

Locked in a Dark Calm

Tameca Cole

Tameca Cole is a visual artist and writer from Birmingham, Alabama. She also performs with the abolitionist arts organization Die Jim Crow. Cole's art has been featured in *Art in America*, *Artforum*, *ArtNews*, *Momus*, *the Nation*, and the *New York Times*.

My name is Tameca Cole. I'm forty-nine years old. I'm a lifelong resident of Birmingham, Alabama. Currently, I'm serving life on parole after serving approximately twenty-six years in the Alabama Department of Corrections.

I went into the prison system at a young age but always with a hopeful attitude that a better future awaited. Most of my time was spent going to trade school to upgrade my job skills and reading. I signed up for a creative writing class sponsored by Auburn University and that's when I found my purpose in life. Once I reconnected with my creative side I never looked back.

Art and writing allow me to address my personal demons in a way that doesn't hurt others. They give me an outlet to express how the cruelty of my incarceration, injustice, and experience with racism has affected me. They give me the power to show other human beings how degrading it feels to be Black in America and still live under systemic racism.

I consider my art to be an educator, a weapon, and a thought-provoking conversation about change. I would be grateful for any support that allows me to continue to elevate as an artist as well as a civil rights soldier.



Tameca Cole, *Locked in a Dark Calm*, 2016. Collage and graphite on paper, 8,5 × 11 in. Collection Ellen Driscoll.