

MEANS OF SURVIVAL

A COLLECTION OF NANCY B JEFFERSON
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STUDENT
ART AND CREATIVE WRITING



TWO
THOUSAND
FIVE

'Nuff Respect

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drawing of hand by an anonymous artist, design by R.K.

Contents

Page

- iv. Introduction
- vi. Invocation

Poetry

- 1. New Day Anthony C.
- 1. Peaceful Brittany W.
- 1. Succeed - Never Give Up Donald S.
- 2. So Happy I'm Still Alive Steve S.
- 2. Life & Death E.M.O.
- 3. She Went For A Ride, Never Came Back Jalisa
- 3. Last Breaths Elijah M.
- 4. Memories Of Michael Q.
- 4. The Streets Steve S.
- 5. Why Do Kids Die Young Valentino M.
- 5. Watch Yo Mouth Anonymous
- 5. Me and My Buddy Antwan
- 6. I F***ed Up Nicholas S.
- 6. Sometimes Alla C.
- 6. Just A Day On Intake Cordarryl S.
- 7. Stress Barrett C.
- 7. Where We Are Group Poem
- 8. Being Locked Up Steve S.
- 8. Close To A Month In Jail Jeremy K.
- 9. Rebel Tabitha T.
- 9. All These FEARS IN ME Kennedy S.
- 9. Freedom Valentino M.
- 10. Emotion and Peer Pressure Valentino M.
- 10. If I Could Wash Away My Past Pt. 2 Derrick S.
- 11. I Wonder Nate A.
- 12. My Men Jennifer D.
- 12. Where I Live Deontae W.
- 12. Black West Side Girl Felicia T.
- 13. I Remember Back In the Days Jerome W.
- 13. Preschool Stephen C.
- 14. I Regret Teairia I.
- 14. Human Nate A.
- 14. j.d. - protectin the innocent avery r. young
- 15. To Love You More Steve S.
- 15. Showing True Feelings Crystal T.
- 15. If You Knew Anonymous
- 16. Unwilling Devotion Gregory W.
- 16. Audy Home Valentine's Day
Form Letter Composite Male Resident
- 17. First Sight Sade E.
- 17. You F***ed Wit' Da Wrong One Anonymous
- 18. I'm Gonna Get You Back Katrina D.
- 18. Blindness Sadieh
- 18. Hidden Love Kalifa
- 19. One In Paradise Kalifa
- 19. Sophisticated Woman Kadafi
- 20. My Distant Lover Anthony C.
- 20. My Wish Calvin
- 20. I Am Patricia V.
- 21. Treating You Right Orlando S.
- 21. Haiku Cynthia B.

21. I Was Raised Trina
22. Mother and Daughter E.M.O.
22. I Was Raised Felicia T.
23. Why? Hanna F.
23. When Will It Stop? Talisha H.
23. Grandma Called DCFS Ronald C.
24. Mommy Wasn't There Elijah M.
25. Daddy Wasn't There Elijah M.
25. Pops Why? Pt. 2 Anonymous
26. Rape Sade E.
26. Five Darwin
26. Who Am I? Anastasia O.
27. Audy Home Dream Michael R.
27. I See Death Steve S.
27. A Soldier's Cry Anonymous
28. The Life of Nate Nate A.
28. I Don't Know Why This Man
 Don't Like Me Fredderick S. & Dion C.
29. After I Got Out Of Jail Anonymous
29. Police Cars Friends Timothy P.
29. The Leg Rakeem S.
30. Life Dorothea B.
30. Hollow Anthony C.
31. When I Melissa J.
31. Cursed Hosea J.
32. Crowded In the Hall Dan Dillon
32. Why Does A Bust Down Bust? Brittney S.
32. Why? Kristana
33. All I Wanna Be Is Free Michael Q.
33. Gone Too Long Anonymous
33. Haiku Samella R.
34. On The Dark Yoshi
35. Should Have Realized Before Nicholas S.
35. Letter From Dad Andre W.
36. I Miss You Jennifer D.
36. I Realize What I Lost Now Katrina D.
37. Missing You Pedro D.
37. Special Lady Kalifa
38. I Remember Steve S.
38. Sending Up 4E Marlon R.
39. Office Life Kim Hunter
39. Changed By Mistake Ken K.
39. Life Is Short Anonymous
40. EVERY-MINUTE Derrick S.
40. The Drive Dan Dillon
41. Leaving Out Deon R.
42. Wake Up Blackman Kadafi
42. My Past Kalifa
43. Making My Life Right Lwanda S.
43. Angel Ronald C.
44. Life Kenneth S.
44. Darkness Barrett C.
45. These People Trina
45. In My Hands Steve S.
46. This Beginning and End
 Of A Gangbanger Life Michael Q.
46. Why Charles H.
46. Dream Poem Nate A.
47. The Person I Want To Be Nate A.
47. My Shoes Robert W.

- 47. I Is Anonymous
- 48. From Dope Fiend To Young Queen Regina J.
- 50. I Am Anonymous
- 50. I Wonder Charles H.
- 51. Why? Kalifa
- 51. The Bush Way Timothy L.
- 52. My Disability George R.
- 52. Revenge Marquis C.
- 53. Grandma Brittney S.
- 53. I Am Dominique C.
- 54. Free Peace Kadafi
- 54. In My Dreams Kalifa
- 55. Upon It All Deandre B.

Autobiography

- 58. Story Of My Life (excerpt) Cordarryl S.
- 60. The Life Of A Young Gay Man (excerpt) . . . Jonathan H.
- 63. My Problem, My Solution Kadafi
- 66. My First Love A.J.

Visual Art

- 2. "Demon" Elijah M.
- 7. "My Vision" Orlando S.
- 11. "Only God Can Judge Me" Nicholas S.
- 19. "Tiara" Ronald C.
- 24. "9-1-1" Elijah M.
- 37. "Cat" Cordarryl S.
- 38. "Monster" Willie M.
- 38. "Yo!" Willie M.
- 41. "Story Of My Life" Cordarryl S.
- 50. "Dream Come True" ??? (peep tha signature!!)
- 55. "Ocean Sunset" Elijah M.
- 65. "Sticker" Mia Ferreira

Introduction

to free/right or why a book

By avery r. young

1.
language should never swim in boxes. it should river droves of midnight violets
n midmornin gol ds. it should pierce hearin n lip lock with sight. it should
alarm bees awoke n lullaby giants asleep. it should ride beat box of car horns
n crickets as emcee Reality. it should swoosh n spring n swish n swirl n swash
n swoop n swing n soprano.

language should drum.

2.
boys n girls need not to know prisons. they should only inhale the perfume of
hugs n be soiled by attention. they should crayola they imaginations with
anecdotes passed along by fathers n tamales prepared by mothers. they should
soak in warmth of knitted quilts n float on mist of collard greens boilin. They
should speak two tongues flo-etically n count quad-droople-catrillion durin
double-dutch sessions. they should cotton candy n amusement park n learn stars
n giggle prayers.

boys n girls should leap.

3.
anthologies must not collect dust. them should flip round sunshine n lament
honest emotions no mater how blunt n abrasive. they should have legs n secrets
n ideologies n rhythms. they should cut cheese n belch n scratch dandruff n
pick at scab. they should stuff pillows with reasons to ovah-stand collected
voices form a hammer to bam a world better.

anthologies should thunder.

4.
teachin art is not pullin teeth _
its poki n holes
in misguided inner-gee
n allowin peach trees to seep through.

5.
i'se got learnt ghetto inside its meter of j. bees n pac _ joplin n b.b. king _
mahalla n titto puente. i'se got learnt voice framin stanzas of keats n hughes _
neruda n sonia _ emily dickinson n perdomo _ gordon/rosa parks n nina simone.
i'se got learnt revolution freedom underneath basements of tubman n afros _
burnin bras n sit-ins _ hymns n dance ... readin/writin n hands ajar.

i'se got learnt redemption kicks.

6.
i'se know words mo/dagger than pillow. i'se know documentation mo/oxygen than
proof. i'se know work mo/reason than rent.

i'se know tyesa loves to sonnet her walls _ terry jo transforms poli-tricks into
act-shawns _ ryans pops locks ... avery observes loudly _ george is genius _ p.
arthur is magic _ josh reads ... lisa reaches.

i'se know educators who meet at round tables desire to inform education that
words be change.

7.
this be block story gleaned from classroom n bunk n memory n shower n street n
solitude n conga n heartache n madness _ tug-a-war with truth n privacy _

bunched-up some-time-ago-moments that remain as attached as nose hair _ young
men n women strangled by screech of poverty n despair n rainbows n
misrepresentation _ images that glare out smog of misfortune _ hallways of
obscenities n weed clouds _ bedrooms of broken hearts n rattled minds.

this be _
rhyme n security
ink n p-o
discipline n public defenders
tangible n lock down
july n fire drills
christmas n eye witnesses
pecan cobbler n openin remarks.

i'se know big mamas joy be release dates _
n this be sweat from sky.

a. r. y.
April 11, 2005

Invocation

This story is a love story, a hate story, an
adventure, a journey, a drama, a creation, a
mystery, a horror...This is the story of my life.

Rachael G.

The best time to breathe
is when you are about to drown.

Ronald C.

Means Of Survival

Poetry

New Day

Waking up to a new day,
Lights of inspiration and sunrays,

Sounds echoing through the air,
Full of snow from the winter,
And cars trying to get from here to there,

Smells of fresh food fills my nostrils,
As I inhale the taste of the morning breeze,
Getting ready to anticipate new and trying obstacles,

While my heart is full of love,
Because the morning is my friend
like the meaning of two turtle doves,
I love to embrace it and give it a warm loving hug,

If the morning wasn't here,
My life would be full of grief and despair,

With the feeling of this pleasurable joy,
My life will stay with memorable moments to make me rejoice,

So homage to the maker,
Because I love this beautiful time of day,
That is why I always give praise to the creator.

Anthony C.

Peaceful

Peaceful is a place between heaven and earth,
Where everything's beautiful and has its worth.

Its color is blue maybe, even white.
Like the stars and the moon, it's all so bright.

It shines like the sun and might be fun,
but it's a place where your life has just begun.

Brittany W.

Succeed - Never Give Up

When things are not right, and they're
going wrong;
Try your best to strike back strong!

When life and yourself is full of
pain; so gloomy and blistering
throughout the rain.

Try to succeed; and you'll
be known - for this point,
You must hold on.

Donald S.

So Happy That I'm Still Alive

Where I'm from, I'm from the hundreds
where the young die early
where mothers cry hard
from seeing their child's getting buried
lil' kids run around starving with nothing to eat
no money, no clothes, no decent shoes on their feet.
G's on the block gangbangin' all day and all night
selling blows, selling weed, selling rocks to hypes.
Nobody gave a f*** so I did some dirt
sold rocks, shot gunz, and even sinned in church.
I even stuck people up, I even stole out of stores,
I even put gunz on the block when it was time for war.
I even shed a few tears when my nieces was born
I can't stop thinking about the dead
how long will I mourn?
It was the new millennium
when a lot of things fell apart
seeing my family and friends dying
it hurt my heart
where the hell is Lil' Timmy, Wendy
and my uncle L.C., Josh, Wild Wild
may they all rest in peace
I'm going to keep it real
please let their souls survive
thank God, I'm so happy that I'm still alive.

Steve S.



"Demon" -
Elijah M.

Life & Death

Life is scary.
Well, it scares me,
beaten, raped, mistreated.
The world doesn't know me.
They don't care.
If I could tell & help
then I would,
but nobody believes.
No. Not you,
You are YOU.
My hard looks, my walk, my talk,
even the fights.
I could fool the world.
No, not you, but they
don't know how hard I've had it.
2 years, 2 months and 2 weeks
was my sentence and nobody knew.
They just thought
Oh well, you're going home
and death isn't an option
'cause people are too scared
to do it for me and I am
too scared to do it for myself.
My best friend died so I
learned from her mistake
because it was a mistake.
Life is hard and death isn't
an option.

E.M.O.

She Went for a Ride, Never Came Back

How was your day?
Someone asks as I
pick up a bottle of Remy
then take a sip of my drink
and start to think
of how my day weighs until now.

I went to school
then smoked a B in the bathroom
and continued to my class.
After school, I went to
the bus stop and just chilled with a couple of friends,
got on the bus and went to
my brother's tip and dat's where
my story, so far, ends.

I get up to leave
and open the door
and headed toward the bus stop.
Some dudes in a 'lac
came where I was at.
They asked me where I was going.
Me, being gone from taking 7 blunts to the dome,
I told them I'm going home.
We got in the car and stopped at the store.
A gallon of Bacardi we drunk in the hotel,
where I can't remember,
but I do know I never woke up.

Jalisa

Last Breaths

I'm rollin' down the block having fun,
when all of a sudden my best friend passes me a gun.
So my mind is racing,
thinking of the time I'm going to be facing.

While I'm looking at Tim,
my best friend yelled, "Shoot him!"
Not willing to use my voice,
I knew to make a choice.

Feeling pressured and confused
I pulled the trigger.
Now I know my problems just got
a whole lot bigger.

Tim fell and landed on his back,
then his boys were ready to attack.
My best friend pulled out his gun,
now I have to bounce like Tigger or run.

Everyone knows that when the truth is told
you will realize who's your true friend.
But it cuts like a knife when it was your so-called
best friend who tricked on you in the end.

Elijah M.

Memories of

Memories of my past
When I decide to join
Join the gang
Memories of.....
When I got violated for about a minute and a half
I shook up with all the brothers
and began drinking and cheafing
we smoked a couple of blunts
and we tried 2 lite the last blunt
nine shots went out. it was a 9mm pistol
and then all the brothers ran out
to the busy street which is Lawrence and I had
Memories of.....
That one n***a that didn't gangbang
but love to play basketball and listen to his cd's and the
Memories of.....
Me retaliating at the n***as who
shot that young n***a who love 2 play ball and listen to his music.
So I did what I had 2 do
and that's the Memories of a young Hispanic kid.

Michael Q.

The Streets

These are the streets
you are welcome, but a lot of dirt goes on
even if you clean you f*** around and
get killed in your home.
I done seen people get shot over the pettiest things.
Can you picture getting killed over a chain and ring?
These are the streets we are born in.
That why we all do crime,
gangbanging on the block out here ready to die.
You know the streets can swallow you up
like the sewer do water.
If you survive the game you will make it.
The streets get you smarter, it's something like a school but its
one thing strictly you got to abide by the rules.
If you are true you won't have nothing to worry about.
If you want something to be done
you can send your guys out
but it's one thing important
you get caught and snitch
you will end up dead somewhere in a ditch.
Let me put you up on something:
Stay cool and just chill because
a wise man learn and a fool never will.
These are the basics of the game,
I ain't going too deep.
I f*** around and get killed
over the words I speak.

Steve S.

Why Do Kids Die Young

Dying young is not a choice
even if you go church
because when you die it really hurts
for people who really miss your voice

Where I'm from
kids loaded with guns
at the ages of ten
they wanted to be thugs
just to be true
so they do the thing
that the old cats do
some things you ain't even no you can do
like selling drugs, smoking weed
drinking VSOP, Remy or Hennessy
just because you heard the rapper talk about it on TV

In my hood they put a police station across the street and it don't
do nothing but bring heat
like putting people six feet deep
because they stop people hustling
so they move somewhere else
and try to take over somebody's hood just to eat.
Putting guns on innocent people
just so they can see the penitentiary
Putting drugs on people to keep them off the street
and the beef is way worse than rotten meat.

Valentino M.

