

# The Beat Within



The Beat Within ■ A Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside ■ Volume 19.09/10



**T**rying to find love, all in the wrong places. Grandfather telling me he loved me  
As long as I don't say nothing.  
Father says he loves me, but haven't  
Seen him since forever.  
Momma saying she loves me too, when she wants,  
But on the streets doing what she wants to do.  
So now what's next, I'm lost, alone,  
Scared, worried about who's going to tell me  
They love me next.

# Editor's Note

**H**ello The Beat Within editorial note readers! Wow, do we have a solid batch of writings in this latest issue of writing and art from the inside. Now, before you dive into this double issue, 19.09 and 19.10, we hope you will stick around to read OT's latest note to us readers. Without further ado, here's OT...

*When we are young we don't know much about the world. Remember those good old days when you use to ride your bike, roller blades, skateboards, or whatever you use to do when you were little? When you are little everybody likes you. You're the baby. Who doesn't love a cute baby? As we get older though, we come to find out that this world is colder than it actually is. It seems like, as we grow older, the world doesn't love us as much.*

*The more older we get the more people don't like us and instead they despise us. We have lost our innocence and we have lost both our innocence and our aura as likeable people. Instead of people telling you, "you can be anything you want to be." You have people telling you "you will never be shhh" in life.*

*You know like we all catch ourselves saying, "damn I miss those days when I didn't have to worry about anything." No one is trying to kill you when you are six or seven years old. The police doesn't harass you when you are that young. There is no pressure from your peers to go do this and to go do that. Maybe you are getting pressured into kissing a girl on the cheek for the first time, but besides playing at school and playing outside when you get home, you don't really have to worry about anything.*

*Now you are thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen years old and find yourself in your cell thinking about your mom, brothers, sisters, dad, uncles, nephews, kids, nieces, girlfriends, future wives, etc. (you name it). You reflect a lot thinking about the life you have lived and most of us change and evolve with the times. Life's experiences have brought us to where we are right now, and I am not talking about the actual cell, or where you are physically standing right now. I am referring to your mind state.*

*We feel that life has put us in unfair situations so we decide to treat life like crap because we want to get our paybacks or because we feel like we need to take this anger out on someone or something. "Why me?" "What did I do to deserve this?" Those are common questions that float through all of our heads.*

*Change is important for us to survive. Nothing stays the same forever. Hamburgers at McDonald's use to cost nineteen cents and nowadays you can't buy jack squat for less than a dollar. We're all happy with the dollar menu. Shhh the McDonald's in Nicaragua doesn't even have a dollar menu. Think about it though, if a hamburger cost nineteen cents how much do you think the worker would make an hour? Definitely, not what they make right now.*

*My point is this: Life tends to throw obstacles at us because these are necessary experiences that we need to go through to help us become stronger and better human beings. Life's obstacles are not meant to destroy us. They are meant to build us up in tougher, smarter, more honest, sincere, and humble people. Look at the all the rich people with money that have OD on drugs: Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley Amy Winehouse, Michael Jackson, even The Famous Joker from the Batman Movie, etc.*

*Why? Money can't cure a person's unhappiness, because money can't do anything but buy stuff. You can't buy a new mentality and materialistic things don't define us as people. So for all of you chasing money, cars, jewelry, etc. what will you do after you get it? Are you just going to keep chasing forever?*

*We all have a purpose in this life. Maybe you don't know what it is yet, and that's fine, many of us don't know, but many of us do know without knowing it. If you are a parent, well that's your purpose in life. To be the best parent that you can possibly be. Maybe you are a brother or sister, well be the best brother and sister that you can possibly be. Maybe you are an artist, a plumber, a writer, or just a regular person. Well be the best person that you can possibly be. Your purpose in life is to change because change is unavoidable in life, but you are the one responsible for changing for the better...Not life...You are.*

*One love, one heartbeat, one struggle.....*

OT!

All right, we hope you readers appreciate OT's words of wisdom. We encourage you to take a peak at the topics below, given these are the prompts that were discussed in our workshops prior to the writing featured in this issue.

If any of you want to write on our topics, please do so. We definitely look forward to reading your thoughts and sharing your work in our pages.

In closing, we can't thank you enough for your support. Keep us in mind. Please share The Beat Within with your family and community. If you are anyone has a Facebook page, please stop by and LIKE us. Thanks.

This issue goes out to our near 1500 friends on Facebook. Thank you all for your continued support. The Beat goes on!!!!

Cuando somos jóvenes no sabemos mucho de este mundo. ¿Te recuerdas los días de antes cuando andaba en tu bicicleta, tu patinetas, o lo que te gustaba cuando era niño. ¿Cuando sos un niño todo el mundo te quiere. A quien no quiere un niño chiquito y bonito? Avanzando en edad ya miramos que este mundo no es tan cariñoso como pensamos. Parece que al crecer de mas este mundo ya no los quieren.

Al crecer mas parece que ya la gente ya no los quieren, y en vez los desprecian mas. Perdemos nuestra inocencia y nuestra aura como gente agradable. Antes te decían que tu puedes ser lo tu quieras en esta vida y

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## 19.09 Topics

1. Generosity - Has anyone ever been generous with you? How did it make you feel about them and yourself? Have you ever been generous with anyone? Is it easier for you to be generous with others or to receive another's generosity?

2. Lost - What do you do when you are lost? Can you describe a time you felt lost? Maybe the lost is inside of you and your searching to get back on track? This week we want to hear from you how you handle being lost and what does lost feels like for you.

3. Food - What is your favorite food? What do you like about it? Where do you get it? Does someone specially prepare it for you? Can you make it for yourself? Is your favorite food special to your family or culture? What is your least favorite food?

4. Words from the wise, quote of the week - "You can close your eyes to the things you don't want to see, but you can't close your heart to the things you don't want to feel." Johnny Depp. How do you interpret this week's quote? Do you have examples from your own life? Share your thoughts.

## 19.10 Topics

1. Capacity for love - This week we want to know from you writers and artists what is your capacity to love? They say that everyone has a different capacity for love. They also say that in every relationship there is always one person that loves more, do you agree? Is it hard for you to love? What are your thoughts on this and your own capacity for love?

2. To conquer - This week we want to know from you what is most important for you to conquer? What will it take? Describe what it is you want to conquer and why.

3. Substance and alcohol abuse - This week we learned of the death of actor and director, Philip Seymour Hoffman, to drugs. With that said, do you know of anybody who ever had a major drug problem or who passed away from a drug related issue? Write about your relationship with this person and if there is (or was) any way that you could help.

4. Words from the wise, quote of the week - "There is something about participating. It is almost my religion. If the world is still here in 100 years, people will know the importance of participating, not just being spectators." Pete Seeger (1919 - 2014) was an American folk singer and activist. What are your thoughts on this week's quote? Where do you fit in when it comes to participating? Tell us of a time you got involved in making a change, playing a role, having a voice. How did you feel with your involvement? Or, tell us why you prefer not to have a role.

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The Beat Within publishes a bi-weekly magazine of writing and art by incarcerated youth.

The Beat Within is a program of the Youth Law Center.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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**Writers:** Thanks to all the participants in our writing workshops. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, please contact us.

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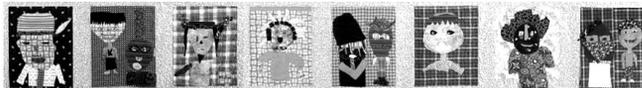
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Tara Libert and Juliana Ratner

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ahora te dicen que nunca vas ser nada en esta vida.

Ustedes saben como yo lo se, que hay veces los encontramos hablando solos "Me hacen falta esos días de antes cuando no me tenia que preocupar de nada." Cuando tienes los seis o siete años nadie te quiere matar, la policía no te molesta, y ninguno de tus amigos conocidos te van a presionar de hacer algo que no quieres. Bueno a lo mejor te exigen a besar tu enamorada en la cara por la primera vez. Del escuela vas a la casa a jugar a fuera, y no tienes que preocuparte de nada.

Ahora tienes, trece, catorce, quince, diez y seis, diez y siete años y te encuentras en tu celda pensando en tu madre, en tu hermanos, hermanas, hijas, tíos tías, novia o de tu esposa del futuro etc. (de lo que sea). La mayoría de ustedes reflejan de la vida que han vivido o que viven ahorita en este momento y miramos que cambiamos y desarrollamos con los tiempos. Las experiencias de la vida los han llevado adonde están ahorita, pero no estoy hablando físicamente en tu celda, me estoy refiriendo de tu mentalidad.

Sentimos que la vida lo a puesto en situaciones injusto so tratamos la vida sin respeto por que lo queremos desquitar nuestra arrechura con la vida o con alguien. Y todavía te preguntas "por que yo?" "Que hice para a merecer esto?" Esas son preguntas muy común que pasa por todos de nuestras mentes.

Cambio es necesario para sobrevivir. Nada se mantiene lo mismo para toda la vida. Una hamburguesa en McDonald's antes costaba diez y nueve centavos y ahora tu no puedes comprar nada por menos de un dólar. Estamos alegre solo por tener en menú de dólar. El McDonald's de Nicaragua ni tiene un menú de dólar. Pero piénsalo bien. ¿Cuanto va ser el saldo del empleado si las hamburguesas cuestan diez y nueve

centavos? De seguro no lo que le están pagando ahorita.

Mi mensaje es esto: la vida los tira obstáculos por que son necesario que pasemos por momentos difíciles para ser humanos mas mejor y fuerte. Los obstáculos de la vida no son para destruirnos. Son para enseñarnos como ser mas inteligente, resistente, mas honesto, mas sincero, y humilde. Mira a toda la gente rica que tenían riquezas y todavía sufren sobredosis de drogas: Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Amy Winehouse, Michael Jackson, hasta el famoso Joker de la película de Batman, etc.

Porque? El dinero no es el remedio para la infelicidad de una persona. El dinero solo sirve para comprar cosas materialista. No puedes comprar un nuevo mentalidad y las cosas materialista no los definan como ser humanos. Para todos que están persiguiendo dinero, caros, joyas, etc. Que vas hacer después que consigues todo? O vas a perseguir esto por el resto tu vida.

Todos de nosotros tenemos un propósito en esta vida. A lo mejor todavía no lo sabes, pero hay muchos de nosotros que ya tienen propósito sin saberlo. Si sos un pariente, bueno tu propósito es ser el mejor pariente para tu niña o niño. Si sos hermano o hermana, tu propósito es ser el mejor posible. A lo mejor sos un artista, plomero, escritor, o a lo mejor dices yo soy una persona regular. Pues seas la mejor persona posible. Tu propósito en la vida es cambiar porque el cambio es inevitable, pero tu responsabilidad siempre vas ser a cambiar para mejorarte. La vida no se encarga de eso. Ese es tu responsabilidad y de nadie mas.

Un amor, un latido, y una lucha.

Siempre OT!

features of the week

## Features of the Week!

Jewish Community High School, San Francisco

### Knowing

Sometimes you just know it's right.  
You get that feeling in your gut, the butterflies  
In your stomach.  
And you just know.

Sometimes knowing isn't the problem.  
Figuring it out isn't what drives you crazy.  
It's the patience.

It's the waiting, the longing, and hoping that one day soon,  
The other person will "know" too.

-Simone

**From The Beat: We agree. We hope the wait was worth it! Sounds like it is.**

### Technology

I sit down at lunch and what do I see?  
I see everyone's heads face down. Faced towards their screens.  
Have you seen that? Have you heard? Yes of course...who hasn't?  
The thought is  
absurd.

Notifications, dings and alerts.  
Hold on, one second, I have to get that...  
The boom of technology, of iPhones, of droids, the thought of  
losing one's phone  
often accumulates horrendous terror and gruesome noise.  
Look up. Have you seen? Have you heard?  
Life is happening! But you missed it...I guess you'll have to just  
check your phone.

- Sally

**From The Beat: Brutally true. Kind of sad too, that many of us have become slaves to technology.**

**From The Beat: We are honored to include the writings from a number of students from the Jewish Community High School of The Bay in San Francisco, CA. For over five years, thanks to teacher, Roni Ben-David, The Beat Within has had the opportunity to bring our story and work to this wonderful high school. From this partnership has come a number of wonderful volunteers and interns over the years too. We could not be more grateful for their support in this important work. A few weeks back, in February, The Beat not only did a presentation, but also did a writing workshop with a number of students. Today we bring you their writing to share with the larger Beat community. Enjoy!! In our next issue we will feature these same students who have taken on the task to type up, edit and respond to a number of pieces from our weekly workshops.**

It's the waiting, the longing, and  
hoping that one day soon,

### Teddy

My teddy bear  
He used to be white and fluffy  
But now he's grey  
My love for him will always  
Stay.  
He makes me happy  
When my life feels like the  
Color of his fur.  
I love him.

- Aviva

**From The Beat: Well said. We so understand and can relate to your Teddy Bear.**

## Life

I'm tryna find the time before you  
Find the time to change.  
I'm giving you the pieces of  
The puzzle on this page.  
Should I slit my pale wrists for  
You to see my open veins?  
One second life is deathly  
And death is life locked in a cage.  
We're all part of the maze.  
The point here is to get out.  
While feelings of anxiety can't  
Help themselves to be bred out.

-Alex

**From The Beat: Nothing is worth hurting yourself over. We hope that will never be the case for you. What inspired this poetry?**

## Jessie

Small and white with round ears,  
He and his sister Lillian had their matching ones-ies  
The one's with white ruffles and little green flowers.  
He would protect me, my first love. I took him everywhere.  
But sometimes your love leaves you  
The day of show and tell was my last day with Him  
Tears filled with memories of Christmases and reading together  
Fell down my face.  
No more of our pictures together, the "selfies" of 2001.  
You were my rock, but some how you rolled away.

- Izze

**From The Beat: Heartbreaking to lose something so special. Did anything ever replace Jessie?**

## He's Never Coming Back

We laughed together. We argued together. We cried together. We  
smiled together. I miss him. I want him back. He was only sixty-  
one, he still had a whole life to live.  
Why? He didn't do anything wrong. I need him back but then I face  
the reality  
He isn't coming back. I need to move on and realize that's life.  
My grandfather will always stay in  
My heart.  
I want him back.  
I love you and I wish I had emphasized that more to you.  
I miss you. Come back.

- Samara

**From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. Your grandfather is with you in spirit and knows as he watches over you the love you have for him and your family. In his name live a life that will make him proud.**

## Bunny

Tattered strings hold together the memories  
Of broken hearts and tempered sorrows.  
As I walk through the sidewalks in the city  
Sun I clenched the pinks of your skin in mine.  
I walked, no raced fast cars  
and faster tears, running after me.  
I kept my hand tight on the pink.  
I came home and cried because I made it  
By the skin of my teeth  
And I used you for my pillow.  
You took my tears.

-Libby

**From The Beat: What moved you to write this piece? How are you doing today? What is your relationship life now?**

## Choice

If I could make the perfect choice  
there was no stuck within my voice  
I guess then maybe I would know what to write

I'm not sure  
at the moment  
what is secure  
and what is broken

and I can't seem to figure out  
what to do right

There never seems a day when we don't fight

And these days sometimes I feel  
like what your telling me is real  
but now you only confide  
'cause it's too late  
to run and hide

you already told me  
the climax of the story  
and I can't take back my knowledge  
even when there's a need to apolog-

Eyes  
wander  
and  
cry.

I know that in the end you aren't lazy  
even if you may very well be crazy  
I swear I'm trying my hardest  
not to be angry.

-Maia

**From The Beat: What a powerful piece of writing. What inspired this work? How is it going today for you?**

## Say The Word - Lucky!

The one word I would choose is lucky. I think that I'm very lucky  
to be born into the family I have. They always support me and help  
me whenever I need it. I think this caused me to stay away from bad  
situations as well as bad decisions. I know I'm lucky to be in this  
situation and I never forget that because I know that not everyone is  
born into the good situation they wished they were born into.

- Gali

**From The Beat: It is great that you notice how fortunate you are. This will only help you in life as you continue on your wonderful adventure.**

## Word of The Day

So many words go through my head for the first prompt, all of them  
work for my past. The biggest and most common one is "ef-up." I've  
screwed up so many times, always say I'm not going to do it again,  
but I always end up doing it again. I disappoint my parents, but I  
mainly disappoint myself.

The future, though, I think of how I won't be alone. I know how  
to survive; as they say "life finds a way." But even so, the future  
scares me, I don't know what to expect. Will I always and forever be  
the way I am? Will I continue to disappoint, or will I finally learn my  
lesson and grow from it?

-Pondering thoughts

**From The Beat: We bet you will only grow from your past experience and truly improve in yourself and how you are seen by others. Sure the past is frustrating, but the future is yours to work towards improving.**



POEMAS Y REFLEXIONES DE JÓVENES  
PRIVADOS DE LIBERTAD

**From The Beat:** We're back again this week with some more great writing from El Salvador. Our friends from Project "Tell Me" have been consistently participating in our program and seizing this opportunity to let their voices be heard by a large audience. We would like to give the floor to the young adults that are expressing themselves with their heart and soul.

**From The Beat:** Otra vez regresamos a otra semana con buenas escrituras de El Salvador. Nuestros amigos de Proyecto Cuentame han participado en nuestro programa consistentemente y aprovechando de esta oportunidad para que sus voces se pueden escuchar para el público. Le damos nuestra atención para que los alumbramos con sus escrituras que escriben del Corazón y alma.

At every court date I keep my gaze fixed on the door of the courtroom to see if she comes in to represent me as my legal guardian, but she never comes, and my sentence becomes even longer.

## Mother's Day In a World of Sadness

Yesterday as I lay in my bed, I thought about how wonderful my mother is to me. I felt deep sadness because I couldn't be by her side. I went to the bathroom of the cell and I looked out at the sky through one of the small holes, because I wanted to find a star. I only found one star in the cloudy sky. I closed my eyes wishing, "Mother, may you always be the best thing in my life, wherever you are." I began crying huge tears from deep down in my heart, because I could not give her a hug. All I could do was share my pain with this star and carry on with my suffering. I went to lie down and I made a card for my mother, wishing her a Happy Mother's Day.

5 months later...

In this world, everything takes a turn upside from one day to the next. This time the flipped coin landed on the other side. For two and a half years she visited me consistently, since my two best friends gave her the money to come. Now that they are both dead, it is harder for her to come visit me. It's now been five months since I've seen her, touched her, felt her presence. This fills me with loneliness and sadness. Every visitation day and I sit at the table waiting to see if she enters through the front doors, but she never enters, and my heart's torture continues.

As I lay in the hospital bed, I waited for her to come see me in the operating room, but she never came. The knife not only passed through my throat that day, but also through my heart, leaving it with yet another wound.

At every court date I keep my gaze fixed on the door of the courtroom to see if she comes in to represent me as my legal guardian, but she never comes, and my sentence becomes even longer.

They tell me that she's sick, now that she's eighty years old and has no one to care for her. Her children have left her and forgotten about her, and I can do nothing more than dream about getting out one day in order to help her carry on.

What I miss most is her love, understanding, communication, care, warmth, hugs, and kisses—everything that made me feel happy. As another one of my court dates approaches, I don't know if she'll come. If she doesn't come, I'll stay here. I am in a hopeless place. I feel like killing myself in this damned solitude, because no matter what I do, no matter how hard I try, I have not been able to have her close to me.

-Saylor

**From The Beat:** Sometimes we put ourselves in difficult situations and don't realize that we have loved ones that really need us. She needs you just as much as you need her. Understand that she can't travel because she's not physically healthy. Be strong and stay focused. You need to be physically and mentally healthy so you can help her once you get out. It's hard, but you are the only person that can help you right now.

## Día De La Madres En Un Mundo De Tristeza

Ayer acostado en mi catre, pensaba en lo linda que es mi madre conmigo. Sentí una gran tristeza al no poder estar a su lado. Me fui para los baños de la celda y me puse a mirar por los hoyos hacia el cielo porque quería buscarla en las estrellas. Hallé una tan sola estrella en el cielo nublado. Cerré mis ojos deseando, "Madre siempre vas a ser lo más lindo en mi vida, estés donde estés". Se me salieron las lagrimotas de lo muy profundo de mi corazón, porque no podía darle un abrazo. Me tocó desahogar mi dolor con esa única estrella y soportar el sufrimiento. Me fui a acostar y le hice una carta deseándole un feliz día de la madre. 5 meses después...

En esta vida todo da vuelta de un día al otro. Hoy dio vuelta la moneda... Por 2 años y medio ella venía seguido a visitarme con el apoyo económico de mis 2 mejores amigos. Ya que no están con vida ninguno de los dos se le hace más difícil verme a ver. Tengo 5 meses de no verla, de no poder tocarla ni sentirla. Me llena de soledad y tristeza. Cada día de visita, sentado en una mesa, me quedo esperando a ver si dentro por esa puerta, pero como nunca dentro, mi corazón está torturado.

Acostado en el hospital esperaba que llegara a verme en la sala de operación, pero no sucedió. El cuchillo no sólo traspasó mi garganta sino también mi corazón, dejando otra herida más. En cada audiencia me quedo viendo la puerta del juzgado para ver si llega a representarme, pero nunca llega y así se alarga más mi pena.

Dicen que está enferma ya con sus 80 años y no tiene a nadie que le ayude. Los hijos la han dejado en el olvido y yo no puedo hacer nada más que soñar que algún día saldré de aquí para ayudarle a salir adelante.

Lo que más me hace falta son su amor, comprensión, comunicación, cariño, su calor, sus abrazos y besos—todo lo que me hacía sentir feliz. Hoy que se acerca la fecha de mi audiencia, no sé si va a venir. Si no viene, no me voy de aquí. Estoy en un lugar sin salida. Me dan ganas de matarme en esta maldita soledad, porque haga lo que haga, intente lo que pueda, no he conseguido tenerla cerca.

-Saylor

**Del Beat:** Hay veces los ponemos en situaciones difíciles sin realizar que tenemos seres queridos y familiares que necesitan nuestra ayuda. Ella te necesita como tú la necesitas a ella. Tienes que comprender que ella no puede viajar ahorita porque físicamente no se siente bien. Tú tienes que hacer el esfuerzo y estar enfocado para estar sana de la mente y de tu físico para ayudarla cuando salgas. Es difícil, pero ahorita tú eres la única persona que te puedes ayudar.

## We Only Have One Mother

I picture all of the times she shouted to me outside of the holding cell: "Son, are you there? I've left food for you." As she left, the policemen always made fun of her: "Son of a bitch, why don't you educate your children?" Maybe she was able to keep her composure, but this always made me want to cry. There were twenty-three of us in the cell that was designed to hold eight. As I suffered from the pain in my bones, lack of sleep, suffocation, hunger, and raging fevers, I missed her warmth.

I picture her raising my son when I had to run from our village so that I wouldn't be captured. I'm sure that as you looked at my son, you saw me, believing that I had been born again in him. I worked like an ant for two years, cultivating coffee and trying to live an honorable life. Although I was free, I felt like a caged prisoner. As I slept in the coffee plantations so that the police wouldn't find me, with branches pricking me, mosquitos biting me, and rain falling over me, I missed her warmth.

I picture her on the five-hour journey, making a huge effort to see me the few times she was able to visit me with my son. Thanks to her I spent one Christmas on an abandoned coffee farm, playing and setting off fireworks, just my mom, my son and I, so happy. I couldn't go and visit them because I feared being captured, but I put up with the distance knowing that at least this way I could see them once in awhile in the free world. When we said goodbye I felt so sad because I didn't know when I'd see them again, and as I let go of her, I already missed her warmth.

I picture her worried sick, kneeling down in front of her bed and praying for me when I left to go on foot to the United States, begging God that I might arrive safely and find work. Fifteen days into the trip the coyote turned me in because he thought I was up to no good, and I was deported to El Salvador. When I saw her I was handcuffed, and as I stood there, wishing I could hug her, I missed her warmth.

I picture her crying, suffering because of the water-filled blisters that show up all over her skin, and suffering because of her desire to visit my brother and I in jail. She saves her money to come and visit us instead of buying herself medicine. I think about the footprints of pain that I have left in her heart because I haven't been the son she wished I'd have been. She would like things to go back to how they were when we were young, but it's too late. As I wait for her to enter the visitation doorway and she doesn't show up, I keep missing her warmth.

-Stomper

**From The Beat: This is a story filled with pain, sadness, and at the same time you describe some vivid memories of happiness with your son and mother. Sometimes we take a look at our current situation and realize that we are not alone. There are loved ones by our side suffering with us, or there going through it with us, in your case it's your mother. You will have an opportunity to be released and do things the right way. You will be able to spend time with your son and with your mother without having to look over your shoulder all the time. Do everything that you can so you never have to experience this again. Spending time with those you love is the best thing about life.**

## A Mother's Advice

In our family, the strongest always won. We learned this as we crouched in the corner watching my father and mother grab each other and fight. There was always conflict in our home, in addition to the homicides that I got used to seeing at a young age in front of my mom's market stall.

My mom had been a part of the gang as well as my four brothers—it just runs in our blood. She wanted to sort out every issue with us by beating us, but she was never there for me to vent to, nor did she give me anything in which to occupy my time. Instead I looked for attention on the streets. She warned me not to love people, nor to feel bad for people, in order to keep me from suffering as she had suffered.

Since I was young, I ate up her advice. I became cold just like her. Now, the gang is more important to me than my family. When I get out of here, I am going to continue in the same life. I feel better that way, feeling the adrenaline of hurting others. It's like a vice. It's easier to hurt than to love, to see someone suffering and feel nothing. Loving someone would be like giving up my life, because if that person ever hurt me, the pain would kill me.

-El Pensativo

**From The Beat: We hate to be the ones to tell you that your mother gave you the wrong advice. You are telling us that you'd rather physically hurt other people instead of you getting emotionally hurt? Your life could be much better if you decide to have some heart. It's time for you to try something different for once. Don't be scared of pain. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.**

## Madre Sólo Hay Una

La imagino las veces que me gritaba afuera de las bartolinas: "¿Hijo, estás allí? Aquí te dejo comida", sólo para que los charlis la deshabilitaran: "A la puta, por eso no corrigen a los hijos". Tal vez se hacía la fuerte, pero a mí me daban ganas de llorar. Habíamos veinte-tres en una celda con capacidad de sólo para ocho. Pasaba entre el dolor de huesos, el desvelo, la sofocación, el hambre y la gran calentura, extrañando su calor.

La imagino criando a mi hijo cuando me tocó huir a un pueblo, para que no me capturaran. Seguro que cuando veía al morrito me veía a mí, creyendo que había vuelto a nacer en él. Dos años trabajé como zandepo cultivando café, tratando de vivir la vida honradamente. Aunque andaba libre me sentía prisionero, acorralado. Al dormir en los cafetales para que no me agarraran los policías, aguantaba las ramas, los piquetes de zancudos y la lluvia que caía sobre mí, extrañando su calor.

La imagino durante el viaje de 5 horas, haciendo un gran esfuerzo para verme, las pocas veces que logró visitarme con mi hijo. Gracias a ella pude al menos pasar una navidad en una finca abandonada, jugando y quemando luces. Sólo ella, yo y mi hijo, tan felices. No podía llegar a verlos por miedo a que me capturaran, pero me aguanté la distancia con tal de poder verla a ella y a mi hijo en lo libre aunque sea a veces. Cuando nos despedíamos me sentía triste porque no sabía dónde ni cuándo los iba a volver a ver, y al soltarla, me dejaba extrañando su calor.

La imagino preocupada cuando me fui por tierra para los Estados Unidos, arrodillada frente a su cama, orando por mí. Rogándole a Dios que llegara con bien para poder trabajar. A los quince días el coyote me entregó porque me vio plante de mala pieza, y por eso fui deportado a El Salvador. Al verla, yo esposado, me quede queriéndola abrazar y extrañando su calor.

La imagino llorando, sufriendo por las ampollas de agua que le salen en la piel y por las ganas de visitarme a mí y a mi hermano en la cárcel. Pasa ahorrando su dinero para algún día vernos a ver, en vez de comprarse medicina. Pienso en las huellas de dolor que he dejado en su corazón al no ser el niño que ella quería. Ella quisiera que las cosas volvieran a ser como cuando éramos niños, pero ya no se puede. Mientras espero que entre por la puerta de visita sin que aparezca, yo sigo extrañando su calor.

-Stomper

**Del Beat: Este es un cuento lleno de dolor, tristeza y a la misma vez tú los cuenta memorias graficas lleno de felicidad con tu mama e hijo. Hay veces miramos nuestra situación y realizamos que no estamos solo. Hay seres queridos que están a nuestro lado sufriendo con nosotros, en tu caso es tu madre. Vas a tener una oportunidad para salir y vivir tu vida derecha. Vas a poder estar con tu hijo y tu mama sin mirar sobre tu espalda a cada momento. Hace todo en tu poder para nunca jamás pasar por esta experiencia otra vez. Pasando el tiempo con la gente que queremos es lo mejor de esta vida.**

## Consejos de Una Madre

En nuestra familia, el más fuerte salía ganando. Aprendimos desde un rincón, mientras mi padrastró se agarraba con mi mamá. Siempre hubo conflicto en la casa, a parte de los homicidios que desde chiquito me acostumbré ver en frente del puesto del mercado.

Mi mamá había vacilado con la pandilla, igual a mis cuatro hermanos—ya venía en la sangre. Con nosotros quiso arreglar todo a golpes pero no estuvo para que me desahogara, mucho menos me dio en que entretenerme. Buscaba atención mejor en las calles. Ella me decía que no llegara a querer a la gente, ni tenerles lástima para no sufrir yo como ella había sufrido.

Como era chiquito, me tragué los consejos. Me hice duro como ella. Hoy es más importante para mí el barrio que la familia. Cuando salga de aquí, a lo mismo voy. Me siento mejor así, sintiendo la adrenalina de matar. Es como un vicio. Es más fácil matar que querer. Ver sufriendo a alguien y no sentir nada. Querer a alguien sería como entregar a mi propia vida, porque si me llegara a herir, yo me moriría del dolor.

