

May 8, 1963.

Mr. Danny Lyon,  
5430 University Avenue,  
Chicago,  
Illinois.

Dear Danny:

I have had a long look at the photographs you brought today and anticipate going back to them many times before you take them away. Seeing them has been the most stimulating event for many days. They are better than anything I have looked at for some time and they are the best you have done. Of course the subject is fresh and great and is something I have long wanted attended to, but even this does not gratify me more than the step ahead in your own development which is shown in these pictures. How I wish I had some influence in the world so that there might be a book of them, with a glorifying text by someone like Burroughs, James Jones or John Dos Passos, the reproductions done by a great firm like Conzett and Huber in Zurich or Pizzi in Milan.

This time you have gone farther on and present the exciting subject without getting between it and the camera. Thank you and God for no too often served social messages in these pictures. In them you evoke and provoke emotions and are modest about your own self-expression. This is always good. And one of the most difficult things there is to convey to photographers in discussing their work. I like photography best when it is a medium of presentation and does not impose interpretation. When I say your pictures this time do all these things I like, I am not implying you are not felt or recognized in them, because I feel these are yours probably more than any of your others.

I hope you will come in and see me so that we may talk more about these prints and yourself. If you have any time Sunday or Monday, call me at FAirfax-4-8000, as I expect to be home those days and we might have a talk then. Pardon this inadequate letter today - I wanted to be sure to congratulate you before tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Hugh Edwards.

1124 Gov. Nichols st.  
apt. 10  
New Orleans  
Dec. 5, 1964

Dear Mr. Edwards,

It is a while since we have <sup>seen</sup> each other, and much has happened. I am delighted to say that photography has come to mean more and more to me in the time that I have worked with it, so that now it clearly dominates my life, which is fine with me. I <sup>recently</sup> rediscovered the letter you were <sup>kind</sup> enough <sup>enough</sup> to write me about my first motorcycle pictures in May of 1963. Quite honestly, I always felt very good about what you said but never really understood what you were talking about when you talked of getting out from between the camera and the subject, and photography as "a medium of presentation." It makes much more sense now, and really makes me want to be able to talk with you, since there is practically no one I have ever been able to talk to about it.

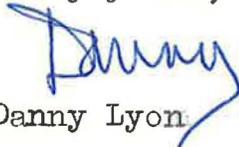
I am sending you a set of prints that should reach you a few days after the letter. They were all done in New Orleans during October and November of this year. Although I am leaving the city now for a month, I have set up a permanent home here of sorts, and plan to remain and photograph the city for at least a year. I am trying to use the city to photograph America, or anyway American cities, and in fact go to great pains avoiding signs and license plates that would identify the city as New Orleans. But you'll see the prints. Linn Ehrlich and I have become close friends, originally through and interest in each others work. He might give you a ring to ask about the prints I'm sending you. I would appreciate it if you would let him come to down to <sup>look</sup> at them. Since I don't get to Chicago very often, we never have a chance to see what the other is doing.

From Dec. 14 to Jan. 1st I will be in California and can be reached care of Richheimer, Canyon, California. There is a possibility that I will be able to get a ride from there to Chicago, in which case you will certainly hear from me. If not, than I will be back in New Orleans during January, and will stay here for a while.

I am anxious to hear what you think of the work. I would like eventually to have enough on the city to be able to reduce it to something more balanced and comprehensive than it is now. But there's much more shooting that must be done first.

Have a nice Christmas, and maybe I'll be able to see you in wintry Chicago.

Sincerely yours,

  
Danny Lyon

MAGNUM

Route 2  
Midway, Texas

Jan. 22, 1968

MAGNUM PHOTOS, INC. New York 72 West 45 Street, N.Y. 10036 Tel. 661-5040 Cable: MAGNUMFOTO Paris 125 Faubourg St. Honoré, Paris 8e, Tel. Élysée 15-91 Cable: FOTOMAGNUM

Dear Hugh,

I have been meaning to write this letter for a long time and finally waited until I could send you the book with it. It meant a great deal to me to complete the *Bikeriders*, for it was my first book, and it seemed to contain the best I could put together from those years in Chicago, before and after I lived in the South. I have dedicated the book to you and I sincerely hope you do not mind. It occurred to me when I did that that I could do a better book one day and maybe I should wait for that. But another book seemed far off. I will always associate you with this book because it came out of the time I began making pictures and you were so much a part of that for me. When you saw some of the pictures that begin the set you suggested they be published. That was five years ago and such a letter from you would mean as much today. The Photography that you introduced me to has enveloped me and my life in a way I could never have imagined. It has become my life and with it I have grown into all my joy and pain. Certainly this book is not the one you suggested. I am hoping that if a second edition is printed that some of its grosser errors will be corrected. I hope that <sup>they</sup> do not disturb you enough to nullify my intent. You not only encouraged my photography but seemed to awaken in me a vision from which I will never recover. Even though I have been away from Chicago ~~my~~ the development of my work often leads me to think of you. I suppose in the end the dedication is personal, and by way of apology I can only say I meant it very much.