Me and My Buddy

Me and my buddy, he have nine shots.
Once I was on a mission in the hood
to stick everybody up that was selling
drugs on my block.
Riding around listening to my rap music
Looking at everybody that's out on the block
selling drugs.
The first person was very easy to rob.
The second person ran,
So he had to get shot by my buddy.
The third person was also hard because he
had fought back.
But my buddy went across his skull
and he was crying like a little girl
If I was not to complete the stick-up
I was going to be broke.

Antwan

Watch Yo Mouth

Time 2 die
Just open your eyes
So u can c
Whats in ya face
Long chrome
Hammers
Have u eatin
Bananas
Catch u sleepin
In ya pajamas
But I go by
the code of
the street
So watch yo
Mouth
When u speak
About me
.

Anonymous

I F***ed Up

You told me I would go to jail and that I would get caught
I f***ed up my life and it's all my fault
I'm in jail now and there ain't sh*t I can do
But say I love my family and I love you
I should have listened or saw it coming but I was deaf and blind
and I regret leaving my friends and family behind.
I know you worry about me. Don't worry, I'm fine.
Knowing that I can't see you too gives me
 a chill down my spine.
I hope I'm found innocent or else 25 to life,
And I really do want you to be my smart and beautiful wife.
I dream about you everyday and think about you all the time,
and I hope I get out cuz I never committed this crime.
You and I both really know what is true,
So wipe your tears and dry your eyes because I love you.

Nicholas S.

Sometimes

Sometimes I think about home.
 My bed, my room,
 My family around,
 The mornings with sunshine,
 The home-cooked meals.
Sometimes I think about freedom.
 No more being alone,
 No more being upset.
 Sometime, I will be home.
 Maybe today, Maybe tomorrow.

Alla C.

Just A Day On Intake

Just a day on intake can make you sick.
Just a day on intake make you think I hate this sh*t.
Just a day on intake makes you think twice.
Just a day on intake you feel things ain't right.
Being on intake you wish you had another chance.
But when you do get another chance you start off good
 Then you slowly fall off and before you know it
 you're back on intake again.
And when you go upstairs people keep asking what you are. And if
 you cool with the staff kids hate on you and try to fight you.
 Sometimes you fight them
 and sometimes you leave it alone.
But then you fight to prove a point.
And before you know it it's time for you
 to sit in a cell in your new home.

Cordarryl S.

Stress

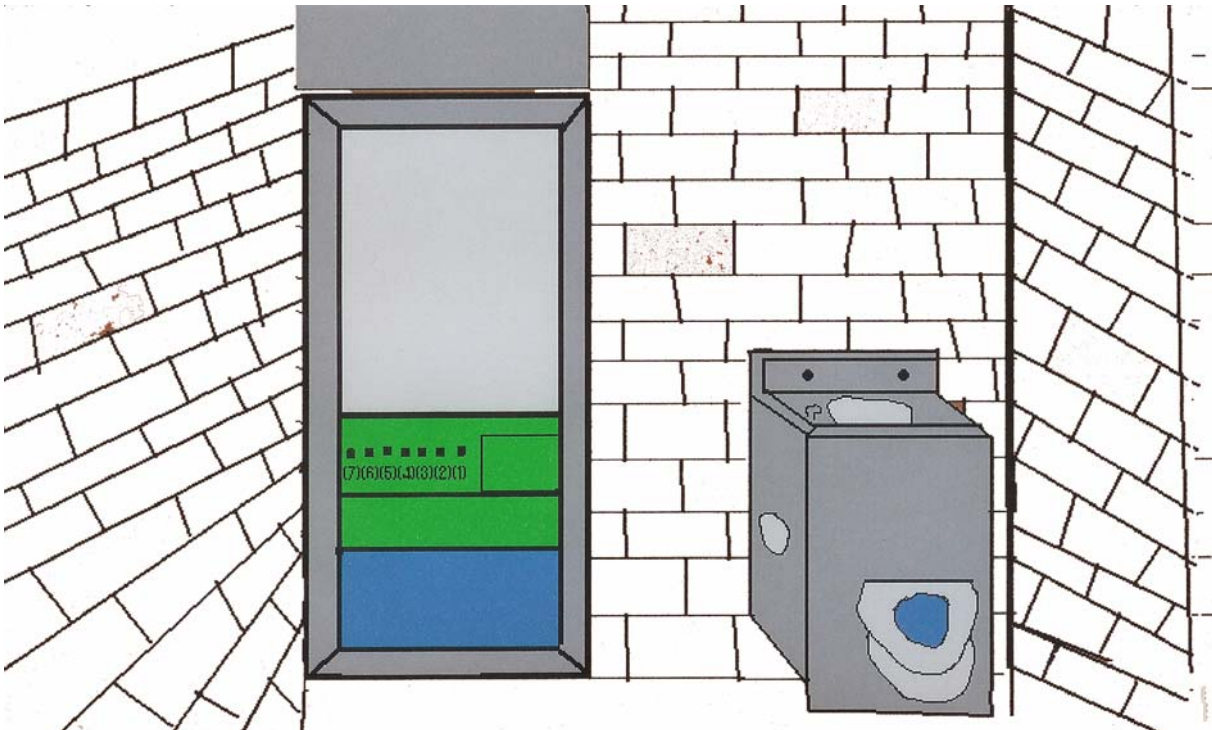
Nobody knows until one's in jail.
It all starts when the judge declares no bail.
Straight to your cell without saying goodbye.
Waving to your loved ones as they cry, cry, cry.
Worrying about your child or a letter from home.
Not to mention residents of all kinds
wanting to bust your dome.
Stress so high you can feel the growing rage;
Like a wild blue-eyed wolf locked in a cage.
The pain of stress is only a reminder I'm still alive;
But I can do without all this freaking jive.
They say stress can cause you an early death.
If this is true, I'm on my last breath.

Barrett C.

Where We Are

This place is white and fine on the outside,
but brown and rotten on the inside.
This place is as dumb as a cow,
and it smells like skunk.
It's a giant spider making its web, capturing us.
Bad days in here are like thunder and lightning
because everyone's screaming like banshees.
This place is like something out of a thrift store.
It's always raining here.
This is hell.

Group poem written by NBJ Students



"My Vision" - Orlando S.

Being Locked Up

Being locked up ain't nothing nice.
Being locked up you barely have rights.
Being locked up there's nowhere to go.
Being locked up is killing me slow.
Being locked up sh*t ain't the same.
Being locked up got me insane.
Being locked up ain't nothing like the bricks.
Being locked up got me feeling life ain't shit.
Being locked up sometimes I'm a dead man walking.

Being locked up man life is a bargain.
Being locked up you know you a target.
Being locked up ain't no smart thing.
Being locked up is a waste of time.
Being locked up you can't even shine.
Being locked up is hurting my peeps.
My mom told me some days she can't even sleep.
Being locked up a lot of stress on your back
worse than a fiend when they smoking crack.
Being locked up ain't a place for no one
So stay out of trouble and do not be a victim.

Steve S.

Close To A Month In Jail

Close to a month and jail
Haven't been to court
only 16, not able to make bail
all I can do is think about things,
do what someone say
that's why it's been close to a month in jail
by 8:00pm I have to be in the cell
I sit back and watch all the days go by
with no hope, no farewells,
no one to visit me, when they leave, no good-bye
it feels like I have already died
when I wish I was at home instead layin' in my bed
but I'm in here,
all I see is colors of red
like it's the color of doom
I wish I was somewhere else instead of this room
somewhere besides here,
somewhere like McDonalds pushing a broom
I stand and lean up on a rail
It's been close to a month and jail.

Jeremy K.

Rebel

I am a rebel
sidetracked by the county doors.

So I use my mind
to animate the time.

The world seems so small now
because I'm disgruntled,
because I miss the parties I used to attend.

Someone please help me
to mend this odd feeling,
to keep me focused and planted in the right direction.

Like a radish
planted in the ground
with its roots still attached.

Tabitha T.

All These FEARS IN ME

I'm locked in this cell that feels like hell
All alone behind these bars
watching the guards pass me by.
Tears crawling down my face
wishing I was never in this place.
Reminiscing on being free
and tormented by
these fears in me.

Kennedy S.

Freedom

Freedom is not here, freedom is outside of here
Freedom is at home when you don't got to ask to use the phone
Freedom is like a bear that won't sleep in peace
Freedom is at home when you use the bathroom on your own
Freedom is everywhere
except the Audy Home
Freedom is like a pirate that love singin' songs
Freedom is a living thing
Freedom is a moving thing
Freedom is a bomb that don't work
Freedom is like a gun that when you shoot no one get hurt
Freedom is like a garden that's full of dirt
Freedom is love, freedom is peace, freedom is trust
Freedom is inside of me
So I will end this story with peace.

Valentino M.

Emotion and Peer Pressure

Dealing with emotion is really tough
even if you go outside and other gangs say what up
As soon as you hit a move
they pull out a gun and bust at you
that's only for big and brave n***as
that think they can't be touched
That's why it mess with my mind
I don't no who to trust
Emotions is tough

Peer pressure
Now you a free man
Soon as you hit the land
in your face is a big hand
with something to smoke
If you say no folks will call you a h**
now you take a walk outside chillin' on the block,
maintaining, sipping on a pop
and you sitting in one spot.
A couple minutes passed,
there go the police with a whole jab of rock
they put it on you
because you was sitting on the block.
Peer pressure is very tough
Trying to survive
on the block in between the peer pressure
and all the crooked cops

Valentino M.

If I Could Wash Away My Past Pt. 2

Because of my past
Awful bad, dreadful I've been cast.
I feel lost, knowing not what to do,
where to go now or whom to be fair to.
Totally stressed, inside and out.

Because of those days,
Stumbling around in a maze,
as my beautiful candle burned out,
shadow, now haunts me.

I'm clearly not here.
I have lost all that is dear.
I should give up, or perhaps
already have.
I feel my life is over, there is no salve.
Only stress, inside and out.

I'm embarrassed and hurting,
and so terribly ashamed,
Guilt-ridden and sorry for the trouble
for others
on them I've blamed.
And me
I cry inside and out.

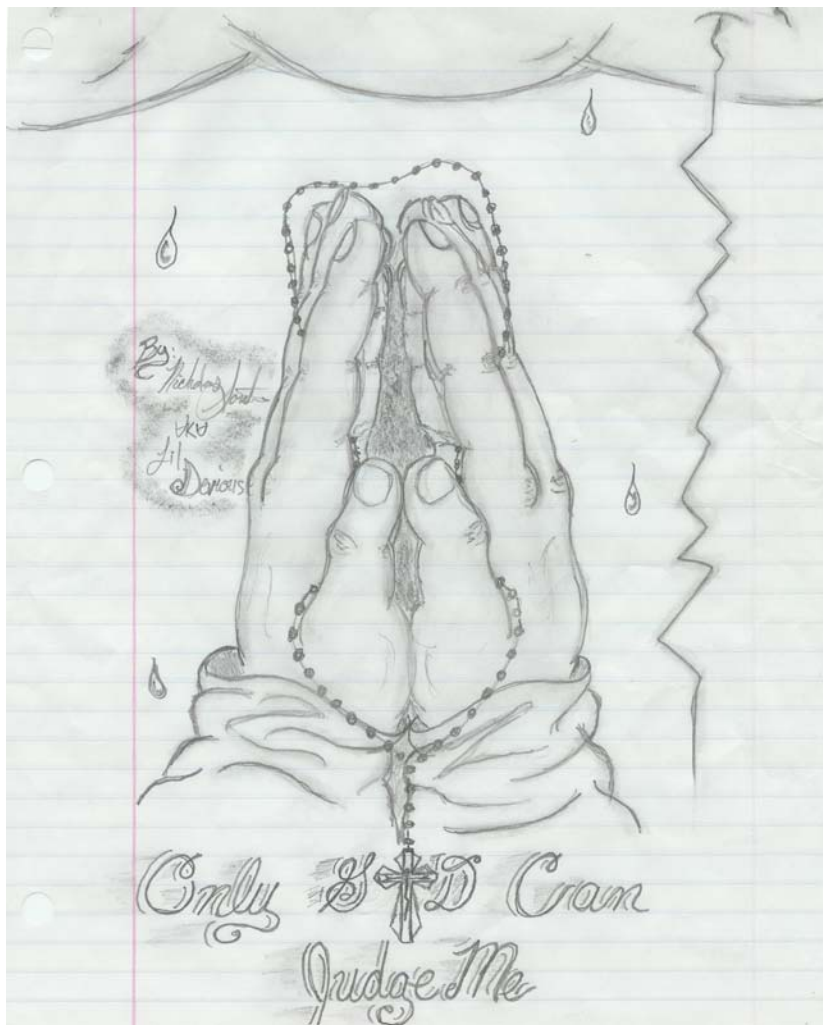
Written by my mom, dedicated to me.

Derrick S.

I Wonder

I wonder if I was never looking
up to drug dealers and my cousins.
Where would I be? I wonder
if I would never stay out late
hanging with dealers. I wonder
if I would have said no, I don't want
to work them blows. I wonder if
I would have said no I don't want
to sell them rocks. I wonder if
I would have said no you don't need
to front me an ounce, I don't sell
drugs. I wonder if I would not
ask can I buy some ounces. I
wonder if my cousin never asked
me to sell that ounce for him.
I wonder if I never said yes
to selling drugs where would I be?

Nate A.



"Only God
Can Judge
Me" -
Nicholas S.

My Men

I was raised by thug walkin', sh*t talkin',
blunt smokin', square takin', rap type men.
My Brother.
I was raised by Cool Water & Jordan wearin',
loud speakin', baby rockin', ball playin',
gangbangin' type men.
My Uncles.
I was raised by soul food cookin',
sayin' *it's alright baby*
been workin' late lately,
where my grandbaby talkin', sharp dressin',
oldies listenin' type of man.
My Daddy.

Jennifer D.

Where I Live

Where I live people like to fight.
Where I live people don't have a house
to go to at night.
Where I live the kids don't go to school.
Where I live they break all the rules.
Where I live the kids carry guns.
Where I live they say it just for fun.
Where I live people stay on the corner.
Where I live guns can put you under.
Where I live little kids like to smoke.
Where his mom and dad was on the side
looking at him choke.
Where I live people say there are no rules
but kids like me try to stay on the right path
and go to school.
This is where I live.

Deontae W.

Black West Side Girl

What it's like being a black West Side girl
Well, it's kind of hard because you got
other Black girls competing against you
all the time. Some of them are jealous. Some
be hating because you have more than them.
Some girls don't like you and want to
fight you because you stole their man
or they could just be on something with you,
but it's hard being me because everywhere
I go on the West Side some female want to fight
me, any and everywhere. But a strong-minded
female like me ignores all of the negative stuff
around me. That's why I stay to myself because
some females are no good.

Felicia T.

I Remember Back In The Days

I remember back in the days
when I was a little boy
I was bad out there

I remember the days
When I used to break windows
and run

I remember
When I used to
talk back to my mom
But look where I am now

I remember my mom
always used to tell me
Do not go out there sell drugs
because I had everything I wanted in my life
I did not have to do that

But now I should listen
to my grandmother
I love my grandmother
I hope the good Lord forgives me
for all the bad things I did.

Jerome W.