-El pensativo

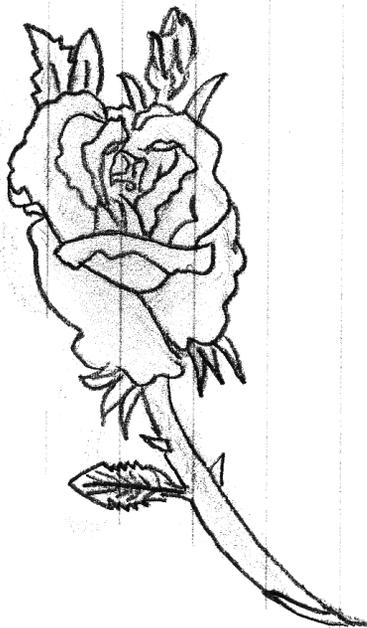
**Del Beat: Nosotros tenemos que decirte que tu madre te dio unos consejos malos. Estas diciendo que prefieres hacerle daño físicamente a otra persona porque tienes miedo que te hagan daño emocionalmente. Tu vida puede mejorar si tratas algo diferente y tengas un corazón. No le tengas miedo al dolor lo que no te mate te hace mas fuerte.**

## My Heart

Six years old, him telling me he loved me,  
 But doing what he wanted to me.  
 Growing up with nothing,  
 Feeling like nothing.  
 I was lost as a child,  
 not having nobody by my side.  
 Taking care of myself,  
 Running the streets at thirteen.  
 Trying to find love, all in the wrong places.  
 Grandfather telling me he loved me  
 As long as I don't say nothing.  
 Father says he loves me, but haven't  
 Seen him since forever.  
 Momma saying she loves me too, when she wants,  
 But on the streets doing what she wants to do.  
 So now what's next, I'm lost, alone.  
 Scared, worried about who's going to tell me  
 They love me next.  
 I'm scared.  
 So now what do I do?  
 Now seventeen years old still going through  
 The same problems.  
 Sitting in this program wondering what's gonna' happen next.  
 Momma still running the streets, some days  
 I think I'm going to get that wrong phone call.  
 Dad still dead in the ground, nowhere to be found.  
 So know what do I do?  
 Do I let this affect my future?  
 No, I'm going to move on with life,  
 And be that young lady everybody say I can't and won't be in life.  
 'Cause it's my life.

-Monaezna, Solano

**From The Beat: This is beautiful. Thank you so much for sharing it. It seems like so many people have disappointed you. But you're a strong woman, and you'll raise out of this like a true independent woman. Break the chain, and make your own future. Be whatever you want to be.**



*Mouseie*

## My Family

I feel pain, I've been lied to.  
 I think about the past every night. I'm locked up in a cell, I can't go outside.  
 Girls nowadays just lie.  
 I'm going through hell. I feel like I want to cry.  
 Thinking about my family, going through my mind.  
 I fell in love with a girl, but she did me wrong.  
 I don't have time for these girls  
 Because all they do is just be wrong.  
 I'm just a loyal guy. Go ahead and mess with the other guy.  
 I'm not like those other guys.  
 All they do is make girls cry.  
 I'll stay by your side.  
 Let me show you I'm right.  
 My family is all that matters.  
 That's right.

-Loyal Guy, Solano

**From The Beat: Loyalty is a valuable character trait in any relationship. What does loyalty mean to you? It sounds like your family matters to you because they have been loyalty to you, they support you in good times and bad. You deserve to be with someone who values your loyalty.**

## Prosper From Your Own Happiness

In this world there are a lot of routes, some lead to good and others lead to bad.  
 Life has many passages and we won't always go down the one we want, but with realization you can determine the paths you want to take.  
 We the people have the ability and power to control our present life and future.  
 If you realize with the correct decision-making anything is possible.  
 If you want something you have to chase it and you have to plan and not over shoot.  
 And when you're lost, you have to accept and be open from other viewpoints;  
 but never give up to where you want to be, no matter what anyone thinks.  
 The whole world can look down on you, but if you make yourself happy, that's all that counts.  
 You have to be strong as an individual, and when other negative opinions hit you,  
 just let them reflect back to where they came from.

"Always walk the path of happiness to prosperity." – Dalai Lama

-Ateeq, San Mateo

**From The Beat: What an inspiring piece of writing. We trust this is how you will be living your life moving forward.**

## Books vs. Bullets

When it's a battle between books and bullets, which one do you choose—a life of success or a life that you might lose?  
 It's easy to say, but hard to prove,  
 that you will make the right decision no matter how hard you bruise.  
 I went to church with grandma every Sunday,  
 while you were riding low, trying to find a place to stay.  
 I was a bright young man with heart and confidence,  
 while weed, money, and women sparked your every accomplishment.  
 I walked the stage with my head to the sky,  
 while you were in the locker room, smoking blunts and getting high.  
 I went to college, living my life to the fullest,  
 while you were out banging, where you then caught two bullets.  
 My mother was proud of me, while yours was left to cry.  
 I was a success, while you succeeded to die.  
 And it's sad how it all came to an end, but when it comes to a battle between books and bullets, the reality is books will win.

-Tarrin, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: Love this piece! Packs so much heat and truth to what too many young people are going through.**

## Hard To Realize

I woke up tomorrow feeling sorrow.  
I had a dream. It was a fantasy.  
It sparked my curiosity.  
I look out the window at the sky.  
Yes, I wish I could fly.  
But I have to face reality about that possibility.  
I think of my family  
and wish they were next to me.  
Memories stir me, emotionally.  
Hard to realize I'm alone,  
away from home.

-Angel, Santa Cruz

**From The Beat:** We love your first line. It's a real knockout. You've managed to roll fantasy and reality into one poem. Very fine, Angel - very fine. More, please.

## Lost in Life

I've been lost so many times,  
my whole life.  
From Mexico to San Francisco  
or El Salvador to the Pacific shore.  
Though the most current and confusing is me  
being lost in my thoughts, feelings and life.  
I sometimes get lost in drugs,  
To feel like I'm in the right place.  
I just can't seem to find that light.  
Now I'm fighting and traveling to find my way.  
I've been through rainstorms and fallen into holes  
but the train-tracks are fixed.  
I'm on my way home, even though,  
I'm in jail, there is no way,  
I will fail. Just be careful,  
that light might be too bright,  
that could blind you all the way through your mind.  
There's always a way to find it though, and trust me,  
I'm about to find mine.

-Gq, San Mateo

**From The Beat:** Very poetic piece of writing. We are encourage and support you in finding your freedom, free of the old life that holds you back.

## Confused

Voices in my head  
The only conversation I have  
With someone who understands me  
Tragedy that equals death  
But standing like a tree  
That wasn't thrown by a tornado  
Mixed emotion that gets me lost  
In my own dream  
In a place I've never seen  
Wishing the power to time travel  
Taking the right door to my dream  
  
Different place in my mind  
No process of thinking  
Feels like my mind  
Wants to rest my eyes  
To be free  
Just want to open my eyes  
And see the beautiful smile of my niece  
Looking at me  
With those sweet eyes  
That melt my heart with love

-Gregorio, Marin

**From The Beat:** You're a beautiful poet. Maybe now, talking things out in your own mind will give you the most honest answers, even if they're not the ones you want. Soon you'll be out, to time travel to freedom, and your niece's sweet smile.



## Things Will Never Be The Same Again

### (Part 2)

[In Part 1, Kevin wrote about leaving his girlfriend, the eventual sadness that it caused him, and then, how "the streets" began to call to him.]

Started hanging with fools who were always high, those fools who roll with guns. And I became a hard headed little fool and started throwing signs. I was lost, causing nothing but trouble, but still didn't realize. Everyone who tried to talk to me - I let them go like a kite. I started making my own moves, learning how to survive. The hood needed some help, so best believe - I was there to provide.

When I'd return home to my jefita, seeing her tired from work made me feel cold as ice. She asked me where I'd been for the last two days, but all she heard from me were lies. She didn't understand that I was alone and stressing, with no hope. I never meant to make her cry. Matter of fact, Lord, please tell her I apologize.

Pain, sadness, anger, and a broken heart led me to this life of crime. Thinking of my baby girl, my Mom, all my loved ones - that's what has me here, writing all these lines. If you were to see me talking about this, you'd see my eyes get bright. I've hurt them all because of my choices. It's something I recognize. People get what they deserve - that's something I will memorize.

Bad choices didn't pay - I knew it from the beginning. But I had to sacrifice my freedom to prove it. I did something for the hood, and now I'm doing some time.

Waking up away from my family - it's something that gives me a fright. I know what I'm here for. It was my fault, so I don't mind paying the price. And I'm explaining how I feel, even though it makes me a little shy.

What hurts me more is that the girl I still love, and always will, doesn't know what I'm going through. She's in a university - living in paradise.

I got a lot of mess in my dome, so I'm trying to keep things organized. I'm going to do good in here, try my best to graduate, and give everybody a surprise.

Since the start, this journey hasn't been nice. Hopefully, all my positive thoughts will get me out of this hole, soon. I want to see the light.

It's good, getting this out of me. It's just something I had to write. So - I've expressed myself. My words are over. It's time to say goodbye.

And to my family and to that beautiful girl out there - coming from my heart - I hope we get to reunite.

-Kevin, Santa Cruz

**From The Beat:** Beautifully written. We suspect that you've learned a powerful lesson. And you're right - it does help to put your feelings into words, and to write them down. That's why The Beat is here. We're at your service. Write on, sir. Write on!

## Making a Change

This phrase that Martin Luther King Junior said means a lot to me, and makes my heart fill with joy. As a younger girl I always looked up to Martin because he was so brave. Even though people called him names, threatened his life, and attempted to hurt him, he never acted violently no matter what. That's a hard thing to do. He says, "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl. But whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward."

To me this means that no matter what happens in life, the bad, the good, or the ugly, you can keep moving forward and nobody will stop you but you. In life you will always see hard times or have someone wanting to knock you down. Its up to you to get back on your feet and keep moving forward. Shine on those people - look back and say, "look at me now!"

Years ago when my family and I moved to El Monte, CA, we were treated very badly. We were the only blacks in our neighborhood, and we didn't mind but the Mexicans hated it. They didn't do anything to me or my younger siblings, but my big brother was in high school and the only black in his school. One day he was leaving school and a gang called Florence 13 followed him, called him nigger, and threatened his life. They had knives and weapons and told him that he can't go to their school anymore. If he did, they would kill him. So, he never went back.

I could tell his feelings were hurt and he was upset as well. I was hurt and angry because he was feeling that way. Later, I had negative racist experiences in El Monte. A boy called me nigger and told me to go back to Africa where I belong. I told him that I belong here, because it was his family that jumped the border and not mine.

Afterward I felt bad. Truly, I like everyone, but he upset me to the point that I stooped down to his level of ignorance. That's just not who I am and my mother taught me that two wrongs don't make a right. Next time if I'm in this situation, I will kill him with kindness.

-Sabrina, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: From your story and the account of your mom's advice, it sounds like you have been through a lot and that you have your priorities straight in case you come across this in the future. Why do you think that people react with anger when they are in these types of situations? Why is it hard to remember our mom's advice in the heat of the moment? How can you remind yourself of this important advice if you are ever faced with a difficult situation again?**

## Crystal Meth

As I sit right beside you  
 You can't help but reach for me  
 I come in oceans and puddles  
 I've been shipped across the sea  
 I can take your family and friends  
 I can help you when you're down  
 When you're feeling all needy  
 I can take your smile and soul  
 I like being greedy  
 I can walk you through hell  
 And that's all up to you  
 You can take just one hit  
 But you'll be addicted on two  
 I've already warned you  
 With the harm I can bring  
 It's risking your life  
 Like wearing a ring  
 Just take my hand  
 Let me show you the world  
 I'll make you feel rich  
 Like diamonds and pearls  
 Did I forget to tell you?  
 I can be the cause of your death  
 Welcome to my world  
 Where I'm known as crystal meth

-Keahi "Ahi Girl," Hawaii

**From The Beat: Wow, what a real and creatively descriptive piece. Thank you for sharing your talent with us. Stay strong in your fight, you have a lot to offer.**

## Devil's Oven

My stomach aches from all the bullshhhh I ate last night. I threw up all my insecurity this morning and I now have a hangover from all the tears I drank. My head hurts so bad that my conscience had to take a capsule of reality with a drink of what the hell am I doing.

My mom invited me over for dinner last night. Her spaghetti fed craving for that feeling of being wanted by someone, anyone. But I'm hungry for help I told her, so she fed me with all the reasons I need Jesus.

Last but not least she filled me with chocolate cake basked in the devil's oven that was just a temporary solution for the empty space in my bed.

I'm hungry for love, yet I'm full of all the hate that the world has offered me.

So as I finish off my night with a shot of rejection, I will always remember this meal as the breaking of my body.

-Tarrin, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: Now tell us, what are you doing to improve your young life? Your talents as a writer speaks volumes. We are hungry to learn more from you, as you share your past, current and thoughts on what you hope awaits.**

## Being Lost!

Every day I look out my window  
 And I wonder what happens to  
 The old Deaja: happy, positive,  
 Smart and helpful,  
 But I lost myself. I never thought  
 I would smoke or drink.  
 But look at me. I'm lost,  
 Still beautiful, but angry, selfish  
 And pregnant at only sixteen. Haven't even  
 Got my GED, but I'm lost in  
 A world full of hatred, drugs,  
 And death. I'm from a city where  
 The positives aren't an option.  
 But then when I think about  
 I just lost myself and one day  
 I will find her, but until then I'm  
 Just lost in a tragic life of a  
 teenager. Gangbanging, partying  
 And smoking with tattoos and piercings.

-Deaja, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: Do you think you can get back to a place where you can be your old self? It sounds like you've faced a lot of challenges in your life, but do you think you can use these to your advantage and grow into a stronger person by mixing parts of your old self with your new self?**





## The Truth!!

The truth is always with us.

There are many ways to find the truth and see the right truth. The truth is what sets everything right, it makes us better people.

It makes us who we are.

Truth evolves into many things it takes many forms in life.

The truth makes everything better

even though you might feel like you might mess up if you tell the truth.

If you do tell I promise you, you will feel better even if it's bad you don't want to have the lie on your conscience, you won't live right.

To live is to tell the truth even if you don't want to!

**-Christian, Portland, Oregon**

**From The Beat: You have a good understanding of what the truth is. Use it and realize that there are things in life you shouldn't take for granted. Lying can get you in trouble, but if you tell the truth to people you'll feel better for it.**

## Where am I?

W- What's going on?

H - How did I get here?

A - Alone is how I feel.

T - The world is slowing down.

H - How will it change?

U - Us is what I don't have, it's just me.

R - Reminiscing on good times.

T - Tired of being in detention.

S - Such is not having the sun to grow.

**-Luis, Portland, Oregon**

**From The Beat: It is true that the feel of the sun helps us grow. Next time you are on the outside look at the sun and weigh your decisions. If you like having the sun on you change your plans for the better.**

## Overcoming Obstacles

"If you can't fly, then run. If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl. But whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward." This quote is saying that you're going to have obstacles come along in our life, but it's up to you to overcome them.

This relates to me because I got into trouble and ended up here in juvenile hall. But my mom keeps telling me that this is just a minor setback in my life. She tells me that it's up to me to overcome this and go back to school and to do the best I can. So that is how I know if I keep a good mindset and not look at the bad, I will be able to overcome this. I will be able to laugh at it in the future.

**-Gilbert, Monterey**

**From The Beat: We love where your head is at around this obstacle that has come up in your life! Unfortunately, life is full of obstacles. However, we believe that some obstacles can be foreseen and avoided. After this experience in juvenile hall, how can you avoid obstacles like this to run faster, fly higher, in your life?**

## The Central Address

We are products of the institution—in and out of jail, domestic violence, prostitution, and corner drug sales. Now look what we've come to be; after all they've fought we've finally been set free, for life came to all they sought. Those who fought now tumble in their graves, filled with regret. I died for you to live, and this is all I get?

Is this the life you really want to live?

Back and forth to prison, something's gotta give.

Sitting in a cell twenty-three-hours a day, writing the larger truth I will die to convey.

The world is beautiful and our problems aren't that bad. I have now learned to cope with all the things I never had.

Growing up in the ghetto without a father is no excuse; we choose these gangs and drugs

and it is us who put forth millions of dollars to no use.

It hurts so bad everytime I see a cop car

'cause in the back I know its another brother

and as bullets rain from the sky,

we are dropping one after the other.

But we need to take into account that there are some things we can't control

like that drunken bum or the contents of your soul.

Now it's so sad how there is no true help with parole or probation—reminiscing on my whole life as I sit in the police station.

But this is not the time to bathe in our own sorrow;

it's the time to learn from our mistakes

so that possibly we can have a better day tomorrow.

Released on parole, found a gun, a blunt and... oops here we go again: third strike, 25 to life, the tale of an average black man.

No regard for life or the outside world,

rollin' blunts in the pen, went from a man to a girl.

Now to momma—I see her face in the clouds.

Oh, what I'd give to say I made my mother proud.

And as far as my father, I'll love him in his absence,

but I'll never forget who took his place, although that life is past tense.

Now I'll end with a love letter from me to you

because I know someday that fairytale will eventually come true.

How could you love a heart so scorned

and then leave it shattered with no remedy to be reborn?

Walking in the shadows of jealousy and lust,

I've come to find that I lost all trust;

and I can walk and walk until I reach the wiz,

but the journey isn't over until I say it is.

However somewhere along that journey we must find a solution;

love is the key and I have finally come to that conclusion.

**-Tarrin, Los Angeles**

**From The Beat: Love is the answer! And as you write and write more and more revelations will come forward. You have mad skills, continue to teach and create through your writing. We readers can learn so much about ourselves, our truths through your story and your art.**

## I Have A Dream

I have a dream that brothers and sisters of all races can live in peace and harmony. I have a dream that there will be an end to all wars, whether it be war against countries or war between neighbors. I have a dream that our right to live will be respected and fulfilled. My dream will be reality when people can walk the streets and not be afraid that every moment will be their last. It will be when you need not fear you may never see your brother or sister again.

It will be when you can feel safe that your belongings will not be taken. It will be when there is no poverty so those who need won't have to take to have their everyday needs. I have a dream that everyone can be proud to be who they are and not feel less than anyone else. Those are my dreams. Help me make them reality.

**-Esmeralda and Savanna, Alameda**

**From The Beat: That is a wonderful view of what the world could be like if we all cooperated just a little bit. Do Nelson Mandela's words, from our topics, inspire you both to write this? We truly appreciate your "I Have A Dream," piece and hope this dream does come true.**

## In My Shoes

When I was five, I was adopted. After spending years 0-4 in foster care I thought it was a new start and a blessing. Finally someone has chosen me and my sister to be a part of a family. A family that would protect me and always be there for me.

Now 11 years later I'm fifteen. After experiencing a horrible childhood of an adopted mom beating us for the little things, making us eat out of the garbage, and eat lint from the dryer if we didn't clean it right. Eleven years of being put down, getting called ugly, and having nobody to express my feelings to, I'm confused and lost and angry.

So, I started to smoke and drink and experience things I wish I never had. At the age of 15 and a half I have my first encounter with meth and being raped. I didn't realize that the whole time I was being raped, I was also overdosing.

If I could go back in time, I wish I had chosen a different life path, and maybe now I wouldn't be experiencing these feelings in my chest; regret, anger, and misery, and sometimes confusion.

Now, being sixteen I have traveled from Arizona to California to meet my real mom. Little did I know, she is a drug addict like I am now. I lived with her for a year, traveling from motel to motel. My 8 little brothers were with us. I remember them having no shoes, so I'd give them mine. I would walk barefoot in the street just so my mom would have shoes on her feet. My moms- I love them both regardless of what I have been through.

When my biological mom started sending me to steal from Walmart for her drugs and giving me my first trip to juvi with a felony that was thankfully dropped to a misdemeanor. Now I am in a system I won't be out of when I am released. I think it is best to be on my own, even being seventeen and living on the streets by myself.

I have become astonished with life not knowing where to go from here. I have recently become immune to love itself when my boyfriend of eight-months torments me and mocks me and beats me for what I have given him. I don't know why certain things in life happen, maybe God wants me to be strong for what will happen later in life, if it is anything compared to what I've been through; I can handle it.

I'm stuck in a pattern that I wish to change now. Today I am a young adult that would like to take a different route. Almost 18 and still don't have a dollar to my name... but I don't even care about money. All I want is a future. A life so I can give my children what I never had.

So today I have come to ask you to listen to my story and give me advice. I believe that every character in a movie or life starts their outfit with a pair of shoes. Their shoes tell a lot about their personality. Their character and their life. The shoes I would choose would be the Cortez Nikes. The original versions- the color would be white. Hopefully my future would be as bright as the white and not dark as my past. If you could please give to me what my mom always promised but could never afford... a brand new pair of shoes. That way, my character in life would begin making a new movie.

-Sabrina, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: From this honest and thorough account of your life, it sounds as though you are at a point where you are considering making serious changes. We commend you for taking some steps forward, namely, asking for advice. The first step in getting help, or anything for that matter, is being able to ask for it. Sometimes that is the hardest part. If you continue to seek out responsible adults in your life, ask for help, and then put your best foot forward; change is likely to unfold. While we can't hand you a pair of Nike's today, we can commend you for putting your best foot forward and taking a big step with this narrative today. Keep putting one foot in front of the other.**

I'd take a trip into the galaxy of a new dimension, for a short time. Then I'd be able to change what I would do in the present to make a better future for me, and everyone around me.

## Losing My Uncle

Drugs can cause your life, soul, spirit, family and you to suffer. Drugs demand complete loyalty.

My uncle, who I loved dearly (RIP) was a drug addict. He would do mushrooms, crystal meth and heroin. Even though he was an alcoholic, he remained a lovely person. Always caring, if you got it, you got it. He would walk around the house naked because the drugs took over him. He couldn't stay still. He was a fighter,

I was too young to understand what was going on. My mama would tell me he loved me, but, he didn't know how to show it and that he was sick.

He would lock himself in the room and bump loud music. He would inject heroin, do crystal meth and many more drugs.

I would sit there and look at him. I would tell him, "Aye Tio, one day that stuff is going to take you to the grave."

He would tell me, "Mija, that day is never going to come, death isn't ready for me".

One day the drug took over. He started choking, choking on his own tongue. He couldn't take it. He started banging his head on the side of his bed, a metal bed. He gave up and died. When I went to his room, there was blood all over him. His mouth was open, but, his tongue was rolled backwards. I cried and cried, knowing I could've helped him. He was gone.

At his funeral, he had a paper inside his nose and he had his bandana on that read... RIP Puppet, you'll never be forgotten!

I can still see the image, just like it was yesterday. I told him, "Uncle one day that stuff is going to take you to the grave."

-Francica, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: Your story is heartfelt. It's a sad descriptive, but, a loving piece. How has this experience helped you face your own issues? Do you find that your Tio has left you a message?**

## Always Time

I do not intend to be in pursuit of satisfaction in the eerie shadow of success because I would like to make success my friend. There is always a time for change, a time to float down the river, get out of that negative grasp, and experience true freedom. Time to connect with the positive roots of life, bleach the dark back to light.

It will be like snowboarding at top speed, with exhilarating laughter, or like the fresh scent of mountain air as you hike through Big Sur looking at a breath-taking view only a fool wouldn't appreciate.

I wish I had a time machine. I'd go decades into the future so I could know what would happen. I'd take a trip into the galaxy of a new dimension, for a short time. Then I'd be able to change what I would do in the present to make a better future for me, and everyone around me.

-Thomas, Santa Cruz

**From The Beat: We're not sure that there is always time for change. But we are sure that we're impressed with your writing and your imagination. Good work Thomas.**

## Drug Abuse and Me

My grandma did PCP.

My mom did cocaine and so did my dad.

My five uncles did heroin and meth.

My sister is a drinker and my two brothers are tweakers.

What am I? I'm recovering meth addict.

The cravings will never subside.

But, my new craving is to be sober and live right.

I will conquer the creeping dark thoughts.

Round 3... This time I'm ready to fight for my sobriety!

The same way that I fought for my drugs!

-Sheila, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: We feel your strength and are behind you as you conquer your demon. Have you put together your support? Do you have people backing you up and ready to help you with your challenge? We all need a little help from our friends!**

## My Grandmother

My grandmother has brown eyes, with blue circles around them, just like most of my family, on my mom' side. She has two bad shoulders, one that has to be replaced and one that has already been replaced.

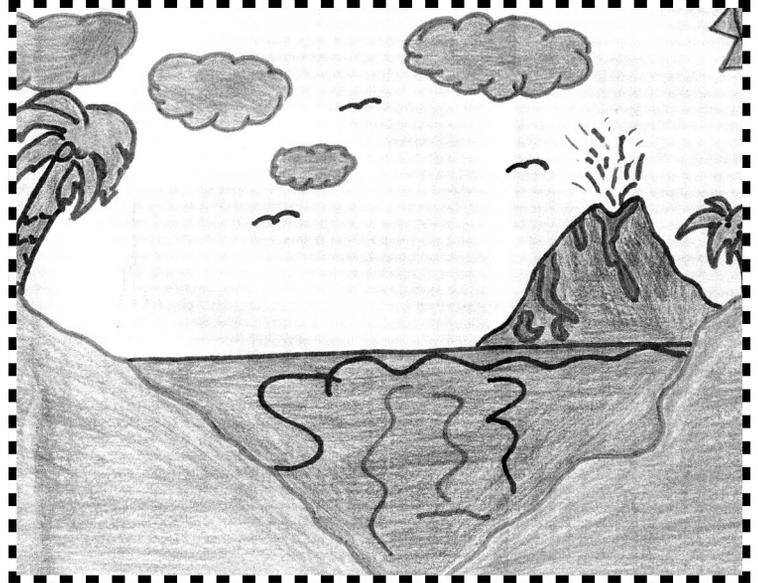
I try to make it easy for her. I help around the house. I take her to Walgreen's so she can pick up her medications. I go to the grocery store. I go places for her and drive her, even though I still have to take my driving test, because I'm only fifteen.

I help my grandma cook. I cook for her, whatever she wants, like steaks, ribs, chicken, greens. She and my auntie taught me how to cook. I put the dishes in the dishwasher, clean the bathroom, clean the whole house.

I'm content with what I have, and all I want from her is a place to stay at; everything else I get on my own. One of the four people I have love for, is my grandma.

-Deantae, Marin

**From The Beat: Terrific description of your grandmother. How did she hurt her shoulders? From working hard all her life? Your love, gratitude and help for her is wonderful. She must deserve them all. How do you earn whatever you need?**



## Church

Spiritual guidance, change, and prayer;  
love yourself as you would love your neighbor.  
Drink the wine, but don't swallow—just savor  
the blood of our one and only true Savior.

Praise his name and perform his labor,  
and we will always be kept and blessed with his favor.

As I bow before you,  
endow me with your spirit,  
make me whole again,  
cleanse my soul so that it may be pure once more,  
and open my heart so that I can love again.

Do not forsake me;  
I am a sinner, but that does not define me.  
I sit and I pray,  
hoping that you hear my sorrowful cries and make it all better.

As I bow before you,  
endow me with your spirit,  
so that when I die I can wake up next to you.

-Tarrin, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: Well written prayer of love for your higher power. We feel the connection you have towards your religion.**

## What Hurts

I'll tell you what hurts  
It's the cold lonely nights  
It's the feeling when you know you've been lied to  
It's when trust is lost  
When a heart is broken  
When a loved one dies

When you've been violated one way or another  
I can't forget but I still try to forgive  
I can't fight but I still try  
I can't move on but I still try  
It seems all I do is cry

But behind tears you'll see me... a gentle soul  
While I break, I'm reborn  
I think, who am I?  
And I see myself,  
A creature made in the image of perfection  
Yet, I am a sinner but I'm still me  
Young, wild, and free.

-Esmeralda, Alameda

**From The Beat: What a beautiful piece of poetry. We definitely feel the strength still alive behind the pain and sadness. Those words are full of hope and eagerness to go on and live life to its full extent.**

## I Try to Love You

I know we have a situation  
Arguments from conversation  
I wish we could put this all behind  
I hate it when you walk away  
When I'm just tryin' to ease my pain  
I wish we could work things out one time  
But still I try to love you  
See my heart is getting tainted  
Ever since we been acquainted  
Struggling for your love  
Is confusing and frustrating  
I must admit I hate it  
But girl I can't deny it  
That these feelings for you keep taking over  
I can't fight it  
My heart gets excited when you come around  
And your voice rings in my ears like heavenly sounds  
Baby why can't you understand  
That I want you as my woman  
And I want me as your man  
But still I try to love you  
Now what do you think we should do  
You're upset and I'm upset too  
It seems that it never fails  
Irritated when we're on the phone  
To hear you say "I'm all alone"  
It hurts because I can't be there to comfort you  
But still I try to love you  
It seems to me we were meant to be  
But it doesn't seem to show  
We been through hard times  
But I never let you go  
'Cause you are my dream girl  
And welcome to my dream world  
You can be the queen  
Of everything you see girl  
If I could wish upon a shooting star  
I would wish that I was eternally  
Anywhere you are  
Side by side  
Hand in hand  
Baby girl I really need you to understand  
That I try to love you

-Kawika, Hawaii

**From The Beat: We love this piece! It is honest, raw, and vulnerable. We hope that you both can continue to support each other well and work out the confusing parts.**

## Lost in Lauderdale

I am always feeling lost, not in life but in spirit.  
 The choices I made in my past have strongly affected me.  
 Now that my parents are incarcerated, the only pain I ever feel is  
 discomfort and fear.  
 I have no one to talk to, I feel like I have nowhere to go, but to  
 places like here.  
 Every day I wake up and I say to myself, I am tired of living this way.  
 There's nothing I wouldn't do to take away my pain.  
 When I was at home my mother had struggled trying to pay the bills.  
 And my biological father was never around  
 even though he had all the time in the world to kill.  
 I was always on the corner selling bags trying to make a hustle.  
 So me and my mother could make it out of the struggle.  
 Now that she's gone all I ever feel is being lost  
 and being without a father and a mother.  
 I'm lost in fear.  
**-Victor, Tuscumbia, Alabama**  
**From the Beat: You seem to express so much love for your mom. I hope you both stay out of trouble and are reunited soon.**

## Light Brights, Everyday Life

August 6th, 2006

This was one of the most traumatic, sad day of my life. This was the day my daddy left us for good!  
 He still stays in contact, but it hurts to know that my own daddy would hurt his only daughter he claimed. I felt like it was the end of the world, wondering a lot why my father would just up and leave without saying goodbye. Even though it hurt me and my family, we always knew wherever he landed he would be okay. I love you daddy.

