

RCM

RETURNING CITIZENS MAGAZINE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE JUSTICE INVOLVED COMMUNITY

LEARN HOW
T.O.R.I., A
FAITH-BASED
ORGANIZATION
INSPIRED BY
T.D. JAKES, IS
ASSISTING
RETURNING
CITIZENS

Matthew 25:44-45 (NLT):

44 "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?'

45 "And He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sister you were refusing to help me.'

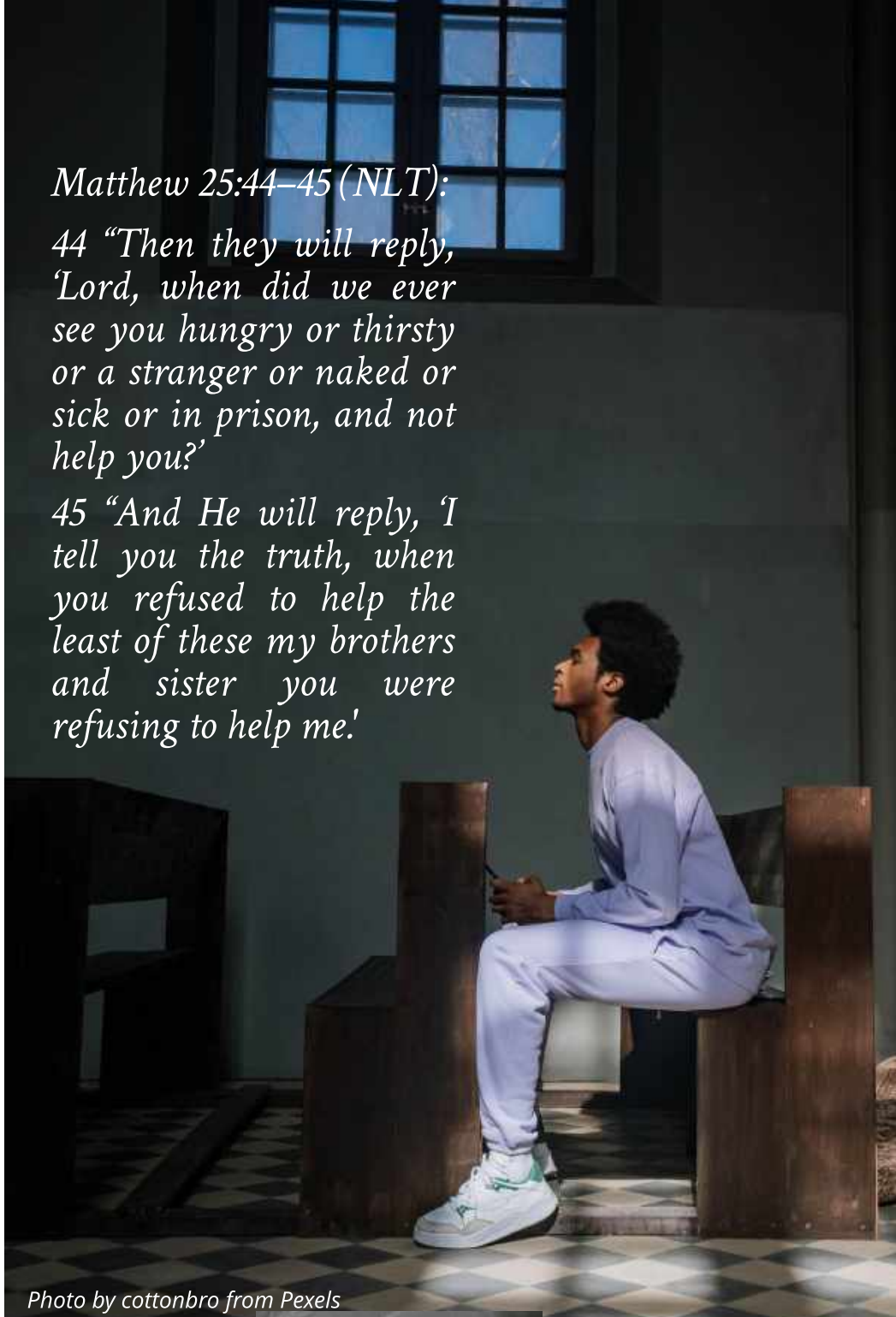


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KENNETH JACKSON



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Inmates to Entrepreneurs

Inmates to Entrepreneurs' free video course "Starter U: How to Start, Run, and Grow a Business" is available online and on GTL and Edovo tablets in correctional facilities across the U.S.

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In 2008, Kenneth Jackson landed his dream internship at Marvel Comics, working on titles like “X Men” and “Black Panther.” He did so well that the editors invited him for a second semester. But it was unpaid; and New York was expensive. So Jackson returned to Michigan State University and, after graduation, embarked on a long journey back to the world of comics.

For years Jackson traveled around the country, taking jobs like cook and cashier while honing his artistic skills. He produced comics and sold them during underground concerts and open-mic nights. “I would say, ‘Hey, I will help set up the show and clean up if I can sell my books,’” says Jackson.

But Jackson was experiencing mental illness, exacerbated by sleep deprivation and a concussion. After being institutionalized, he moved to Burbank to take advantage of the expertise and resources available through the Animation Guild. Homeless, and harassed at the facility where he collected his mail and showered, Jackson reacted violently. He was charged with assault with a deadly weapon and served jail time followed by a year at a behavioral health center.

Now Jackson is back in Detroit, trying to launch his publishing company, called Blank Komix. Jackson’s marquee title is City Hare. “It’s about a dishwasher who gets the skin of Br’er Rabbit and gets superpowers by making a deal with the devil,” says Jackson, who draws on Native American and African American folktales. Working on his own, Jackson can produce four books a year and he recently hired a freelance colorist and a letterist.

Production has been challenging. He recently switched to a pay-what-you-can model “to make comics more accessible to the average customer,” he says. Before his incarceration, when Jackson sold comics on the streets of Burbank for whatever consumers could afford, “they would often donate more than the \$5 requested.”

The concerts where Jackson once sold his books have been suspended by the pandemic, and so have the environmental and social-justice events that were another distribution channel for Jackson’s left-leaning products. In the interim, he has experimented with digital distribution, on Global Comics, where he offers the first 10 issues of City Hare as a graphic novel. He is also building his own website where fans can pay to read comics online or order print copies.

Digital distribution is Jackson’s best bet to reach a wider audience with higher profit margins. Still, he wouldn’t mind finding a home in comic book stores. They’ve turned him down in the past, calling his work too graphic for their clientele. So he’s toned things down and plans to try again. “Since I am in Detroit people are finding out who I am again, which is creating an interest,” says Jackson.