Preschool

Before my granddaddy and I would go to the school,
my grandmother would cook us breakfast.
Before we leave she would give us pop and juices.
One day I went to school and
was ready to get on the teacher's nerves.
The teacher let the whole class
go to the bathroom at the same time.
I only got some water.
Soon as we got back I was ready to use it.
However, at the same time
we just come back from the bathroom
and the teachers would not let me go back.
I told them if I cannot use it
I would use it in the garbage.
Then I pull my pants down.
Before I could get to the garbage
the teacher call my granddaddy
and he came into the class and grabbed me.
At the same time I did not get suspended,
but I did get kicked out a minute.
However, when it all ended I still graduated.

Stephen C.

I Regret

The day I ever got into a fight with that B.
I regret the day I fought with her sister.
I regret stealing and selling the parts to those cars.
I regret opening my legs for that so-called male maturity.
I regret saying the words "I love you" to that boy.
I regret hanging out with the wrong crowd.
I regret...

Teairia I.

j.d. protectin the innocent

cant read him name on paper
cant read cat/run/fast
cant read room number
cant read why him here

would think him stevie wonder
but him eyes work

real well along frame
of some city gul
with country curves...
yes him like a lot of those

n him fight
eryday if him have to

today him fought stone n window
to be free
to fight powers
that told poe-poe where him was hidin

these powers look like ms. miner
candy store in livin room
stabbin husband on backporch
cause her must accept another child
that aint come from her

these powers look like mr. thomas
downtown trapped in briefcase
interruptin alley ball
with invitations
to him crib fo/leaf n gameboy

these powers look like tt cc
always in skirts
even when snow is at knees
always in bright colors
even at funerals
her refuses to buy black
to mourn
or teddy bears fo/trees

Human

I'm like a bird, I fly high
then I'm back down low.
Like a bird every time I
try to fly high the pressure
pull me down. Like a bird
when I try to do something
good I get shooed away. I'm
like a bird, I have to hustle
to get my food. Like a bird I
have to go find a shelter.
Like a bird it's always a flock
that don't want me around.
Like a bird that when I'm
old enough to fly I leave
the nest. I wish I could
stop being like a bird and be
human.

Nate A.

these powers look like me
a poet teachin
mathematics through haiku

who wants him to read
who wants him to fight

but read n fight fo/him mama
who knows that AIDS has her tired
all the time now but
her still brings him gymshoes
to get him to smile
cause him smile
all the cocktail her needs

him cant read
but him gonna
if its the last poem i'se do

him gonna be able
to read

avery r. young

To Love You More

I try so hard to love you more.
To hold you in my arms like never before.
To take you out the hood and see a better place.
Girl, I love to see a smile on your face.
I see it in your eyes that you love your boy.
But through the hard times it do not show.
But when I see you I just want to love you more.
To hold you in my arms like never before.
I want to be with you girl until the end.
To the day that I die or the day that I dim.
I've had dreams of us being together for years.
To escape this world from all our peers.
You say that you love me and I take your word.
I get high off your love like it is an herb.
Everytime that I see you I feel real good.
Because I love the way you walk,
and the way that you look.
But I just want to love you more
and hold you in my arms like never before.

Steve S.

Showing True Feelings

When I first met you
I was afraid to look at you.

When I looked at you
I was afraid to kiss you.

When I kissed you
I was afraid to hug you.

When I hugged you
I was afraid to love you.

When I fell in love with you
I was afraid to lose you.

Crystal T.

If You Knew

If you know how much I love you,
So I will tell you
As the sun and the moon crosses the sky
My love for you will never die
Hear me as you hear the birds
And the winds through your curls
I speak to you from my heart
And even though we are physically apart
My love for you is as constant as the rain
So take heed my love and know it
will never change!

Anonymous

Unwilling Devotion

I can't breathe with all this oxygen around
Since you are my air
I can't see with my eyes so wide open because
You're simply an eye full
My joy thrives on your exhale and my relief
Depends on your inhale
You make me vulnerable and it's disgusting
I hate that I want you and I hate not having you
want me, so I hate it all
I'm drunk off your scent and high off your taste
You're in my pores and I feel filthy
You've become the dictator of my mind and the
Thief of my heart
I can't take it and I want to hate you, but it seems
that I just can't get enough of you
So I guess that make me your zealous slave

Gregory W.

Audy Home Valentine's Day Form Letter

Dear Sweetheart,

I am sorry that we could not be together on Valentine's Day. But I wish we can spend more time with each other. When I get out I'm going to spend all the time in the world with you. I miss you. I be telling my guys about you. These last couple months since I been in here I been really thinking about you. I cry myself to sleep wondering what you're doing. Wondering if we can be a family. It seems like you been away from me too long. I'm going crazy without you. I don't think I can do another month without you. You my queen, my sweetheart, my everything. I wish I could give you the world. I wish we can last forever and ever. It seems like the time I been gone I really know what I been missing. I been realizing that you have feelings too and I got to treat you like a woman. So how are you doing? What are you doing? Have you been thinking about me? I got your letter. That's why I'm writing this letter back to you. Since I been in here you been by my side. I never had no girl like you. You the sweetest girl I ever had. That's why I try to treat you with respect because I do not want to lose you. I hope you be my wife someday. I hope you spend the rest of your life with me and have some little kids. I hope we be together until we get old. When I get out I hope you still be waiting on me because I want to start a whole new life with you. All the things I done in the past, can we put that behind us and start all over? But I know I did you wrong. Can you forgive me? I will try to make it right this time.

Love,

(insert name here)

PS. Happy Valentine's Day

First Sight

When I first laid eyes on you
there was a match
Your pretty eyes looked at mine
and our love attached
If I ever had a chance to let you know how I feel
We'll talk about our problems and discuss the real
You're not a player to the point
'til you break my heart
See you have to understand why we had to part
You cheated on me once
now you got to say good-bye.
You be lucky you still alive

Sade E.

You F***ed Wit' Da Wrong One

We didn't see each other for a long time then school started and I seen you again. I didn't want 2 talk wit someone like you becuz of how we left off.

One day I change my point of view and started talking 2 you. We got close and became good friends, so I thought.

One day we met up in a conversation that end up me + you gettin' up and gettin' in bed together becuz I didn't get you a birthday gift.

One weekend you drop a hint 2 come over so we could do some things.

That Monday I stopped by wit' a dum reason that someone came over and I didn't wanna be there, we ended up going upstairs and gettin' busy twice. I felt so used.

We did it so many times but I never felt any love or feelings 2 you or what we were doing. This change all my reasons for being wit' you.

Four weeks later we ended up in the car going back 2 a place I didn't wanna be. Why did you do it to me?

Now I'm in the Audy Home thinking of the night you got me jumped over and over again. Me screaming your name 2 help me get the seven gurls off of me. Why?

Now I got 2 get you back. Four weeks of pleasure will never compare 2 the one night of pain I'm going to give 2 you.

You f***ing wit' da wrong one.

Anonymous

I'm Gonna Get You Back

You played with me and got
in my face and then got
kicked in the face. Didn't
you learn?

I'm gonna get you back.

You gave me dirty looks
and looked me up and down because
I had something you want.
You play too much.

Didn't you know I'm gonna get
you back.

You had friends & family
jump on me and kill my baby
and give me bumps and bruises,
but don't you know who I am?
I'm Katrina D.
You f***ed with
the wrong one.

I'm gonna get you back.

Katrina D.

Hidden Love

I hid my love, when young till I
Couldn't bear the buzzing of a fly.
I hid my love to my despite,
Till I couldn't bear to look at light.
I didn't look upon her face,
But left her memory in each place.
Where I saw a wild flower lie,
I kiss and command my love goodbye.
The lost breeze kissed her dark brown eye,
The bee kissed and went singing by.
As secret as the wild bee's song,
I lay there all year long.
I hid my love in field and town,
Till the breeze would knock me down.
And even silence found a tongue,
To haunt me all year long.
The riddle nature could not prove,
Was nothing else but hidden love.

Kalifa

Blindness

I am dead the world,
only to feel, smell and taste.
My face is scarred
forever in disgrace.

Never can I discriminate,
I guess this is love
so I can't hate.

Why, God, cursed at birth?
I can't see the beauty
of your earth.

But I can feel it,
that's all I need
My yearning to see
so solemnly bleeds.

Sadi eh

One In Paradise

You was all to me, love,
For which my soul did pine,
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine,
Dream too bright to last,
Starry hope that did arise,
But to be over cast,
A voice from out the future cries,
On and on, but the past,
Dim gulf, my spirit hovering lies,
Mute, motionless, aghast.
For with me,
The light of life is over,
Such language holds the solemn sea,
To stand upon the shore,
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar.
And all my days are fragrances,
And all my nightly dreams,
Are where my dark eye glances,
And where my footstep gleams,
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams.

Kalifa

Sophisticated Woman

Brown eyes
Black soul
Sophisticated woman
What you do to me
Beauty unimaginable
Unexplainable by
words
Caress your thighs
Joy ride, your curves
Sophisticated woman
Such a joy you bring
Like the happiness felt
When winter springs
Into summer
New life
New growth
New love blooms
Sophisticated woman
No one
Is as fine
Or divine
As I find
You to be
Smile like gold
Paralyzes my soul
Sophisticated woman
What you do to me
I need you desperately
Sophisticated woman

Kadafi



"Tiara" -
Ronald C.

My Distant Lover

Time flows past I just want to embrace and hug her,
Missing her smile full and bright like a wonderful sun ray,
I send her a kiss, or should I say affection,
 while my heart is broken and in dismay,
Foolish thoughts and decision were made,
Like sending back her pictures like our love is gone
 and about to fade,
But I can't let that happen,
Because I am true to her and all her actions,
Even if the task was big or small or, should I say,
 no matter the caption,
Only if my freedom wasn't taken away,
I would have been close to her not this far away,
So with this time spent,
I know soon I will be home and all blessings are heaven sent.

Anthony C.

My Wish

I wish I have
a son one day
So at night
I can look
in his room
and smile

Calvin

I Am

I am pretty like a rose,
sweet as candy.
Skin like cinnamon toast,
long brown hair like licorice candy.

Sometimes I am mad,
like a dog chasing a cat.
I get like the devil.

But if I smoke like a chimney,
I grow calm like the ocean.

Then once again, I am pretty like a rose,
sweet as candy.

Patricia V.

Treating You Right

Thinking of you, bring tears
to my eyes. Just one day we
were planning to meet.
I miss you so much, I pray
every night. I cannot go to
sleep, it isn't right. It's just
no fun when I'm not with you.
I picture your smile
inside my head. I miss you so
much and pray every night
that the angels are watching
you and treating you right.

Orlando S.

Hai ku

I lost my mother
Four years old feeling lonely
I really miss her

Cynthia B.

I Was Raised

I was raised by women
and probably always will.
They had the strength of ten men,
stronger than any steel.

I woke up to the rose's scent
along with the smell of perfume.
These are women's greatest assets
as any man would assume.

They cooked the finest meals
although not always having the fanciest clothes
with children they never made deals.
This all women must know.

I learned much more from them.
I'm glad to say I did learn.
Now, I will teach my own flower to grow her little stem.
I'll grow my own little fern.

Trina

Mother and Daughter

My mother she is lovely, beautiful, and smart
Life dealt her a f***ed up hand
She played it the best way she could
Or so she says
She had six kids, three are locked up
One is alright and the other two
Are out of reach
My mother she keeps things a secret
Afraid of what people might think
Afraid to share her pain
Afraid that what she'll tell me I will not understand
I already know, if she only knew
I already know, I wonder if it would be the same
It's hard sometimes to deal with her
I know she loves me but
Has awkward ways of showing it
She hits me but still comes to see me
She yells but tells me
the difference between heaven and hell
She puts me out and comes looking for me
I am stubborn, so is she
So we will argue, never giving in
But I do wonder
Does she know I love her?

E.M.O.

I Was Raised

I was raised by my Grandma and Father.
Why I was raised by my Grandma & Father is because
my mother left me in an abandoned building.
Well, I won't get into all of that right now.
They raised me pretty good.
I turned out to be almost a good girl.
I go to school every day. I don't disrespect them.
I was raised in Chicago on the West Side of town.
When I moved to my Grandma's, I was a little girl in Pampers.
When I see my Grandma & Father, I get a big smile on my face
because I think of the good things
that they done for me in their lifetime.
When I touch my Grandma, she feels like a big bear to me
My Daddy's like a hardworking daddy
My Grandma smells like some soul food from down South
Daddy smells like Cool Water cologne to me.
When we sit down and eat, we eat soul food.
It tastes good too.

Felicia T.

Why?

Why are there so many bad people in this world?
Why does my stepdad hate me so much?
Why can't he just get along with me?
Why did I have to grow up in a bad world?

Why was I born?
Why was I in foster care half my life, living hard?
Why does my mom not want me?
What's wrong with her?
Why does she try to hurt me and my other siblings?

Why am I here today?
Who should I trust if they're never there for me?
Why do you say you're my mother,
when a mother is supposed to be there
when her kid needs her?

Why?

Hanna F.

When Will It Stop?

She was nine years old,
that's when she was told
her mother left her at nine
for them softbuck dimes.

She never understood herself,
so she learned from her brother
all about wealth.

He walked her through one statement,
that won't nobody alive
ever be a replacement.

She stepped on tippy toe,
but soon her brother showed her
the rainbow.

She soon was alone.
That's when she ran away from home.

Everything that she ever done,
hid behind the shining sun.

Talisha H.

Grandma Called DCFS

Her eyes watery
Her mouth full of slob
Her face vengeful
Her arms shaky
Her hair red and black
Her clothes pink and blue jeans
Her tears red
Like blood hitting the air
Her smell crack
Her bang a laughing stock
Her feet exhausted

Grandma called DCFS
For letting her five year old
son smoke a cigarette

I tricked
Because I was not right.

Ronald C.

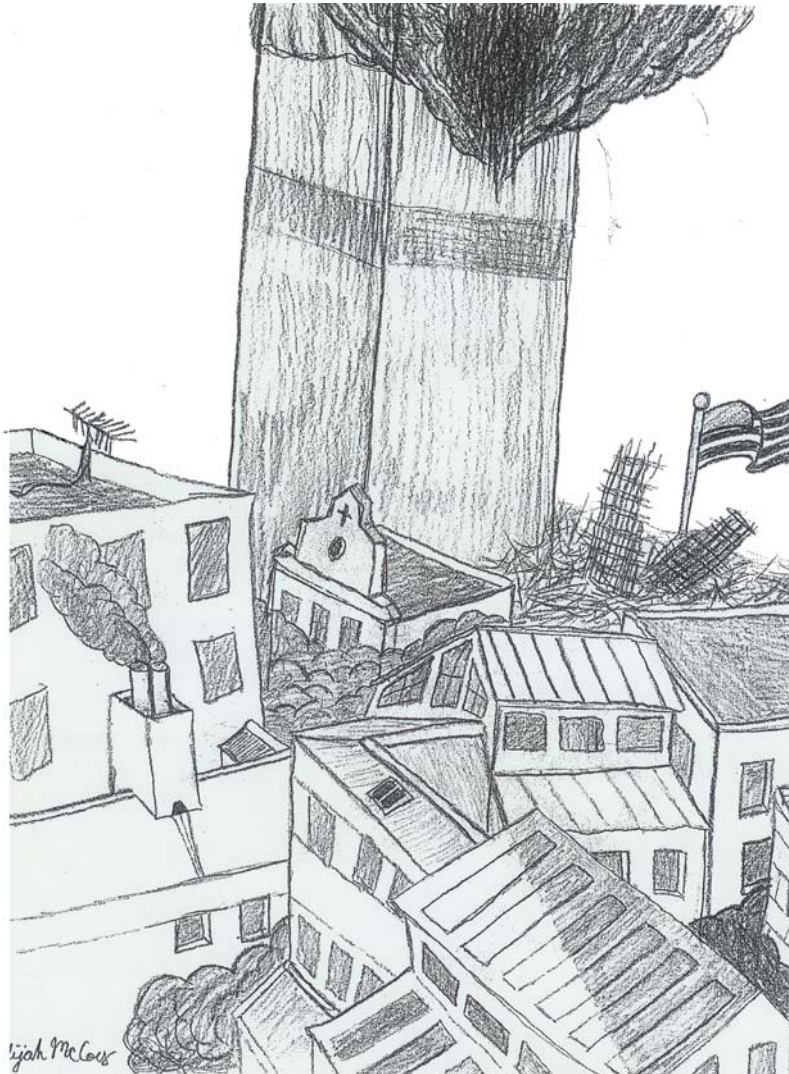
Mommy Wasn't There

Mommy wasn't there in my life,
Mommy wasn't there when I grabbed a knife,
Mommy wasn't there when I got drunk and hit the floor,
And Mommy wasn't there when I said
I can't take it anymore.