May 13, 2011

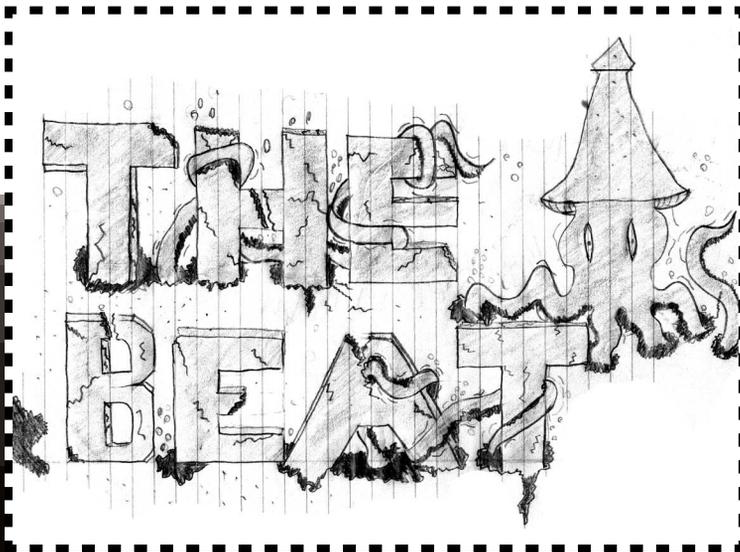
This day was the worst day I've ever experienced in my life. And before I say this, you should never judge a book by its cover. This was the day I had not only my innocence taken from me but my self-respect. As others put it, I had been "raped" and it took forever for me to realize that it's not my fault, but that I should realize now I got lucky.

So while you and others are thinking about talking about people you should think of my stories.

Don't ever judge. Before you judge people think about what they go through in their life!

**-D, Champaign Illinois**

**From The Beat: We appreciate and salute your courage to share your truths with us. We can't thank you enough for being so open with us. This hopefully will help others realize that they too are not alone.**



## Lost In A Nightmare

I'm lost in my thoughts, trying to figure out the real me.  
 In the process of this, I've gotten interrupted by the negative drama  
 of the Youth Guidance Center.  
 In the midst of obtaining my goals,  
 I hit the obstacles, the sound of the metal door closing,  
 awakening me from my nightmare.  
 I go to sleep again and hope to have a better dream.  
 The sound of doors slamming makes me hope  
 that soon they will slam behind me,  
 let my dreams take control and lift my soul.

**-Tay Beez, San Francisco**

**From The Beat: We all get lost in nightmares, and worst of all are the times when our waking life becomes nightmare and there seems to be no escape. In a way, there is no escape, we just have to open our eyes to what's real. Maybe we can't unlock the metal doors outside us, but we can learn to unlock the doors that keep us trapped on the inside.**

## Ever Been Lost?

Have you ever been lost  
 And you're out and on your own?  
 When you are out on the streets  
 And feeling alone  
 The only friend that you have  
 Has created a monster  
 It's built up the pain  
 With the past trauma that haunts her  
 Raped at four and seven through twelve  
 Completely controlled by the devil himself  
 She undressed  
 Few days after daddy left  
 She became depressed  
 She came across, the sign that read lost  
 And couldn't fight the thought  
 That nobody loved her  
 All because mommy never showed love for her brother  
 She ran away and got lost in the world  
 Got addicted to ice  
 Now she is just a lost little girl  
 Now she's locked up with nowhere to run  
 A lost little soul in a faraway kingdom

**-Keahi of Big Island, Hawaii**

**From The Beat: Thank you for sharing such intimate thoughts. The pain depicted in this poem is so tangible. We hope you find the strength and support you deserve.**

## Capacity Of Love

There isn't enough meaning in the words that can express my  
 mother's love for me  
 Though, all I've been through she's supported me loving me  
 unconditionally  
 No matter what's ever happened wrong or right  
 I can trust and truly believe she'll be by my side  
 When I was out I was looking in the wrong places for love  
 When all I really needed was my loving mother and father above  
 I know I really hurt her and probably as I'm in my cell I'm on her mind  
 I have dreams at night I'm holding her in my arms tight  
 But, then I awake covered in sweat realizing I'm still confined  
 All my thoughts are of her day and night  
 That is how I would define that word that many use so loosely  
 I didn't believe in it either because my hatred used to confuse me  
 Now I see a better me more humble and wise  
 Now all I hope for is to hug my mother and sincerely apologize.  
 "The Capacity of Love"

**-Lil Jay, Santa Clara**

**From The Beat: Your mother has been rock solid and holding you down no matter what situation you find yourself in. You need to get out and stay out. She's missing you and you are missing her. If you don't change the direction of the path you are heading down on, then you may find yourself writing her more of these poems behind bars. Life is too precious and short to be spending it away from the people you love, like your mother.**

## Put Down The Guns

Put down the guns  
And pick up a book.  
Shootin' each other  
Is the same as hanging ourselves  
Like fishes on a hook.

I stand up for what's right.  
Hit me, hurt me, take my life.  
I'd be afraid  
If you could kill me twice  
But I'm not afraid.

What is wrong with our people?  
Can't they comprehend  
This is what society wants?

Why take a life  
If you can't give one?  
This is the institutionalized racism  
That continues to oppress black people.

Tired of the government  
Playing my people.  
They blurb us and hurt us  
And act like they didn't do it  
On purpose.

Letting the reason  
Why we're here on earth  
Come to the surface.

What don't kill you  
Make you stronger.  
Change to live  
A little longer.

**-Khalid, San Francisco**

**From The Beat: You're a beautiful, inspired poet, but can you take seriously your advice to your people, and analyze your own role in any violence that goes down? That may help stop society's racism. You're still alive, and can only live this one life. Please stay strong!**

## Feelings For Females:

### The Good And The Bad

It could be hard for me to love at times. Especially when I feel like I'm putting more love, trust, and effort than my partner is. It's hard for me to just love a female it for sure takes time for me to trust a female, because now-a-days females are some what evil. They always out to get something, but not all females are the same. You could get lucky and find that one female that is into you and likes you for you.

My experience with the past few girls I have messed with were not for me. They just wanted me because of the name I got in the streets. I had to find a mature woman that I am really into and I feel like she is into me. I can't deal with a little girl and by that I mean a female my age. I'm too advanced and too mature, far too mature for a female my age.

I'm growing to love the female that I am currently with. I hope she don't play me out, but deep down in my heart I know she won't play me. She likes me just as much as I like her. My female that I am with now I feel like is specifically for me because she looks out for me. I feel like I'm always on her mind, I could sense it in her voice.

She is a cool person and we get along very well. She is a fun person to be around, while I'm away I feel like she is going to be loyal to me. That is all I'm hoping that she keep it solid.

**-Terry, San Francisco**

**From The Beat: You bring up some really good points and we appreciate your honesty and sincerity. Love is hard. Nothing comes easy. It's a constant battle with both parties involved and it takes a lot of dedication and patience to make things work. We wish you the best of luck on your relationship and we hope that you have found the one.**

## Bullying

My friend killed himself because people were bullying him because he was gay and has always been gay. I lived with him in Decatur in 2010, in a shelter. People were calling him names like faggot, and gay boy. He told me that he has been dealing with this all of his life. He said he felt like no one was doing anything about it.

He would move from town to town, skip school, stay in the house and isolate himself.

One day he was out in the community and random people were walking down the street saying "you might as well kill yourself because you're gay and nobody likes you because of it." So in June 2013 he overdosed, and hanged himself. He was a very smart boy, kind, awesome and sweet.

Everybody was sad that people took it this far with bullying him and he killed himself. Words can't explain how sad the world is with out him. His family was so sad about this that they had a private funeral and didn't want any friends to come, only family.

The bully kids and teens put my friend on their Facebook pages after he killed himself and all types of people that didn't even know him were calling him gay, and talking about how stupid gay people are and just being very rude and disrespectful to a boy that they don't even know.

So my friends and I got sick of it and reported it to the police. A couple of them got into big trouble.

He got at least 100 friends and everybody was very disappointed when they got on Facebook and saw that people were being very rude and disrespectful to a boy that they don't even know.

What does it mean to be different? It means that not everybody is the same. Everybody is unique in their own way.

How long did I know him? I knew him for 4 or 5 years before he took his own life.

Did I ever witness his bullying? Yes I did. It was very sad because when I lived in the shelter with him he got bullied every day. It's sad how people treat bullies.

How did I find out about his suicide? My friend called me and told me. Then I got on Facebook and saw for myself because I didn't believe her... It was actually true. I was very sad and didn't know what to do. I cried for two whole months.

I think people judge gay people because they are different. People shouldn't be judged no matter how we look whether we are gay or straight, black or white. God made every human being unique in their own way.

The cause of bullying has made many teens kill themselves, just because bullies feel bad about themselves and want to bring other kids down with them too. Some people are mean.

I think it's a true statement that when someone feels bad about themselves they sometimes do whatever they can to bring another person down, such as bully or make fun of someone. It doesn't matter how you look or how you act. Somebody in your life is going to take time out of their day and make fun of you or say rude things.

It's interesting that some bullies have been bullied once in their life. Sometimes I wonder if people that bully other people are able to put themselves in someone else's shoes and find out how it feels to be picked on because you're gay or the way you look or the way you talk. It doesn't matter what happens in your life. NOBODY deserves to be bullied or made fun of. It isn't right.

**-Hannah, Champaign, Illinois**

**From The Beat: Well said. We hope your sad story/commentary will be read by all our readers. You make very good points. We wish you the best in your journey. Please continue to reach out and teach through your words.**

**People shouldn't be judged no matter how we look whether we are gay or straight, black or white. God made every human being unique in their own way.**

Me and my mom lost our relationship when I went to jail for my second time, so now I'm looking at a foster home.

## The Man Without A Mouth

There is a man with no mouth.

The reason that he has no mouth is because he has no voice.

When he tried to voice an opinion, he got shot down.

When he spoke, he was told to be quiet.

He couldn't even talk at mealtime.

It made him feel like there was nothing beneath his nose

but a blank space. Because he couldn't speak up

for himself, he realized it was best to just keep his mouth shut,

or even better, have no mouth at all.

**-Day Day, Alameda**

**From The Beat: This is a powerful metaphor, Day Day. There's nothing worse than having your voice taken from you. We encourage you to keep writing. Speak truth to power. Nothing can silence the written word.**

## My Life

My name is Daniel and right now I'm locked up. I have two kids at the age of sixteen. I have a baby girl named Alaija, and one on the way. My baby mother is four months pregnant. I hope I have a boy.

I've been locked up five times and I told myself I'm never coming, and I came back. But this time I realized that I was putting myself somewhere I don't want to.

I have been reading the Bible, believing in the word of God, and I can't be a good father if I'm locked up all the time. My kids is the reason I'm changing and also for me to have a better life.

Ever since I was thirteen, I've been a run away. Me and my mom lost our relationship when I went to jail for my second time, so now I'm looking at a foster home. But I feel like that's safer for me and for my kids. All I want is my kids.

**-Daniel, Solano**

**From The Beat: We are so glad to hear that you want to change your ways. You're now a father, and soon two people are going to look up to you as an example. How do you want to be seen by your children? There's still time for you to be an amazing father to them.**

## With Honor

If I have to be your best friend,

If that's all that I can get

Then I'll take the job with honor

I'll be the best one yet

I'll offer you my shoulder

I'll show you how I care

I'll be there when you need me

I'm not going anywhere

If I have to be your best friend

The one who hears you cry

Then I'll take that job with pride

My love for you is stronger

Than you will ever know

But for you to ever hear me

I'll have to let you go

You need time to go find your purpose

You need time to sort your thoughts

But when the curse has ended

And the race is finally won

Remember it's your best friend

Who has loved you from day one

**-Kane of Puna, Hawaii**

**From The Beat: This notion of supporting someone even though you can't be with them is truly thoughtful, respectful, and kind. We love this piece and thank you for sharing it.**

## Conquering One Day At A Time

Sitting in my room, hours passing by

My best friend is the Holy Bible and a dictionary on the side

Just another day stuck in the hole

But I can't let it get to me,

Gots to keep moving on!

But where?

Only little room to spare

Even when I go outside I'm limited on space

I never thought I'll be in a situation like this

But I have to work on me today

So tomorrow will be a brighter day

Conquering each day with something new

Learning new words

You can stop my body for now

But my mind keeps seeking new ways

To keep moving on

I hear and I listen

To people getting out in a month or two

Listen, I don't want to brag

I wish I had your chance

Facing life ain't no joke, but I strive for more

So I sit here as I read and learn

To keep conquering new things as I keep moving on!

**-Bascom, Santa Clara**

**From The Beat: You are right it takes one day at a time, but if you want to get ahead in life you need to start thinking about the future. Makes plans farther than a day ahead. Start thinking about what you want to do in life and what it will take for you to get there. It doesn't have to be long term, but think about where you want to be a year from today.**

## Living Every Day

What hurts? Man, I want to say everything hurts but what hurts me the most is not seeing my baby girl, not holding her close, and not being able to see her beautiful eyes. Having her to let go so soon, having to live with the grief, smile and laugh when inside I'm dying.

I hate that we live to die but only God knows why. I wish God would just take me away because I know this pain won't go away. Maybe I ain't the only one, but I'm living today and my past is in tomorrow. Day by day is my routine- living to try to survive.

Life is all about trying, so like Martin Luther King said, "If you can't fly, then run. If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl." I'm crawling to survive cause in the end of the day I'm just trying to strive. Strive for my lil girl 'cause the one promise I won't break is hers. Rest in peace my lil girl.

**-Michelle, Los Angeles**

**From The Beat: It sounds like you are really missing your baby right now. And, as much as everything hurts and you are faced with difficulty, it sounds like you are staying strong and trying to strive, just like the words of MLK.**

## Drug Abuse

My brother was always on heroin, it got so bad that he would sell gifts and items that he would receive. I even gave him a phone. I paid for it, and for the connection. He ended up selling it two days after I gave it to him. I saw how the drug was eating him, and sucking the life out of him literally and emotionally.

I actually have seen him get sick off of the drug because his body needed it. Also, it didn't get him high anymore. I was so mad, not at him, but at all the stupid things the drug made him do.

It got worse. I saw he lost a lot of weight, and actually preferred the drug over food. So me and my older brother decided to get him into a program. Now that I see him, he is back to normal, but still fights the side effects. I know for a fact now that this experience has motivated him to move on and be a better person.

**-Carlos, Alameda**

**From The Beat: Thank you so much for sharing this incredible story. You were really able to communicate his addiction as well as your deep concern and desire to help him. We are glad to hear that the experience has motivated him to move on. Has seeing your brother go through this been a transformative experience for you as well?**



## Change My Mind

What's up Beat? It's Brother Iz! Well, I'm going to write about conquer. In my life I want to conquer my old mind set. I want to break the chain of wrong thinking. I know that if I can overcome my old mindset I have the ability to change my actions. I not only want to do this for myself I want to do it so I can develop a better way of living and be able to pass it on.

I gave my life to God also to become a better person and be a role model to my younger brother. So my goal is to conquer my old mindset and bad habits that contribute to the corrupted world. This world needs a change! Well, God Bless you all. Shout out to my younger brother, I love you man.

**-Brother Iz, Santa Clara**

**From The Beat: Conquering your old mindset is the best way to start, and there isn't a better time than to do it right now. Don't trip too much off the world, you can't be worrying about changing other people when you have yet to change yourself. Focus on yourself first, establish your new mindset and identity and then you can pass on everything positive that you have learned.**

## Lost

I have been lost plenty of times. I really was lost when my dad and my two older brothers went to prison. I started becoming something I wasn't. I wanted to follow their footsteps and then I started getting in trouble and getting locked up.

I even got locked up with my younger brother before. We really put our mom through a tough time.

I wish I could take back some of the stuff I did, but it made me to the person I am today. If you are ever lost, the only good advice I can give you to pray because God is the way and the light and He will make a way.

**-Antonio, Tuscumbia, Alabama**

**From The Beat: Sounds to us like it will be up to you to break the cycle in your family with getting into trouble. It is great that your God has given you a path when you were lost. We hope you stay on the right track in becoming the person you were meant to be.**

## Forgotten

Seems like I've been forgotten in this messed up world I've been brought into. I'm trapped in these walls with no sun, only shade, and all because of the mistakes I've made. No one comes to see me.

They say I'm a dead man walking, just 'cause I'm a G. But when you live this life, dropping out isn't a possibility. And if I don't stop, in a casket is where I'll be.

My life is filled with pain and sorrow - not knowing if I'll make it to tomorrow. Everyday's a Friday. That's what the homie used to say. But I want to stay alive, so I watch my back, everyday. I'm just a fading memory, to everyone. But that's how it goes down where I'm from. Maybe one day I'll be shot. But it feels as if I already have been because I'm the guy everyone forgot.

**-Pelon, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat: We won't forget you and we encourage you to continue to examine your lifestyle and to find new solutions to living. You're a terrific writer. Don't stop writing.**

## Life Is Full Of Gifts

I went to court and they read my psychiatric evaluation. It was an exaggeration. The doctor said I lacked emotion. But I know I am always feeling. There is no question about that.

Sometimes I express how I feel through art. That is one avenue of my life that is bright, full of light, out of the shade. Every day there are new possibilities and I am going to make tomorrow even better than today.

It makes me smile to be proactive. Life is full of gifts, like driving a convertible with the wind whipping through my hair.

Even though I am locked up, I can still feel free through my dreams.

**-Thomas, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat: We only know how you are when you hang out with us. You're certainly not lacking in emotion when we spend time with you. Perhaps you could write a letter to the appropriate people, a letter that respectfully demonstrates that you have plenty of emotions. But check in with your attorney first.**

## It Wasn't A Dream!

Tiring, but not asleep when I think of something that's close to me. It makes me very weak, as I turn to my side and slowly close my eyes, I have a dream that I am home. But then when I awake, I'm sitting in this cold, small room, bored, and feel all alone. Sometimes, I just rap or read, or even think of a song. I stress sometimes, because when you're up inside this system, it makes you have hard times.

God gave everyone a choice and also a life. Once I'm released, I'm gonna do stuff right, which means no more drama, no more violence. I'm sick of arguing. I'm tired of fighting.

It's time to make a change and be someone. Why do a bad thing or end up in the streets. I thought it was a joke but it's not. Lord told 'em to believe someone, and it wasn't a dream!

**- Buddy, San Francisco**

**From The Beat: You do a great job of capturing how painful it is to be trapped inside a cell, but take heart by knowing that some of the greatest people who ever lived have been sitting where you are, and from the pain of being locked up, learned to live a life that would be worth living.**

## Where's The Switch?

My thoughts are in the gutter and I don't know how to solve this problem. It's not as simple as ink on a leaflet. It feels like there's a monster controlling my noggin. And an eerie fog, like Moss Landing, at 6 AM. I don't appreciate this feeling. To escape it, I suspect I'll go through many tribulations and trials.

It seems like only yesterday that I was in my safe zone, my mental sanctuary. If I were to take an x-ray of my head, it would probably reveal a nest with a monster in it -

a monster playing tricks with my brain, making me do things on impulse. I wish I had a switch, or a knob, to turn the monster off.

**-Thomas, Santa Cruz**

**From The Beat: If you find that switch or knob, make sure you don't turn your imagination off. We enjoy your fanciful musings. You are a fine writer.**

## Searching For Directions

When I am lost I look for directions or someone to give me guidance. When I came to the juvenile detention facility for the second time I just couldn't understand why I was being held. I knew that I should be home with my family.

Then I realized that this is not a punishment, but is to help young teens understand their purpose and get ready for the real world. It lets us know we've faced hard times but life is only going to get harder.

**-Devron, Solano**

**From The Beat: It's great that you are focused on using your time now to get ready for the real world instead of feeling sorry for yourself and/or angry about being locked up. What is your life's purpose and what are you doing to get ready?**

# Co-Pieces of the Week

## Mom

Mom, I love you.

Mom, you are my rock.

Mom, when I see you hurt, I hurt, when I see you cry, I cry.

Mom, I'm going to ride with you through everything.

Mom, you never left my side through hell and back.

Mom, you're a very strong, beautiful woman.

Mom, I know if I got it, you got it.

Mom, even though my siblings and I stress you out, you still love us.

Mom, I wish at times we could be closer.

Mom, you made a strong daughter.

Mom, sometimes I think do you still love me.

Mom, I love you no matter what we go through.

Mom, thank you for having me.

Mom, I wish you could come visit me.

Mom, I need you,

Mom, I want to see that beautiful smile.

Mom, I wish I could kiss you.

Mom, I know I have disappointed you.

Mom, I will never disrespect you, nor forsake you.

Mom, I just want you to know I love you.

**-Monaezha, Solano**

**From The Beat: We can feel your love for your mother, and we hope she realizes what an amazing daughter she has. Make sure you show her your love when you're done with the program. There's nothing like a mother-daughter bond.**

## Leave

I want to leave juvenile hall and go to placement because I can go home with my family and be with my siblings and show them that I can be a good role model. And show my family that I'm not a mess up in life.

The day I get to go home, the three most important things are to get a job, practice driving to get my license, and especially graduate high school and get my diploma. I want to make my family proud and show them even though I have been through a lot in my life, I can move on and be something in life like being a singer or a tattoo artist (like my uncle) and help my sister by going to her hip-hop classes.

**-Mariana, Los Angeles**

**From The Beat: It sounds like you have some good goals once you go into placement. Are there any other jobs that you dream of having? You mention possibly singing... what are the ways music has been a part of your life thus far?**

## People

People are funny

People are sensitive

People are angry

Some people care

Most people cry

And most people,

Which is over half,

Just don't care

The people to me that's funny

Are the people who play cool with someone

But is really trying to hurt them or set them up

In a certain way.

Some people are very smart at what they do

Most people are just trying to fit in

And be something they really aren't

Brave people make the same choices as scared people

And smart people make the same choices as dumb people

Now that I have grown up,

I now could see that a lot of people are not friends

People these days are just here

To use you for what you have.

**-Ib, Washington DC**

**From The Beat: Which of these categories would you put yourself in? What type of person would you most like to be?**

## Drugs are No Joke

A while back, I was at a kickback with my friends.

We were chilling, just drinking and smoking.

At least twenty-minutes had passed

when I left to use the restroom.

When I came back, my friend was on the floor with foaming coming out of his mouth. I was scared.

I didn't know what to do.

I, finally, called 911 and they brought the ambulance. Another friend was trying to help, he moved him around, patted him on his back. But, he wouldn't stop shaking.

Suddenly, he stopped and the shaking stopped.

I said, "NOT NOW, NOT NOW!"

I started crying as he passed away with his eyes open.

RIP... Puppet. We have a new angel in heaven now.

**-Desiree, Los Angeles**

**From The Beat: To experience the act of losing someone close is a tragedy that affects you deeply. How are you doing, now? Do you have someone to talk to regarding your loss? Sometimes it helps to have a shoulder to lean on.**



## Three Months

I can't wait to go home. I got three months left, I am a little nervous because I am eighteen and I need to get a job and pay rent. It's not as easy as it sounds locked up but it is time to step it up and become a man and support my family. I am still going to be doing my thing, you feel me? Can't stop, won't stop.

**-Dc, Solano**

**From The Beat: These sounds like great goals, to get a job and pay rent. Your can't stop attitude can also help you reach these legitimate goals.**

## Physically Lost Mentally Found

The last time I was locked up I was lost but I had no idea. I thought everything was okay with myself. When I went home I said I would never come back but now I am here again. The first two weeks in here this time I still thought I had learned my lesson and would be fine if I got released. I was stressing out every day last time I was here and the first two weeks this time, wishing I would just be home.

It didn't hit me until a couple of days ago that I honestly believe I had my life reality check. Now I have never felt so peaceful with myself and so strongly determined to stay on the right track when I step out of these doors. I am comfortable with where my mind stands. I was lost, but now I am found.

**-Cody, Solano**

**From The Beat: We are so glad that you had a wake up call about your life. Perhaps you can describe how that happened in your next piece for the Beat. Did you wake up with the new awareness or did it come to you after some reflection?**

## Conquering Distraction in School Classes

I try to conquer distraction by asking questions and participating when the teacher is speaking. When I get confused and don't know what to do in class, I ask around in the class. Also, when I start getting distracted, I try to study more of the concept of what I'm learning.

Distraction is always getting in my way of learning when there is a long lesson. I really wish there was a more hands-on lesson in class, so that the class can go by faster. Other times I am distracted by other students who try to distract other students and be silly. Every day in class, I try to conquer distraction.

**Nubia, Marin**

**From The Beat:** How could your teachers/school books galvanize your mind so deeply, that you'd love learning whatever you're being taught? Does your personal drama cause you to daydream, distract you in class? Your participation in classes is wonderful.

## To Conquer

My past wasn't all good. My mama was in and out of prison so me and my little brother stayed with my grandma and I stayed in trouble at school.

My current situation isn't any better. I have been in and out of this place, but I have a baby on the way so I got to conquer to let my child have that childhood I didn't have, that father figure I didn't have.

My main goal is to get my GED and get a good job so my child won't have any worries. It's going to take hard work and dedication, but I'm with it if it keeps me out of jail and gives my child a better life.

**-Antonio, Tuscumbia, Alabama**

**From The Beat:** Every decision you make from now on, you will have to think about your child BEFORE you make that choice. Best of luck in all you do and always keep in mind that you want this child to have a better childhood than you did.

## Eagle Steps

Comparing my life to an eagle is really interesting. Eagle families are really tight, but eagles push their babies out of the tree to get them used to being on their own.

I compare my life to an eagle's life as a baby, taking an extra step, and even if you feel uncomfortable, you should take that extra step toward becoming a man, to being independent and self-reliant.

**-Tay Beez, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** It's a long fall and scary to step out of the safety of the nest, but it's the only way to test your wings and fly. You sound like you've already taken flight. The question then, is where are you taking yourself?



## Fallen Angels

Every day there's people born and there's people who die.  
There are angels who fall out the sky  
who land right in front of you to save your life  
but will you see it and take to heed that the angel is your ticket out  
of death,  
or will you leave the angel there and act like you don't see it and  
avoid the warning? There's to me angels falling  
so that is one excuse you won't have when you die.

**-Jk, Washington DC**

**From The Beat:** Beautiful description of fallen angels. What distracts people from acting on the angels' warnings?

## I Wish

I wish I can be free to help my baby  
Her daddy is missing her and loving her  
I don't know what's going on every day  
When I don't call her  
I really don't see her  
At least my mother brings her up here  
Sometimes I want to fight  
Sometimes I want to do right  
Sometimes I want to live longer  
Because nothing is better than living  
Don't want to die  
I'm way too young to die  
I look up to the sky and said hi  
But not good day  
Only love my family and people that hope for me to get out  
And give money to homeless people because  
It can be a sign of God  
Think like a man.

**-Jp, Washington DC**

**From The Beat:** We hope you get to go home and see your daughter soon. What is the first holiday you'll be able to celebrate with your daughter? What do you hope to teach her once you're home?

## Dream

Some dream of fame,  
Some dream of power,  
Some dream of rooms full of happy white powder.

Some wish for love,  
Others for peace,  
Some just want a full good night's sleep.

There are many things you may dream if you try,  
But if one fact holds true, it's that dreaming is a lie.

I dream of a world where there's no more dreaming,  
Where we all move past the lies we see gleaming,  
A world without toil and trouble or fear,  
Without need to worry for what we hold dear.

A world without people who're stuck in their visions,  
Which stream and collide into unforeseen fissions,  
Of darkening depression, of fury and dread,  
Which stress and compress 'till you're seemingly dead.

I dream of a world where we all just slow down,  
Just sit and appreciate all that's around,  
To relax and to think what it means to be me,  
To live in a world in complete harmony.

**-Noah, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** A world in complete harmony sounds like a great place to live in. Sometimes we can indeed become too preoccupied with our visions which end up getting in the way of what is right in front of us. Perhaps when we are able to live harmoniously within ourselves, we in turn promote positive and harmonious choices within others?

## Happy Valentine's Day To My Friend Who's a Girl

Girls always went the wrong direction with me. They cheated on me; they left me. I think relationships are depressing. It's the same thing repeating itself over and over. Maybe it's because I'm quiet, I'm always thinking, at least that's what they said.

I haven't had a girlfriend for two years, but I have a friend who's a girl. We've been talking for two years. We're just cool, I guess. I mean, she has a boyfriend. She has had three boyfriends, one at a time, not all at once, but I'm not one of them. They fight over her. I guess I'm just waiting to get out of here and wish her Happy Valentine's Day with her boyfriend, but I've been in here and I don't know what's going on outside. Maybe they're broken up.

I don't know her boyfriends very well. They're a bunch of nobodies. I don't really care about them. I'm just glad she and I are friends.

-Kevin, Marin

**From The Beat: You have a sweet, patient, romantic heart. It's wonderful that you love to think through what you're learning, not just partying your way through life. Many girls like quiet, pensive guys they can talk to. Don't worry, they'll find you.**

## Food

Everyone has their own favorite food. My favorite food is spicy chicken. It's a kind of Chinese food. I usually cook it at home.

My mom doesn't know how to cook. I knew that her favorite food type is spicy. When it is my first time to cook it, I felt scared and excited. I cut the chicken's leg into pieces. Then I put something on the chicken and waited 20 minutes to make it taste better. Next, I poured some oil and put chicken in to boil it. After the chicken turns yellow, I took a clean plate to put the chicken in. After that, I pour some new oil inside and put red peppers inside. When it smells good, I put the chicken back in. Lastly, I put some salt on it and it's done.

