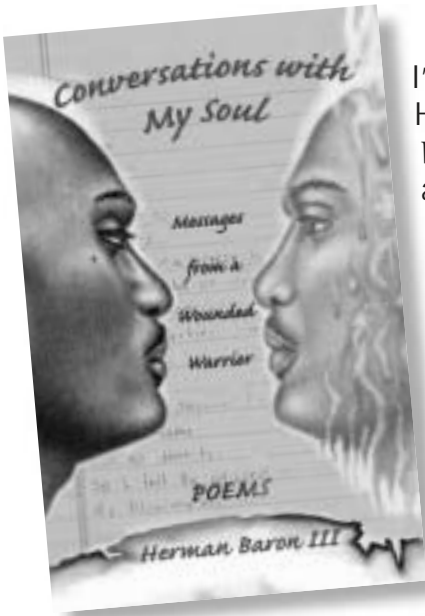


Conversations with My Soul

by Herman Baron III

I've Known Rivers Press Introduces
An Exciting New Talent



I've Known Rivers Press is proud to introduce, as its first title, the work of poet Herman Alexander Baron III. In *Conversations with My Soul: Messages from a Wounded Warrior*, Baron gives us a voice that is both a cry from the heart and a window into a unique poetic voice:

Struggling to break free from this self-induced trance,
I scraped holes into the knees of my designer pants
And bloodied my fist.

Just for an unconditional kiss of freedom
A wounded warrior defending my kingdom
Fighting to make a better life for my sons and daughters
Life expectancies are growing shorter.

Baron, who is incarcerated in a federal prison in the south, was born in 1974. His poems are part of a long tradition in African American letters of poetry and song of the incarcerated and the enslaved. From the enslaved poet Phillis Wheatley, to the folksinger Huddie Leadbetter (Leadbelly) and the poet Ethridge Knight, both of whom won their freedom through their art, African American letters and song have long included those forcibly held at the margins of society in their ranks. Its prose writers have also included former slaves and former prisoners, from Frederick Douglass to Chester Himes and Malcolm X.

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This is the tradition that's produced this young poet and his very special book. His voice, though still in development, shows remarkable confidence. With echoes of influences ranging from today's hip hop vernacular to the "cry" of Rilke, Baron's work speaks with the voice of a generation of African American men whose culture is linked with incarceration, but one that nevertheless seeks to liberate its soul. With these poems, these "conversations," Baron gives us the voice of his liberating soul.

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