Mommy wasn't there when I felt like I wanted to die,
Mommy wasn't there when I gave my final cry,
All I wanted was my mom back and nothing more,
So since I can't have her back there's nothing to live for.

All alone walking the streets of the dirty south,
When I pulled out my gun and put it in my mouth,
Mommy wasn't there to tuck me into bed,
And Mommy wasn't there when the doctor pronounced me dead.

Elijah M.



"9-1-1" - Elijah M.

Daddy Wasn't There

Daddy wasn't there when I turned eight,
Daddy wasn't there to see me graduate,
Daddy wasn't there when my mother had my sister Kate,
And daddy wasn't there when I went out on my first date.

Daddy wasn't there when I needed some advice,
Daddy wasn't there when I had a nightmare twice,
Daddy wasn't there when my wife had our first child,

I hate my dad and I know you can relate,
But my daddy was there to walk
me through heaven's gate.

Elijah M.

Pops Why Part 2

Chorus It's like pops why you keep on leavin' outside
Leavin' us cold, heartbroken, u lonely inside
Pops why you don't wanna be with yo kids
Its kinds hard to accept what you did

Verse 1 Pops it's been years since we shared tears
Told our deepest secrets ur coldest Fears
U afta all these years
U back expectin' to be a father again
Promised neva to leave us
Now we can't trust u man
I wish I had the same (heart sign)
4 U from back in the day
The 1 I had be4 U left, it turned into hate
But I don't c that no more
'Cause u turned yo back, bet
Don't deserve my respect no more
I don't even know if I want u back no more

Chorus

Verse 2 When u left y u wait so many yrs. 2 come home?
U got the nerves when u couldn't giv yo kids a
simple phone call
What did u 4get u gotta son n a daughter?
When we needed u the mos u wasn't man enuf 2
be a father
I neva expected this type of sh*t from u
U just like mama she f***ed round left us 2
At least she thought enuf of us 2 com right back
Y U probably out there kikin' it laid back
Not a trace of us runnin' thru yo head
2 U it's like we don't exist, we dead
I wish u neva did what u did
Jus think about how u hurtin' yo kids

Anonymous

Rape

Kidnapped, dragged into a dark place
Yellin', screamin', trying my best to escape
He pulls me down, slap me and make nasty comments
And just when I began to fight back
He pulls out a gun and puts it to my head.
That when you begin to wish it wasn't true.
You cry but the man show no remorse
Now he's doing what he do best
And start taking advantage of a young girl
And what made it so bad
He was my so-called dad.

Sade E.

Five

She was five.

She was in her room playing
With her brother and sister.

That man took her out
And put her in a room with him.

And he began making her feel different,
Because she didn't know what was going on.

But she sat back in the chair,
Just looked.

Because she was just five.

Darlin

Who Am I?

You won't see me in the world because
I am invisible.

Clear is my color.
I taste like fresh tears.
I'm usually forgotten.
I can be downtown in a rush hour crowd
but yet all alone.

I am loneliness.

Anastasia O.

Audy Home Dream

I was walking right. Then I got into it with some guys but I didn't know the guys know where I live. I went to go get my shorty. We passed by the guys house. They got to talking crazy and I went by their house and shot it up. After I shot their house up me and my guy went to go kick it. My guy dipped off, went to go kick it. I went in my house late at night to kick it with my shorty. Next thing I know I went to sleep about two o'clock I hear something breaking in my house. I left the gun in my guy's crib so when I hear them breaking in the house I try to put my people in the basement but they shot me when I came back up. I woke up in they basement in one of they spots. They got me. It's crazy cuz they had me handcuffed to poles. They was steady beating me with hammers, shooting me and sh*t but God was still with me cuz every time they shoot me I blink out and come back. They kept me down the basement about four days not feeding me or nothing. My o.g. went around asking people where I was and my dad started telling everybody if they see me to help me cuz he knew they kidnapped me. So then they dropped me off in an alley and left me for dead but my people found me. Then I woke up.

Michael R.

I See Death

I see death in my dreams,
or is that what I see?
Could it be my enemies
or could it be me?
Could it be my closest friends
or could it be thee,
Ones that I love or could it be G?
Could it be the people that's coming
that I did wrong to,
Or could it be reality
that's sending love through?
Or could it be what's in my cup that I
drink and think,
Or could it be the man in me
that want to be free?
I go to sleep cold, I wake up I'm hot.
Could it be the gunz
I hold that's telling me not,
Could it be the block I rep
that's telling me stop?
I want to live in peace
but I'm living in strain.
Could it be the stormy nights
that's got me in pain?
So as I see there's all our people
getting killed in my dreams, don't squeal.
I see death late night and it is real.

Steve S.

A Soldier's Cry

All my life I try, to
live my life and not to
die,
But some time my heart
feels shy
When I feel another
soldier's cry.

They want me to start
'cause I will not go,
Until the soldier
leaves and returns
My glow

Yes I cry, I will not
lie,
But pain is not pain
Until a soldier cries.

Anonymous

The Life of Nate

The life of Nate you'll think it's fun
to stand in the pissy hallways
to get off your rocks and blows
just to get the latest drop
of Air Force One's or Mike's
to rock the newest Enyce
or Azzure outfits.
But it ain't worth it
now look at the life of Nate.
He got busted.
Now how is all those material things
going to help Nate? Nate is sitting
waiting in a new home, but it's
not there to help him,
but to break him.
Nate wish he could trade
his fun life for freedom but
he can't.
Don't live the life on Nate.

Nate A.

I Don't Know Why This Man Don't Like Me

I don't know why this man don't like me.

Is it the way I'm a black man or the way I stand?
Can it be the way I talk or the way I walk?

I don't know why this man don't like me.

Is it the way I run or the way I have fun?
Is it the way I live or the way I pay my bills?
Is it the way my baby's coming up
or the way I drive my truck?

I don't know why this man don't like me.

Can it be my new house or my new spouse?
Can it be the way I work or the way I hurt?
Can it be that I'm in jail or going to hell?
Can it be my boy is 11 or I'm going to heaven?
Can it be because I'm young
or is it because I'm dumb?
Can it be the money I make
or all the things I take?

I don't know why this man don't like me.

Fredderick S. & Dion C.

After I Got Out of Jail

After I got out of jail, me living my life,
I don't know nothing about this jail sh*t.
I go back to the spot doing my grimy sh*t.
Bang, bang, bang.
Hit a nigga up.
Then everything went down the drain.
They were there for me as far as
sending me money and packages.
They got me the best lawyer they could.
I had just gotten out of jail then three weeks later
I was locked up for a gun case.
I was locked up for one year.
I was grinding.
But the game was the black stone
they was already the "Infamous" Mobb.
But it's hard to leave the house after eight hours
and think, Where am I going to sleep?
I had family and all that, but I got that pride.
I've been out of my crib since I was 14 years old.
I'm so proud.
I got a beautiful little sister Dajiah, 6.
I'll die for my sister
That why I needed to become a basketball player
And when my lil' sister is 18
she's gonna have that college money
She's gonna have that

Anonymous

Police

Cars

Friends

the police Lock me up for
not going to School and I
was in a Stolen Car
me and my friends

The Leg

I shot a man in the park
Because he stole my rocks
out of my stash
I saw him and shot him in the leg

When I shoot him
His leg said, "You motherf***er!"
The leg said to me, "I am going to
kick you in the nuts!"
And I said, "So?"

Rakeem S.

my mom came in
got me out in she
was talking to the Police.

I got to go home
but my friends had to stay.

me and my mom seen
the same car that me
and my Friends had with
somebody else in it and
the police got they ass---
--they got locked up

Timothy P.

Life

My bones are broken.
My mind is not focused.
To be in jail I'm the one that's chosen.

Life...

My life is hard.
My choices that I make are not smart.
Being in the hood got me behind bars.

Life...

Life is hard when you're behind bars.
The choices I make was the worst from the start.

Life...

Shedding blood,
hanging around these so-called studs.

These girls who are incarcerated think
they would ride or die for they people,
just because they shed a little blood.

Life...

Dorothea B.

Hollow

I feel so hollow,
The air so thick I can't even swallow,

With all these times of mischief and despair,
My heart feels unwanted from all this wear and tear,

I used to feel love but now I feel denied,
It's just the regret of going on this terrible ride,

So now I always think of why I used to lie,
And now I get mad after I've burned my bridges
and have to say goodbye,

I used to embrace the devil and thought it was my friend,
I used to have bad intentions when I lost, to me it was a win,

So the long term effect of all this disrespect,
Ended me up with grievances like a butterfly effect.

Anthony C.

When I

When I...
was five,
I was mommy's little girl.

When I...
was eight,
My dad died.
And as f***ed up as it sounds,
I think I was the happiest kid in the world.

From the age of nine to fourteen,
I was a good little child.

When I...
was fifteen,
we moved and I started hanging out
with new friends I meet.

When I...
was sixteen,
I started smoking, drinkin',
Partyin' and staying out late,
and not caring what happened the next day.
I stole a car,
and got locked up for the first time.

Now I...
am seventeen,
locked up for the second time,
sitting here not knowing
if this is my last chance.

Now I...
know I need change.
God please forgive me.
Please forgive me for when I...

Melissa J.

Cursed

No matter how loud I cry,
I really cain't deny
That no one thinks a man
should shed tears at night
so I pout and doubt myself
feels like my brains is gonna melt.

Hosea J.

Crowded in the Hall

Sad and lonely eyes crowded in the hall
3rd floor, 4th floor, 5th floor Wall to Wall
as I walk around up and down
some faces smilin', others with a frown
Hey Mr. D
How you'd be
As the years come and go
You watch these kids as they grow
Sometime a tear comes to my eye
Oh Lord don't let me cry
Hey Mr. D.
How you'd be
We know their time in here won't last
I pray they can put it in their past
I hope they keep in their head
The good things that I said
Hey Mr. D.
How you'd be

Dan Dillon - NBJ Teacher

Why Does A Bust Down Bust?

Why does a bust down bust?
Is it because she worn out and smell like must?
Why do girls smell like cat pee
and jump out at every boy they see?
Why do some girls talk stuff?
Why do some girls look so ruff?
Why do girls cut their hair
or teachers get mad when we swear?
Why do boys say on *the Fin*?
Whatever, cause they busting in the bull pen.

Why?

Brittney S.

Why do I laugh like that?
Is it because I'm not fat?

Why is the sun yellow?
Is it because god was a fellow?

Why aren't we all the same?
Is it because it would be lame?

Why am I locked up again?
Are they getting me ready for the pen?

Who invented jails anyway?
I mean what was it he thought that day?

Is there life up on Mars?
Will they make flying cars?

Kristana

All I Wanna Be Is Free

As I sit here and write this poem
All I wanna be is free
Because I'm in jail and this ain't for me
I can't see me in the penitentiary
As I grew up as a little kid
All I wanted to be is free
Because everywhere I went I had
to watch my back and when I got
caught up with rivals I had to pay
All I wanted to do was walk
through their hood like I was free
But this gangbangin' life ain't free
Because one way or the other you'll pay
And the way you pay is either getting
shot, stabbed, whipped, dying, or even locked up
All I wanna be is free

Money ain't free
Clothes ain't free
Food ain't free
Drugs ain't free
Liquor ain't free
Shoes ain't free
Life ain't free
All I wanna be is free
Life ain't free
God has a purpose for you and me
But in reality
All I wanna be is free
Free from this gang life
So please leave me.
All I wanna be is free.

Michael Q.

Gone Too Long

Day by Day I pray I leave, I shall
not stay. Time and time again,
I fight, but never win, try not to
live my life in sin and Hell, which I am
in--but now, I am stuck, struck and
out of luck. But at times, I cry cause
all the days went by; I wish
I was at home. Now, I realize I have
been gone too long.

Anonymous

Hai ku

Why am I so tired?
It's a very gloomy day
I will go home soon.

Samella R.

On The Dark

I'm sitting on the dark thinking
on the places I use to ride, with
my people down the block thinking
everything is all good while other people
bucking at us from they hood, every shot
was louder yelling "We are not gangsters
But we are survivors."

Been and did the things u did,
Shotie don't tell me what to do 'cause
u don't know what it's all about in the hood,
So don't come and tell me what should I do,
I'm 17yrs old and been in the game for too long,
Got lock up for a case while I should be at home
helping out my mom on the stuff we need at home.

Don't leave cause my life is like a gun,
one on the chest
One down shot to the face,
now tell me what u got to say
'Cause I'm already dead by your hands
and lips telling me
I don't deserve to live.

Locked up in this room telling myself on the mirror
"all this time I been here I be acting like a fool,
'cause with out you I'm a little
puppy looking for a owner all over the hood."

Tell me ma what I got to do, not to say good-bye
to those beautiful lips n eyes, looking at me while saying,
"I love you, and I always be by your side,"
While I buck at n***as coming down our block.

I'm looking at this picture thinking what I got to do
to get right back with u.
Time is going fast, get low, smoke a joint,
I can't wait to go back home.

Tell me what should I do.
Sitting here being without you.
Looking at the sky saying,
"Damn she is riding around with her new man."
Please don't lie 'cause
I'm about to break out and deeply cry.

I did some things that nobody did,
u said I was u'r first that lasted a long time
while I was at home talking to u on the phone, breaking my head saying,
"I die for you cause my love always true".

I thank u for the things u did for me on my return
I gave you my love,
Tell me why u leave me behind.
After I was with you on the last time of my life
while my eyes cry for you 'cause it's true.

Another day of my life past by
as one of my boys left to the DOCs,
He's been locked up for a year and half,
cop out for 6, he only going to do 3

He is a king a.k.a. big spook from Lawndale 28st,
that's my nigga while he was lock up
behind this glass doors
24 hrs a day 7 days a week
I met his mom, so did he.

Can't wait to go home
start a new life,
try not to go back to the block
'cause if I do I'm going to get shot
ain't trying to die.

Yoshi

Should Have Realized Before

Today I called her crib talked to her family on the phone
They said she cried all week locked in her room all alone
When a n***a come to jail he really didn't care
'Cause the love of my life wasn't really there
I waited 8 months for her to walk back into my life
And now that I'm in jail you talk about being my wife
You should have realized before by the way I treated you
No man can compare to the sh*t I used to do
As your man, friend or lover I was always by your side
But you never chose to listen to what a n***a felt inside
A poem from my heart means like it meant sh*t to you but words
like you already read it or it's something you already heard
If we would have never broke up
I probably wouldn't be in here now
I'm not saying that it's your fault but just think of it somehow.
I was out on the block selling rocks with Jungle and the crew
And now I'm f***ed in the game 'cause my life wasn't with you.
How could you break up with a nigga who love you so much
Just to hang out with your friends or whoever such and such
That sh*t makes me mad cuz I'm locked up behind a steel door
But we all make mistakes on sh*t we should have realized before.