The first time my mom tried it, I was scared because I was afraid it wasn't good. She said it was a success and she loved it. I also tried it. I can't believe that I made it really tasty. I love to eat it and when people talk about my food, I'm happy.

It's a good experience to learn to cook. Also it's very exciting when you are tasting your own food. My own food is my favorite food.

-Jin, Los Angeles

**From The Beat: It sounds great! Have you always liked to cook? Did you learn how to cook from your mom? What's the next thing you want to learn how to cook?**

## When she has pain, I help her by making her tea or something that will make her feel better.

## Helping My Mom

What hurts me the most is finding out that my mom might be getting cancer again. The reason why that hurts me is because she is the only person that would put up with all of my BS. She has been a mother and father to me since I was born. She has put a roof over my head and food in my stomach.

I always help her out by cleaning up the house and doing all of the chores. I also help her by carrying heavy things when she can't carry or move them. When she has pain, I help her by making her tea or something that will make her feel better.

-David, Monterey

**From The Beat: You are faced with a really challenging part of your life. With her cancer, it sounds like your mom needs you just as much as you need her. How do you think your absence from her while you are at juvenile hall has affected her?**

## Lost in Myself

I've been in these walls and can't break free.

I found myself lost, physically and mentally.

My whole life is a drifting memory.

All I remember are enemies,

Trying to get the best of me.

I walk in the darkness, filled with a breeze that's cold.

In my heart I know that one day my mother I will hold.

My mother shed tears throughout the years

'Cause what she experienced were her daily fears

That I'd lose my life, one of these days,

All because of my fast livin' ways.

I'm lost and trying to find my way to success

But I can't do it without my mom

Who remains in my chest.

-Pelon, Santa Cruz

**From The Beat: You are doing it. And you should save this copy of The Beat to show to your mom.**

## Self-Perception

Don't judge someone by their thoughts or intentions but by their actions. A person can think irrationally but they will not do as they do not want. A general way a person acts can tell a lot about the person's personality, but this does not mean we as people cannot make a change to one's self because we all are susceptible to just that.

To change for the better though, is simply improving one's demeanor. To change for the worse is causing harm and self-judgment. Low self-esteem is one of the most frustrating and confining feelings in the world. How will you perceive the world for its actual meaning if you cannot perceive yourself for your true colors? Looking in your own eyes can be the most fearsome task you'll ever have to perform but it is the most invigorating feeling you'll ever encounter.

Once this is done, you can expand the broadness of the capabilities to your desire. You are your biggest enemy. The moment you defeat yourself is the moment you can begin conquering your surroundings. Acknowledge yourself for a genuine big person and the outside looking in will perceive you for an even bigger one. Make the incentive.

-Marina, Santa Clara

**From The Beat: Change is difficult for anybody. We are all so accustomed to the habits that we have developed over the years, that it's hard to break away from those habits. People do have to develop self-confidence and that will help us make better decisions in life. You need to take the initiative.**

## Never Knew Love

I believe that everyone has their own capacity for love. I have been in relationships where I didn't give even as close to much love as I got from my partner. One partner in particular gave me too many chances and each time, I let her down. She has moved on but she still supports me. Her support has shown me what love really is, and now I know I wasn't even close to the meaning on love.

When I was younger (and up until recently) my understanding of love was limited to having intercourse or telling someone what they wanted to hear. That's why none of the relationships I had ever lasted, even when I really liked the person. But you, Tori have shown me what love really is—that it's not just about me and my needs. It's about making sacrifices and decisions based on what's better for both of us.

I never knew this until it was too late. When I get home, I hope you give me another chance.

-Lorenzo, Alameda

**From The Beat: It's never too late, Lorenzo. Even if you and this particular person are better off as friends, the ways in which she's helped you grow will serve you well in future relationships.**

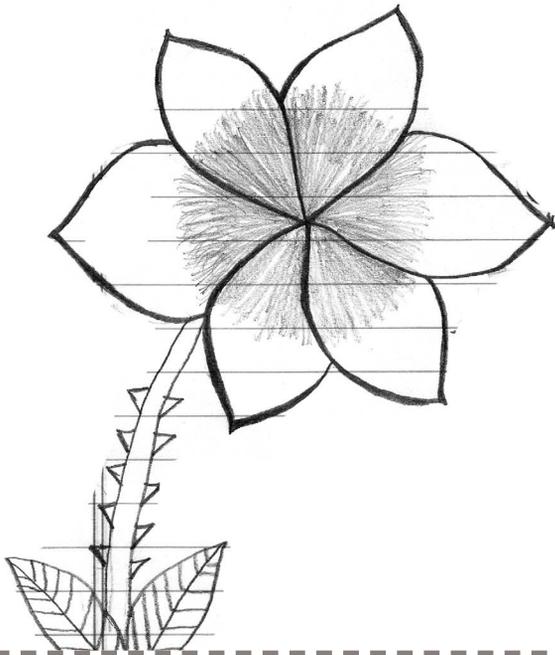
## To Conquer Longer Days

What is most important for me to conquer, is how to make life last longer.

Every day I think of ways to make the day last longer, like: I sit around all day, don't take naps or, work out. I want my days to last longer, because I want to do more stuff in one day instead of doing it in few. That is why I want to conquer to make my days last longer.

-Bob

**From The Beat: This is such a great attitude to have towards life! What kinds of days make you feel really happy and fulfilled?**



## Jayla

I decided to name my daughter Jayla because I couldn't decide between Layla or Julissa so somehow I put both of them together. Her middle name I let her Godfather choose and her last name is mine.

She just turned a year old in January. She comes to visit every week for the most part. I love her and can't wait to see her whether its forty weeks or forty years, she's my forever.

-Liddo L

**From The Beat: Congratulations! You are a mother and you should be proud. Take pride and cherish these moments because they don't last forever. It's time for you to mature and change the way you think so you can be there to support your child in all aspects.**

## Valentine's Day, Anniversary, Court Day, Me and My Lady!!!

So, I got court on Valentine Day, and my one year anniversary with my lady is the day before. It kind of sucks, but I know one day I'll see day light again, hopefully the judge gives me a good deal or something. Hope they give me two to four years.

Anyways, it's better than 25 to life. I wake up every morning with a smile on my face, so I can maintain throughout out the day but, oh well! It's like a vacation to me but, without a nice view haha!! But, thanks Beat, I always like when you come. Stay up! Late.

-Lil Steven

**From The Beat: We do hope things are going your way and your lady continues to see the progress you are making to return home to lead a successful life free of the system.**

## Substances and Me

One of my boys from high school was always smoking weed or drinking. I have a problem with substances because when I know someone that has it, I'm always around them a lot. I also have a parent that has a problem with a very bad substance addiction. It can make you feel sick.

When I was around my boy from high school I helped him because when I stopped he followed my steps.

My parents left me for a substance problem and didn't even try to get help.

-Muggzz

**From The Beat: You're right, substance addiction can make you feel sick, because it's a disease that is tough to beat. We're proud of you for being a good influence on your friend. We hope your parents get help before it's too late.**

## Hood Life

In my neighborhood there ain't nothing but corruption, Crooked mentality born out of destruction.

Young women trying to get their way through seduction.

Young hitters growing up without the proper loving...

It bugging the hell out of me,

Growing up in these streets, that's all you see.

They will never understand the smart individual I can be,

All they see is someone locked up for robbery.

-Bg

**From The Beat: With this poem, you showed all of us how smart and talented you are. Keep writing, keep resisting corruption, and we hope to see you changing the world.**

## Good News

Today I'm going to write about the letter I got in the mail. I don't know how to react to my girl being pregnant with my kid. It's hard to get the news while I'm in here. I think this will be a positive thing because it will be my motivation to stay out of trouble and be the father I never had. I'm happy for both of us.

- Villain

**From The Beat: Being a father is a big responsibility and we are happy that you are using it as a motivation to change your life. What kind of a father do you want to be for your child? What kind of a life do you want for your baby?**

## My Mentality

My mentality has changed a lot since I did what I did. Now I see things from a different point of view. I realize that I'm not in the hall for something petty. I'm looking at twenty-years for a mistake made at fourteen/fifteen.

I'm sixteen now, and I finally get the big picture. It's crazy to think about it but hopefully it doesn't come down to it. I can honestly say that my mentality is different than when I first came here.

-Chance

**From The Beat: What do you think is the most important difference about your new mentality? If you could give your younger self advice, what would you say?**

## Struggle to Survive

You got to struggle to survive living this type of life. Born and raised in SJ. I get choked up when I see tears in my mama's eyes because she has to visit me while I'm stuck in the hall.

I hate being in my cell thinking about my case. I am looking at a lot of time because of my mistake. I wish I could take back all the pain but, for now I'm stuck up in the hall...Until my release date.

-Aaron

**From The Beat: Regret and remorse can make us feel really bad, but they are powerful tools to force us to look closely at ourselves and our decisions. We can't take back all the pain, but what can we do to make it easier to bear?**

## Amor de Padre

No sé cómo demostrarle a mis dos hijos que los amo, por mis problemas. Pero cada vez que me encuentro en esta situación, atrás unas rejas, pienso y digo que voy a cambiar y enseñarles que los amo por que los necesito como ellos a mí.

Espero esta vez que salga cambie y deje de venir a la cárcel y ser más responsable. Espero verlos en una semana más. Los amo y esto es como me siento Beat. Bye.

-Silent

**From The Beat: Podemos sentir el amor que le tienes a tus hijos con cada palabra que escribiste. Hay veces nos hacen más fácil a escribir nuestro sentimientos o expresar nuestro sentimientos de otra maneras. Cuando le tienes que expresar cuanto lo amas a tus hijos tienes que enseñarle con tus acciones, y eso incluye no viniendo a la cárcel para que seas ese buen padre que sos capaz de ser.**

## A Father's Love

I don't know how to demonstrate to my kids that I love them because of my problems. Every time I find myself in this situation behind these bars, I think to myself and tell myself that I will change and show them that I love them because I need them like they need me.

This time when I get out and change and stop coming to jail, I will be more responsible. I expect to see them in one more week. I love them and this is how I feel.

-Silent

**From The Beat: We could really feel the love that you have for your kids with these words that you have written. Sometimes it's easier for us to write our feelings down or express ourselves through other forms. When it comes to your kids though, you need to be able to show them with your actions, and that includes staying out of jail so you could be that great father we know you are capable of being**

## Changing The Past

My conquer, thinking about my past makes me want to change and I am going to. I hate the situation I'm in right now and when I get out this place I am going to stop what I do in the streets. Being in here made me think a lot about how I'm going to be a better man when I get out of this place. I'm going to stop hanging around with the wrong person.

-David

**From The Beat: The biggest obstacle that usually stands in our way is our own-self. Nobody makes us do anything we don't want to do. Not hanging with the wrong crowd is only the beginning of a new change for you. You are on the right track.**

## Cars of the future

Future generations will probably be like, "Why did they live like that?" Their cars were shhhty compared to ours. Their cars can't go under water like ours. Their cars can't float like ours can. 2014 cars can't be compared to the future. Future cars are going to be 100 times better, faster and better upgraded.

- Automan

**From The Beat: Interesting insights into the future. Do you think that roads, public transportation, and other modes of travel will be different? How so?**

## No More Running

Hey what's up Beat? How is it been?

These days it's been good for me. I got out and came back a week later. I was in LA in a group home but I ran from there because I had some problems in there. I wanted to go to my hood and post up.

Then I got arrested in Morgan Hill but it's all-good. I'm going to another group home. This time I'm going to stay out of the hall but by that time I'll try to stay up so late.

- Snorlax

**From The Beat: It is good that you have made up your mind to stay out of the hall and go through your time at the group home. It is said that patience is hard but it's fruit is sweet. What are some ways you can stick to your resolution?**

## Voices

I would like to conquer the bad voices in my head when I'm trying to do well. It seems like every time I want to do good a little voice tells me to go do a crime. Then I black out and wake up the next morning wishing I would have never done that, but then money comes into play.

As a result I keep listening to the voices because they get me money. Then one day I get caught without me knowing because I blacked out and I wake up in the hall. They treat me as a psycho but it wasn't me. It was the voices inside of me that the staff and workers cannot see.

- K-Dot

**From The Beat: It can be very hard to over come the negative impulses and demons within us. An important step is recognizing that they are harmful, as you have. What do you think the next step is?**

## Realize

Time to realize

Open your eyes

You don't need that dude,

His mouth speaks all lies

Always trying to deny,

His vocab educated,

So it makes it all right,

Cut ties with him,

There's no need to cry,

He treats you like crap,

But you're sweet as pie,

Now that's not a lie,

I wonder if you fantasize what life would be like on the other side,

No fear all love,

Shine through your eyes,

Try to let go into the light,

You'll be all right,

I'll be there waiting for your arrival.

- Gerard

**From The Beat: It really shows in this piece that you care for this girl and want her to be happy and cared for. How can two people who care for each other, make the other happy? In your opinion what does it take to make a relationship healthy and beautiful?**

## Games

Art there be a need for man to be sane in a sane-less land.

For the flow of the crimson tide is everlasting in a sprawling city.

For not even the moon and all it's might can control these tides.

The kings of these cities are not men of fear.

Since the thinking these men fear is not of war or famine,

But fear of ones own shadow.

Due to their shadows are left by a lonely tear.

These kings are fortified by castles of crystal and ivory towers.

They have tried so hard to stay sane that their plight has caused

them to become insane for an old man's wars and reasons are

clouded by the promise of riches.

-Marcos

**From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece on fear and insanity. Your powerful use of imagery and grandiose, magnificent style make this a forceful piece.**

## Raising A Family

What's up, Beat? I'm going to talk about raising a family. To tell you the truth, I was raised by my homies from my hood. They taught me a lot of stuff like growing up to protect my stuff, feed my stuff and everything above. My hood, my family, taught me right.

-Greeneyes

**From The Beat: Is there anyone you have helped to raise? What is the most important lesson you have learned in your life up to now? Did the homies prepare you for a life of loneliness and incarceration?**

## Conquering My Book

This week I would love to conquer my writing because I'm writing a book about my life and I want to add more and more to it. So when I leave Juvenile Hall I would have my book finished and ready to get it published.

Writing in this book makes me think a lot of my life and helps me release my stress and anger I've been holding inside about my family and friends.

I love writing to The Beat because I can express my feelings. Well, until next time Beat.

-Downer

**From The Beat: Through writing you will learn a lot about yourself, and you can also teach others through the experiences that you have encountered. Nothing is easy in life and when you feel like you need to get something off your chest, put the pencil to work on some paper, and you will feel much better after you do.**

## It's Never Too Late

I once thought I was a bad kid and that I will never change. Or why go to church if all I do is sin?

My Mom told me it doesn't matter as long as you believe that there is a God out there He will bless you.

I didn't believe her but when I went to church and read the Bible and met the Lord, it made me a different person and I want to let people know that it's never too late to change or how many sins you have committed in life, as long as you regret it.

-Serg

**From The Beat: Nobody is perfect in this life, and we will all make mistakes. We just have to make sure we recognize when we have done something wrong and correct the mistakes we make.**

## Lessons Learned?

I miss my girlfriend, my family and my son (dog). Everyday I cry in my room and just fall asleep. Sometimes it helps but sometimes it makes it worse.

You know that quote that says, "No regrets, just lessons learned"? Well somehow for me it's more like, "No lessons learned, just regrets."

I hope to get out of here and get my things together, but only God knows what will happen next.

-Miguel

**From The Beat: When we are in the midst of difficult circumstances it is hard to see the lessons but keep faith and don't lose hope! No experience is wasted if you decide to learn from it.**

## Change of Plans

Topic's this week aren't interesting. So I'm going to write about what's going to happen in court.

I got something called a contested disposition, which means the District Attorney is contesting my PO's disposition. I have court tomorrow and the DA is going to try and get me to the ranch. My PO and Public Defender are going to fight in court on why I should go home.

I was supposed to get released at my last court date. My original DA who was assigned to my case was not here. She was going to let me go home. Now this new one is bringing up more stress for me as well as disappointment.

Now I have to explain to the judge why I want to go home and why it would benefit me. Hopefully I can persuade the judge to release me. If not I'm off to the ranch. I miss my son and I regret all I have done. I'm in a different state of mind than I was one year ago. I got my son and realize how much I could miss out on. Don't wish me luck, cause that is bad luck. Ha ha. Anyway I'm out Beat!

-Edward

**From The Beat: Seems like you are ready and prepared for your court date and for your release. We hope you get to be with your son soon and are successful in the free world!**

## The First Time

The last time I did something for the first time was when I first got locked up which was two and a half years ago. In my eyes, it was a positive and a negative experience. At least now I know how it is to be in here. It is a negative experience because now I have a long record. If I don't change my ways, I'll have that record for the rest of my life.

-Stranger

**From The Beat: Fortunately, your record does not define you. Try sharing with us another record about yourself, a record of the positive qualities you possess and times or experiences in your life you look back on with pride. We want to hear your whole story.**

## Freedom

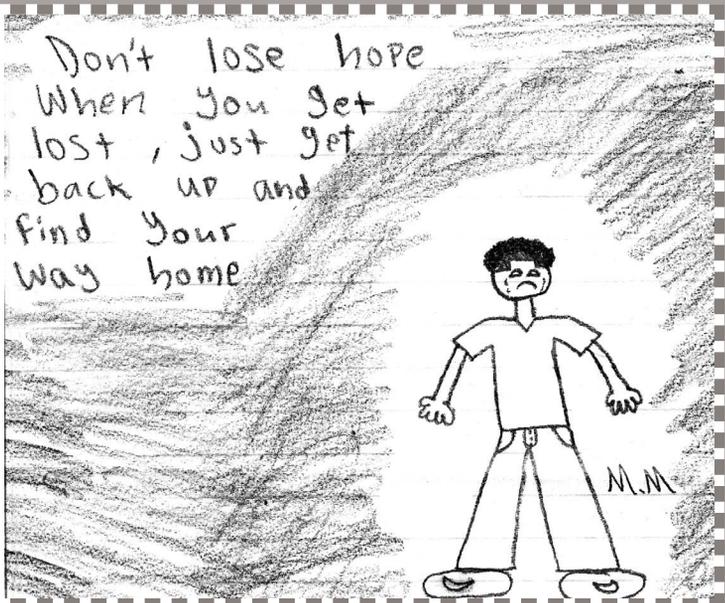
What's up, Beat? Today I want to talk about freedom. It's important to me because I've been locked up since October of last year. I have been sentenced to a group home. Being a teen and having your freedom taken away from you is heavy on you, especially after so many things I have been through as a kid. My life has been like a roller coaster going up and down. I am stressing about what my dad always told me, "Those who fail to prepare, prepare to fail." My dad is locked up too.

I sit in my cell and look out my window everyday hoping I could be out, make a man of myself, and most of all, be free. People around me judge and discriminate against others in here. I don't trip off them because one day I'm going to be myself, and do me like I have been from Day 1.

I may be tall and have a baby face and an Afro. But, most of all, I have a life and deserve to be free like everyone else.

-Chief Saucy

**From The Beat: Has your outlook on freedom changed recently? Your reflections on your right to freedom are very inspiring. What times in your life do you think you enjoyed the most freedom?**



## Being Locked Up

I would much rather be free than being locked up. It sucks when you're in your room. You just get so irritated cause. You can't just walk out. That is so hard. There is simply nothing you can do about it.

You just have to suck it up and stay in your room. Another thing that is so depressing is knowing that you're going to do the same thing tomorrow that you did today. It's just the same thing everyday.

-Jj

**From The Beat: If you could reform the system, what would you change about your living situation? It sounds like you think the environment you are in creates a strong negative response in you. We hope it gets better.**

## Love

Love? To me love is when you wouldn't want to be with any other person but the person you're with. Love is when that person can't get out of your mind at all. When you are willing to go through whatever it takes to have that person by your side.

I do agree that in most relationships there is that one person that loves more, that puts way more into the relationship. I am that person. I always tend to put the whole hundred in the relationship. I always tend to go that extra mile. I have no idea why 'cause I just end up hurting myself.

-Addie

**From The Beat: Love is always a delicate issue. Many of us have trouble not only defining love, but also trying to figure it out as to whether can a person love someone else if they don't love themselves. What do you think? Is it possible? Does love come from learning experiences that we go through in life?**

## Where Am I?

A day when I felt lost is when I was hanging out with my friends. We were chilling, sipping and kicking back smoking. The only thing that I felt was that I was lost, I didn't really know where I was. The only funny thing is that we were all chilling in the hood and I didn't know where I was. When I asked my friend, he told me I wasn't really lost I just got lost in time.

-Benjamin

**From The Beat: Did you enjoy the feeling of being lost in time? Sometimes it can be nice to just let our thoughts wander for a little bit, but other times, it can feel like a waste. Thanks for sharing your thoughts with us.**

## Short Story

It was early January, 2014, there was nothing to do so I started drinking, still partying for the Happy New Year, drinking every day. I didn't have any fear of what would happen, but I drank on an empty stomach and blacked out.

I was chilling with some heads and did some dumb shhh that got me locked up in here. I have been here since, waiting so I can get out. I hate when my Mom comes and starts crying but I love seeing her support me and my brother.

Also, my cousin is here in the other unit. It's my brother and cousin's first time here, I've been here before but this is the longest I've been here. It's getting hella whack listening to staff, but I can't blame no one but myself. My stupid decisions got me here but when I get out I'm going to be smart and do things right. Until then, I'll be in here but yeah just wanted to share that. Be smooth Beat.

-Chub

**From The Beat: Damn that's too many of you guys locked up! Wouldn't y'all rather be out kicking it together and barbecuing with the rest of the family? Why put your mother through so much pain, when you can change your lifestyle and enjoy life a bit more? You see the pain your mom goes through when she comes to visit. You definitely need to stay away from alcohol, because drugs, alcohol, and bad habits are just distractions that keep you away from the people you love.**

## Love and Trust

For me it isn't hard to love but to trust the person I love. I've only fallen into love twice and the first time it was tough. I've gotten my heart broken and it ain't nice. So after the last one I've treated all my girls the same, how I see them.

Right now while I've been in here I met a girl and she came to my court today and well, what can I say Beat, she looked beautiful. She hears me out and understands me. I'm changing little by little and she is there to help me out when I'm falling back down. Well, Beat for me love is easy to give, but trust is the hard part.

-Downer

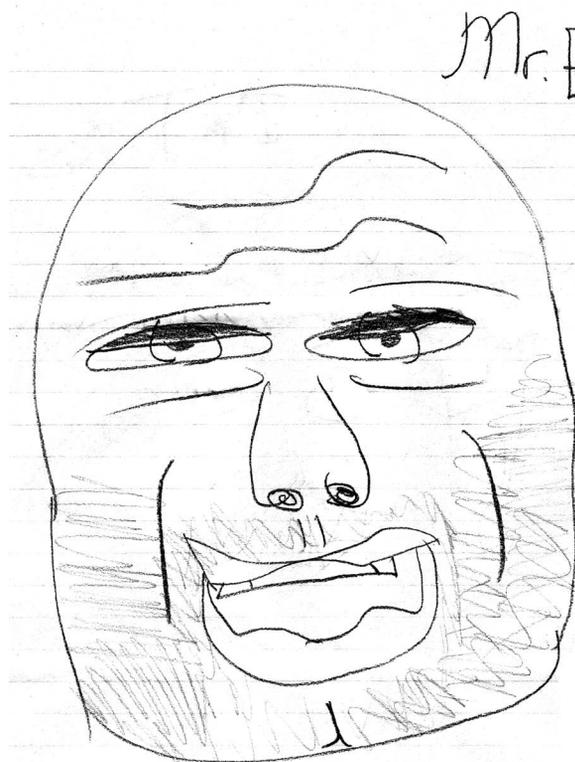
**From The Beat: Love is not an easy task, it takes a lot of patience, dedication, and determination to make things work from both people involved. To love someone you have to learn to trust. Without trust there is no real relationship.**

## Them Tires

I think when I have kids they will look back at the past and say why did we have tires on cars. I will give my kids a talk about my past and tell them my mistakes.

-Papa

**From The Beat: It is great that you intend to share the lessons you've learnt with your children and help them make better choices! Has anyone ever given you advise based on their past? How was it helpful?**



## The Truth

How I determine a lie is if they stutter and they don't give you eye contact.

Truth is example - I cheated on my test and I told my teacher that I cheated on it because I felt bad.

It evolves and it gets bigger and bigger because you're going to have to make bigger lies.

That my lady and me are going to stay strong.

When they give you eye contact and they talk to you from the heart. I love my family and I love my lady. I will do whatever I can to make them happy.

And I am trying to get my education to be a staff at a juvenile facility.

-Junior

**From The Beat: You brought up some very good points about being truthful. How can people always be truthful and sincere? Why do you think some people can't be truthful? Oh and we wish you the best on fulfilling your dream of being a staff at juvenile facility.**

## New Mindset

The one thing I would like to conquer is going to get out of this facility. Then I want to go back to High School to get my High School diploma and probably after that get a part time job to help provide for my family and to save up for college.

-Ricky

**From The Beat: These are all goals that you are more than capable of accomplishing. You just need to put your mind to it and stay focused.**

## Changes

What hurts me is the obstacles in life I've overcome, the people I love that I've lied to, the promises I made to myself that I've never followed through with. Overall what hurts me the most is knowing that I have family that misses me. They miss me because I'm away by the choices I've made but hopefully, or I'm most certain, when I get out I'll be making wiser choices, better choices.

- Justin

**From The Beat: It is hard to look honestly at our past actions and acknowledge the mistakes we've made. However taking responsibility for them and for our lives, as you have, is a big step towards making wiser and better choices. We wish you the best in making the changes you wish to see in yourself.**

## The Future

When I look into the future I see glimmers of hope. When I wake up I realize I'm surrounded by the gangs and dope.

I snort a lot because I'm trying to cope. It broke my heart when they killed Smoke.

Only eighteen shot down in the street. I wish I were there to save his life before his blood reached the street.

When I look into my future I hope my past doesn't catch up to me because I know there are people who want to see me in a body bag.

Lord look into my future. Let there be hope because it ain't no joke.

- L

**From The Beat: We also hope that your future will be different from the past. It is hard to deal with sad memories and a difficult past but you must find a way to free yourself from their clutches. How do you think you can do that? How can you keep clear of environments that pull you back to that past?**

## Love Gets Lost Too

I lost many friends, also family members.

My cousin was sixteen.

He overdosed on some kind of pill.

His girlfriend got so scared she didn't know what to do, so she grabbed my cousin's gun and shot herself.

He wrote a message saying, he loved you. Don't worry, I love you too. Stay strong little brother, will be on top looking over you.

-Nightmare

**From The Beat: We should treasure every moment and try to make the best decisions possible so we can guarantee ourselves another day of life, to spend time with those we love. We love our family and friends but we don't ever love ourselves enough to stay alive or stay away from jail. Why is that?**

## Hard To Do

Generosity is a hard thing. Most people can't do it. I try and I try and it doesn't come out how I expect. Giving isn't for me, receiving generosity can do a big thing for me though.

-Juan

**From The Beat: It's very mature of you to realize that you have a hard time being generous with others, yet you appreciate when others are generous with you. We admire your self-awareness about how difficult the impulse to be generous can be.**

## Lost on The Road

Well I'm going to write about a time I was lost. Well I was driving by myself and I took the wrong freeway. I was driving for like half an hour and all of a sudden I saw that the next exit was San Francisco. So I had to turn all the way back and drive home. I was tripping because it was a stolen car.

-Hopper

**From The Beat: Why do you think you didn't notice that you missed the exit? Were you lost in your own thoughts worrying about getting pulled over?**

## What Is Love?

To me love is success

Love is the power of a dove

Love is the will to be yourself

Love is not getting a divorce

Love is not a source or a force

Love is the understanding of a bumpy road ahead

Love is respect to one and to all

Love is born through the heart not through the lust

Love is a beautiful Red Rose with all kind of thorns for different occasions

Love is life and its long road

What is love?

-Alexandria

**From The Beat: Excellent description of love. Love can be a mixture of all kinds of things, but love has to come from within. If you don't love yourself, then there is no way that you will know how to love someone else.**

## Past and Future

People hurt me and I hurt people

Why can't I stop?

I know I'm the cause of other people hurting me

In my past people hurt me before I hurt others

Why did I choose this path?

Can I take a turn and make my negative path into a positive path?

I know it's not that easy, but it's always worth a try

I will not give up on being the good, positive person I know I can be

I know it will be hard and there's a bumpy path ahead

But all I got to do is keep moving forward, head up, and stand strong.

-Alexandria

**From The Beat: Inner strength is hard to conjure up sometimes, but that's what we have to do to persevere in life. Nothing will be easy, change, staying positive and breaking out of your old habits is a very difficult task to take on. It might not be pretty, and remember you are not perfect, but if you fall, dust yourself off and pick yourself back up.**

## Lost in The System

When I was a teenager I met a group of people that I can truly call my friends. I started talking and hanging out with them daily. They brought out the best in me and made me feel like I was home.

One day, I made the mistake of turning them down and hanging out with a different crowd and I got into some trouble ending up in a stabbing and shooting. I didn't know if I had made the right decision, but all I know is I saved my so-called friend's life. I don't regret it but now I'm here.

All I wanted was to be an anesthesiologist and I will find my way out and pursue my dream but in the meantime I'm lost in the system.

-Future Doctor

**From The Beat: The feeling of being lost in the system is one we hear often. What do you mean when you say you have no regrets? You write in this piece that you made a mistake abandoning your old friends. Is that not something you regret? We hope you're able to achieve your goal.**

## Outta State

I'm getting sent out of state. I keep running from programs and they got tired of dealing with it. Shhh got real. I didn't expect it. I took for granted what I had now I'm probably getting BAP.

Regardless of where they send me, I'm going to be myself. If they just gave me a chance, I feel like I could exceed their expectations and my own. But without that chance, I can't strive. I can't do anything but continue doing me.

