

LETTERS TO A YOUNG INMATE LONGER WORKSHOP | TALIB'S LETTER

Looking at the letter as a work of literary art, examine what the author did that makes the letter persuasive. As an example, this letter by Talib:

TO THE YOUTH

*"Show me your friends
I'll show you—
Your future!"*

In this world we have three best friends:

- 1) Your money*
- 2) Your family*
- 3) Your deeds*

It is said that your first best friend, Money, will be the first that parts ways and leaves you the second you die. It matters not how much you make—you can't take it with you when you die.

And your Family will be the second best friend to part ways and leave you when you die. You will hear their fast steps as they walk away from your grave.

Your third best friend: your Good Deeds—the only friend you take with you into the next life. Hence, the best friend you have in this world is your own good deeds. So be good to yourselves and treat people with the same love and respect you desire for yourself.

part 2

Spring is my favorite season. It brings new life to the dead lands. The brown dry mountains turn green with fresh grass. Cows graze on this green grass yet produce pure white milk for us to drink. Amazing, isn't it?

Spring allows the beautiful flowers to bloom. Daffodils to daisies, tulips grown for their large showy erect cup shapes, the magnificent magnolia and all the fragrant flowers, bees sipping nectar, producing sweet honey for us to eat. Amazing, isn't it?

What do men, women, and lovers say of the beautiful rose? Red for love, yellow for friendship, white means forever... right?

But what of the thorny black rose? Rare indeed are they—like the three beautiful black roses Dr. King Jr., Malcolm X, and Tupac Shakur. Rare indeed are they, but like the wind, blown away.

Still, like the black rose that grew from concrete, WE LIVE—so you live within us today!

*Bro. Talib
incarcerated 28 years
Age 52*



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QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS:

- In Talib's letter he uses some poetic techniques to tell his story and make his points. How does he do it?
- In part 1, does he persuade you that good deeds are more valuable than money or family? If so, how does he bring you to that conclusion? If not, why not? What do you believe? Have the good deeds you've done so far in your life been valuable to you?
- In part 2, he makes a case again for the value of good deeds: the good deeds of MLK, Malcolm X and Tupac that lasted beyond the grave, that live on through everyone that has ever heard what these "rare black roses" had to say.
- What knowledge, what good deeds would you like to leave behind for future generations?