I wish you could see the work I have done since we arrived in Texas, a month and a half ago. I have spend almost everyday in the fields and cell blocks of the Texas Penitentiary. I can hardly speak of it except with the pictures I am trying to make. The experience is at times shattering and needless to say at times I have trouble sleeping. The selective process of the courts in Texas seems perfect, for they seem to have jailed their most exceptional men. The inmates welcome a chance to talk with someone from the freeworld and my only real problem, other than sanity, is that on occassion I get whistled at. I hope I can visit Chicago this Spring with Rachel and see you then. This is the first and only copy of the *Bikeriders* I have yet received but I was anxious for you to see the first one from me. I am told MacMillan has 15,000 others and as I mentioned, when they get rid of them maybe they will managed to print it correctly. I hope you have been well and enjoying yourself.

Love, Jimmy



September 24, 1968

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
HUNTSVILLE, TEXAS 77340

Dear Hugh,

I hope you are well. We are still here in Texas, and I think finally I am drawing near a time when I might complete the set of prints I am making here. The print I am sending is the only duplicate I have of any of the new work. I hope you like it. It is at Ramsey, in the six wing cell block, where I've done alot of work. The boy in front has a brother on deathrow. Did you see the picture in this weeks Sunday Times Magazine. Its nice to see it printed. I am going to apply for a Guggenheim again and I would like again to burden you with being a reference for me. I thought I would apply to continue work in the prison system, since I really don't know what else to ask for. I would like to mention the coming show at the Art Institute. Do you have any more information about that? I am looking forward to it very much. The weather is still quite warm here, and almost all the prisons are bringing in their cotton crop. It is a remarkable thing to watch. Many of the inmates compete to see who can pick the most in a day.

I'm afraid I don't feel too much like writing. The Guggenheim thing worries me a bit. I Have no way to know what I'd want to photograph in a year. Right now I just want to finish what I've been doing for so long. I've been reading Seigfried Kracauer's Theory of Film and found the ~~art~~ section of Photography, and the references to Rroust quite stimulating. I've shot some more 16 mm film in the prison and hope to concentrate on movie shooting here as soon as I get near completion of the stills.

I hope you're enjoying yourself in Chicago. I look forward to working with you on getting the show together, and seeing you and Chicago again. I'm sorry to have writen such a poor letter also. You know Mark Di Suvero has built alot of sculpture in hicago in the past year. I think one is installed at the Circle Campus.

I look forward to hearing from you.

FEB. 2

Dear Hugh,

I don't know if I will be able to write much of a letter, but I seem to be doing too many important things at once, so at least I know you'll be happy to get the pictures. I am sending these, I think there are around 35, keeping in mind that you will receive another 32 from the Guggenheim Foundation. I thought that when those of Knoxville and Manhattan that you already have were added, it would leave with with enough leighway to put together the show. I have tried to assemble the best work I have done since my last show there, so I see this very much as a continuation of that. For the record, The Destruction of Lower Manhattan will be published by MacMillan in Sept. The Prison book should be available by next February, that is in a year, and I hope will be published by Knopf. That is not yet settled, but I'm sure will be before the show. One of the greatest satisfactions for me from such a show is to see for the first time a picture from one set, or project, next to something say from the prison. Because of the way I have been working, particularly with making books out of the projects, I have been so tied down to a kind of glorified reporting role that I never have the chance to stop and see a portrait of my own friends (Rachel, three boys in Colorado) next to a portrait of a convict, who is also my friend. The worlds are so ~~se~~ separated that I hardly believe that they are even united through my own experience, which they are, and only when I try to mix up the subjects in the pictures can I see that they are one world. It is difficult to mix the subjects in this way, but when the strength of the images allows it, it is very gratifying.