-Bambis

**From The Beat: We hope it works out better for you in the future. Please share with us more of your experiences in the system.**

## Reality

What's up Beat? This is Ryder. I don't have a lot to say but I have a court date tomorrow. My mom told me that I'm not going to get out tomorrow but if not, I'm going to rehab. Hopefully they'll accept me though. If not, I'll get out on my next court date on EMP.

If I do go on EMP this time, I'm actually going to try and pass it, not like before. I want to thank my mom for telling them that I need help but now I'm here thinking about my girl's dimples that I love. She means a lot to me, good thing I've got a picture of her in my room. I look at her every day and night.

I just wish I was out there to be with her, to be with my mom and to see my baby nephew. Well that's it for today Beat. Your friend,

- Ryder

**From The Beat: We wish you the best on all of your endeavors. Maybe this little bump on the road will help you appreciate your freedom a bit more and help you make better decisions so you never have to be away from your mother and your girlfriend.**

## Rest In Peace

First off I want to start off by saying rest in peace ARod. He was a solid individual he was always ready to ride no matter what the situation was. He was funny, a lady's man, a father to a handsome boy, and he was all about his money.

Until one day he was trapping with the goons and popped some Xanax bars and was sipping on some syrup "promethazine and codeine." That night was the last night of his life because he never woke up again. I guess you can say he overdosed but he was no knock!

I wish I could have spend that last night with him but I guess stuff happens for a reason. I love him till the death of me and we gone keep sipping for my man. Love you.

- Lil 'O

**From The Beat: This is a sad piece. Instead of learning from his gravely mistake you and the rest will just keep using and using. How many more deaths will it take to get you to realize how dangerous drugs are? Don't you think he would want you to learn from his mistake? Who's going to take care of his son? Why don't you get active by being a good uncle? That would be the best way to honor his loss.**

## Wishing

Wishing I was free

Wishing I could go back in time

Wishing I wasn't on probation

Wishing I didn't commit the crime

Always wishing

When you're locked in a box

Should've done this or should've done that

I can't wait to be free

I'm never coming back.

- Lil J

**From The Beat: You can't change the past and you are in the situation you are in because of the decisions you have been making. If you never want to come back you need to start making better decisions. Don't sit there and wish. You need to make it happen.**

## The Love of My Life

The love of my life, in the future she'll be my wife. I disagree with the fact that in a relationship, one loves the other more. I feel that both I and my lady love each other with all our hearts and that's all that matters to us.

It was hard for me to love because of all the times I've been hurt. When I met my Boo it became easy. I love my lady with all my heart and soul. I can't wait to be free and you in my arms again. I'll see you soon baby.

- Lil J

**From The Beat: We wish you the best for you and your lady. It's time you start thinking about the future and about what you want to do in life because guaranteed your lady doesn't want a husband that keeps going in and out of jail.**

## One Day at a Time

Got me locked away, they trying to throw away the key

Having vivid thoughts and dreams of my family

While sitting in my cell thinking of my crime

Hoping and praying that he don't drop that dime

No privacy, no rights, just a lot of time

It's so fast how a good time can go so wrong

Facing a sentence looking several years strong

I know it could be a lot worse looking at my peers

But spend a week in here and it feels like years

Have to look at the positive and thank God I'm here

"Please give me another chance and help me conquer my fears."

Seeing my mom at every visit telling her I'm going to change

No more getting high, living in the fast lane

I feel so wrong causing her so much pain

Tears running down her face like a gloomy rainy day

It's funny how you take advantage of the little things

All you can do is sit back and see what tomorrow brings

Keeping my peace of mind and positivity

So until I'm free...I'm going to take it

ONE DAY AT A TIME.

-Lil. Jay

**From The Beat: We admire your positive attitude and your great rhymes. How can you do right by your mom and by yourself?**

## The Pains of Drug and Alcohol Abuse

I know a lot of people that struggle with addiction. And, I'm not talking about a couple beers a day, or a hit here and there. But, people that struggle saying they want to quit... But, they never do or they can't quit.

A lot of those are close relatives, relatives that I've lost. One of those was my grandfather on my pop's side. I only met him a couple times when I was young, no younger than five. Heroin was his drug of choice, I don't know why he liked to slam but, it was his thing. Anyways, my pops walked into his room one day, finding him on the ground with a needle in his arm, dead. They said he OD'd on a dirty shot. My dad was hurt in the worst way. Not only had he lost his father, but a part of himself too.

-Mirez.

**From The Beat: We're sorry that you lost your grandfather to substances. How does this experience affect the way you think about drugs?**

## Love Is Everything

What's up Beat Within! This be your one and only boy, Chucky. Yeah I'm locked up once again but I don't mind that no more. For me, next up is County if I mess up, but I'm not here to talk about that. I'm here to talk about Love. What is love?

Well to me love is a great feeling when you're in a serious no BS relationship. When you and a girl are both committed to one another, when both of you guys put fifty percent on it, that's what love is. Not just when one person puts more than another person. Now that's not love at all, because I think it takes two to be able to keep a relationship strong and healthy.

Yeah people have ups and downs but I think if people are really dedicated to their soul mates, then they do anything to try to solve the problem right there and then before it even escalates to an even bigger problem.

Basically, what I am trying to say is that it doesn't only take one person to be in a relationship. It takes the commitment and dedication of two people not just one in a relationship. It should always be equal, not one person giving more than the other.

Well I'm done writing about that topic for right now. Till pencil meets paper.

-Chucky

**From The Beat: You made some very good points. It does take two to tango, but what happens when the other person doesn't want to put in their fair share in a relationship? When we are in love most of us are blind to the facts and we end up getting hurt. When that happens, we need to recognize our own errors as well.**

## My Uncle

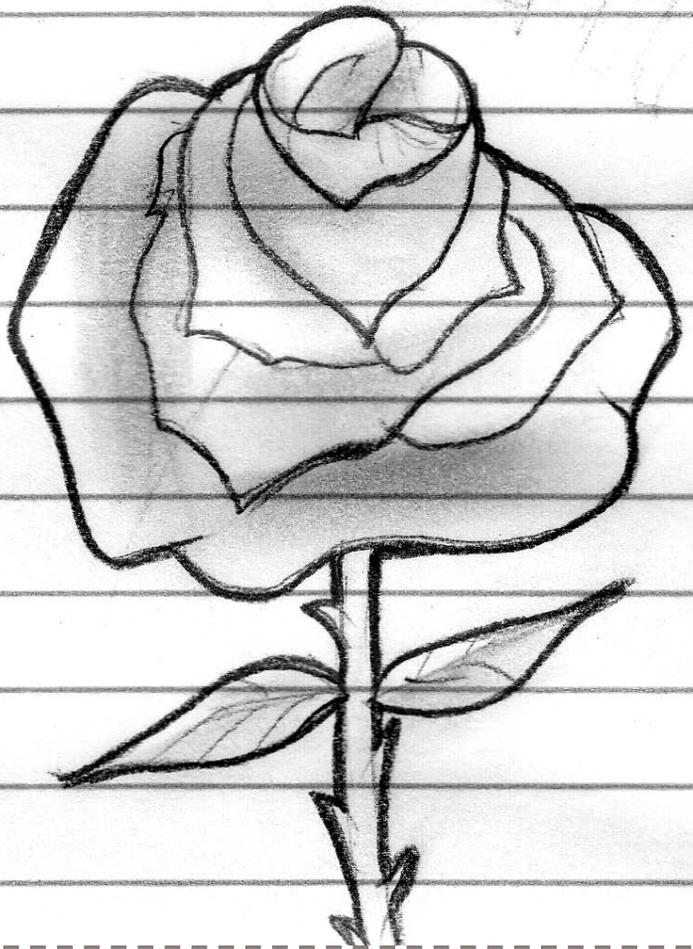
My uncle is doing a life sentence for using drugs. The drugs took over him and now he has to pay the consequences. When he got caught up, he tried to commit suicide because he was going to do a life sentence for putting hands on my aunt, mom and sister. That's what he gets.

They raided my house and got him out of the shed before he burned all the way. When they brought him out, they beat him. He tried to take off running, but they shot him in the back of the leg.

They got him and used a tasered him. Now they are taking him to a mental hospital and he's in the County for life. They are going to take him for life in prison just for drugs. That is why drugs are not good for you. They mess your head up.

- Freddy

**From The Beat: Drugs mess up a lot of people's lives. This is a good example of how drugs can ruin a family and affect a lot of people's lives. We are very sorry to hear of this tragic incident, but we are glad that your uncle can no longer harm you or any of your loved ones.**



## What Is Love?

I think love is how a person really feels and what they like about you. Many girls only care about looks or how much money the guy has now, but that's really dumb because some of those guys end up being assholes and crush a girl's heart or feelings.

Love means many things to different people but my reason are how they act, feel, care, and show you the best time and never waste your time.

-Young L

**From The Beat: You only waste your time when you don't learn from your experiences but other people don't waste our time. We tend to waste our own time.**

## Alcoholism

My cousin Bobby has always had an alcohol problem. His life has become complicated since he was thirty.

Now that he is fifty it continues. He has disappointed everyone in our family but we hope in the near future he'll make a difference.

-Young Free

**From The Beat: What kind of difference do you want your uncle to make? How can you encourage and motivate him to make a difference without putting too much pressure on him to do so?**

## Mine

As long as you're mine,  
I promise I'm yours,  
And if I mess up,  
Don't settle the score.  
Because I love you,  
And I know you love me,  
I'll prove it to you,  
When I get on one knee,  
I'll give you a present,  
It must be a ring.

-Giorgio

**From The Beat: Do you think there are ways of proving love other than a proposal? Sometimes we get so caught up in grand gestures that we forget to appreciate the small everyday things.**

## Drugs Around

Since I was young, I was around drugs. Mom smoking dope and having people around the house, always up late and not giving a damn.

My little brothers scared, asking if mommy was coming back and me telling them: everything was going to be alright.

-Ulises

**From The Beat: Your little brothers are lucky to have you to look up to as a responsible role model, but you deserve to have one as well. Who do you go to for support?**

## Divine

She's soft to the touch like the sand on the beach  
With glowing caramel skin from her head to her feet  
A smile that shine like the moon lit sky  
She's a drug that provides a more natural high  
I could go on but we're all out of time  
So until next time Miss Cheyene divine.

-Chop

**From The Beat: This is a sweet little poem. Sometimes it's a lot easier for us to express ourselves when we write things down as opposed to saying things verbally.**

## No Love Again

Your love is sweet, like sugary canes  
But you break my heart constantly and cause me pain  
You lie to me always, and lead me astray  
I try so hard to forget you, but you stay in my mind  
Because I do all the time  
I wish I never met you, so I would not have all this hate  
You had me like a starving fish  
And your love was the bait  
Thank you so much for destroying my life  
And no we can't be friends  
While your happy in love with your new boyfriend and son  
Just know I could never love again.

-Hopper

**From The Beat: Don't let one bad experience ruin your future relationships. Just be more careful next time. You will find yourself a decent partner. It just takes time and patience. The good ones don't come easy.**

## Substance and Alcohol Addiction

I tend to know myself...I have what most people would think of as a problem with Meth and alcohol. I am a cigarette fiend on the outs. Once I pick up the glass globe I cant put it down. Bowl after bowl, most would OD on the amount I smoke in a day.

I keep leaving my group homes for a cigarette and some beer. My grandma just died of lung cancer and probation didn't let me go to her funeral. I'm dying over here with stress. I just want to go home.

-Nick

**From The Beat: We are sorry to hear of the passing of your grandmother. Do you really feel like you can know yourself if you have a substance abuse problem?**

## Follow Your Dreams

Never give up,  
keep trying and follow your dream.

Never give up,  
never stop trying to follow your dreams and goals.  
Keep hope in yourself and fight for what you believe in.  
Try your best to be the person of your dreams.

-Alicia

**From The Beat: That is a wonderful message, full of hope and positivity. Are you planning on staying true to your words and making your own dreams come true?**

## Sharing The Love

To me, the capacity to love is having the same amount of love for each other. I agree that everyone has a different capacity for love, and I agree that in every relationship there is always one person that loves more. It's hard for me to love a person. I don't put more into a relationship than my partner. My thought on this is to watch who you fall in love with.

-Makayla

**From The Beat: We all love with different capacities and intensities, so it's important to understand the other person's love toward you so that you can create a beneficial relationship that you both can cherish.**

## Football

I like playing football  
I used to be corner back on defense  
I used to play for Skyline High School  
I messed up  
I got benched because of my grades  
The coach gave me an ultimatum  
That I either get my grades up or I can't play  
Then I went to jail  
I was charged with some serious crimes

-John

**From The Beat: It seemed like you were really enjoying your life with football. Does being in jail make you want to get things right so that you can continue to be happy and do the things you love? Or, do you think you need to stop and think about some deeper issues that need to be addressed and worked out?**

## Not Wanting Something Back

Somebody that can have generosity is someone that is willing to give without wanting something back.

Giving food to somebody and helping them out with something they are struggling with.

Giving things to people, the things that they need, clothes and toys for moms that have kids.

-Donna

**From The Beat: There are many people that can certainly use many acts of kindness no matter how big or small. Most people want to gain some kind of profit, or at least have an exchange of goods, but being able to give unconditionally shows a mature and empathic spirit that demonstrates a much deeper understanding of the nature of life.**

## To Conquer Staying Out

What's more important for me to conquer is to stay out of Juvenile Hall. I have a plan and I'm not going to let myself or anyone else stop me from doing what I need to do to stay out of here. I plan to stay out by going to school more, even if I don't want to. I am not going to let impulses take over me.

I am going to start going to church more and ask God to lead me in the path and direction He wants me to go down, because I don't want to be dead or in jail for a very long time.

I have realized that I need to get my life together now or it's going to be too late. I see friends my age dying and not making it to see eighteen. I don't want to be an example. Okay, bye.

-Lex

**From The Beat: Sounds like an excellent plan! We hope you'll stay strong enough to make it happen. We wish you the best of luck!**

## Court Day

I want to get out of here  
I wish I was never here  
I can't wait until the next court day in a few days (Friday)  
I can't wait  
I miss my mom  
I can't sleep at night  
And I really want to go home  
Hoping I get let out on GPS

-Aaron

**From The Beat: These times can be difficult when you are dealing with a lot of anticipation about what may come next. Hopefully you will be reunited with your loved ones soon enough.**

## Captivity Of Love

I do believe that there is, not always, but sometimes, or even most of the time, there is one person that loves more than their partner. It's only hard to love when you had your heart broken bad.

But its easy to fall in love after a long time, or almost long time. Especially your first time. To be honest, I've never been in a relationship where I tried harder than my partner, but if I ever fall in love, I wouldn't mind trying harder than my partner.

-Christian

**From The Beat: Falling in love is certainly a wonderful feeling, and having ones heart be broken can be just as painful. Part of a successful long term relationship is having both people be willing to put the same amount of time and effort into making it work.**

## Unforeseen Horror

From the darkest of halls,  
From the deepest of dungeons,  
Creeps and crawls an unforeseen horror.

It moves as a shadow,  
From person to person,  
Searching the land for its next sorry victim.

The smell that comes forth,  
Is putrid and rancid,  
As it slowly engulfs you,  
In darkening panic.

No sounds will you hear,  
From this dark faceless foe,  
But in silence you'll wither,  
In the darkness that flows.

-Noah

**From The Beat: We all reach certain points in our life where we have to deal with frightening and dark situations. Perhaps it has to deal with our physical security, and maybe other times it's our emotions that consume us. What kinds of things do you do to defend and protect yourself against these dark forces?**



## Bad News

I was locked up and when I called my sister she told me she had bad news for me. The police killed my homie. I still remember the days we used to hang around together.

-Lil G

**From The Beat: We are sorry to hear of your loss. Is there any way that you can honor his death with others so that he will be remembered?**

## A Boss Is Never Lost

A Boss  
Will never be lost  
A Boss  
Can never pay the cost  
Of being lost  
The Bullshhh to  
The side I'll toss  
Because A Boss  
Can never pay the cost  
Of being Lost

-Kidd

**From The Beat: Being large and in charge is always a great feeling, though even Bosses can feel lost sometimes and not have a clear path. Is this referring to a deeper feeling of personal fulfillment? Perhaps a level of fulfillment that money can't buy?**

## My Lostness

When I'm lost I get very irritated because its like, damn I could have sworn I knew where I was going. I sometimes even get lost doing what it is that I'm doing.

A time that I felt lost was when I was way up in the hills, and my boyfriend left me stranded. I had to walk all the way down. When I finally got to my destination I was so relieved, but upset, because my "boyfriend" didn't come pick me up.

The feeling of being lost is not cool because you're mad. You ask people to help you and they be having attitudes like, "Nobody's got the time for that shhh!". So yeah.

-Susie

**From The Beat: We all live very busy schedules, and it is indeed unfortunate that some people are not willing to give a helping hand to others who are in need when there is no reason why they could not. What are the differences between being lost physically verses being lost mentally? How do you think people in society perceive those differences?**

## What I do When I am Lost

When I'm lost and don't have nothing to do I go to sleep. Another way is when I go somewhere I've never been before I get lost and call someone to come get me because I don't know my way back.

My favorite food is homemade mac n cheese and pork chops, chicken and ribs because it is really good to me.

-Man-Man

**From The Beat: You're lucky to have someone to come and get you - and feed you all that good food!**

## Love Cheese

My favorite food is Cheeseburgers. I like how the cheese melts into the meat when I eat the burger. You can get it from a fast-food place or a grocery store.

I prepare it myself or a fast-food place prepares it for me. Yes I can throw down a good cheese burger in the kitchen myself. No, my favorite food is not special to my family. Juvenile Hall food is my least favorite food.

-Donovan

**From The Beat: That's great that you know how to cook, it will save you money and help you out a lot in the future.**

## My Food

My favorite food is BBQ boneless chicken from WingStop and In and Out Burgers. No I cannot prepare it, not really a special culture. My least favorite food are vegetables.

-Charles

**From The Beat: Is there any food you do know how to prepare? What do you eat if you don't have any money for Wing Stop of In-n-Out.**

## Forget Love

It's hard to love someone, because you never know when they're going to stab you in the back. So forget loving someone!!!

-H

**From The Beat: It seems like you have had some bad experiences. Do you think that if someone truly loved you they would stab you in the back?**

## Wish I Had A Last Chance

I wish I could have gotten a second chance on GPS.

If I got a second chance, I would prove to the judge and everyone that I could change my life around and not come back to the hall.

-Lil G

**From The Beat: Having to deal with situations where we do not get second chances is difficult to accept. Do you think the best thing to do at this point is learn from your mistakes and move on?**

## Moving From Home To Home

As a young boy, I grew up moving from home to home because my mom left me in the house by myself. Consequently, I was taken away from her.

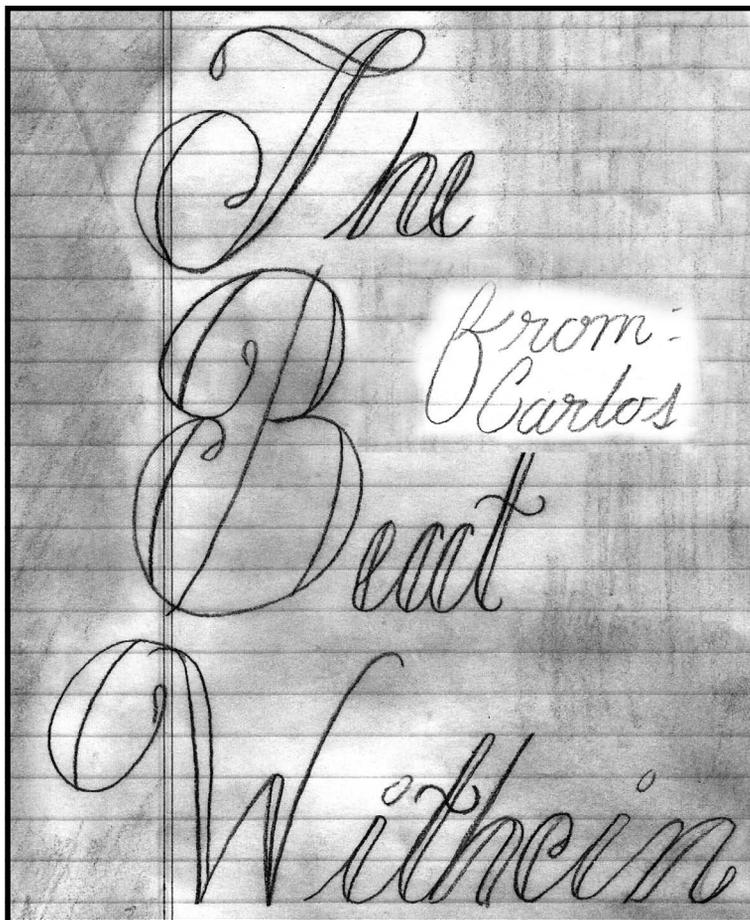
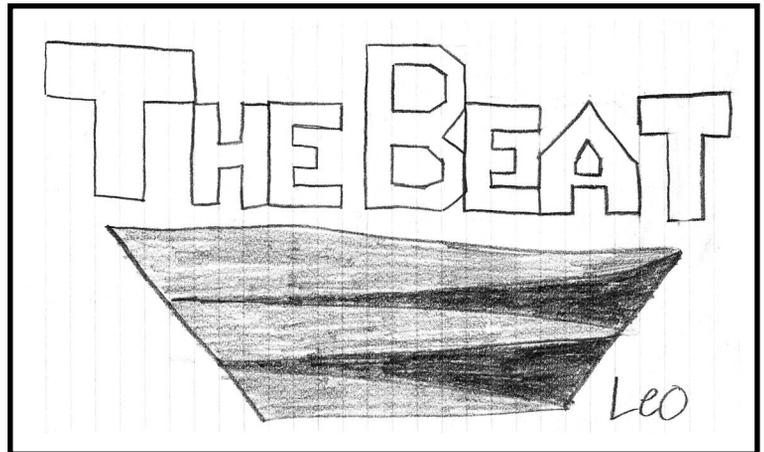
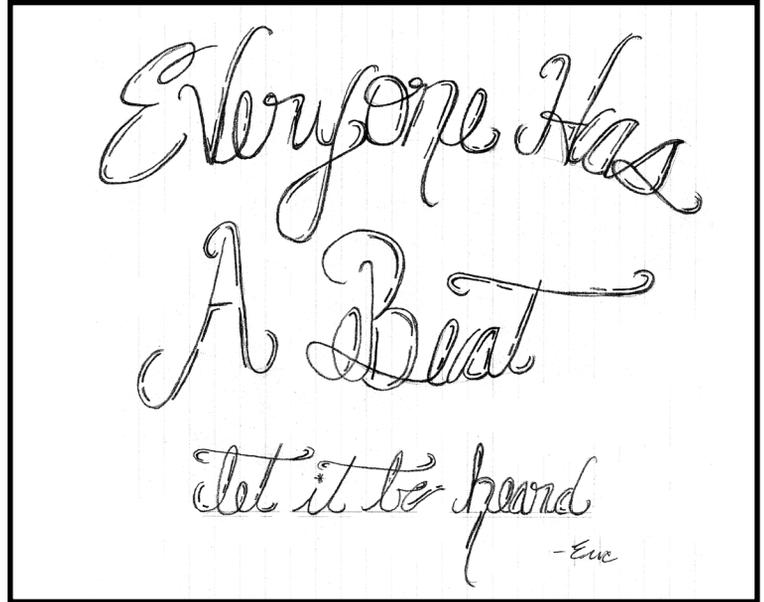
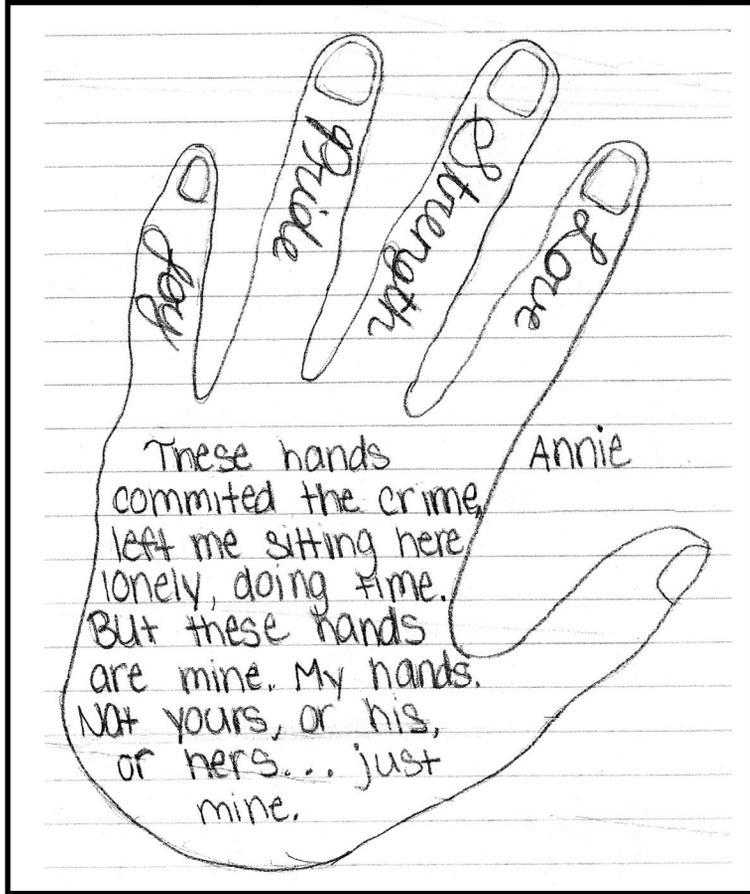
As I moved around from home to home, I experienced abuse from certain people I lived with. What made it even worse was that they were cousins of mine. So I grew up hating them.

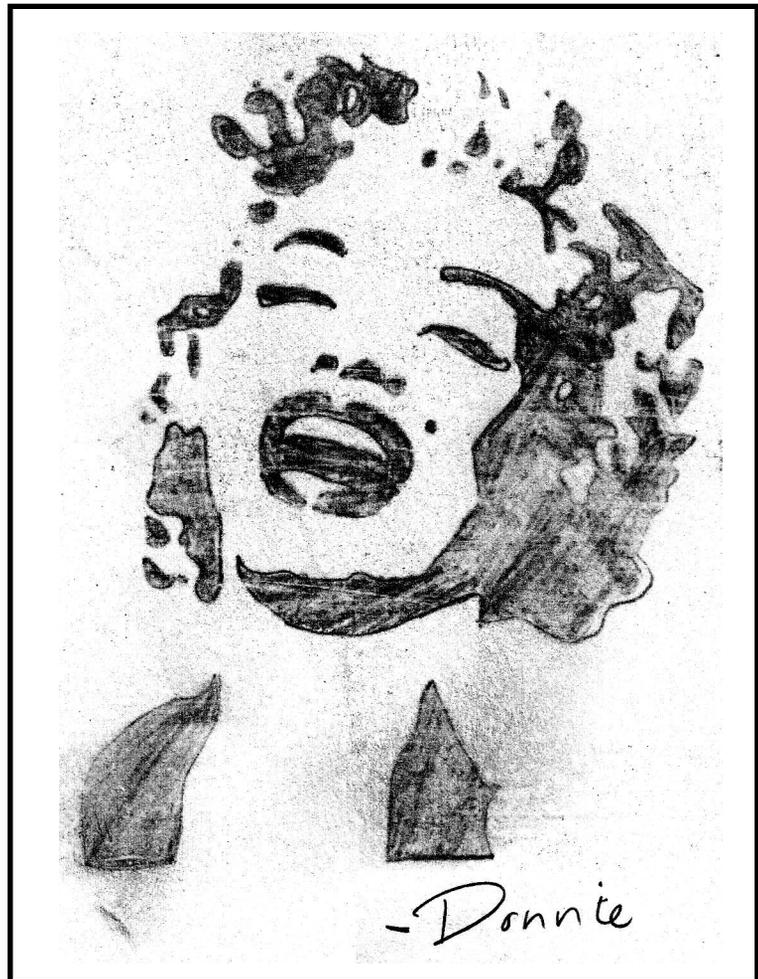
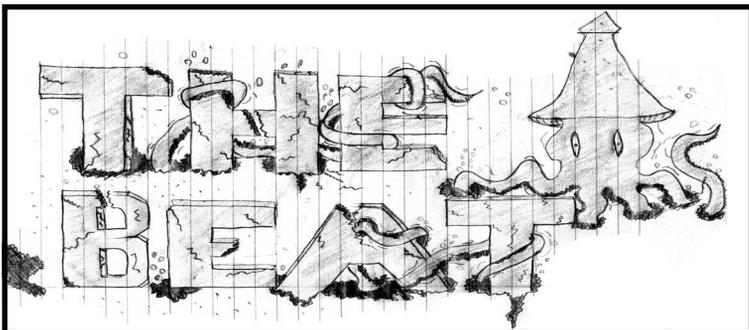
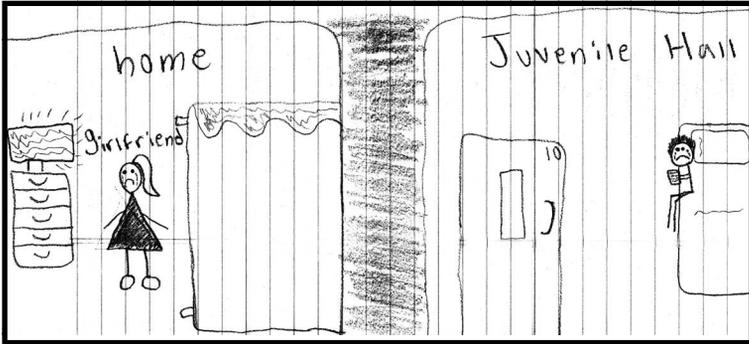
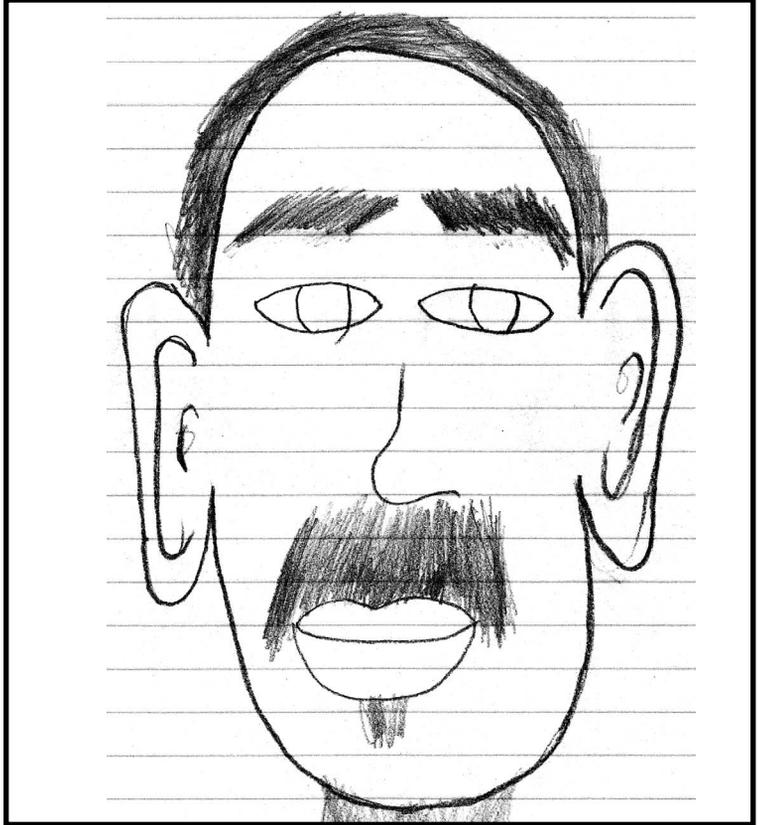
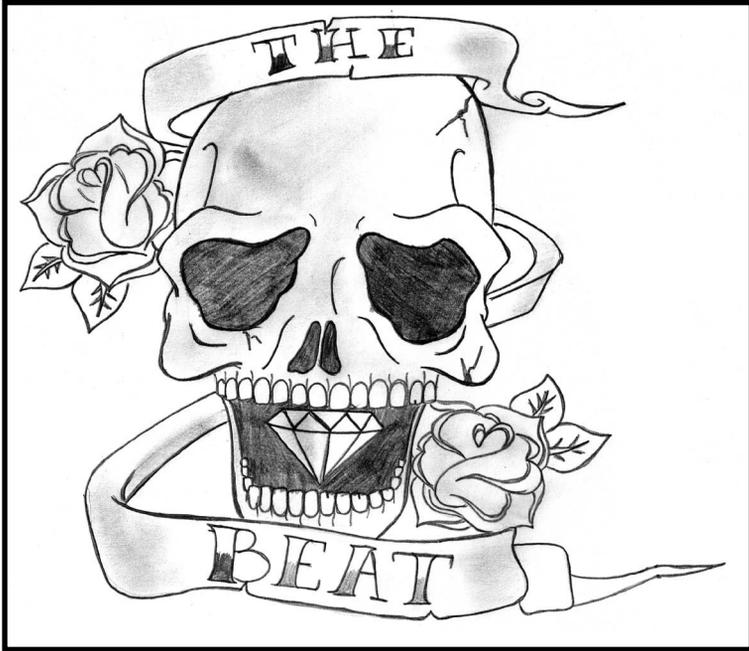
As I got older, in my mind I always thought, "Would I ever see my mom again?" And, "Did she love alcohol more than me?"