Nicholas S.

Letter From Dad

Dear Son,

I'm sorry I can't be there with you for your fifth birthday. Don't go the same way I'm going. Get your education and do something with your life. I can't explain how I feel being in this building. Now I'm just thinking about my family and friends. I really hope you're getting this in your head. I hope you don't ever come here. You eat what the staffs want you to eat. You go to sleep when they want you to sleep. And they take away your privileges. Well, I'll see you when I get out! Bye Son.

Sincerely,
Dad

Andre W.

I Miss You

I miss you so much and I can't even talk to you on the phone.
I miss you so much and without you I feel so alone.
I miss you so much and I can't even come home.
I miss you so much that I feel I can't go on.
When I think about you my mind starts to zone,
Zone back into when we'd make love and when I made you moan.
It was such a good feeling when we used to bone,
But now there's none of that cuz I'm gone.
Locked up becuz I've done wrong.
I miss wearing my own clothes and hanging
with the folks but those days are over,
no more laughing, no more jokes.
No more smoking weed, no more slangi'n' coke.
I miss my block even though it was so hot
 I would carry a 9.
I miss drivin' the car and smoking a dime.
I miss letting my mind flow and hittin' that mad dro.
I miss it all, but that's cool
cuz I played the role of a fool
and now it's all through.

Jennifer D.

I Realize What I Lost Now

I left you and started messin'
around wit Cameron and I left you
all alone.

I did things wit him & made
you mad. You went and fronted
on me so I would not leave.

One night can make you realize
everything's changed. He got me
jumped. You know. You were there.

How could I be the fool? You
told me, didn't you? Why did I
play all those games wit you?

Now, I realize what I lost
the night I got jumped by the one
I thought I loved.

Now I realize what I lost
when I'm sitting in my cell
reminiscing about us, dreaming of you
and the things we used to do.

Now I realize what I lost
when I cry & cry about all the
things I've lost.

Katrina D.

Missing You

As I sit in my room
I think about you
with
 so much
on my mind
and
 nothing to do
with all my time

Only if you knew
my love for you
would always be there
Every night I think about you
 in my dreams
And
 missing you
 is all I can do.

Pedro D.



"Cat" - Cordarryl S.

Special Lady

Beautiful, intelligent, and lovable,
someone I called to be very honorable.
You are well respected by me,
Kalifa is who I am to be.
I see something in you,
that makes me care for you.
I see humbleness and respect,
you have a high intellect.
I admire your beauty,
because you are a cutie.
You are a very caring lady,
I wish I was out of jail to be your lover, baby.

Kalifa

I Remember

I remember them days when I was young and dumb
about 12,13,14 trying to sell some drugz.
I remember them days when I ain't never had sh*t
No mom, no dad. Man life was a b***h.
I remember them days when I was suffering from broke
trying to find a new lick on who I'm gone poke.
I remember them days when I was out on my own
As I grew a little older became 50 deep, strong.
I remember them days when I use to hit the block.
I was hustling on the streets trying to serve some rock.
I remember them days when I was ready to die
No family, no friends. A tear dropped my eye.
I remember them days when I was going to school.
Messing up big time, breaking all the rules.
I remember them days when I was ducking the cops.
Escaping from death, paranoid to get shot.

Steve S.



<- "Monster"
"Yo!" ->
- Willie M.



Sending Up 4E

It started by stealing.
Taking lighters and sh*t..Stealing, man.
Mostly people on the section's lighters.
They found the lighters. He tried to lie
but they jumped on him.
Everybody else started fighting him,
a lot of more people fighting, staff and all.
It lasted for a couple of minutes
all the staff and supervisors came in.
Broke it up. Put everybody in their rooms.
I got out today but everybody else caught new cases.
Staff was throwing oatmeal on a person who was fighting them.
There was oatmeal all over the windows.

Marlon R.

Office Life

Sweet rhythms soft words spoken across moving lips first
books gingerbread and Malcolm X first poems cell and hell
bars tears fears on the wall tight poem pain moves to smile
I got lots a hidin' places blue shirts and green sweaters
BARRIO yes VACANT yes AESTHETIC yes best and brightest
file by through center isle could I get a phone call to family
to friends yeah I'm aight I love you grandmas pencil on
paper fingers on keys what's about to happen? What's that
book about? Shared poems backandforth backandforth
backandforth deep tones of voices not silenced won't be
silenced quiet calm soft words spoken across moving lips
mouse clics tandem raps and nods and taps and love and
office life
'bout that time fellas
aight

Kim Hunter - NBJ Literacy Tutor

Changed By Mistake

As I lay, I pray
As I wake, I ask
Where life will lead today
In the day
As I play
As I run
As I stunt
As I chase, to make a mistake
To follow a crowd
Has gotten me to sit
In a room to consume time
As I lay, in a day
Up in section 4J
I would say
Never again
Will I play
Will I run
Will I stunt
Will I choose to follow a crowd
That would have me
Sit in a room to consume time
Now as I continue to lay
I would say
I rather spend time at home
than alone in a room
up in Section 4J

Ken K.

Life Is Short

Life is short, but time in here gets
long.

Judges give out sentences-but it's
like you're hearing them wrong!

I wish I know the outcome of it all
before

I rush to throw the rocks up.
Money sounds good free but it's
harder

when you locked up.

In here sometimes you got to gamble
with your life.

Being in here, it's hard to pray;
funny, 'cause you do
not see your freedom until it's taken
away from you!

Anonymous

EVERY-MINUTE

I JUST WOKE AT 4: 35 A.M. I SIT IN MY ROOM WRITING
JUST LAYING DOWN IN BED CHILLING.

EVERYONE SOUND ASLEEP BREATHING IN AND OUT DREAMING GOOD
THINGS, I SHOULD BE DREAMING.

EVERY-MINUTE A DAY PASSED BY FOR ME TO GO TO COURT.
WE HAD PHONE CALL YESTERDAY, AND NOW IT'S WEDNESDAY.

EVERY MINUTE ON THE OUTSIDE SOMEONE DIES AND I KNOW THAT
BECAUSE WHEN SOMEONE DIES THE SKY TURNS WHITE OR DARK BLUE, AND
THINKING ABOUT IT HURTS MY HEART.

ALL THE DAYS I SIT IN HERE I SAY TO MYSELF TAKE IT SLOW, TAKE IT ONE
DAY AT A TIME.
WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT HURTS YOU? ME, I'LL TELL YOU MY AUNT DIED,
MY DAD DIED, MY GRANDMOTHER DIED, AND MY UNCLE DIED, THIS IS THE
PAIN THAT I HAVE.

EVERY MINUTE I SAY TO YOU ALL,
BEING LOCKED UP IS NOT COOL,
HAVING YOUR ONE JOB, THAT'S COOL, MAKING MONEY THAT'S COOL,
BEING AROUND FRIENDS WHO HELP WHEN YOU ARE IN NEED, THAT'S COOL,
GETTING OLDER HAVING KIDS WITH YOUR WIFE THAT'S COOL.

IF YOU ARE LOCKED UP AND YOU SPENT MONTHS IN JAIL AND YOU OUT, SAY
TO YOUR FRIENDS GOING BACK TO THE BLOCK TELL YOU FRIENDS, "MAN I DID
THAT, I DID THIS, THIS SH*T BEING LOCKED UP
THAT'S NOT COOL."
ME I'M FACING A LONG TIME 30 TO 60 YEARS IN STATESVILLE.
THAT'S NOT COOL, MAN.
I HOPE THAT PEOPLE CAN MAKE IT THOROUGH THIS WORLD AND GET GOOD
JOBS. I SOMETIMES GO THROUGH HARD TIMES SO YOU TELL ME WHAT ABOUT
(EVERY-MINUTE).

Derrick S.

The Drive

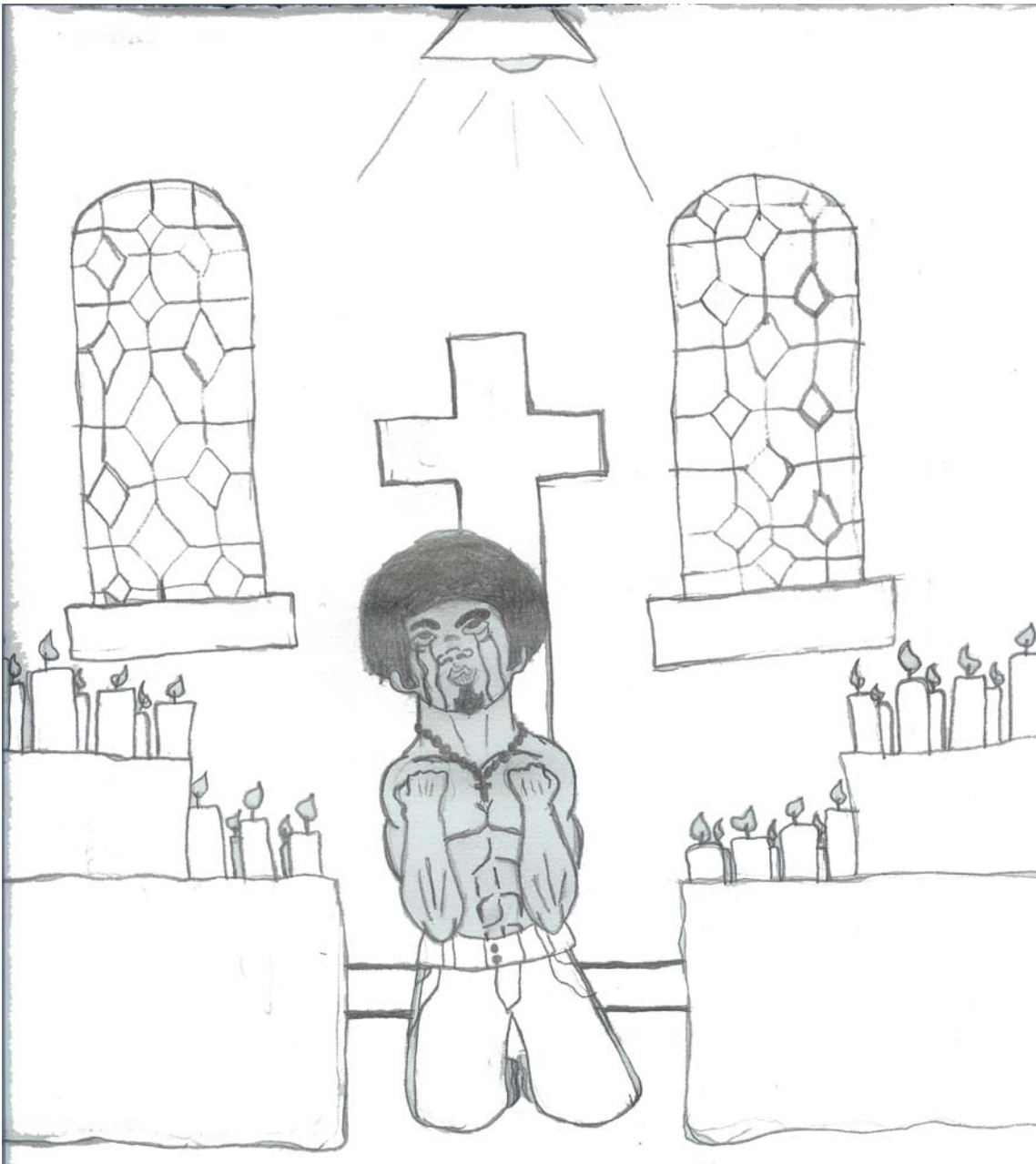
Everyday past 26th & California I drive by.
And often a lonely tear escapes my eye.
I think about all the NBJ students I know
Realizing at County Jail they must learn to grow
No longer can they walk the school hall
They are now housed behind a ten-foot barbed wire wall
Looking behind the _____ tower
I see the concrete divisions and
the guards that control all power
Yet the hardest thing is the feeling
Hear the lack of cheer
and that continual fear.
We must try our Best
a never-ending Quest
to save the Rest.

Dan Dillon - NBJ Teacher

Leaving Out

Being in this place for so long
People going to hate to see that I'm gone
Going somewhere else is going to be hard to handle
I'm strong so I feel I could make it anywhere I go
Long as I keep my faith
If I stay in my place I will make it out safe
And be a free man.

Deon R.



"Story of My Life" - Cordarryl S.

Wake Up Blackman

Wake up Blackman
Where you going, where you been?
Not doing anything productive
you don't have to pretend.
Blackman, I come to tell
you the painful truth,
The whiteman won the
war between me and you.
Let's take a look at reality.
It's not one day that there's
not a black on black fatality.
Blackman ever heard of the Ku Klux Klan,
I guess you had to
you their number 1 fan.
We hate ourselves and our sisters and brothers.
In the twisted condition we in
we probably hate our mothers, hmm.
Blackman it's time to
conquer this insanity.
Let's give the whiteman back
his profanity and vanity.
Blackman, they brainwash you because of your potential
Plus a Deaf, Dumb and Blind negro is always essential.
Blackman, they see you as a heartless pod,
but in reality they know you're just a misguided god.
Blackman wake up and smell the truth,
God has big things in store for me and you. Peace.

Kadafi

My Past

Laying in my bed, staring at the sky,
Just thinking of my past and the cruel things I
did and I ask myself why?
Where did I go wrong?
Was it that I was just trying to be grown?
Or was I confused,
Or was it just an excuse?

Smoking weed to dodge reality,
Part of my youth was just a calamity.
Mind corrupted at a young age.
Now they got me locked up in a cage,
full of rage,
worse than the impact of a twelve gage.

I wish it was just a dream,
so I could wake up with a big ol' scream.
But instead I was acting like a fool,
thinking that is really cool,
not knowing that my mind is my strongest tool.

Kalifa

Making My Life Right

I can only speak about
Girls all around me; With different attitudes
Being locked down; With slaves
Going on the block; With the slick boys
Arresting people
The pain of the crying mothers
Babies that can't even eat abandoned on the streets
Drug dealers that try to help the field

Myself serving every day on the block
Only getting chump change
Barely eating
Me killing my black family
The police always riding down
Having to always get up early to survive
Hating-ass niggas like b***hes
Just staying down all day to eat for two days
Having to be foul every day; To get that money
My kids suffering to see my sisters kill themselves
The lives of how we live to feed the mouths
of ourselves and others
Being caught for that first time; And going somewhere
where none would ever want to go
Serving, not being in school; While seeing
kids coming from school
Not having the knowledge of school; But the
knowledge of the block
Not knowing where to go sometimes when
you're done serving and is tired and sleepy
Sleeping outside; In the park on a bench
when your so-called "BF" has his "BM" in the house
Hitting the blocks spending the chump change
on liquor and weed; Instead of food and saving it
Crying sometimes when I feel
that I have no one in my life
Spending time with my son because
I can't take care of him
When no one want me no more
When this kind of life is gonna end
Making my life right
Falling into the place of Jesus Christ

Lwanda S.

Angel

I is the angel of pretty white snow from all fallen angels.
I is the wind beneath hell's wings.
I is the glory that shines like the sun.
I is the blood of the unhealed wound.
I is the unborn child who seeks to be unknown.
I is the future that's to come to all mankind.

Ronald C.

