

# Happy holidays!

**RESPONSIBLE  
BUSINESS INITIATIVE**  
FOR JUSTICE

As we celebrate the festive season and bring in the new year, RBIJ wanted to share a piece of art from one of the most talented and inspiring individuals we have the privilege of working with – the artist *Ndume Olatushani*. His story is one of profound hope and incredible resilience in the face of almost unbearable adversity –something we could all use after another trying year.

In 1985, Ndume Olatushani was wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death in Tennessee for a murder he did not commit. Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, Ndume had never even visited the state of Tennessee before he was brought to Memphis to stand trial. The prosecution won a conviction by burying evidence of Ndume’s innocence and seating an all-white jury to convict him.

Ndume spent 28 years in maximum security prisons, and 20 of those on death row. His story is one of human resilience, perseverance, and the power of art to change lives.

While on death row, Ndume began to draw and then taught himself to paint. Art allowed him to exist in a state of harmony and tranquillity, in spite of being wrongfully locked up. Ndume says, “I found freedom locked in a 4 x 9 foot cell, for 23 hours a day, living in the shadow of death.”

After 20 years on death row, Ndume’s death sentence was overturned, and he was moved to the general prison population. He spent another 8 years in prison before a court finally overturned his conviction. On June 1, 2012, he was released from the Shelby County Jail in Memphis.

Ndume travels nationally and internationally speaking out against the death penalty. He also works with young people, helping them to find their own inner artist and teaching them about the perils of making the wrong decisions.

For more information about Ndume and his art, please visit [www.ndumeart.com](http://www.ndumeart.com) or email [ndumeart@gmail.com](mailto:ndumeart@gmail.com). He can also be reached on Instagram (@olatushani) and Facebook.



*When I think of hope and justice, I inevitably think of the Statue of Liberty as a Black man living in America. Perhaps, more importantly I think about the ideas that the Statue of Liberty is said to represent. I believe in the ideals. However, I struggle with the fact that too many people like myself have not been the beneficiaries of said ideals. Why do we let politics of differences and othering subvert our humanity? I often ask: why won't we give shelter to the homeless, comfort to the tired, or relief to the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" the world over? This is what **"Hope and Justice"** looks like for me. There must be an unveiling of the hypocrisy that lives among us. While I sat on death row for something that I did not do, something happened to me. I came to realize that I am a much better person when I am rooted in my belief that "if I want for you what I want for myself, no one has to tell me how to treat you." This is the time of the year we should all want for others what we want for ourselves. I believe in our shared humanity; I know that our humanity has the capacity to deliver justice – and this is where my hope lies.*

– Ndume Olatushani, Dec 2021

**Wishing you a happy 2022.**



The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice (RBIJ) is an international non-profit organization that works with companies to champion fairness, equality and effectiveness across systems of punishment and incarceration.

We can be found at [www.responsiblebusinessinitiative.org](http://www.responsiblebusinessinitiative.org) and [info@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org](mailto:info@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org)