I moved around so much, I thought I didn't have a family anymore. I was thinking there was nobody left in my life. I had lived with my grandma and thought that was the only one left that...

-T

**From The Beat: Along with all of the struggle and hardships, it sounds like you have never been given the opportunity to truly have a place to call home. Do you plan on continuing this story with us and write a part two?**





## Missing My Lady

Sitting all alone in a room (the stress box). All alone thinking of my lady. I haven't seen her in one month and six days. Today, we turn three years and ten months together. It sucks being away from her. It sucks not seeing her. To hug her, and kiss her.

-Lil G

**From The Beat: Missing a loved one is difficult to deal with. Do you think you can use this time to think of how to continue the lasting relationship you have with her?**

## The Love Of My Life

Love isn't something to play with. Love is a powerful emotion/feeling. If you really love somebody, you can't play with their feelings. You should show the same amount of love to your partner, because if you really love your partner you would do anything to keep that person beside you.

For example, someone played with my emotions before and broke my heart. After all the times the girl told me she loved me, she went on going breaking my heart.

After a long time of having given up on relationships, I found the love of my life. I noticed I would do anything to keep my love happy and next to me for as long as I can. I also noticed that she puts the same amount of effort that I put into the relationship.

-C

**From The Beat: It seems like you have an understanding and respect for the power of love. It's good to know that you have found the love of your life and that you both put the same amount of effort into the relationship. Hopefully this will be a journey that will last a lifetime.**

## Rest in Peace

My big cousin Skeet died  
I swear to God I almost cried  
I ended up missing his wake  
I think that was my worst mistake  
My cousin Skeet  
speak on him and get yo ...beat.

-Man Man

**From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. Didn't you cry? Why was it your worst mistake to have missed his wake? Could you write him a letter and tell him everything you appreciated about him and then say goodbye?**

## Capacity For Love

In relationships there is not always someone who loves their partner more. Love can be equal and if not, the relationship shouldn't even be happening. That's not love, love is equal. If you say you love someone and they say it back, you can tell if they really mean it or not.

Sometimes it's hard for me to love, because I don't trust a lot of people, mostly the ones who make it seem like they don't want anything from me. I always put more into my relationships but it pays off when my partner notices how much I care and try.

-Belani

**From The Beat: Do you think it is possible for some of us to put more into our relationships with all of the people around us? Maybe it pays off even better when we spread our love to others as well, don't you think?**

## Tired Of Jail

Right now I'm tired, I just want to sleep, but overall, I feel good, I'm happy, I'm alive and healthy. Plus, I'm happy about having court on the sixth. Hopefully, I'll be going home. Yay! The reason why I stay so positive in here is because some of my friends keep me happy, not all of them though, because I don't like some of these girls.

-Ava

**From The Beat: We are glad to hear that you are staying positive and that you are happy. What are you planning in order to keep that happiness and good health?**

## Where I'm At

What do you do when you're lost? When I get lost I ask strangers where I'm at, or if I have a phone I would just call my Mom or use Google maps and see where I'm at.

My Favorite Foods are a Bacon Double Cheese Burger and Fried Chicken and a Steak Burrito.

-Tamoni

**From The Beat: We're glad you ask for help when you need it.**

## Black People Food

My favorite foot is barbecue ribs with mashed potato salad. In my African American culture we eat it every Memorial day. I also love eating sweet potato yams.

If I get the right ingredients I can make it the old fashion way by my self. My least favorite food is black eyed peas, because the little black eyes look creepy.

-Sir Jewel

**From The Beat: How did you learn to cook? That skill will definitely come in handy throughout your life.**



## To Conquer My Goals

My future is to get out of jail, go to school, and get my grades up. I want to get a job maybe working at a recording center. I want to graduate and become a college cheerleader at UC Berkeley.

I'm going to go to class everyday and do my work. I'm going to avoid the people that rob others. I want to be with my best friend De'sha, and my sister Darnesha.

-Alicia

**From The Beat: It sounds like you have a future ahead of you with some pretty clear goals in mind. Stay strong in your desire to do these things!**

## Going To Show My Family

I can't wait to get out. When I do, I'm going to go to college, be a better person, and not come back here. I'm going to show my family that I can do that.

-Manny

**From The Beat: These are all great goals that you have for yourself. We have the fullest confidence that you will be able to prove to your family all that you are capable of.**

## Don't Do Drugs

Drugs are bad, they can and most likely will make you do something that will get you killed. So don't do drugs unless you want to die.

-The Boogie Man

**From The Beat: These are strong words. Using drugs will certainly lead you down a path of self destruction and pain.**

## My Love

My love breaks my heart. We were just friends from the start. Now we're holding hands walking to the park. My baby is going to hold it down until I come home.

I know she doesn't feel right when she's all alone. I got her pregnant. Now, when I get out, I have to be stuck with her like a magnet. My baby is my love. When she's sad, I give her that touch.

I love my diamond Dansby.

-Lil Vontay

**From The Beat: Your writing is definitely showing the development of your relationship with this other person. Were pulling for you to get your life back on track so you can be with your diamond!**

## Getting Out!!

When I get out, I'm going to love. I'm going to love everyone and everything as my family, my friends, my neighbors, the guy who works at Safeway, the stranger walking on the sidewalk, the birds, the trees, the sky, the air, the rain, and even the people and the things that hurt me. But most of all, I'm going to love myself, because you can't give to someone else what you can't give to yourself.

How am I going to do this? By realizing that love is not a reaction but a decision. Real love does not need to be earned. Real love does not require anything in return. Real love is completely unconditional because real love for others comes from the love of ones self. Anything else is a counterfeit emotion.

I will love everything about everyone, including myself, their flaws and weaknesses, their joys and passions, everything in-between, and even when someone does something wrong. Because there is no "right" or "wrong", there is only what works and what doesn't work. This is what it means to express your core self, to be the creator of your own reality; which we all are. And I'm going to create my own beautiful reality.

-Noah

**From The Beat: There are certainly many aspects of love as you have so eloquently described in your writing. Loving someone unconditionally when they have done a lot of hurtful things can be challenging, especially when those things are harmful to others or perhaps themselves. Being able to implement an unconditionally loving attitude is definitely a fundamental aspect of understanding the nature of the human condition.**

## My Love

I love my girl  
She is my world  
Without her I feel alone  
I'm locked up  
Can't even talk with her on the phone  
I wish I was home  
I love my baby girl  
I miss her a lot  
I wish I was with her  
But life is a test  
I hope I get out soon  
I got a lot to prove  
I've said enough  
So now I got to show it  
And I hope I get out soon  
I love my baby girl  
Wherever you are in the world  
Happy Valentines Day  
I know you're my Valentine

-Young E

**From The Beat: Thank you for sharing so much love with this work. Do you think that being away from your love makes you appreciate her more?**

## Conquering a Car

What do you want to conquer? Lets say you want to conquer your goal of buying a car. The first thing you have to do is find out your weaknesses. Say your weakness is like getting money, and when you do have money you don't know what to do with it. After you find out your weaknesses you can set goals for yourself.

-The Boogie Man

**From The Beat: This is certainly a great strategy. Discovering your weaknesses and then working on them to create strengths will help you to obtain any goal that you may have for yourself.**

## Had Court Today

I had court today. My PO recommended for me to go back home, but the DA messed me up. I'm not going home for a while. I'm sitting in the hall until I get sent to camp. I hate seeing my mom cry because of me. I miss my mom and family, but I guess I'm going to be here until I finish my time.

-Lil G

**From The Beat: This is certainly a situation where you can easily feel out of control in terms of your future and relationships with family. Your goal should be to finish your time without getting into trouble.**

## Make Her Proud

I'm going to get my GED when I get out  
Hopefully get a part time job  
Then, I want to go to college  
I'd like to get a degree in civil engineering  
I'd like to design buildings and bridges  
I love my mom and I want to make her proud

-Fontana

**From The Beat: Do you also think that when you accomplish these things you will develop a lot of pride within yourself as well?**

## Missing My Family

Every time I sit in my room, I think of my family. I cry at times because I miss them. I don't know how they're doing, or if they are doing good. I wish I could hug my family.

-Lil G

**From The Beat: This work very clearly expresses the love that you have for your family and the fact that you miss them.**

## This Hurts

What hurts is the moment you feel you are going to die. It's a moment you won't ever forget and it's a moment that makes you thankful for living this present day.

-Savanna

**From The Beat: It's true and it seems like you've been there. If so, we are sorry you had to go through that experience, but at the same time we are glad to know to be taking that experience as a lesson for the rest of your life.**

## When Reality Hits Home

People stress for many distinct reasons in these juvenile justice programs. The stress makes us feel lonely and isolated.

On the outside, we commit crimes that we don't even bother to care about until we're caught, and if we're not caught, we feel like we're off the hook. A lot of us actually like the thought of being on the run, having a warrant out for our arrest, being in gangs and having shootouts. It makes us feel like we're living in a movie.

-Faheem

**From The Beat: There's no denying the romance associated with being an outlaw. Tell us, what is the flip side of that excitement? When does that lifestyle stop feeling like a movie? What do you think could be a substitute for that excitement when you get out?**

## To Conquer Bad Temptations

I want and need to conquer bad temptations. I'm going down the wrong path in life. Sitting here in juvenile hall is proof of that. Temptations come in many forms, such as drugs and friends. I found that out too late. I say too late because now I am in here on serious charges.

I look back at my past and realize that I let temptation conquer me. I was trying to conquer my life and thought that I could conquer anything, but the truth was that I couldn't even conquer the simplest of things.

-G

**From The Beat: Conquering temptation is never as simple as it seems. Until we put a plan in place and follow it, it's too easy to fall back into old patterns and repeat our mistakes. What are some practical things you could do to avoid those temptations in the future?**

## Stressing

It can be stressful in here at times. It's hard not to stress about everything that goes on in The Hall. The staff treats us like little kids and we're locked in here like animals. They get loud with you for the smallest things and just take things way too far. Also, our rooms cause us a lot of stress because there's nothing to do in them. At least we can read, daydream and drift off in them.

-Andre

**From The Beat: We find that the best way to deal with people that we're frustrated with is to try to imagine what it's like to be in their shoes. What do you think it's like to be a staff member? What do you think causes them stress? What should change in order to improve your relationship with them?**

## Endless Capacity

My capacity for love goes beyond infinity because I am a very loving person. I show love to people that I don't even know, so imagine how much love I have for those I know personally.

I agree that in a relationship there is always someone that loves more, and no, it is not hard for me to love if you are a nice, sweet and loving person. I don't put more into a relationship than my partner because if I did that, it wouldn't be eligible to be called a relationship.

I can love a person in many ways—as a friend, a family member, a lover and many more ways.

-Jose

**From The Beat: We're glad to hear that you're able to show love to people you don't even know. Imagine what kind of a world this could be if more people could follow your example.**

## The Future

In the future, it's going to be harder to rob, steal cars, etc. because the system is going to get upgraded and get more technology.

The songs are going to be different compared to that time back before we were even born and until now.

-Savanna

**From The Beat: Have you ever pictured yourself in that future and the things you might be doing then? Cool thing about future is that it always surprises us. We hope it turns out great for you!**



## Mood

I'm irritated. Actually, I'm enraged! I want to get out of this hell hole. I'm tired of seeing these same faces, and I've been here way too long. I'm ready to go home!

-Homesick

**From The Beat: Maybe being in the hall may help you take a break from everything else and give you time to think about what you really want from life, don't you think?**

## The Hall

January 27th 2014. I came to the hall again, and it's really hard to be in here because my life was just getting good.

I have a family that loves me. My dad just started to get along with my mom, and my friends are doing good. I have a boyfriend, and at this point I don't know what to do because no one knows that I'm here. I can't tell them because I don't have their numbers, but I really miss my mom and other family.

I really regret beating up my sister. Because if I didn't, I would never have ended up here. I hate it here, it's not the people, it's the fact of knowing that I put myself here. I wish I never would have done that. Every time I go to my room, I cry my eyes out just thinking about what I've done and why I did it. Who I miss, how I would change that thing I did, and how I could change it...but I can't

Another thing is my bad anxiety. I had a really bad attack. This shit really does scare me, but I just don't want anyone to know. I would do anything to get out of here. As many chances as I have had, I've messed up a lot, but I just need one more opportunity to prove that I can do it.

-Téa

**From The Beat: It sounds like you are dealing with a lot of feelings of guilt which may be causing some of your anxiety. Sometimes it's less about reflecting on the hurt we have caused others, and more about being able to forgive yourself which can end up being the most challenging. Do you think you would be able to do this and begin the process of moving forward?**

## Hall!

This is my first time here and I'm never coming back. Being in here is like being in a ditch. It makes a person go crazy. I'm not a bad kid, but I was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

This is not a place you want to be, and it's weird because what I'm seeing right now seems like some people feel comfortable...they act like the staff is their aunty, and they let them do their hair and stuff.

-Ronisha

**From The Beat: Being exposed to a different environment that one is not accustomed to can come as quite a shock. Some individuals actually see being in juvenile hall as a vacation compared to what they have to experience at home. Maybe this is an insightful experience to gain more understanding and context in your life?**

## Fried Chicken And Bacon

I love food. My favorite food is fried chicken and crispy bacon. I like the taste and the smell. I love how my mother makes it, although I can cook it myself. The majority of my family can cook fried chicken and bacon.

My least favorite food is oysters. People tell me to try it with hot sauce, so it tastes better, but I disagree, its very disgusting. I can't wait to go home, so I can eat fried chicken and bacon.

-Tilajah

**From The Beat: One of the great pleasures of life is smelling the foods that we love, especially when we can appreciate someone that cooks the food we like just right.**

## When I get out

Getting out of here  
Going home  
Doing good in school  
Staying at home  
Being a good kid  
Being nice to people and not fighting  
Not coming back to jail  
Asking parents permission before going to a party  
Not hanging around with the wrong people  
Getting out of trouble

-Amy

**From The Beat: We have the fullest confidence that you will be able to do all these great things, but do you personally think you will be able to keep to these words?**

## When Lost

When I am lost I think about the past and just drift on a memory. I always get lost in my dreams. But when I wake up my minds is back on the green!

Don't think about your friends cause it's just a loss. Friends you have grown up with and have had an impact on your life and truly care about you are family. "Friends" who you just met or always try to put you down will just stay "friends" and no more.

I focus on family because that's my Maine law.

-Phantom

**From The Beat: How does it feel to not smoke for awhile? Why would friends put you down? Are they even friends?**

## I'm a Helper

When I get chosen to be a helper it's always a good day because I have a little more freedom. It's always easier to be generous to people 'cause you don't need anything in return and sometimes others want something in return.

-Phantom

**From The Beat: How do they choose who is the helper? Generosity can give you a little more freedom, inside and out!**

## It's Possible

I think it's possible for someone to have more love than another. My boyfriend has more love for me than I do for him. He says I don't love him as much as he loves me. It's hard for me to show it, but I wish he could see how loyal I am. To know how much heart I got for him.

It's hard for me to love because I never had it shown to me. So how could I know "Love" if that word is barely in my vocabulary? It was foreign between me and my mom. My boyfriend taught me how to love and still loves me. So I love him back and it doesn't even feel weird. I say it to him, and I'm thankful for him showing me how to love.

-Savanna

**From The Beat: It's so wonderful that you have someone in your life that can show you new feelings of love and sincerity. These individuals open our lives up in a way that offer us new possibilities of what life can be as well as emotions and feelings that can deeply enrich the quality of life.**

## My Life

All my ninjas doing five  
Or they're doing ten  
I lost my feelings when they locked my boy up  
That's why I be sipping  
And popping all them Zanaxes  
When he went down  
That's when I started to hit  
Hitting houses, being with that shhh  
When I learned all that...man I went insane  
Doing this all just to ease the pain  
I started selling shhh like Mr. Caine  
Trying to get the fame  
I'm not going to lie, I might not change  
Looking in the mirror like whose to blame?

-Sergio

**From The Beat: Escaping from your troubles into drug addictions is never a good choice. Do you think you can continue to transform those feelings of hurt, anger, and frustration into great pieces of writing?**

## Back In My Dreams

I'm here and you're not,  
I know that you're gone,  
You said it was over,  
That it's all said and done.

In fact it was saddening,  
But I slowly moved on,  
Now you're back in my dreams,  
Even though you are gone.

My heart melts away,  
At the sight of your face,  
But then I wake up,  
To sharp and dull pain.

-Noah

**From The Beat: The contrast between living in a dream state and having to face the harsh realities of life is clearly evident in this work. Managing our daily life as well as our dream states can be challenging and sometimes overwhelmingly difficult, but gaining knowledge and experiences from our dream states can be just as important as the knowledge and experiences gained from living our daily waking life as well.**

## Jail Food

My favorite food is chicken, greens, macaroni and cheese, and corn bread. I like the taste of these foods. I get the food from my mom. I can make it myself. It's special to my family. My least favorite food is jail food because it's very nasty.

-Makayla

**From The Beat: It's nice to know that you enjoy such great foods with your family.**

## Going Home

When I get home, I will take my mom, sisters, and my girlfriend out to eat so I can make it up to them. I don't like to hurt my family because I know they love me, and I love them so much, but I knew one day I'd be in jail because my dad's been in jail most of his life. The last time I saw him was my seventh birthday.

When he went to jail, I talked to him sometimes. When I talk to him, I don't have nothing to say, but I really miss my dad, and I hope he comes home soon because I have a little brother that I need to be there for. I miss him so much, and I love being with him. He always has fun with me, and he never wants to leave.

I want to change for him and my mom and sisters. All I want is to go home and be happy again, and never come back.

-Jamon

**From The Beat: There's an old Indian saying that we all have two wolves inside us, one that tears things up and gets locked up, and another that loves and protects and is rewarded with love. It seems that this is how you care for your family. Which part of you do you want to feed?**

## Tough Love

I love my mama

But forget her right now

That's suppose to be my main support

Instead all I got is a bunch of other ninjas and strangers supporting me

Helping me, what the hell?

Blood is thicker than water my ass

My ninjas for life

Instead he ain't trying to hear me

Ha forget you then

Only the man above is going to acknowledge me.

-Monique

**From The Beat: You can never forget about the people that have supported you for so long. If your mama has stopped being consistent you need to take a good look at yourself before you start pointing fingers. Do you want support? Do you want help? You can start by helping yourself first, and then accept help from those around you.**

## Football Goals

When I get out, I'm gonna finish high school and play for their football team. I might be a running back or fullback for Lincoln High.

I'm going to change when I get out. Every day, I pray to God for giving me another life to live.

When I'm in here, I always think about what I should have done to make things better. I always think about the good things when I'm in my cell, like my dad. He always has been there for me. He always supports me in school and even sports, always kept me off the streets.

-Jay-Smacks

**From The Beat: You have a noble goal in your wish to become an athlete. It takes discipline and perseverance, but also brings the joy of being a part of something bigger than oneself, which being a father is also about. It sounds like your dad is noble himself in the way he has parented you. That is a great blessing to have a father like that. In what ways would you like to let him be a role model for how you want to live your life?**

## My Life Is A Struggle

I hate being away from my hometown. I had court today, and I'm going to another group home, but I feel that no matter what, I'll always come back to my town, 'cause where I'm from, there's a lot of violence.

I haven't been with my family in over a year. All I get are visits once in a while. All I have is my uncle to see when I'm out, but I feel like my friends are my family because when I need something, they would take care of me, and I know no matter what, they would always have my back, and I would have theirs no matter what.

-Snappy

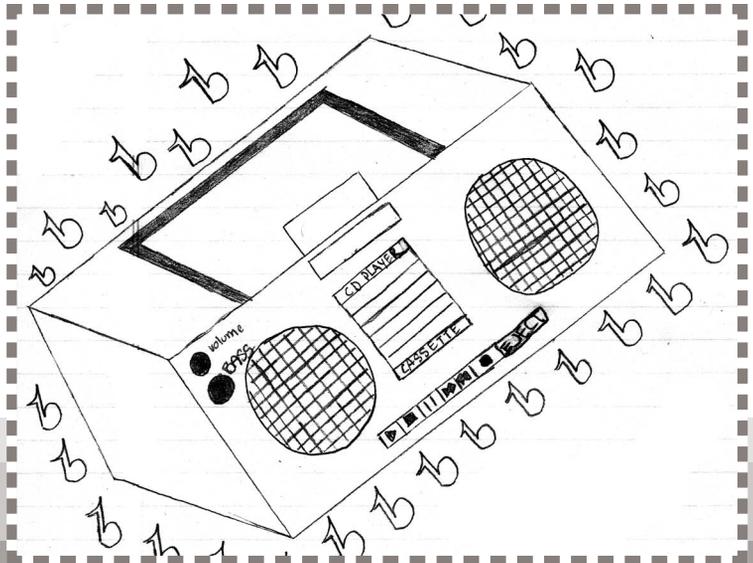
**From The Beat: We're sorry to hear the rough cards you've been dealt, but a great thing about life is that the past doesn't have to determine the future. Even on the inside, you are free to become a powerful person by creating a good life.**

## Lost in The City

I remember when I first came to the city of San Francisco. I was lost and had to ask for directions to get back to my mom's hotel. I kind of felt nervous being around a lot of people I didn't know. I was only about thirteen years of age, so I was really young but this one lady heard me asking how to get back, and she gave me directions. That's how I found out it's okay to ask for directions.

-Corell

**From The Beat: We all get lost, and in more ways than one. Just as we get lost in new places, we get lost in life too, and it helps to have trusted people to ask for directions, to get us where we need to be.**



## My Favorite Football Game

My favorite football game was when I was on a young team. My jersey number was three. I scored lots of touchdowns. The first time I scored, I ran through the middle for lots of yards. It was so easy to score.

-Akese

**From The Beat: We'd love to know if you still love to compete in positive ways, ways that don't put you in harm's way or get you into trouble**

## Getting Out

I can't wait to get out for real. It seems like I'm never getting out. I've had four release dates in the last two months and didn't get out not once. Hopefully I get out on Wednesday.

I'm not going to say when I get out I'm going to change, but I will be smarter about my decisions, and change who I mess with. I am going to do me. I'm going to try to get a job and get my money the right way so I won't end up back in here.

-Dae Dae

**From The Beat: Making smarter decisions, is a sign of change. You are maturing and you have to be smart about the decisions you make because you have realized that the decisions you were making before weren't producing the results you wanted.**

## I'm Generous

I'm a generous person and expect nothing from people. I don't need anything from anyone. I don't want that person feeling like they owe it to me. I'm a nice person but I wouldn't put myself in a predicament to get taken advantage of. I'm just a nice person and I genuinely care.

-Desteny

**From The Beat: People like you are special and hard to come by. Be smart about who you are generous to because there are people who are good at taking advantage of people. Not everyone is worth of your generosity, so be selective!**

## I Be Feeling

I be feeling like a man when I walk through  
I be having ninjas staring when I walk through  
I be feeling like arm and hammer when I walk through  
I'm a Trojan that lives that magnum lifestyle  
I'm lost without you  
I'm lost without food  
You sad you were going to feed me  
You said you were going to squeeze me  
But all you did was tease me.

-Javina

**From The Beat: What else do you feel like? What makes you feel all these different emotions?**

## Moms' Special Spaghetti

I love food. I love all kinds of food. I love how it taste. I love fast food, restaurant food. Moms' food is the best, though.

My mom cooks spaghetti with tomato sauce, olives, cilantro. She doesn't put tomatoes in it, though, because I don't like tomatoes. She doesn't put wine in it, because she doesn't drink. She puts a lot of Mozzarella cheese in it, though. I guess she puts hamburger, some kind of meat in it, but I don't know for sure, because I don't watch her cook, I just eat it.

I have not learn to cook, because she cooks for me. I don't ask nothin'. I just love it, her spaghetti, because she makes it with love.

-Jepte

**From The Beat: We can imagine, smell, taste your mom's spaghetti already. Get out of juvy, go home, and eat! You must be as hungry for her spaghetti as we are reading about it. If you cannot cook special spaghetti as screamin' as your mom does, when will you learn?**

## Awaiting God's Path

Walking in the path of the Lord, hoping that God guides me through the untamed world of wild humans. My life is like being blindfolded, hoping to make it to my destinations safely without getting hurt.

Being blindfolded, taking chances with your life in God's hand will be the toughest decision. As I close my eyes and pray to the Lord, I ask Him to send me a clear path of success for me and my family.

-Tay Beez

**From The Beat: Nice! What form does God's greater inspiration take for you? Is there any way it can bring love, or wisdom, peace, and most of all freedom to your life?**

## Ice Cream

My favorite food is ice cream. The kind of ice cream I like is strawberry vanilla. It is so good I could eat it everyday. The best time I like to eat ice cream is when I put on a movie late night at home with my girlfriend. We both eat it and just have fun watching the movie, like Love and Basketball, or something like a romantic movie. She be feeling it, too.

-Dee

**From The Beat: There is too much sweetness in life, whether it's love, or ice cream, or just being free, to stay locked up on the inside. Sometime, when you're bored at night, think about all the sweet things you want out of life, and let it inspire you to get free for good.**

## Don't Publish My Work

You always tell me to write about anything I like. You say it will be published, but my work never makes it. I see people with several works in The Beat—some crap about the streets. It's fine. I understand.

This is my last time writing, so let's find out where this one lands.

-Mason

**From The Beat: Anyone who writes anything with substance, heart, but isn't disrespectful or obscene, gets published in The Beat. In the next Beat, a piece you wrote before Christmas is in the CO-POW section. Congratulations!**

## Man I Miss My Family

Man I miss my peeps. All the times that we spent. So I can't wait until I get home so I could spend some time with them. It's been a minute since all we been together. Every time somebody gets out, somebody gets locked up.

I can't wait until we all out, so we all can be together to do some fun shhh and to travel around the world. Then we going to get this money by any means necessary, not to just have money in our pocket, but to help our fam out whenever they need the help.

-Young Budda

**From The Beat: It's hard being away from all your loved ones. That's a given. What we would like to know if y'all miss each other so much when you are apart, then why do you do things that you know will separate all of you. Before you know it, time passes by someone locked up in this prison, the other person in another prison, five years go by and for what? Is this money really worth the time you miss with your loved ones? Money isn't everything.**

## Super Base

I be shaking it for money  
He want me more and more  
Got my Prada, got my Gucci  
Now I'm heading out the door  
When I step up in the club he be missing all the fun  
I clap it on the floor like a booming basin drum  
At six in the morning I be freaking up a storm  
When he done we'll be heading out the door

-Kyra

**From The Beat: Is that what you want to be doing for money? Shaking it? We think that you have the potential to be whatever you want to be and get money in a way where you don't have to lose your self-respect. Being successful is not about who has the most Prada and Gucci.**

## Football Future

My idols are Jerry Rice and Michael Jordan, because I like how they made it through their careers to be so successful.