Life

We as people are enemies with ourselves.
We love no one, we say that we know God.
But you have to know yourself first to know God.
We have no joy, no happiness, no respect for our own people.
We will tell deceitful lies to our people.
We will get angry if somebody hurt our mothers or sisters or family.
But we as a people don't think about other people's feelings.
I am beginning to understand that life doesn't begin
when you're 18 years old.

It begins right here.

When I think of life I think of six things:

- Family/friends
- Education
- Religion/Philosophy
- Good jobs
- Understanding self and others
- Traveling

I think these six things are important because we as people
need knowledge and understanding in the world we live in.
Education means a lot to the people that run the world.
With an education, we as people can go and become
successful individuals that can make this a better place.

A person should have religion or a philosophy in their life.
They need to believe in something greater than themselves.
True happiness comes to a person when he or she lives their life
focused on and devoted to others.

This may mean taking on responsibilities,
to work hard to get an education and a good job
to provide for one's family in the community.
However, living and working for others,
rather than selfishly for oneself,
brings the greatest happiness and fulfillment of all.

We as people don't understand ourselves and others
because the world that we live in has in-putted-micro-images
in our minds
such as cars, clothes, jewelry, and quick money.
That is the reason we as a people are mentally and physically dumb.
We think that being famous and rich is the most important thing in life.
But it's not. The most important thing in life is being happy,
To love others and your life.

Kenneth S.

Darkness

I know what blind people see.
Their thoughts, their soul is now a part of me.
Although I have sight, I have no vision.
Just dictated thoughts and dictated decisions.

One day I will have my sight.
I will have a chance to live or fight.
But for now my choices are made for me.
They have my body, but my mind will remain free.

Barrett C.

These People

I grew up with these people.
I knew them all my life.
Now, they consider me as feeble.
I say only the strong survive.
Now they ridin' roun' on rims,
Gucci, Prada and much more.
I ain't even got that kinda money
to even window shop in a store.
They walk by me and sigh
as if to mock me cuz I don't smoke.
So I'ma go show them I get high
in front of them, laid back and choke.
A few years later, I come back pimped out.
I ain't got no insecurities or no doubts.
Now who's feeble, I call out, I don't need y'all.

Trina

In My Hands

I feel the world is in my hands
Some say let it go.

But I can do good.
Fix it up and let it show.
For those that's living rich.
And those that's living poor.
For the homeless on the streets
that's dying to eat.
For the people that's gone
praying for a family.
May our people be strong.
May our people be weak.
May our people be sour.
May our people be sweet.
We are all born different
in this world of ours.
But most people got a purpose
and that's to meet God.
We all got to die, it may not be today.
It can be next year.
Or a whole 'nother decade.
Some die young.
Some die old.
Less die at suffer.
And most by the gun.
I want to tell the world
This poem got love.

Steve S.

This Beginning and End of a Gangbanger Life

This poem right here is for all the young black and
Puerto Rican kids that don't gangbang
Don't start now or don't have any thoughts
of being in a gang it's not worth it.
When I started banging it was fun
and I was in and out of the Audy Home
Instead of going to school
and being at home with the family.
I thought the niggas I was banging with
were my second family.
The first few times I was locked up
they was there for me
but after a while getting locked up
they forgot about me
and it even happens when one of the brothers die
we'll get revenge and celebrate the memories
of that brother for a couple of weeks
and after that, that brother is basically forgotten.
I regret being in this game
but like my father always told me,
"you make your bed, you lay in it"
and now I have to deal with it
Tomorrow is not promised to anyone
So you young niggas don't start gangbanging
I don't want you to regret it like I do
I'm not a hypocrite
I don't want you to mess up your life like I did
Thinking my brothers will always be there for me
I was wrong!

Michael Q.

Dream Poem

Can that boy Nate have
dreams. Would that
boy Nate want to
be something. Would
that boy Nate like
to change his life.
Would that boy Nate
want to leave the fame
and quick money of
selling drugs. I know
he wish he could go
on with his dreams,
but it's a little too late
because Nate is locked
down and he wishes he
could go on with his dream.
Don't go on in life wanting
a dream, go after it.

Nate A.

Why

Why do we die,
Why do we cry,
Why do we get high?
Why are we strong,
Why are the white racists
trying to take our home?
Why isn't my father in my life,
Why is my granny
close to dying?
Why am I in jail,
Why am I straightening out my
life?
Because that's what's right.

Peace out.

Charles H.

The Person I Want To Be

My mama wants me to be
a family man. I maybe don't
want a family. My friends,
they want me to be a
hustler, I maybe don't like
to sell drugs. My cousin
wants me to be like
him, I maybe don't want
to be like him. The judge
wants me to be a perfect
person, maybe I don't think
I can be perfect. My teacher
wants me to be a A+ student,
maybe I like to get stuff off
my chest. Maybe I would like
to be the person I want to be.

Nate A.

My Shoes

How could you talk about me?
You never walked in my shoes.
How could you
make decisions for me?
You never tasted my blues.
These are questions I ask myself
about folks who know more than I
do
concerning when, why, and how I
should act.
They've never tasted my blues.
Each one of us has a
different drummer
to whose music
we walk in step.
And yet we hear everyone else's
tune
that sometimes should be kept.
Don't get me wrong,
I don't know all
and advice from friends I'll need.
But just before you start
to criticize please ask.
Whose shoes are these?

Robert W.

I Is

I is the courage givin' man
I is the man who gave courage
I is drawer maker and caretaker
I is a father and a father is I
I is the friendly man
I is the black man
I is the white man
I is the push
I is the shove
I is the man who is
raised to love
I is the workin' man
I is the playin' man

Anonymous

From Dope Fiend to Young Queen

Before God came into my life,
the pain I felt went deep like a cut from a knife.

Lost in my own world of drugs
Nagging me consistently like a wearisome bug

As I gradually fell off my throne
I realized I couldn't do it on my own.

I went from Young Queen
To a seventeen-year-old Dope Fiend.

I tripped and fell in a ditch
And became another hype chick

Gone were my ambitions for life
Swallowed up in smoke from the pipe.

I fell in a hole
Drugs were my heart, my very soul.

I always thought I was too fine
To do Heroin Lines.

But I found myself lost in my world
No longer Daddy's little girl.

The drugs wouldn't allow me to cry
They just allowed life to slowly slip by.
So sad and confused, just waiting to die
Living that Heroin and Crack high
All along not knowing Jesus was by my side.

On my way toward the Block
About to buy another Rock

Jesus looked me in my eyes
And said, "Now is your time to die.

I will help you get back on track
I just can't allow you to go out like that
Another victim falling in to the Hands of Crack."

So I turned around and headed home
Called my P.O. on her phone
And told her my life was going wrong
And that I couldn't stop on my own.

I can no longer be a victim of the crimes
In and out of jail doing time
Caught serving nickels and dimes.

While we sit behind these brick walls
Thinking we have no future at all
But before a baby can stand tall
She must first learn to crawl.

Never be ashamed of the things you did
We are all young: still little kids.

Anticipate Judgment Day
When all the pain and hurt will go away
But for now drugs and hate is here to stay.

We weren't born to be Dope Dealers
G.D., B.D. and Stone Killas

We all have a purpose in life
To turn our wrongs into right.

When will we stop hurting each other
And accept us as sisters and brothers
Start loving and stop disrespecting our mothers?

Stop talking smart up at our lips
Cause people are quick to empty their clips
And put you in a ditch, quick.

When will we open up our eyes
And finally realize
That life is quickly passing by?

And know we are young queens
Not runners of the hottest Dope scenes
And if anything, we can accomplish our Dreams.

When will we stop poisoning our people
with rocks and blows?
Cause what's really in it, only God knows.

We selling drugs and buying new kicks
While the addicts are staying sick.

So take a minute and think about ya life
Stay up in ya cell at night
Whatever comes 2 mind just write
On how to make life right
B4 death comes and takes a bite out of your life.

Life is what we jeopardize
Going through life without opened eyes.

Think about what would Jesus do?
Why would you do it to Him if He wouldn't do it to you?

He died for our sins on the Cross
How do you think he feels when we fall down
Does he take it like just another loss?

When will we stop all the hate
and gossip going around?
Cause Hate and Sin will get you hell bound.

Regina J.

I Am

I am strong as I always been.
I am smart as I always am.
I am stupid sometimes, I am.
I am respectful as the way I was raised to be.
I am a son still running to my father's hands.
I am a Dad leading the way for my Lil' Seed.
I am a man listening, learning, something new everyday.
I am quiet 'cause I like to chill and peep things out.
I am myself as I always gone be.
I live my life day by day asking myself why.
But at the end of the day I AM.

Anonymous

I Wonder

Lord sometimes I wonder
What direction is my life
heading in. I live my life in
so much sin, I read my Bible
everyday thinking
everything is going to be
OK, but it's not!
Lord sometimes I wonder
when are you coming back to
get your children and I get
scared, kids raised in the ghetto
ain't got no hope. We have to make
a living by selling dope.
Life really ain't changed to nothing
good. Wolly locked down in
jail missing the good. In a
different environment I feel
scared and strange, as I look back
at my life I learned it's
time for a change. Peace.

Charles H.



"Dream Come True" -
??? (see signature!)

Why?

Why are we mentally deaf, dumb, and blind,
Why we don't take our time
to gain wisdom and knowledge to elevate our mind,
Why are we always on negativity?
Why we don't help our brothers
that are dead spiritually?
Why is it that the enemy
gives us the wrong information?
Why? So we won't be able to
find self and our destination.
Why most of our people are incarcerated in prisons?
Why? Because they say the only thing we do
is be pernicious.
Why do they change some of the scriptures in the Bible?
Why? Because they see they could keep us
spiritually dead and deniable.
Why is it that the life we live
is filled with confusion?
Why is it that the life we was promised
is just an illusion?
Why is it that we never have a solution?
But in my conclusion,
May God continue to bless you
in this world of delusion!

Kalifa

The Bush Way

The lion, the king of the jungle
Most of the kids out there
Dying of hunger
It's crazy
She 13 having a baby
She trying to start a new life
Dying of AIDS
Because her parents don't care
They so lazy
For them poor baby still so crazy
Most of my brothers
Dying of lethal injection
Trying to keep my brothers awake
My people from resting
And could we please get a new election
Because Bush ain't trying
to help my brothers and sisters
Send us to war
Trying to kill my brothers and sisters
Mothers giving birth
But while the mothers is pushing
Bust your own brother's head
Then the blood start to gushing

Timothy L.

My Disability

My computer teacher taught me to do computers.
She taught me how to cut, copy and paste on computers.
I took a lot of things for granted before
because I didn't feel right.
They told me I had a disability.
I really didn't know anything.
I didn't know how to do anything like the other kids
so I acted out in class.

I told people I really don't need any help
because I was embarrassed to get help.

After a while, I started to help myself.

I started to do some math and a teacher helped me.
She took special time to help me with my math
and helped me after school.
I met other kids with the same thing as me
except they were a little bit worse.

They didn't know anything.
I wanted to help them.
I felt bad because they reminded me of me.
They didn't want anybody to help them.

After a few years I knew I needed to get
a lot of this done if I wanted to get a job.
So I started asking people for help
so they started helping me.
And the things I learned from teachers
I used it to help the other kids.

George R.

Revenge

There once lived a man named Bruno and his talking moose named Roo-Roo. They did everything together. They lived in the woods, but now only Bruno lives in woods because Roo-Roo got killed by some wild moose-eating wolves. When Bruno found out that Roo-Roo was dead he got very upset and went after the wolves. He killed all four of the wolves, but when he killed the wolves that didn't make him feel no better. He learned his lesson. The lesson was sometimes revenge is not the answer.

Marquis C.

Grandma

I was raised by
The essence of woman
that soothes my soul
reminds me I'm hers and that I'm whole
The essence of woman
shows me love
teaches me everything I finely wove
The essence of woman
makes me put my hands on my hips
reminds me that I have curves and dips
The essence of a woman
keeps me in line
only time she goes to sleep
is when she drinks fine wine
The essence of a woman
likes fine art
will slap your hands when you say "fart"
The essence of a woman
is what I love about her
I will cherish every moment
cause I know she really cur.

Brittney S.

I Am

I am incarcerated
but someday I will be free.

I am in a relationship
but someday I will be married.

I am a young woman,
but someday I will be an old woman.

I am selfish with mine,
but someday I will be able 2 share something.

I am jealous,
but someday I will be able 2 put that aside.

I am trustworthy,
but someday I will be able 2 trust others.

I am hurting,
but someday I will be healed from the pain.

I am lovable,
but someday I will be loved back.

I am tired of being locked down,
but someday I will be free from all this.

I am lied 2 constantly,
but someday I will be told the truth,
face 2 face.

Dominique C.

Free Peace

Take your time and picture your own
paradise where you control everything,
use your imagination to go to that place
where we all wish we were when times
get rough, that place is always available
we just have to look with our hearts and
soul to see how to get there...

Mystic skies
Purple rainfall
Black ocean
Grey waves
Clear meditation
Let's travel to a place
Where we never been before
Take your time to
Exhale pain and sorrow
Inhale the sweet smell
Of green peace
Feel the slight breeze
Like music to your skin
Smell the aroma
Of butterscotch wilderness
Taste nature's appetite
See what would be
Taken for granted
By the naked eye
Hear the white waterfall
Glowing with peace within

Take your time
And enjoy
Peace's company
Soon it shall leave
But the memories
Are everlasting
If you believe
Let your imagination
Run wild
Through the black sand
And yellow sea
Explore what was bonded
But now is free
Free from man
Free from grief
Free from reality
Free from me
All I want is free!

Kadafi

In My Dreams

Come to me in my dreams, and then,
By day I shall be well again.
For the night will be more than pay,
The hopeless longing of the day.
Come as you came a thousand times,
A messenger from radiant climes.
And smile on the new world, and be,
As kind to others as to me.
Or as you never came in sooth,
Come now and let me dream in truth.
Come to me in my dreams, and then,
By day I shall be well again.
For the night will be more than pay,
The hopeless longing of the day.

Kalifa



"Ocean Sunset" - Elijah M.

Upon It All

Upon it all
I am still living
Upon it all
I am still young
Upon it all
I am still in school
But most importantly
I am a student
striving for knowledge
and truth.

Deandre B.

Means Of Survival

Autobiography

Story of My Life (an excerpt)

When I was seven years old, me and my brothers and sisters move from other projects to the Dearborns with my mom and grandmother. I didn't like staying there because my grandma was too strict. When we went outside we had to come in as soon as the sun started to go down. We did it, but after a while we started coming in too late. The first time, my grandmother told us we could not go outside for a week. We was mad but after that week we went outside. Some of us come in on time, the others come in late again and that time we got a whippin. I was part of the ones who got a whippin. After a while I was the one who always got the whippin.

One day we went to the store and while my grandmother was looking for something in the frozen food section, I wandered off to the candy section and cuffed some candy bars in my sock. When we left the store and went home, I tease my brother and sisters and from that point I started stealing. I was little so I played with toys and that's what I started stealing. I was stealing out of corner stores, Toys 'R' Us, anywhere that sell toys. See, my mom wasn't working so she was outside with her friends. She had a kidney problem that no one knew about until she fell out one day on the kitchen floor. Lucky my grandmother was there to call 911. They told my grandmother that my mom had a kidney problem and from that point on she was on dialysis.