I have often been distressed as the thought of you leaving your position there. Many people I have seen have been equally concerned. If there ever any way that I might be of help to you please let me know. Friendship aside I have always felt that you were the most important person in the field of photography, and it is very important to people like myself that you remain active in that field. I ~~was~~ hoping that Magnum will undergo a radical change. Many people are very unhappy with it, as they should be, and Marc Reboud is trying to unite the discontented, which are the only good photographers in it, and take over. If that happened than maybe Magnum could again be something to be proud of. Maybe if that happened you could work with Magnum in connection with publishing and working with young people outside of Magnum. I offer that idea to you for what ever it is worth to you.

I am going to try to give you a caption list for the prints that are at the Guggenheim Foundation. However difficult it is to follow, I think it will be better than nothing. All the prison pictures were made within the Texas Department of Corrections, on a number of different prisons.

description	title
1 Man in shower	New arrivals, Texas Prison
2 Man in handcuffs	New Arrival, " "
3 Work gangs with fence in foreground	Ferguson Prison Farm, Midway, Tex.
4 Men running across top of picture, guns hanging to right	The line returning from work, seen from a picket tower, Ferguson.
5 Young men in hall way	Corridor, Ferguson Prison
6 Cotton pickers	Cotton pickers, Ferguson
7 Three young men on bench	Zahn, Gunn and Odum, The Walls, Huntsville, Texas
8 Portrait of Jones, <del>Vertical</del> <i>HORIZONTAL</i>	Aaron Evert Jones, The Walls
9 Men sitting on benches, cells in background	Cellblock, Ramsey Prison
10 Man with cotton flower in mouth	Cotton picker, life sentence, Ramsey Prison
11 Negro being searched	Shakedown, ramsey

- 12 Man with hands in air  
 13 Man with dogs  
 14 Man looking through bars with cross (shadow) on face  
 15 Young man looking between bars  
 16 Young man looking through bars with bar crossing his eyes  
 17 Man being carried from field  
 18 Man in back of truck with ice on chest  
 19 Young man with hoe stick, tattoos on arms  
 20 Negro holding jacket and being searched in foreground, line being searched  
 21 Men in woods  
 22 Boy lifting homemade weights  
 23 Five convicts of trailer truck  
 24 Man between two houses  
 25 Young man with cotton sack on shoulders  
 26 Negroes in rain  
 27 Cell interior (24)  
 28 THE YARD, MAN WITH TATOO ON BACK WORKING OUT — THE YARD, WALLS  
 See you soon I hope,

Shakedwon, Ellis Prison  
 Dogboy, Ellis Prison

Ellis Prison  
 Ramsey Prison

Charlie Lowe, life sentence,  
 murder, Ellis Prison  
 Heat exhaustion, Ellis  
 Heat exhaustion, Ramsey

Ellis

Shakedwon, Ellis  
 Clearing land, Ellis  
 Ramsey  
 Fifteen, Five, thirty five,  
~~fifteen~~ seven and fifteen years,  
 Ramsey

Water boy, Ramsey  
 Cotton picker, ten years, Ramsey  
 Squad returns from work, Ramsey

Cell interior, WALLS

Cell interior, WALLS

Danny

P.S. Radel + I are very well. Hope to return to Texas in a week or two.

Robert's film opens today. A great event. I see I've left out some of the captions. Also an idea. Can we call the show "Prison and the Free World" or "pictures of Prison and the Free World"?

March 25, 1969

Dear Hugh,

Robert + Rachel + I were all in New Mexico together. We went skiing, which I don't know how to do, and now I'm on crutches. It is easier to ski than it is to use crutches, I am very happy to be with Robert, Rachel + I as well. On the 16<sup>th</sup> I was 27. I got a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation. Thank you for recommending me three different times, I am glad it has paid off at last. The only things I might add to the show are the following: two or three photographs which I colored over in paint + crayon + ink. They look better than the originals (which were weak) and are very pretty. Also a painting (8x10) by a convict, Billy McClure, who has been in prison 12 years. It is called Big Barbara, Chicago, and is based on my photo from the BR's. Billy is a remarkable person and sends me letters and drawings constantly. Rachel + I will come to Chicago for the show. What day does it start? I have to be in Conn. April 13 + I will come to Chicago from N.Y., I guess. It'll be fun working on a movie in a tailor shop. It won't be brilliant, but I have to start somewhere. I hope by working with Robert I can learn about movies. I think of you often. Robert said many kind things about you.

See you soon, Danny

1 Billy's letters + drawings will be part of the text of the PRISON BOOK.