I play football and basketball, and I try to be creative with it like they were.

Jerry and Michael didn't just play sports, they finished high school and college. My dream colleges are Stanford, USC, and North Carolina. I want to get a Heisman Trophy and go to the NFL more than the NBA.

I want people to remember me as my name and my favorite number, #81, or for basketball, #10. I also want to be on the walls of a teenager's room and have my own sports gear. It wouldn't just make me proud for turning my life around, but it would make my entire family proud. I want to be that person on TV that people see and say, "I knew him. We used to kick it."

-Marshawn

**From The Beat: These are great hopes to have. It's great to dream big, but it's important, too, to have the dedication to follow through. As you say about Jerry Rice and MJ, being great isn't about the fame and glory, it's about dedicating your life to something with all your heart and soul. Do that, and it won't matter whether you become famous or not, you'll be great either way.**

## Quote of the Week

This quote is meaningful to me because I've seen a lot of bad things happen. I've seen bad things happen to me, but when I feel a type of way it won't go away. When I think of ways to cope with situations it can work to uplift myself.

"The mind and knowledge is a powerful thing." People like me try to hold in all the feelings and see bad happen, but let it get out of their mind, but you still feel a certain way.

-Destiny

**From The Beat: Holding your emotions inside and then letting them explode later is not a healthy way to live. The mind is a powerful tool, but many of us don't like to use it. We need to be smart about making decisions and instead of exploding we need to find a way to channel our anger and use it as fuel to succeed in our endeavors.**

## Generosity is Family

Generosity is my family. They give with no reward, period. I love my family. Their generosity is my everything. My family does anything for not only me, but every one of my cousins, oldest to youngest.

-Carl

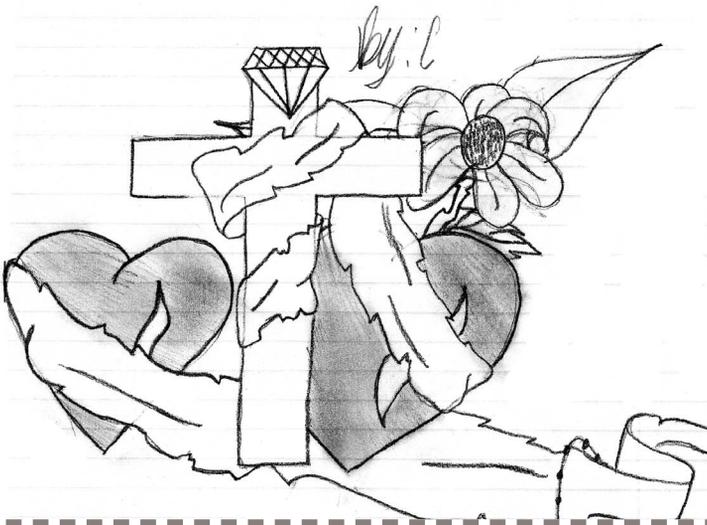
**From The Beat: What do you do for them, that shows them your love, gratitude and generosity, too?**

## I Love My Dad

I love my Dad  
He's my everything  
No matter what the situation  
Right or wrong  
He's always there on my side  
Never left my side for nothing  
He comes to visit me everyday.

-Alo

**From The Beat: That's great that you have a dedicated dad. Dads like those are hard to come by. He wants to be a part of your life and you should honor that.**



## Out Here, All Alone

In the system since birth  
Wishin' I was home  
Now I'm sixteen  
Out here, all alone  
Ninjas hatin' on me  
'Cause I'm from (my 'hood)  
But when it comes to chunkin' 'em  
They don't know what to do  
So, I stay on my toes  
I don't mess with the weak  
A quiet-type dude  
Rarely even speak  
Don't talk too much  
I'm all for what I believe in  
Got some' to say  
You know where to find me  
Checkin' my bread  
'Cause that's how I live

-Donnie

**From The Beat: You say this is just a rap that your imagination created, that it's not the real you, whose quiet approach to the world indicates that you're very observant.**

## Going into the National Guard

The most recent time I felt lost was about thirty minutes ago. I want to do some military service for the school tuition. My mind was set for the Navy, but Julesa helped change my perception to the National Guard.

-Spicy Antoine

**From The Beat: Why were you feeling lost half an hour ago? What is your life like on the outs? What now appeals to you about the National Guard, the military?**

## The Truth

If you on me, say you on me  
Don't beat around the bush  
It's crazy how  
When people get mad  
They think about  
The guns they don't have  
Go in, go hard, be a savage  
Only one thing in life  
Is guaranteed  
And that's death  
Don't take life for granted  
'Cause any second  
Could be your last breath

-Khalid

**From The Beat: If someone's seriously "on you," threatening you, do you expect him to warn you before he messes with you? Can/do you live a wife without weapons, including guns, like you hope/assume others don't have? Please take your own wise advise, and protect your precious life.**

## Tacos

My favorite food is crunchy taco's. I love when my aunt takes me to Taco Bell. I order about five at one time. That's my favorite food. I love taking trips out to eat. Tacos are always my first choice. On my birthday, I don't go anywhere fancy. I just order a lot of tacos and eat them.

-Corell

**From The Beat: We hope you'll be out soon, and get to enjoy all the real tacos you can for the rest of your life...by staying free of trouble.**

## Crucial Living

It's a war in the streets  
People die  
It's hard out here  
We smoke dope all day  
I get mine from the cannibus club  
People steal money, electronics, iPads, computers  
People steal lives  
New territory and money  
People throw sneak disses and silent threats at the payer of money  
Put bands on their victims heads (pay to get them knocked off)  
Kids do, too, if you have the money  
Thieves they knock off your partners  
People freakin' bad on the dead  
Like my dead homies  
I catch them in traffic  
Then they probably got to wear a black dress  
That's how it goes  
Then retaliation cycle occurs  
Then I and everybody where I live better watch out.

-Joseph

**From The Beat: Talk about a crucial environment. How do you stay centered with all this mayday going on around you? There are tough neighborhoods everywhere, but people still find some kind of way to thrive and succeed in life. Is it luck or pure determination? What are your plans?**

## Trying To Change

In my box locked up man it sucks. It's alright though I'll be out soon. I have to keep my head up. Time to change my ways to stay out of this nonsense. Still on my game just have to stay away for a while still about my block I'm out for a little minute.

-Donnie

**From The Beat: We hate to break it to you but you are not trying hard enough to change. First you say you want to change and then you say you are all about your block. You need to put your best foot forth all the way and don't half step.**

## President

I would want to be the President and rule everything. I don't want to be here. I want to go home. I want to be the boss of the world. Let people know what goes on and I'm the one that calls the shots.

-Lala

**From The Beat: To be the boss of anything you have to serve the people first. When you have the responsibility of being president and you are calling shots, remember, you are not making decisions for your best interest. The decisions you make will always be based on what is best for the people.**

## Capacity Of Love

What is love? People these days don't know what love is, especially in teenage years. People think that these days love is infinite when they really don't know the true meaning of love. Love is something that truly comes from the heart.

When love is included in a relationship it should mean the world. It also should be meant from the heart. Love is truly an example of marriage. Marriage is love because its commitment.

-Carl

**From The Beat: There are many ways and forms of love, but love always comes from the heart. Actions always speak louder than words, and yes you can see when people's actions come from their heart.**

## Been Here Too Many Times

I been here too many times. Four, to be exact. I ain't been home in a lil bit, over two years. I'm sixteen now. My time goin' to the halls was when I was fourteen. I was charged with robbery, burglary, assault and battery--four very serious charges. Felonies, as a matter of fact.

My first time here, and they sent me away to Thunder Road, a grouper in Oakland. I finished the program.

My PO sent me to another grouper, my second time there, this time, further away, a grouper called Common Ground in Redwood City. I finished the program, again.

Then, my last time here, my third time, they sent me to San Mateo Boy's Camp. I was there for a very long time, and I got tired of it, so I ran.

Now I'm back here, again, my fourth time. I feel like I'm wastin' my life. I just want to go home to my moms and lil sister. I don't even remember what my house looks like on the outside or inside.

I've been here way too many times, and have been gone for way too long. It makes me sad every day I'm not home.

-E

**From the Beat: Whenever you get out, it won't be any easier to get your life going again, so please do your program, go and stay home. You can create any beautiful new life you want, so get going...!**

## Girls Like You if You Stay in School

If my little ten-year-old cousin came to me and asked me how to get along with girls, I would tell him to stay in school. That's where the girls are. They'll be impressed that you're in school, and you can go from there...

-Joseph

**From The Beat: How did girls let you know that they like boys who go to, do well in school? Did they also inspire you to pay attention to your teachers, do your homework, learn everything?**

## The Player on The Phone

One time I was at the Bay Fair Mall, talking to my patna on my cell phone, when I saw this light-skinned, caramel-colored girl walkin' by, so I was, like, "Where you goin', beautiful?" She turned around and was, like, "Are you talkin' to me?" and I was, like, "Come on over here. Let me get your number." I was still talkin' to my patna, so I pulled out another phone from my pocket, and gave it to the girl and told her to put her number into my other phone.

She was, like, "I don't have a phone," so I told her, "If you was messin' with me, you'd have your own phone. You'd have your own house, your own car. I'd take you shopping for all the clothes you want..." She said, "Aight," and laughed, told me to call her where she works, and walked away.

I called her to see if she wanted to hang that night, but she said she had to work. I asked her if she wanted to go to a party that weekend, and she said, "Yes," but I got locked up the next day and never saw her again. I have a lot of other girls' numbers in my phone, though, so she has to wait in line.

-The Realist

**From The Beat: You are such a player. Is this really how you treat females, or do you write your story about them like this, because you're in juvy, locked away from the ladies, and miss them so much? Do you truly feel tenderly about them, respect them? You'd better!**

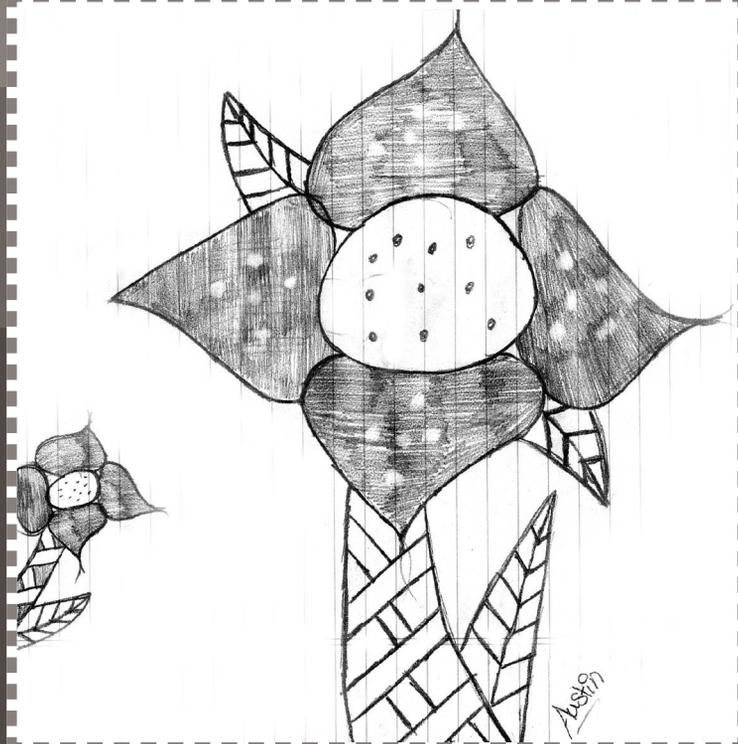
## Forget Love

What are your thoughts on this and your own capacity for love? This topic is messed up. Who's "they?" Those are my thoughts on "this." My capacity to love is very high. If I get rejected or dissed on my first approach, it doesn't mean to quit on her right then.

Nine times out of ten it's cause you said something they don't want to hear. Your next approach should be apologetic, kind of like apologizing for not being yourself. The two approaches allow you to "see" what the girl's looking for, a quick sex hook up or an intimate relationship.

-Jose

**From The Beat: You talk smack about love all you want but we are all searching for that special someone to spend some time with. We want to feel loved and we want to love back. You do give some good insight on what the ladies think when guys try to holler.**



## This Ink

You see this ink?  
I have it permanent.  
Compared to your ink  
mine is burning it.  
Since I've been a young goon  
I've been coming to the hall.  
Now it seems like I can't stay away.  
But don't get it twisted.  
It's not that I like it.

-Jose

**From The Beat: What is it, then? Why do you keep coming back to the hall?**

## I'm In Motion

On the way to the pin  
They ask me if, when I get out,  
I'll do it again.  
But they don't know what goes through my head  
As I lay on this concrete bed.  
I come out in the day,  
play dominoes.  
Darn, I called ten. Twenty more points  
And game over.  
Got them.  
Now hand it over.

-Mo

**From The Beat: Hey, teach us how to play dominoes next time we see you - please.**

## Hopeless, But With A Smile

All I want to do is succeed.  
Life's not just about drinking and smoking weed.  
But it's the only way I get by when I'm on the street.  
It feels really strange at night when I'm on the creep.  
A cold hearted lil soldier looking for fools.  
Hearing nothing but dogs barking, and silence,  
Sends me on a trip.  
Hitting blocks and corners, not in a car, but on my feet.  
Thinking about my family and hoping all's good  
And that God is with me.  
Found no rivals. I guess it wasn't meant to be.  
Got home scared. Looked in the mirror.  
All I saw was misery. I was freezing  
And feeling alone, so I went to sleep.  
Woke up feeling sad, so I went to see my doggie.  
Got there. Threw a rock at the window, with a loud scream.  
Hopeless, but with a smile, I was ready to do the same old thing.  
But now, that night has become a strange memory.  
I'm just another lost Mexican building his own story.

-Kevin

**From The Beat: And quite a story it is. We have a feeling that you've learned a bit by reflecting on how you used to spend your days, and nights. Keep writing about it. We sense that good changes are coming, that you're not feeling hopeless anymore.**

## To Conquer My Addiction

The thing I'm going to conquer is my addiction. I've been trying to deal with it, but I always end up using, and end up in the hall.  
This lifestyle is getting old. All I want to do is get up into the mountains and train horses. But my addiction won't let me do what I love.

-Addicted

**From The Beat: If you can train a horse, you can train yourself. Millions of people have learned to deal with their addictions. But very few people have learned how to train a horse. Do the math.**

## I'm Trying

In the hall, in my room, these rainy days.  
Looking out the window thinking about the good days.  
Dreams slowly fading away.  
That's nothing new.  
Trying to make the best of every day.  
With the blink of an eye, your life can go away.  
Seems like I was out just yesterday and now I'm in this place.

-Edgar

**From The Beat: It seems that wherever we are, time, as they say, has wings. It flies. That's why it's a good idea, as you've said, to try to make the best of every day.**

## I Don't Know

In the pen it ain't no joke. It's all about survival.  
Every time I'm in my room I ask myself this question:  
will I ever get out?  
I don't know, because the way I see things and the way I think  
- I'll just go out like a G  
- always standing tall.  
I'll never fall down 'til the day I'm dead, and they put me in my grave.

-Andres

**From The Beat: Maybe you should ask yourself some questions about the way you think. The way you've been thinking got you into this mess. You're more than a G. Leave the G business behind. Your life is a gift. Treat it with respect and love.**

## Further on Down The Road

One time, when I was in San Francisco, I went to hear Further three nights in a row. They were great shows. It was definitely 'on point' with a positive flow - Yo! My Mom's ex-boyfriend walked up to me and handed me a fifty. Isn't that thrifty! I'd say it was a piece of generosity.  
It was crazy, 'cause he used to be the boss of me. When my Mom split up with him, it was a harsh loss for me. No more Further shows for free. He used to buy my tickets and I was like - Yee!  
I'd burst with glee. Even climb a tall tree, just to feel the breeze and get away from those mangy dogs and all those fleas. Jeeze.

-Tegun

**From The Beat: Yeah, and don't forget "the bees knees".**

## Numb To It All

What is my destiny?  
Is it fatality,  
or time in the penitentiary?  
Three hundred and eleven bricks in my room  
but I have more problems than raindrops.  
But I have no tear drops.  
I used to stress, so I would try not to  
tumble and fall.  
But now I'm just numb to it all.

-Jay

**From The Beat: Numbness is not so cool. Better to let the tear drops roll. Bottling up your feelings doesn't work for long. Better a few harmless tears than a large explosion.**

## It's The Way...

Posted in the hall, just chillin', not giving a darn, headed to the pen. Yeah, back here once again, facing twenty five to life, with my life on the line. But screw it, it's the way it's got to be. But darn, sometimes I just wanna be free and get back on my feet.

-Alex

**From The Beat: We know that you do give a darn. Accepting your situation is different from not giving a darn. Commit yourself to learning. It's possible to become a very educated person in the pen. And that might get you out sooner, too.**

## Favorite Food

My favorite food is at the In-and-Out restaurant. The last time I was there was on Mother's Day. I was with my brother and my Mom. I miss my Mom and my brother.

-Luis

**From The Beat: We hope it won't be too long before you're back with your family.**

## True Story

You could see them drinking and smoking.  
True story. I ain't joking.

Big rock, like a bed - where the Devil rests  
And lays his head.

Right in my uncle's yard the Devil made his bed.

Every night emptying bottles -

My uncle and his friend, until my uncle passed.

They found a lot of gold for which,

They say, he traded his soul.

-Jay

**From The Beat: We'll believe this is a true story if you can tell us, correctly, what color socks the Devil was wearing.**

## At Fifteen

I would want to conquer my situation in life right now, 'cause it sucks living in group homes and not having a stable place to live when you're fifteen.

-Manny

**From The Beat: What do you think it would take to turn things around for yourself? Make a list. Make a game plan for conquering your situation.**

## Seems Like

Seems like everybody's forgotten about me.

I just wish they'd set me free.

But they want to throw away the keys.

-Angel

**From The Beat: It's a good thing that things aren't always what they seem. We bet there are plenty of people who care about you.**

## Road to Nowhere

It's cold outside, in the streets.

Windy nights passing by with a warm soul.

Looking at the moon and wishing,

But there's no way I can leave the road I chose.

The door that I opened is now closed.

They might not unlock it 'til I'm a ghost.

Smoking and drinking at night with my mind frozen.

My way of expressing that I'm lost.

-K

**From The Beat: You were lost, but we have a feeling you're finding yourself - through writing.**

## Hell

I fill this paper with sadness and anger

Because to myself I've become a stranger,

A gangster, a menace, nothing but a danger.

That's what they say!

Alone, in my cell, I get dragged to hell.

I swear I'm not dreaming.

I'm fighting demons, at the gates of hell.

-Jay

**From The Beat: You've become quite the poet since you landed in juvie. We hope you never stop writing.**

## Clock Ticking

Creeping, clock ticking.

Time is passing.

Sentencing is coming fast.

I need to duck and dash.

Gotta make that cash.

Oops! I was thinking about the past.

Now I'm here, writing in this class.

-Alexis

**From The Beat: We know you must be full of anxiety about your sentencing date. Our thoughts are with you.**

## I Struggle

I struggle to sleep at night. The choices that I make give me a hard time. People say I'm stuck with my mind full of lies. But all I do is ignore them, and close my eyes. They want to let me out of my dark vision so I can see the light. But it won't help. I got too much pride deep inside.

-Kevin

**From The Beat: What kind of 'pride' is this? People want to help you and your pride keeps them away? So - you prefer sleepless nights. You prefer to ignore folks who are trying to help you because you have 'pride'. Sounds weird to us.**

## Crazy Thoughts

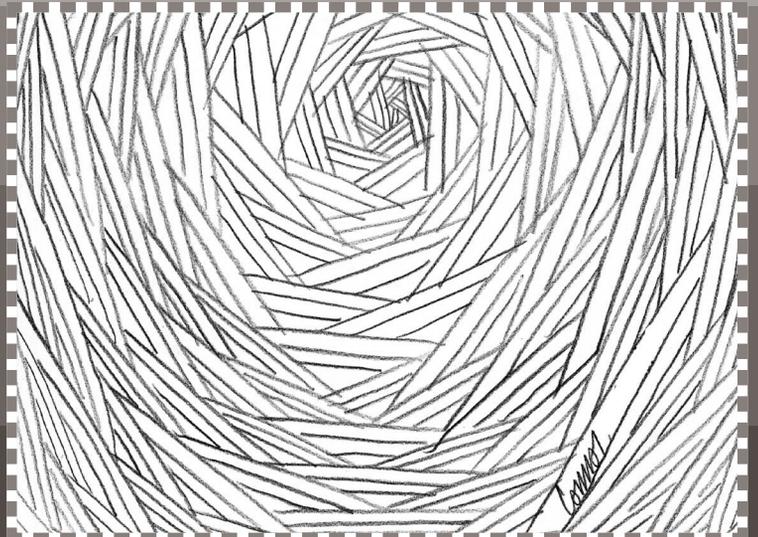
Having crazy thoughts at the police station. In my room - cold as winter snow. Crazy to think this is all reality. I start to cry when my mom's on the phone. Trying to get through tonight and see tomorrow.

Hoping I can go home soon. Not letting this tear apart my dream.

I pray to God for only the best, but I'm always expecting the worst.

-Jay

**From The Beat: What would happen if you started expecting the best? Why not give it a try? What can you lose?**



## I Say A Prayer

I say a prayer every night, hoping that The Lord above hears me.

I think about all those good times kicking it with the homies.

But now that's all gone and I'm stuck in my room, feeling sad and lonely.

But that's not stopping me. I keep on going.

-Eric

**From The Beat: But where are you going? If you were to be released in an hour, where would you go? What would you do?**

## Lost

Sometimes I feel lost, like when I get up in the morning and I get up in this place I feel lost because I'm not at home with my family. Why, because we do a lot of things together at home and we go to lots of beautiful places or we go hunting.

Anyways, I miss my family and my little girl, so yeah, I'm lost sometimes. I will see me little girl again in October on my release day. The day I'm finally free again.

-Gonzalo

**From The Beat: Many people can relate to your moments of feeling lost. You are lucky to have happy family memories to think back on. Have you planned any new adventures for the family?**

## I Miss You

I miss you

I miss your smile, your eyes and your curly black hair

I miss the way you held me

I miss how you sing to me, our song

I miss your laugh and your tough

I miss your voice, and your soft, gentle kiss

I miss when we argue

I miss your hyperness and your concern

I miss your curiosity and the way you understand me

You're the only one who understands

I miss how much you care

You never let me be upset

I miss how you cry with me

I miss your sincerity

I miss the way you hold me when we sleep

I miss doing things for you

I miss going everywhere with you

I miss waking up next to you and how you would look at me

I miss your cute little freckles

I miss how you think of my feelings and needs first

I miss how much fun we have

I miss how close we are

I wish I never said anything to her about you

I cry everyday because I miss you

-Km

**From The Beat: This person sounds lovely. Missing someone is one of the biggest pains we can feel.**

## Real Reckless

I am starving so I bad

I am hungry, not glad

Feed me food, it'll change my mood

Let me out, I'm hungry now!

I was hungry then

Give me food and you'll be my friend

But if you don't you better watch out

I'm starving in jail so you better watch out

I'm fiend'n, I'm fiend'n

That butter on the biscuit sure is gleaming

-L

**From The Beat: Nice job with the flow of this rhyme.**

## Chinese Food

Ahh! Some honey chicken, some pork fried rice, dome chow mein, wan tans, sweet and sour sauce. It all sounds good.

I always used to go to this little restaurant called Wah Shine in Vacaville with my mom. Mmm, miss that place. I can't wait to eat some real food. Two and a half more months and then I'll be free.

-Hungry

**From The Beat: Those items do sound delicious! Do you think you have more appreciation about little things in life, like Chinese food, now that they are not so readily available to you?**

## Sticky Situation

I'm just trying to get out and don't come back to this place called jail. I'm tired of all the staff thinking they are somebody, but they are really not.

We probably got more heart than them, but it is what it is. I just got to except the fact for right now, and make better choices. It's part of life.

-Ky

**From The Beat: Must be frustrating to have every little thing controlled by other people. But as you said, it's part of being inside the hall. We're happy to know that you will make better choices in the future.**

## Moe Love Say No Moe

I let I blow with that tissue

My dudes to the end I truly do miss you

It hurt to have to say them names,

But when you think about it is only a part of the freakin' game.

But what can I say, this world alright.

Change.

Save a spot for me in heaven.

Moe love say no more, let that beat drop.

-Rude Boy

**From The Beat: We're not sure what to make of your writing, but we enjoy it. How do you keep the memories of your loved ones alive?**

## Two Face

A thing I hate is two-faced people. I hate that because I don't like how one minute a person is trying to be cool with you, and the other minute they are talking mess about you. I see that a lot in this world and I get upset.

For example, I had people that were my friends supposedly but I find out that they are talking mess about me. I don't like that, so it makes me be solo, and that's better because that way I don't have to worry about two faces.

-Fernando

**From The Beat: What about confronting them without any aggression? You could tell them that you prefer to talk any problems face-to-face rather than hearing about it from other people. Sometimes people will respect you more that way.**

## Adolescent

It's amazing how much your mood can change by finding your inner peace. When I first came back I was depressed, really depressed. But then, I realized being depressed won't do anything to make things better.

It won't make things go by faster. So I realized I need to see the good in every bad and make the best of being here. I need to think of ways to stay out. So now I have changed.

-Dr

**From The Beat: How wise to understand that seeing the good in every bad helps create inner peace. Nobody can take that inner peace away. What can you do to stay out?**

## What I Gotta Do

My birthday is in March, and I'm going to get a furlough. I'm going to finally be sixteen, but other than that I'm trying to hurry up and get out of this program. This feels like a daycare, they treat us like we are babies or something.

But when I get out, I'm going to just be smooth in the streets and do what I gotta do. But I'm also going to school, and try to get a job.

-Chris

**From The Beat: Happy birthday! Part of being sixteen is that you're older and hopefully wiser. We are happy to hear that you want to go back to school and get a job. Stay away from the negative influence, and you'll do just fine.**

## Mother's Best

I want to eat. I want to eat my mom's food because it's very good and delicious. It's Mexican food, it's called molé, it is very good.

I like it because my mom makes it. I cannot make it by myself. When I get out of jail, I'm going to tell my mom to make it. I got two months left, been here for four months. Can't wait till I get out of jail.

-Cinco

**From The Beat: There's something about a mother's cooking, isn't it? Maybe it's the love mothers put in their food. Maybe you could learn the recipe from her, and cook it for her next time.**

## The Weekend

Hey Beat Within, I'm going to talk about my weekend. I had fun. I went to see my loved ones, I got to wear my new V-day J's. I got to talk to my lil baby, I went to go see my big mama, and I came back to the program. See everything went just the way I wanted. I'm always out this thing, Ayy look.

-Dollmarea

**From The Beat: The outside is certainly a better place than being in the hall. Let's try to stay out, when you're done with the program.**

## BBQ

My dad barbecues a lot, probably twice a week. He barbecues the best ribs and tri-tip. It's so good.

On my first furlough, I'm going to eat so much BBQ. My dad marinates the tri-tip in Italian dressing for five hours then barbecues it and barbecues the ribs with Kinder's BBQ sauce. Ugh! I want food. I can't wait to get out and eat real food. Well, that's it for now Beat!

-Robert

**From The Beat: Are you going to learn how to BBQ from your dad? Your descriptions are making us hungry!**

## Favorite Food

My favorite food is Baldo's steak fries. They are very good and it is a big portion. They come with sour cream, onions, steak and a lot more stuff. Once I get out after doing these six months, it is the first thing I am going to eat.

-Carlos

**From The Beat: Yum, we can almost taste those fries! Even good food can be a motivator to get out and stay out. Can you imagine how freedom will taste and what you need to do stay out?**

## Solo

Posted on the block like a statue. Ninjas are fake on some real nerd shh. That's why I keep it solo. I came in this thing by myself and am not planning to leave with anybody.

My topic is about how people can't be loyal; they are fake. That's why when I get out I'm going to keep it on my solo hype. I don't need friends; I only need family. Family first.

-Jorgyeee

**From The Beat: It sounds like people you thought were your friends have let you down. Does that have something to do with the people you have chosen to befriend? We hope you have family that is there for you.**

## Last Beat Within

This Saturday I go home. I'm scared, my old ways will call me back but my mom supports me. I'll miss my girls and everything, but I'll see them on the outs soon. I'll be in school and working. I can't wait to go back home.

-Elena

**From The Beat: We'll miss you, but congratulations! Get your education and surround yourself with positive influence. You'll do just fine!**

## Generosity

I want you to share what's on your mind. I want you to tell what's on your heart. Most of the time I can tell anyway, so just let me know. Through these times, I've grown and learned how to talk about my feelings. So now it's my turn to listen.

Stress and trouble are always going to be around, but I want to be there to block it down. Don't hold nothing in in these last days. But take and endure my generosity, because I can express it in many ways.

-Savage

**From The Beat: Sometimes that's all someone needs: someone who listens. You are being very generous by just listening to someone else without judgment.**

## Good Food

My favorite type of food I Chinese food, but I like Gumbo and Jambalaya and all that Soul food and stuff. I'm in here wishing I had some good food all the time. My favorite restaurants are them little "hole in the walls" that are in the cuts and stuff. I also like Italian food too.

-Kash

**From The Beat: You have listed some classically fantastic foods, Chinese, Soul Food and Italian cuisine. Do you know how to cook at all?**

## Super Macaroni

My favorite food is macaroni and cheese. I could eat it for breakfast, lunch and dinner. My grandma made it for me over the holidays and sometimes just because, for no reason special. I can't remember the last time I had macaroni and cheese.