Me and my brothers and sisters was worried about her alot. See, my little brother Arsenio was always quiet around grown-ups, but when he was around us he played a lot. My little sister Chanel was always quiet and still is. My big brother Patrick and my two older sisters always picked on me and my little brother and sister. They played a lot and used to pressure us to take things when we did not want to. I mean, I was always stealing but I was stealing for myself. I knew what would happen if I got caught, but why go down because my brother want something? If anything I will go down for myself. But my big sister, she act like she didn't care about anything. Whenever our mom didn't give her something she would talk with our brother or get smart with our mom. She had a attitude. For what I don't know, but she did.

OK. Like one or two years later we move out of the Dearborns back to the other projects with one of my mom's friends. My mom's friend was a crackhead. I guess my mom really wanted to get out of my grandmother's house, but I wanted to leave it too so I didn't have a problem with moving. When we got to the place, it was the projects. I had seen a whole lot of people standing under the building and I heard loud music. We stayed on the 12th floor. The apartment number was 1208. When we got in the apartment I went in the last room and look out the window. I jump back when I look out that window down to the ground. It seem like we were fifty stories high off the ground. I had told myself I would never go by that window again, that's how high it seem.

I had get put in a different school for kids like me. Kids used to always beat me up after school. This girl used to mess with my baby sister. I mean I hated that school, but when I started fighting back I started getting a little respect because I was beating up some of the bullies. Then I started liking school and getting used to the neighborhood, getting in trouble with some of everybody and I didn't care. I was doing whatever I wanted to do. Really I act like all the kids in the neighborhood, but the bullies I couldn't beat. They still picked on me. I went home and told my mom and she said if I couldn't beat them, pick up something and bust their head. That's exactly what I did. People started leaving me alone because they knew I would fight back.

There was this mini-mall on 55th and Garfield. I used to go in and walk around just looking at things but then I started going in and stealing. Or when somebody leave their bike outside I would take it. Then I started hanging around bad groups. They went to the mall and started asking people for money or they would make those poems or something about uniforms for a basketball team and at the bottom of the paper they

were asking for five or ten dollars. So they would give people the paper to read and some would give them money. I like it because it was better than selling drugs and we didn't get in trouble. But it got bad when they started thinking about robbing the stores for money or whatever they could take.

We would always be watching this dry cleaning store. They would count the money and put it under the desk and lock up the store then go home. We watch them for about two weeks. One day after we go out of school, we watch them till it got dark and they went home. We ran through a gate that had a hole in it. My big brother had a BB gun and broke the window. Before we could go inside a police car came around the corner and two lady cops hop out of the car. We thought we was going to jail, but they didn't put the car in park. So the car was still going and we ran as fast as we could toward the hole in the gate, went through, ran across the train tracks, down the rocks to the building we lived in. We went in the house and act like nothing had happen.

We went to school the next morning. You know I think all of us was scared. I didn't say a word that whole day. About a week later, the police came knocking on the door. My brother and I was in the house playing a game when we heard them say, "Police!" Me and my brother had frozen. There was this white man with them. I heard them talking but I could not make out what they was saying. My mom called my big brother in the front room. I came in behind him. They was talking about an ice cream truck and a jacket. The white man was asking my brother for a jacket. My brother looked at him like he was slow. My brother told him, "What jacket?" All the time, someone had robbed the ice cream man and blamed my brother. But me, my brother, and my mom had been in the house all day. So the police had took the ice cream man to jail and told us they was sorry for the trouble they been. My mom said it was OK.

Me and my brother went back in the room and turn on the game. I told my brother, "I thought those cops was coming to get us for trying to break in that dry cleaners two weeks ago." My brother didn't say anything for a whole five minutes. I guess those police really scared him and believe me it did. But only for about two weeks. After that, he was back doing bad. We used to rob people for their money then beat them up until they start calling for the police. After that we got used to the police. When we seen police sitting in their car, we would throw rocks at them, give them the finger, so they would chase us. Sometimes they would chase us. Sometimes we would wait for them to get out of the car and we would hop in their car and ride off. We would get in a high-speed chase. We'd speed up till they are about fifteen feet behind us, then we'd stop and get out and run. They would never catch us.

Cordarryl S.

The Life of a Young Gay Man (an excerpt)

Chapter 1 The Arrest

On March 22, 2004 I was locked up for something that I did not do. On this day I was coming from work around 1:15 a.m. and it was late and I was tired. I was ready to go home to take a shower and go to bed but things did not go like I planned. When I arrived home my mom and I got into an argument about my sexuality. It was the same argument we've been having for the past two years. On this day things got out of control.

My mother called the police, I waited for them to come to the house. When the police arrived they came ready to arrest someone that night; that's when I became their victim. It was four white officers and one black officer. They came in my bedroom yelling, "Get your punk faggot ass up now". I didn't move. I remained still until one of the officers kicked me. That's when I got up protecting myself from the officers.

The officers slammed me down and commenced to beat me. One of the officers put his knee on my neck. I could not breath so I started yelling and kicking cause they were hurting me. The officers then put cuffs on my legs and arms then carried me out the house. When the officers took me outside they started searching me and that's when I started yelling, "Sexual harassment!" An officer then slammed my head on the car and the other officers throw me in the police wagon. I felt sick and told them so. They called the ambulance.

When the ambulance arrived they just looked at me and assumed nothing was wrong with me. The officers then closed the door and drove off with me in the back of the police wagon. When we arrived at Michael Reese Hospital, which is a place where they take people who have a problem at home or who are not taking their medicine, the doctor was asking me all these questions about my life. That was really making me mad. I then ask the doctor, "Why are you so damn nosy?" I then told him, "Stop flirting cause I have a man. So stop trying 'cause it won't work." He told me to put my clothes and jewelry in the bag that he gave me. After all of that they put me in a room for the night.

That morning I awoke and I seen a lot of young people. They start to ask me why I was at Michael Reese Hospital. I told them and they start laughing so I began to laugh also. That day everyone told me why they was at Michael Reese Hospital. I did not laugh at they issues cause I really felt that it was sad from the things they was saying.

After that, it was time to go out and watch movies. I went out with the other young adults and watch the movie that they had for us until they told us to go to our rooms and take a nap. I really thought that it was funny cause I'm saying to myself that I'm a mature 16 year old and they telling me to go take a nap like I'm in preschool. So I went only because I'm a respectable young man.

When I went to my room this guy that I was sharing rooms with was gay and I knew that the boy was gay 'cause I have what we call gay radar and I can tell if someone is gay or not. So then we start having a conversation trying to get the chance to know each other much better. We were telling each other where we were from and also telling each other about the clubs that we have gone to. His name was Jason.

Then he asked me did I have a boyfriend so I told him yes. Then I asked him the same question. He told me that he just got out of a relationship with a young man who was 19. I asked him why did him and the guy break up. He told me that he found out that the boy he was dating had a girl on the side and she was pregnant by the guy who he was dating.

He told me that his so-called boyfriend was doing this behind his back. He told me that they was together for eight months and that he was going to kill himself 'cause he found out that his boyfriend was having an affair with some chick.

I told Jason, "Don't kill yourself over a n**** like him. It's not worth it. You are too fine to kill yourself over a n**** that didn't give a f*** about you from the start. I have a friend that I will hook you up with so don't worry about having to find someone that would treat you right." Then I gave him a big hug, then went out with the other kids and played cards.

After all that we had dinner and then it was time to go to bed. Before I went to my room I told Jason to pray and stay strong and then I gave him a hug before we went to the bedroom. The next morning we had breakfast and Jason came and sat by me. He asked me how did I sleep and I told him that it was decent. It's not like I was at home in my bed. When I said that, everyone said, "Ain't that the truth." That afternoon, Jason came to me and told me that he never saw no one that cared for someone that they don't know like I cared for him. I told him that I'm just a loving person.

That night Jason told me that he like me and that he want to date me and I told him that I got a boyfriend and I'm sorry that he feel this way about me. Then I told him that I would hook him up with one of my best friends. He said, "That's cool," so I gave him my friend Anthony's phone number. That evening he called him and they was on the phone for a long time. When Jason got off the phone he starts smiling and gave me a hug.

He told me that him and my friend Anthony will try to start something such as talking first and see how things go from there. From that day forward they were talking everyday almost for a week. I got a letter from Anthony and he asked me to give his picture to Jason and so I did. Jason said that Anthony was so fine and smart. I told him that them the only people that I hang out with is attractive and educated people.

The next day I was leaving and I thought I was going home but I heard that I was going to the Cook County Juvenile Center on this day. It was March 26, 2004. Before I left, I got Jason's phone number and gave him a hug. He then started crying 'cause I was leaving and going to jail. Then I told him, "Don't worry about me 'cause I will be home in a little while, so don't worry."

Chapter 2 The Audy Home

When I arrive at the Cook County Juvenile Center they had me to sign some papers and also had me change my clothes. They let me use the phone so I called my boyfriend Timothy to let him know that I was at the juvenile center. When I told him that he start crying 'cause he was ready to see me and spend time with me. I then told him that I love him and that I will be out soon. I then hung up the phone. The staff that works for the juvenile center took me upstairs to intake, which is on the third floor. On the third floor was where I would be staying until I go to court.

When I arrive on the third floor people was asking me what lead me to come here. They also ask me was I gay. I didn't respond 'cause I felt like it was not they business. I was on that section for a week then I went to section 4B. I met with everyone and they was asking me the same question that everyone else was asking me on intake. Was I gay? What led me here?

Three weeks later I became cool with everyone. Then they start calling me Holiday. They got that name off the movie "Holiday Hearts." I really thought that was funny. I went to court the following week. The judge told me that I would have to stay in custody until July 2, 2004. I was really mad and was ready to fight. I wanted to go home and be with my mother, brother and boyfriend.

On May 21, 2004 my brother came home from Statesville correctional prison in Joliet. I was really ready to go home and see my brother 'cause I haven't see him in two years. I talk to my brother when he came home. He

was mad 'cause I was locked up for a crime that I didn't commit. My brother's family and friends know that I'm not the kind of young man that has problems in school. He also know that I don't do drugs, disrespect adults or hang out with the wrong crowd. My brother name is Mudryll, but we call him Birdman. He's a nice kid until you mess with his brother or mother, that's when you would have a problem with him. My brother just found out that I was gay. He don't like it but he don't hurt me like my mother does. He said that he don't care if I'm gay or straight, he's going to still show me the same love that he been showing me before he knew that I was gay.

When he told me that I felt good 'cause he would accept me 'cause I'm his little brother. My brother and me talk on the phone once a week, but he hasn't come to see me 'cause his name isn't on the visiting list. My public defender has not put his name on the list and she don't come and see me, so I can't let her know that I think that is wrong.

On June 27, 2004 I got in a fight with a resident here. He was a tall ugly boy who reminded me of the monkeys off the movie "Planet of the Apes". On this day I was in the shower washing my body down when I bent over and the f***er put his d*** in front of my face. When he did that my reactions grew stronger. I whip that boy ass and I did not get another charge. That's when people said the rumors are true. You damn right I'm gay and he just got his ass whoop by me. Everyone made fun of him from that day forward until he went home.

My court date was the next day. My mom came up here and I told her that I thank her for all the whoopins she gave me. She asked my, "Why?" I said, "'Cause these boys in here don't have any respect or home training. They cant even sweep a floor or mop a floor." She said, "Don't talk about them. Help them just like God would."

Jonathan H.

My Problem

Live by the sword, die by the sword. Reality is sometimes the most unreal. Through the satanic forces that rule throughout the Diaspora we learn to like to live lies. Everyone trying to be something they're not, they exist only through fear and the ego entwined. As human beings it is in our nature to know right from wrong. But through the diabolical conspiracy to drive negative thoughts into our subconscious, we encourage and accept negative behavior, which, in turn, becomes our artificial nature.

The Learning Process. From birth we imitate what we're taught and what we see. It is the nature of every living thing on Earth. The brilliant yet evil minds that run the United States of America uses this process very effectively to facilitate the genocide of the "black race". Violence and gore is constantly promoted throughout our communities and homes until eventually we become comfortable with that way of life and learn to demand those surroundings.

The Destruction Process. The plot thickens when they make laws against the same images that they promote and you learn to imitate. So, when you imitate them, they can lock you up for being something "illegal", even though they helped you to be that way. Your brothers and sisters are left vulnerable to the satanic forces around them that lead them into the same traps that you fell victim to.

Change is inevitable. We are taught to fear change. Fearing change discourages us from elevating into a higher state of mind. The result is that we become comfortable and satisfied with ignorance and failure. If we become satisfied with failure we will never succeed. Ignorance is the most common attribute of an oppressed people, which makes intelligence the foundation of our destiny. It is very clear that we are predestined for prison and death. Our destiny evolves into the aspect of poverty or oppression to which we are introduced. If we are constantly praising and admiring the distinguished Gang Members and Uncle Tom indentured servants, we are subconsciously precluding our freedom from the satanic forces that control our minds. Our conscience learns to process these images as okay, as the way it is. The result is suicide on our part, and legal manslaughter for those who promote it. It is destroying our race and the true nature in which we were created.

The Acceptance Process. If our youth is the future, we might as well blow the country up now. It's sad when you look at the condition of our youth. We're tempted by so many negative thoughts and actions. Mainly we're distracted from our journey by the materialistic nature that is instilled in us, we seem to value cars and clothes more than our own lives. Our materialistic nature is perhaps the strongest it's ever been. Millions of our black youth fall victim to the unfair exchange of life for acceptance. We seek acceptance from one another by pursuing the same glamorizing poverty and pain that is always waved in our faces by major media like TV and newspapers. I was always taught to make the best of any situation, but never did I conceive becoming comfortable with unhappiness, ignorance and death. It may start out for play, but over time it becomes a means of survival, because during the process we become deluded into imitating lifestyles of the rich and famous even though we are neither rich nor famous. Those who accept the materialist lifestyle eventually accept you. And you, in turn, accept the materialist lifestyle and forget the pain and poverty in and around you.

The Resurrection Process. Discipline, or the lack thereof, plays a key factor in our destruction. Most people without discipline are very small-minded people with very big egos. Therefore, they're subject to more pain and suffering because they're unhappy with self, mostly because

they don't know self. The practice of discipline and self-control is an excellent preparation for the trials we go through in life. Millions of lives could have been spared by these attributes alone. Divide and conquer. Our submission to the genocidal plot against our people is maintained by our lack of unity. By separating us from one another our foundation was never established, so it became easier to destroy any chance of functioning as a self-governing Nation. Therefore, we became dependant upon the slave masters and their children. Honestly, how can we expect a country that is threatened by our mere existence, that killed and oppressed millions of our ancestors because of our godly nature and the nature in which we were created that gives us the ability to create, to educate us? That's like Satan teaching God's angels to be holy. How can the oppressor work to free the oppressed? It just don't make sense. We must unite to form a self-functioning Nation, to re-encounter the true essence in which we were created. We will only fail if we fail to try!

My Solution

Since the beginning of time as we know it, people have had problems of all sorts. Our problems today might be slightly different, but the old ones are still there. Everyone is talking about their problems...and that is the problem. I think because we're so burdened by our problems we forget about coming up with solutions. What's the point of me telling you that you are doing something wrong if I do not tell you how to do it right? That is negative behavior. It's okay to be aware of your problems, but your main focus should be on the solution. If you focus on your problems, you're allowing them more power than they originally possessed. I wish to be different. I gave you my problem and this is my solution.

