It will take time to uproot
hate and its companion ignorance,
but patience and compassion
will heal us all.

J. Costa
The power of creative genius can be traced to expressions of artistic beauty and splendor in our ancient race.
Dragon, symbol of the ever present force of nature.
The Great Breath, The Vibratory Pulse, Creator and Destroyer which we all belong to.
Like a dice game, full of possibilities. LIFE
The rose, both emblem of life and symbol of death and decay, our fragile human existence reminds us how thin is the thread separating the two.
The question is: Time is something we're all doing. What are you doing with your time?
Life can be compared to alcohol. Consume it with moderation and wisely, and it can give you pleasure, but act foolishly with it and abuse it and it will drag you to the pit of sorrow.
Julio Sosa was born in El Salvador in 1994. Music was a very powerful force in young Julio’s life, but the influence of drugs, guns, and gangs was just as powerful, if not even stronger during the time when he was impressionable and attracted to the allure of the criminal lifestyle in El Salvador’s dark underworld. He came to America in 2011, and although music played a major role in his life, there were certain elements that kept Julio entangled in the lifestyle and culture of the streets.

As Julio struggled to find himself and make adjustments to his new home in the United States, he found refuge in the music he loved. He cultivated his talent as a guitar player and aspired to attain heights of artistic greatness like the musicians who inspired him early on in his life and are still role models for him as he strives to carve his own legacy in the world of literature and the creative arts. Sosa Unshackled is his introduction to the literary world.
Kevin Gardner is an author of "The Thief On The Cross," "The Rose That Grew Through The Barbwire" and "The Art of Larry Mayers." He has also had articles featured in newspapers and poems published in journals and publications. He is an advocate for the creative arts in the prison system and continues to inspire aspiring poets, writers and artists in the Department of Corrections.