The Preparation Process. Through proper preparation you can survive in almost any environment. I know it's hard to be positive in a negative world. It is hard to stay humble in a wild environment. None of us want to see our own people prosper. We continue to hold each other down. We have to look past these unfortunate calamities. There are many ways to defeat those demons without using physical strength. Your strongest tool is your brain. Education is a main ingredient for success and freedom. Our education is detrimental to mainstream society, which grows stronger through our ignorance. We're lost right now but eventually we will be on track. Right now we're going through training to prepare for our resurrection. Will you be with us? Will you be prepared?

The Refusal Process. There must be a purpose for our existence. If you live without purpose there is no purpose for living. Looking at the condition of reality is horrifying. Can we honestly say we are satisfied with our lives? There has to be a better way to function in this society. We often create circumstances for ourselves. Shooting, smoking, selling and bangin'. I refuse to accept this degree of reality. I refuse to go with the flow. I refuse to continue to set myself up for failure. I refuse to make the same mistakes expecting different results. I refuse to let all the black Christ's that spent their lives in prison (to better black minds by the masses) go to waste. I will learn from their journeys and honor their sacrifices and their lives.

The Planning Process. By planning for the future you can prepare for the future. If you fail to plan then you plan to fail. The enemy is planning all the time. They are building prisons and tearing down schools. They are planning our destruction.

The Making Choices Process. Choices! Yes, you do have choices in life. We just often make the wrong ones. In our Black communities we often come to a fork in the road and have to choose Left or Right. As you know usually we choose to go left. Left is a dead end, but we still choose to go that route because it appeals to youth. The temptation is overwhelming. We often

put all of our energy into traveling on that path, which leads to destruction. Think of what the results would be if we put the same energy into going right. Think of digging a grave. The more you dig the farther you go into that hole. At the same time, you are building a hill with all that dirt. That hill can be the extra height you needed to reach your goals.

The Change Process. A wise person once said, "Growth is change and growth is the activity of life itself. Anything less is death." This quote has healing power. If you're not growing or changing, you are not living. You have to constantly think of ways to grow. One way is to become aware of your weakness so that you can correct it. We have to change our weak ways. Stop submitting to those lower powers that help shape for us a future of death and destruction, those who count on us to believe we cannot change. Stop holding on to the materialistic things in this world. They won't help at all. They are just distractions to keep us away from the straight way. To keep us spiritually and mentally deaf, dumb and blind. I will not tell you to stop drinking, smoking and partying. I wish not to enslave your mind, even if it's for something positive. I wish to open your mind to different horizons. I wish to help you balance out. I wish to help myself balance out. What if the right road was closed and you can only go left? You will have no choice and will be able to make no changes once you get too far down that road. If you work to open the right road, only then will you have a choice.

Please take heed of my attempt to clarify our condition, and join the journey to change our world.

Kadafi

i still dream of



a free society.

"Sticker" -
Mia Ferreira.
Chosen by Kadafi
to accompany this
essay.

My First Love

It was a few days before Christmas and we were handing out gifts. My mom's friend brought her son over. He walked into the house and sat down at the table where they were finishing up handing out gifts. His mom went upstairs to put the rest of the gifts away. I sat down next to him and we started talking. I asked him how old he was and he said he was only 15. He said that he was going to be spending the night. That's when his mom came down from upstairs.

"Okay, let's go so you can get your stuff to spend the night," she said.

He came back in like an hour. We were sitting in the front room and I asked him if he wanted to go upstairs and play some games.

"Yes," he replied.

When we got upstairs we were playing a game for a while. He asked me to sit on his lap.

"Let's move the game to my room," I suggested. When we got to my room we were playing games for like 5 minutes then he sat on my lap. We just started kissing. My niece walked in and she started laughing, then ran out the room. We got up and I walked out to talk to her. When I caught up to her I pulled her off to the side.

"Why didn't you knock before you walked in?"

"I didn't know you was still home. I thought you went out," she replied.

"Why would you go in my room if you thought I wasn't home?" I asked her.

"Because I asked you if I could get a CD out of your room before you left and you said okay."

"Oh." Then I told her, "What you seen, just keep it between me and you."

"I don't know if I can do that." She looked like she wanted something.

"What do you want to keep it a secret?"

"I want the CD I was going to borrow."

"You can have it."

My ma came upstairs and told us it was bedtime. She asked him where he was going to sleep. He said he was going to sleep in my room.

We closed the door. We both got undressed and we got into the bed. We made love. When we got done, we were laying there for a while. His head was on my chest when he asked me, "Could this be a beginning for us?"

"Yes, why not?" I said.

"When I asked the other people this they said 'No,'" he said sadly.

"I'm not like any other people...like those other people you know," I told him.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because I had the same problems you did." He asked me how many other people I had been with.

"Just one. It will be two counting you." I asked him how many people he had been with and he said he's only been with two. The conversation died down and we drifted off to sleep. I got up at one the next morning and took my dogs out for a walk. I left a note on the table saying, "Here are some clothes I want you to wear. Meet me at Mexican Inn at 9pm."

Around 9am, my nephews joined me at the park for swim team practice. While we were waiting for the swim team coaches to come, everyone started showing up. The coaches came and told us all to line up. We started doing the exercises then we all walked to the beach and started swimming, doing laps.

After practice, I saw my cousin standing by the lifeguards' house so I went and talked to her. While we were talking the cops came and they said I was under arrest.

"For what?" I asked. They said they couldn't tell me, but they did say "we got a few witnesses who say they saw someone who looked like you

covered in blood run out of a house in your neighborhood. That's all we can tell you. You'll find out more when you are allowed to make one phone call." When I got to the station, I called home and asked for my mother, but they said she was at my grandma's.

"Tell Manuel I'm not going to be able to meet him for dinner. And tell my mom to come to the police station and get me out." My mom came up to the station with Manuel. He said he heard what happened.

"I was waiting at the restaurant for almost an hour until somebody called me and told me where you were," he said.

"I'm sorry I couldn't make it," I responded. "I don't know what's going to happen. No matter what happens, I will always love you." When one of the cops said that visiting time is over, Manuel started crying.

"Everything will be fine. I'll be out soon," I assured him. Three days went by, then they brought me to the Juvenile Detention Center. When I got there, they allowed me to make a phone call. I called to check up on Manuel. They said he was in the hospital. I asked what happened and they said he had a nervous breakdown. He tried to kill himself. I asked was he going to be all right and they said yes, but they wanted to keep him in the hospital for a couple of weeks. Then the detention center caseworker said my time was up for phone calls.

"Tell everyone I love them." The call ended and I went back to my unit. When I got there, I grabbed a pen off the table and stabbed myself in the arm.

"There's nothing else to live for! Everyone around me is dying or trying to kill themselves!" I yelled. The county staff grabbed the pen out of my arm and called medical.

"We have a suicidal patient! You better hurry up and get here because he's bleeding all over!" The nurses got there, wrapped my arm up and sent me out to the hospital. When I got there, they asked the sheriff what happened.

"He tried to kill himself. He still has pieces of pen stuck in his arm. The doctors looked at it to see if they could try to get it out, but they said it was too deep and they'd have to operate." It took a few hours to operate. I don't know how much time passed, but I woke up and heard the nurse talking to the doctor.

"There's another patient here who was just transferred over from Trinity Hospital." The doctor asked her his name. She said his name was Emmanuel. I looked up and they brought him in and put him right next to me. He was sleeping, so I got up out of my bed and went and tapped him on the shoulder. He woke up. I asked him why did he do that. He said because he was afraid he might never see me again.

"Why would you say something like that?" I asked.

"Because our parents are fighting," he said.

"That don't mean nothin'. I'll still be able to see you."

"Well, I don't think so."

"Why do you say that?!"

"Because of what I've done. I tried to kill myself because I missed you. That's why they're fighting," he answered.

"I'm still gonna go see you," I said. He asked me when I was gonna get out.

"I don't know," I said sadly. He asked me would being apart affect our relationship.

"No. There isn't anything that will keep me away from you," I said.

"Well, I'm going to lay back down."

Before he went to sleep, I told him, "I just wanted to let you know I will always love you."

"I know that," he replied from the fringes of a dream. The doctor walked back into the room. He began questioning the relationship Manuel and I had.

"Do you know this person? What type of relationship do you have with him?" he grilled.

"Sexual."

"Oh," He said. "I'm gonna move him to another room."

"How come?" I asked.

"Because he's going to be here for a few months." I asked him if he

could send me notes on him on when he's going to be released.

"Well, I can't because I would get in trouble. I'm not even supposed to be talking to you because you're a juvenile."

"What's that have to do with anything?" I couldn't believe what he was saying.

"The only way I can talk to you is if you are in some kind of pain."

"I am in some kind of pain," I said.

"Oh, yeah? What kind of pain is it?"

"I am in pain that I might lose a friend that I love."

"Well I can understand what you're going through."

"Well, no you don't because no one understands this. The only way you can understand this is if you've been through it."

"I have been through this," he informed me. "I've been through something like it four times already. But, if something happens between you and him, you'll have other people who will come into your life. You have more time to deal with it because you're still growing up."

"Yeah, but even if there is another person, they're not gonna be like him. And there is always gonna be an empty spot in my heart for him."

"You can fill that spot with other people," the doctor persisted.

"Didn't you just hear what I told you? No matter how many people I go with none of them are gonna amount to him."

"That might be true, but not everything lasts forever."

"Well, yeah? This is gonna be the first thing that does," I insisted.

"I hope the best for you. I gotta go check up on Manuel."

"Tell him I'll try to come up and see him if I get out." The doctor said he would tell him. As he was leaving, the sheriff transporters walked in. They asked if I was ready to go. I said I was. They put shackles on my legs and handcuffs on my hands, then walked me out to the car. I rode in the back of the squad car on my way back to the detention center.

When I got there they took me upstairs. They had me on the medical unit for a few weeks. When I got back to the regular section the staff asked me if I was alright. I said I was. They informed me that I was now on "close watch." I asked what that meant.

"That means you cannot help with anything. You cannot have a desk in your room or a chair. No sheets on your bed. No pencils or anything sharp. Now we have to watch you even closer. Why would you do something like that?"

"Because a person I care about is in the hospital. I don't know what's gonna happen to him."

"Well, it's nothin' to do something stupid like that for," they said almost laughing.

"If you love that person there is."

"You must love that person very much." He began to understand a bit.

"How's this person related to you?"

"It's my mom's friend's son but I was going out with him."

"I hope that person knows now that you'd do anything for him," he said.

"Yes, I hope he does, too," I concluded. Then the phone rang. Staff picked it up. He said "Hello, Unit 5E." It was the doctor on the phone. He asked if he could speak to me. Staff handed me the phone. I grabbed it.

"Hello?" The doctor started talking.

"We had to take Manuel to the emergency room. When he got up to use the bathroom he slipped and hit his head on the floor and there was blood all over. He cracked his skull and slipped into a coma." They didn't know how long he would be in a coma. Then he said, "I got to go because they're paging me." I hung up the phone. Staff asked me if everything was all right.

"No," I said.

"Why? What happened?"

"Every time I think something is at the worst it just seems to get worse," I said to him.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"The doctor said that Manuel busted his head and slipped into a coma and I don't know what is going to happen to him."

"If you need time to yourself...", staff said.

"I always need time to myself."

"You wanna go in your room?" he offered.

"I need to be isolated from the unit."

"You need to be sent back to medical?"

"I need to be sent somewhere where I'm away from people." He told me to stand on the wall for a minute. He picked up the phone and called medical.

"We have a resident up here who's not feeling very well. We need to get him away from the population. He feels hostile and other residents don't feel safe around him." Then he hung up the phone. He walked back over to me and said, "Grab a chair and sit on the wall 'cause it might take them a while to come around." I walked to the TV room. People started asking me what happened. I didn't say anything. They were being nosy. I felt a lot of rage, then I grabbed a chair. Right when I grabbed a chair the phone rang. It was the doctor again. Staff called me and I ran to grab the phone.

"We have some bad news. Your friend has died."

"How did he die?" I said in shock.

"From blood loss," he said. I dropped the phone. I fell to my knees and started crying. The staff came and picked me up. I pushed him away and grabbed the chair and threw it. I just started throwing stuff. Staff called for the supervisor. Supervisors ran in and grabbed me and took me down to the medical unit. They put me in a room and they started talking to medical staff and regular staff, getting both of their accounts of what happened.

"He got two calls today from the doctor." The supervisor asked him if he knew what the doctor said. Staff recounted how the doctor said that my friend had slipped and hit his head and that he was bleeding and slipped into a coma and didn't know how long he was going to be in coma. They said that when I got off the phone I told them that I needed to be isolated. Then he said how I got another call from the doctor, and he described my reaction to the second call. After hearing staff's story about what happened the supervisor said, "That's common for that to happen." And, then they all walked away. I sat in my room and cried all night.

The next day, I went to court. Standing in front of the judge, he said to me, "You are being released. We ran a few tests and examined the fingerprints from the scene. The tests showed that you are not guilty of the crime. You are free to go. Stop at the front desk and sign for your property." I felt relieved and excited to be leaving the detention center. When I got home my family all got together to greet me. Everyone was there, including Emmanuel's mother. She pulled me off to the side and we started talking.

"Emmanuel's funeral is two days from now. Are you going to be there?"

"Yes," I answered, then I turned around and told everyone I was going to lie down. They asked if I was all right. I said I was.

On the day of the funeral, I walked into the church. Everyone was standing over the casket. I walked up to the casket. I leaned over and grabbed his hand. I started crying. They tried to pull me away from the casket, but I pushed everyone off of me and ran out of the church. I ran all the way home and upstairs to my parent's room. I grabbed the keys off my dad's shelf and opened his gun closet. As I got the key into the lock, the door slammed downstairs and I heard my brother's voice call my name. I grabbed my dad's rifle, loaded it, put it in my mouth, and pulled the trigger.

"AJ!!! Mom!! There's blood all over the wall!! As I left my body, I saw him looking at it on the bed.

"There's a note sticking out of his pocket!!"

The note said, "It wasn't supposed to be like this. I was supposed to be there for the person I loved. But now that I'm gone, I'll be there for him for eternity."

AJ

Dig Words?

Then get down with
Young Chicago Authors.

Saturday Writing Programs

The **YCA Saturday Writing Program** is an intensive three-year writing program that accepts students beginning their sophomore year of high school. Over sixty young writers attend small group workshops in poetry, fiction writing, non-fiction forms, playwriting, performance writing and selected author studies.

Publishing Opportunities

Say What Magazine is written by and for Chicago teens. It is a writing work book and publication forum for Chicago's young writers with a readership of 20,000.

Watch The Steps is YCA's publication wing. Since 1993, YCA has published the outstanding work of the young writers who participate in YCA writing workshops.

Performance Programs

WordPlay, now in its ninth year, is where Chicago's young adult writers congregate on Tuesday nights. Beginning with a drop-in writing workshop facilitated by the month's writer-in-residence, WordPlay brings together diverse teens to generate new writing and share with one another under the mentorship of acclaimed writers. The workshop is followed by an open-mic and featured reading series.

Louder Than A Bomb, The Chicago Teen Poetry Festival is now in its fifth year. Louder Than A Bomb engages over 300 teens representing 30 Chicago-land schools and community organizations in workshops, showcases, panel discussions and a mind-blowing teen poetry slam.

Special Programs

GirlSpeak Initiative. Through workshops and projects that highlight the accomplishments of women writers and encourage youth to challenge one another to be self-expressed, fully literate individuals, the GirlSpeak initiative raises the level of consciousness throughout YCA core programs.

Poetry of Witness is a yearlong project in which Chicago teens study 20th century world poetry and write about their own lives through the perspective of the theory that literature can bear witnesses to its time and place. In this project, young people are both critics of culture and its creators.

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