-Kulunda

**From The Beat: We hope you can enjoy some of grandmas' specialty again soon, maybe you can learn the recipe.**

## Hopeful

I hope to get out in a few days. If they let me out I am never coming back. I know people have heard that a lot but I am going to make it happen. In six months I will be eighteen and in the Marine Corps. After I get out of the Marines I will join the San Jose Fire Department. I'm already getting my career together.

-Jeffrey

**From The Beat: It is great that you link up never coming back with having some specific ideas for your career and future. What makes you the kind of person that the Marine Corps and the fire department are looking for?**

## Lost

Some people in here are lost because they don't know who they are or who they want to be. So they try to be like people around them because they don't know how to be themselves. Those are people who you can call followers or people who are lost.

-Tyrell

**From The Beat: So who are you? Do you know who you are and who you want to be? Tell us more. Are you a leader or a follower?**

## What's Happening Next?

I am waiting to get shipped off to Challenge. I am about to be there for a while. I'm not worried though, I'm just going to keep it lit and let my dreads bang. I hope to get a little smarter and keep these raps going. Real before rap, respect before success.

-Ji

**From The Beat: We're glad that you want to keep writing and get smarter. We wish you luck on the next stop on your path. What does success look like for you?**

## Not Enough Hours

I only get one hour to see my family. I wish I can get more than one hour.

Damn, I miss my boy, I wish he could visit me, but the system wants to keep me in. I can't wait to hit the streets and play the streets again. The good thing is my loved ones do come and visit me like my little sister, mom and step-pops.

-P

**From The Beat: Remember, when you "play the streets" and you already have a foot in the system's door, chances are GREAT that you will fall back into the traps of incarceration. Wise up young man and begin to make better choices.**

## Generosity

One day I went to San Jose and I had a crazy fun, extraordinary night. The next morning I was on my way to the Cal-Train Station. It was very hot that day.

I took off my sweater and a receipt fell out of an alcohol beverage I didn't even know I bought. Seeing that, I knew I had no money left. I was stranded. My phone was dead. And I had to ask for help so this guy gave me some money, so I could get a taxi, but I thought in my mind it would be better if I took the train. I eventually got home safely, but if it wasn't for that guy's kindness, I am not sure how the day would have turned out.

-Carlos

**From The Beat: Nice story. We are sure when the time is right to repay that next needy person who comes into your life, if you can, you will.**

## Freedom

I could feel it.

I could almost see it.

The excitement is building  
in my blood.

The day is coming.

the day I go back home to my city - Redwood City

I'm sure lots of things have changed.

I heard many of my homies are still the same,  
dedicated to slanging and gang banging.

I have lots of decisions to make.

It has been awhile since I walked the streets.

Questions... What kind of food am I going to eat?

Who's going to be the first girl I meet?

'Cause as a free man, I have my needs.

The cops are probably going to harass,

Can't wait until they ask, "Are you on probation?"

"Nope!" Thought you knew, "I'm terminated."

-Juan

**From The Beat: Good for you. We are glad you are soon going home. Please do not forget to have a plan to succeed in the free world and not get sucked into the lifestyle that will certainly bring you back to juvenile hall or worse. Be a leader not a follower.**

## Taste of Freedom

The food I miss the most is chili rellenos, made by my mom. She makes this when she has the time. I know it is a lot of work to make. The last time I had this was when my sister came to town and she asked my mom to make it, because it is also her favorite food.

Chili rellenos reminds me of home. The last time I was home was in December.

Next month I get terminated from probation and become a free man. When I get home, I already told my mom that I want her to make this favorite food of mine, chili rellenos.

-Luis

**From The Beat: Sounds like you will get your favorite food upon returning home, just make sure you take the rights steps to lead a life free of the system, so you can be with the people you love most.**

## A Little Help

When you are lost,

you should ask somebody how to get to your destination.

I'm here because I needed money for things I didn't need.

I didn't ask enough questions

To get the things I wanted.

I went against the most important people in my life,

My family. I should have listened.

Now I'm sitting in my own banquet of consequences.

-Anthony

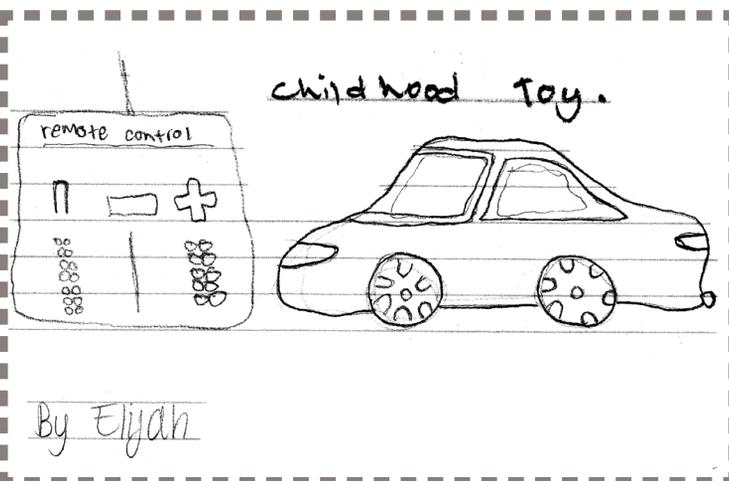
**From The Beat: You recognize the problem, so now is the time to fix the mistakes so they do not happen again.**

## Lasagna

My favorite food is lasagna. I like how it taste. I buy it at the store and a very special person makes it for me. I wish I would make it myself, but I can't cook. I am not sure if lasagna is special to my family, but it is sure special to me.

-Saucy Tony

**From The Beat: With a name like yours, you may want to consider learning how to cook and once you figure out how to cook, which is not too hard, maybe one day you will open up a restaurant called, Saucy Tony's!!!**



## Mac and Cheese Please

My favorite food is mac and cheese. I like it because I love cheese. I like the way it has this melting flavor to it, when you taste it in your mouth. It is also good if you mix the cheese with other types of cheese. I also like it when you put meat into the mac and cheese. I like it with hot dogs or pork or just about any other kind of meat.

-Joshua

**From The Beat: Making us hungry! Thanks for sharing your piece with the group and giving us a real taste of mac and cheese!**

## Lending a Hand

It feels good helping a stranger, even if you don't know them, because good karma will come back to you.

One time I saw a stranger struggling with his car. His battery was not working. I helped him push his car out of the street and helped him get the battery working in his car.

It feels better to give than to receive. People will thank you for the good stuff you do.

-Cristhian

**From The Beat: Absolutely. Thank you for sharing this time you helped a stranger in need.**

## Things That Make Me Smile

What makes me smile are my parents. Because I don't get to see them every day, when I do get to see them, they make me smile every time. They make me smile because I know they're the only ones there for me and I know they will always be there for me.

Another thing that makes me smile is talking to God. I know He is always with me and one day I'll be with Him when I die.

-Ov

**From The Beat: Focusing on the good definitely helps us get through the bad! We are glad to hear you are remembering things that make you smile.**

## Trust None

I don't always believe people are telling me the truth because I've been lied to a lot by someone close to me. For example, I was lied to for many years by my mom about where my dad has been. She would always tell me he was in school or that he was working; little did I know, he was locked up. I know she lied to me to protect me from the truth, but I don't like being lied to. I'd rather the truth even if it hurts.

My dad has been in and out of prison my entire life. He would always lie to me and tell me he would be out soon or that he would be home for my birthday or Christmas. So I have learned not to trust a lot of people. I keep my circle close and only trust my best friend.

-Ronnie

**From The Beat: White lies are lies that people tell when they believe that a little lie can save someone else pain or can be a harmless way to protect someone. Do you think your mom was telling a white lie? Consider this: is it ever OK to lie? Or are lies always wrong?**

## Mistakes

People are always blaming other people for where they're at and what they are doing. It seems that it's always someone else's fault, not our own. Everyone makes mistakes. It's how we handle them that counts. Own up to them, make a few adjustments and move on.

-Trey

**From The Beat: You have a mature understanding of how to handle mistakes that is beyond your years! How can you implement this philosophy in your own life?**

## Lies

Lies are always told. There are so little men of truth left; yet according to most, almost everybody's one. Many refuse to see people's hesitancy to help others when they're in trouble. Some help out of the feeling of obligation, and others - the true help - help out of their own personal want. There aren't many in the world who understand this.

Many say they are your friends, then they leave you in the dust. I have only a handful I can trust. They didn't just suggest I do good; they pushed me and helped me do it. I'll soon be going to college and bringing the new guys with me. I will make sure I teach them right. I will teach how I was taught.

So many say we need to break the cycle and still nobody does it. That's where I come in and show the young ones the truth and the lies.

-Alex

**From The Beat: People say one thing, but do another. How can you live a life of truth and honesty? How can you break the cycle of dishonest living? We think that pushing yourself and the people around you to do good is an excellent place to start!**

## My Life

Little boy, growing up in the 'hood  
Homeboy get kicked out on his birthday  
Growing up in the 'hood, not fun  
You can go to the north  
You can go to the south  
Get down or lay down  
That set with the guns  
Or die, messed up  
Because you saw somebody front  
He's with the gang  
They going to you with the shhh

-Evonta

**From The Beat: Sweet, sad poem. It seems like you could be in trouble, if you saw violence from someone in a gang. If you are, will you please get any help you need now, from your family, a counselor? Let somebody know what's up with you.**

## Home With No Bracelet Bling Bling

I'm juiced that I'm getting out tomorrow for the first time, without the bracelet or on home detention. I'm tired, like literally tired, of comin' up in here for the same thing. I'll try to do better for my mom and for me, so I can stay out of here and get off probation. I'll actually get to school and home on time.

I'll probably still smoke weed, but I'll reduce it. I'll look for a job and make money. I'm too old to be comin' up in here for petty stuff.

-Ricky

**From The Beat: You don't need juvy, weed, a bracelet, probation. Can you go home, help your mom, get your education, and into another life that compels you as passionately as weed did? We believe you can!**

## Lost and Stuck

I always feel lost and stuck. I am always thinking of what I could do. My mind-state has changed over the past years and I've learned to make stuff happen, making moves to get my back on track again. I take walks, talk to people, and push myself out of situations, whatever it takes.

I've loaned my friends money and none of them have paid me back. I keep making the same mistakes, also learning from others' mistakes. I trust myself, because I don't lie to myself, but we are all hypocrites. I've learned to trust no one but myself, so I always feel lost, and no one can take that feeling away.

-Kevin

**From The Beat: It's great that you trust yourself. People who've betrayed you are really lost, because they can trust no one, even themselves. Your integrity will sustain you, and earn you the true respect you deserve, and affection, too!**

**I'm tired, like  
literally tired, of  
comin' up in here  
for the same thing.**

## Being Lost!

I've been lost  
Plenty of times  
Through my whole life  
But one day I will be  
Able to find myself.  
I try to begin where  
I left off but my life  
Is nothing.  
It's like taking  
A walking trip through  
The desert of evil.

-Deaja

**From The Beat: What is the place in your life that you want to get back to and continue from there? How else would you describe the "desert of evil"? Do you think it will last forever or it's just this particular time in your life?**

## Lost No Good

When you are feeling lost it's  
No good.  
You search and search to  
Fill the emptiness.  
I turned to the hood  
Trying to smoke weed  
So I don't feel the  
Pain inside.  
Thinking how to put back  
Together my life.

-Leah

**From The Beat: That was a great way of describing feeling lost. What are some things other than drugs that you can turn to when you feel the feelings of emptiness and pain? What are your plans in getting back on track for your life?**

## My Support

I am a fairly generous person. I give to people and animals. I don't expect anything in return.

My hope is that I will be rewarded with ever lasting life from the Lord. When I see something that touches me deeply, I can't stop thinking about it. I feel I have to do something about it.

When I feel lost, I cry and talk to the Lord. I know He hears me and that He will give me strength to stay strong and get through my situation. When all else fails, I have my Bible.

-Shamon

**From The Beat Within: It sounds like you have a strong supporter on your side. How else has this support helped you?**

## Back

As easy as it came, it had gone just like that.  
Cops took my keys, wallet and phone,  
telling me to put my hands behind my back.  
I made the same mistake now that I had made back then—  
walked through the doors:  
same faces, same program, here we go again.  
However, me and the guards have a really true connection.  
Although it hurts to say it,  
they are only trying to guide us in the right direction.  
It's no longer a battle between us and them—  
criminals and society—  
that no one will ever win;  
and I want to take the time to say I appreciate  
everyone who even cared at all,  
because this will definitely be my last trip  
to Central Juvenile Hall.

-Tarrin

**From The Beat: You know the drill and with maturity now, you also know those in the system who truly want to be a support to you, especially as you are now taking great strides in improving your life.**



## The Truth About This Place

Everyday I get up and I think... damn! I wake up in the same bed as last night. Who wants to sleep on the green mat and with these raggedy blankets! I don't even know why they give us these toothbrushes and toothpaste. Crap in my eyes, are they trying to be funny?

I hate when it's time to eat... they give us these small portions of food! It's a tease, I'm not trying to watch my weight!

The school is boring. You don't really learn anything.

And the showers... Five minutes is just not enough!

But... That's what I get for being in Jail!!

-Keshnay

**From The Beat: We think you have summed it up quite well. Do you feel it's enough incentive to not return? How have you changed during your stay?**

## The Love For My Neighbor

There's a lady (she's now 94) in my old neighborhood named Vula, She used to live two houses down from me. She took care of me when I was a baby. She would walk up and down the street, past my house, to the store.

When her husband died, her heart was broken. During this time, I stayed by her side. To this day, when I'm by her house, I check in to see if she needs any help.

I'm upset at the fact that I'm in juvenile hall and not at home. I can't check in on her or go to church with her. I love her like another grandmother. I wouldn't want anything to happen to her. I hope that for the time that I'm in here, she stays strong.

-Sasha'e

**From The Beat Within: It's wonderful to care for someone deeply. It sounds like she has, definitely, impacted your life. Do you think that you have impacted hers? Have you reached out to her by writing her letters?**

## Lost Feelings

When I feel lost, I try to find my way out of being lost. I can't handle being lost. I try not to panic or get upset or cry. But most of the time, I do cry.

I try to find my unlost station and be on the unlost side. I hope for the best, but, expect the worst.

-Yulissa

**From The Beat: We share your feelings, feeling lost is a frightening experience. Are there family or friends you could go to for emotional support? Sometimes we just need someone to talk to and someone to listen.**

## Forget Love

Forget your kisses and your love

I'm tired of your disrespect

I'm tired of your lies

I've got other guys

Willing to be faithful and stay

So, forget you and your ways

I'll catch you some other day

Good luck to you in life

Stay away from that pookie and light

'Cause, I know I'll catch you creeping in the night

You'll try to come back, just to make your desires feel right

Hah, your lame game don't work no more

So, forget you and your smoked out bore

**-Leah, Los Angeles**

**From The Beat: Your expression is strong and experience felt. How has your experience prepared you for your next relationship? Are your eyes opened?**

## To Conquer

Sometimes, you might have to sit back and realize everyone is not your friend! You blame your friends because of the place where you are today. You pick up your friends' habits. You are influenced by their bad behavior and wind up behind the locked door.

It's good to follow your own footsteps, because, if you follow the next person's footsteps, you could get into trouble. Not your friends, they are experienced, and you are not. If you're not thinking your own thoughts, then, who is? Someone else is!

**-Tayah**

**From The Beat: It's hard sometimes to see people for what they are. They cloak themselves in disguises and don't reveal their true selves until it's too late. Are you able to see this sooner now? How can this epiphany help you in the future?**

## My Truth

A few weeks ago, I was kicked out of my pad. I met up with some fool, who was my so-called friend. He looked out for me for a few weeks, but, too much dope to the Dome. He started to act mean. He started disrespecting me, treating me like dirt.

One night, he left me stranded at two in the morning! Damn man, at the worst time.

I was homeless, cold, sad, and lonely. I was lost in my mind and in my heart. All I knew was... I had nothing but myself.

At the worst moment, I realized only I could help myself in my life. Me, myself and I! Me, the pipe and my dope... all to myself. Fake friends and people who put you down. Keep your head up, no matter what they say.

**-Judith**

**From The Beat: It's hard to feel alone and abandoned. What lasting effect has this experience had on you? Has this helped you identify who are your true friends? What about conquering the dope? The time is now to put it all down.**

## Life

Life is like a road you don't know where to go.

You follow the curves and turns, most time my heart burns.

I don't want lust, I want love and that's why

I talk to the Man above, I know He hears my cry

When I ask why?

I have to learn to let go, so I won't continue to travel or walk down the same road.

**-Monnie**

**From The Beat: Sounds like you are pondering some of life's biggest questions. Clearly you are a person of faith and have come to terms that you would like to make some changes. Keep your eyes and ears open on the road for signs pointing in the right direction, and anyone or anything that can help you along the way.**

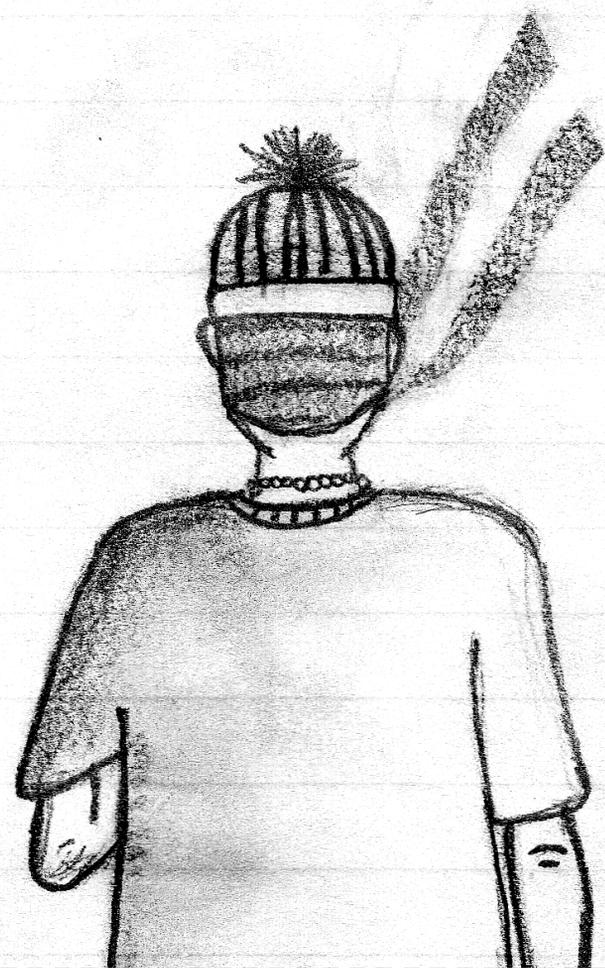
## Truth

Truth to me is telling what really happens. Truth is like the real deal, and not pretend. Being honest- there is no lie around the truth.

Everyone doesn't always tell the truth, for example some people shake, look away, get nervous, or even make things up. Truth is a big part of life to me. Its all about being able to trust something or someone. People can't handle the truth- it hurts sometimes. Truth is better than a lie.

**-Koqweesha**

**From The Beat: You have made several observations in this piece. It sounds like you have heard people say things that are not true as well as get hurt from hearing the truth. Do you think that it is ever okay not to tell the truth? Would you tell a lie in order to protect yourself or a family member?**



## Too Generous

I guess I'm too generous at times. I give people my kindness and then they take it as my weakness.

A lot of people don't understand that being generous is an option. I appreciate people who go out of their way to show me they truly care, but instead people can be generous with their threats, which I do not take so kindly to. But I'm generous with keeping my mouth shut and showing my tolerance. I could be generous with my hands, but I'm trying to be selfish with my anger.

**-Sabrina**

**From The Beat: Why do you think people don't understand that being generous is an option? What are the ways that you go out of your way to show that you care about someone? Deep down, do you think being a giving and generous person is a sign of strength or weakness?**

## Freedom

I been locked up for a year-and-five-months  
 I been stressing a lot  
 Wish I can sit down and roll up  
 But since I can't  
 I'm goin' to take my time on the chin  
 Only one hard month left  
 Then I'm up out of the high  
 Freedom, freedom, freedom is close  
 Just keep my head up  
 I'll be out soon  
 On my way down the road

-Going Home

**From The Beat: Great attitude to get through this last month. Where does the road lead? What are your immediate plans once you're home?**

## Tired

I'm getting tired of being sick and tired  
 Some of the days just make me tired and sick  
 I don't want to be here no more  
 I feel like they playing with me  
 I think they're going to vote no for my level  
 I'm just getting tired of these people  
 So I just try to stay to myself and go in my room  
 I'm tired of the staff keep trying to get under my skin  
 And some of these peers are too  
 I hate being locked up  
 That's why this is my last stop or my heart will "pop!"  
 I try and be cool but sometimes they just try and make your  
 temperature rise  
 And try to get you off track  
 But you have to ignore and keep moving  
 I'm tired of them keep telling me wake up in the morning  
 I'm tired of them keep telling me to take a shower  
 I'm tired of them keep telling me what to do  
 I'm just tired of being sick and tired

-Dc

**From The Beat: We hope you do get your level soon and we certainly understand your frustration. How do you keep yourself on track when it seems like the odds are against you? Stay focused!**

## Home Sweet Home

Home sweet home I go  
 'Bout time I'm leaving from out this junk house  
 This place creeps me out  
 The food is nasty  
 It tastes like prune juice  
 And you know that's yuck  
 The beds are so uncomfortable  
 It's like sleeping on a bed of rocks  
 Then I haven't had sex in a long time  
 I miss my house and going out  
 I miss all the females  
 Just feeling on their soft bodies  
 It's like touching a teddy bear

-Boogie

**From The Beat: What keeps you going when you feel the most frustrated with your situation? How do you push through it?**

## Brotha Love

My brother man, you told me a long time ago that I should not be on the block but now you on a cell block. Come home, I need you to watch my block so that I can be doing anything in these streets.

-Mg

**From The Beat: What can you do to help show your brother support while he's locked up? How can you both keep one another's spirits up?**

## Phase

I've been through a phase, now I feel life is just a maze  
 People struggle for days so us youth can change  
 And improve our ways  
 I played with my future like it was a game  
 Acting insane, actually ashamed of being the real me  
 But now I understand and see  
 And understand only me can set me free  
 I'm locked up so limitations and situations will always occur  
 So I will endure until I leave out this door

-Jw

**From The Beat: We love the line "only me can set me free." What happens when you leave out of the door? What awaits you on the other side?**

## To The President

I had a dream that one day these black young men like me would someday care about themselves like I care about them. And the world is messing up because our young brothers is killing each other.

-Dr

**From The Beat: What would help make your dream a reality? Why do you think young brothers are killing one another and what would it take to get them to stop?**

## Stuck

Stop and think about "what am I really doing?"  
 Something has to change. It's time for renewing."  
 When you get caught up in your ways and you can't take back your actions,  
 you did what you did for a little satisfaction.  
 Now you're stuck in a place where you don't want to be,  
 simply asking yourself ... "why me?"  
 Why you? Well that's what you chose to do,  
 but no one knows your story, they have not a clue.

-Af

**From The Beat: Very true conclusion to your piece. Do you think that renewal and restarting is possible for everybody? What does it take for a fresh start to be successful?**

## Ant Clan

A clan of fire ants.  
 Ain't right, I could see them without light  
 Watch out! They can bite!  
 But I'm going out with a fight

-Ab

**From The Beat: Great imagery! What are you referring to as fire ants? Why is it so important that you keep fighting?**

## Money Is the Movement

The reason why money is the movement is because people always want it, need it, or gon' get it by any means necessary. And the reason I say money is the movement because I want it and I'm gonna get it by any means necessary. Even if it's getting a job, hustling the legal way, but not robbing or killing.

-Ih

**From The Beat: Money is one of the biggest motivators, and we're glad that it's motivating you to stay out of trouble and make good decisions. What type of job do you hope to have?**

## Motivation

When I got locked up I met a boy named Towan. He was a good kid because he gave me some great advice and he was a great motivation for me to go home to my family.

-Grateful Friend

**From The Beat: Good advice sometimes comes from unlikely sources. What was the advice that helped you most?**

## What Hurts Me?

I don't have a place  
to run I sleep and eat  
in the same spot  
it hurts that I can't  
open the door and  
go as I please  
I go to sleep at  
Eight-pm and it's hurting Me.

-Luis

**From The Beat: Maybe this can be the sign you need to get on the right track. You stated to us how you wanted to go to college. Take that and work with it.**

## Summer Snow

I am a hot summer day  
Stuck in winter snow  
I feel alone I want  
To drown but I don't know  
I want people to leave  
Me alone  
I am stuck in a memory  
Of home

-Luis

**From The Beat: Instead of drowning, try and float and keep yourself above the water line and see where it takes you.**

## Lost

We Are Lost  
I am lost, help me  
My brother is lost, help him  
Far away and lost

How do we get around?  
Focus on your family  
Listen to your heart  
You will be found soon enough  
Welcome home my sons

-Kevin

**From The Beat: We like your poetry and your truths. Listen to yourself here!**

## Generosity

I am a very generous person! It makes me feel great to give my friends things or family things!

I remember when I was like eight or nine years old and I got this really big lollypop. There was this girl crying she was having a really bad day, some kid pushed her around and screamed at her. So I wanted to make this girl happy! And she looked up at me her cheeks got really red and smiled. It made me feel great.

-Jonathan

**From The Beat: Sweet story. We could not agree with you more. Nice!**

## Till I'm Free

I want to be on the right track till I'm free  
I want to improve on behavior till I'm free  
I will do and follow rules till I'm free  
I will not let others pull me into whatever they are doing  
I just will try my best to stay on track till I'm free  
I will pray to God that I do good till I'm free  
I will achieve all my goals till I'm free

I will get a job when I'm free  
Help other people when I'm free  
Change my life when I'm free  
Stop smoking when I'm free  
Avoid trouble when I'm free  
Stay at home when I'm free  
Take care of my family when I'm free.

-T-Mack

**From The Beat: Amen!! We have faith in you that you will do exactly what you stated in your words!**

## The Way You Feel When You Out and When You In

Man, out of all 15 years of my life, I have never been to jail. I have always been the one to be on the basketball team, football team, but then I started hanging with the wrong people. I got to smoking and doing crazy stuff and now look at me in a jail. The people I thought that were my friends are really not my friends.

-G Low

**From The Beat: You have awoken! Now is the time to get back on track to do the things you enjoy most! Sounds to us like this poor choice that landed you in jail will never ever happen again. The choice is yours!!**

## My Life and Friends

The day when I'm free I know it's going to be hard to find a job because I will have a really bad case on my background.

When I was young I stayed in school, didn't get into trouble till I started seeing my friends doing the things that they were doing on the block to get money. So I decided to do what they were doing and my whole life changed. I stopped going to school. I didn't listen to my parents. I always stayed away from home.

Now I know that the streets can get you in a lot of trouble. I learned that you really don't need friends because the only thing that is going to happen is you are going to get into trouble and they will not help you get out of the mess that you got yourself into. Friends will just get you into trouble. That's why when I get out of here I'm going to turn my life back to what I used to do. Go to school and get back into sports. I learned my lesson.

-T-Mack

**From The Beat: Good for you. Friends are very good, it is just a matter of finding good trusting people who support you and your efforts to succeed legitly. Sounds to us like you can stay away from the trouble that can take your freedom away. Best!**

**when I get out of here I'm going to turn my life back to what I used to do. Go to school and get back into sports. I learned my lesson.**

## All Sick

Not a day goes by that I don't dry  
Sleepless nights and them lonely times  
One of a kind, you are so divine  
Without you Chantel, my sun won't shine

-Chevas of Makiki

**From The Beat: What a sweet and heartfelt piece to the one you love, thank you for sharing!**

## Stressing

I'm over generosity, I got nothing more to give  
I'm tired of being taken for granted like some little kid  
Sorry doesn't mean shhh if you just keep doing it  
You have to mean it when you say it or at least try to prove it

See, I'm not the type to give in to insanity  
All your mistakes do is bring intentions to clarity  
This is all a bullshhh lesson that I have to learn  
But if it wasn't like that I guess I would just keep getting burned  
Karma's a witch and now I get to see it  
I just never thought I'd be the one to greet it  
Now I realize no one should be trusted  
Next thing I know it's me who gets busted  
Screw her feelings, screw his feelings, and screw yours more  
I should've listened when they said you'd only make my heart sore

-Alana of Lanaina

**From The Beat: Relationships are a constant lesson of love, trust, and respect. Take these lessons as a gift that can guide your decisions to what you really want and what is good for you.**

## Me And Her

I get lost in her eyes  
When she smiles  
I get hypnotized  
She makes me realize what I'm  
Missing in my life  
I wish she knew how much I really like her  
But every time we disagree she might think  
I'm trying to fight with her  
But really I'm trying to relight the life in her  
Trying to do what's right because  
All I want to do is BE with her  
We're locked up in this place  
Staff always tell us make some space  
But we are trying to be face to face  
I wish we wasn't in this place  
Because right now she's mad at me and  
I just want to kiss her face

-Mahina-Jail Bird

**From The Beat: There is no doubt that being locked up is a difficult strain on relationships. This is food for thought for your release and how you choose to live when you are out.**

## If I had One Wish

I'd wish for us to be together again  
If I had all the money in the world  
I'd buy you anything your heart desires  
If I had the chance to talk to you  
I'd tell you how happy I am to have you in my life  
And that I love you so much  
If I had you here, with me, right now  
I'd always have a smile on my face and I'd never let you go  
If I just had you, I know everything would be alright  
I know all my troubles and worries will soon see the light

-Chantel of Maui

**From The Beat: You poetic voice continues to shine through, keep up the wonderful writing!**

## You Are All That I Think About

You're all that I think about from the moment  
I wake up  
To the moment I lay my head down and  
Go to sleep  
You're on my mind twenty-four seven  
I feel so sad  
Because I can't be with you  
I can't hear your voice or your laugh  
I can't feel your hugs or your kisses  
I can't see your face or your smile  
I have nothing, you are my everything  
I know we haven't been together that long  
But it feels like an eternity  
I know we are perfect for each other  
We are meant to be  
Even when you may think I'm  
Thinking of you, know that I am  
You're the love of my life  
You're that special man

-Chantel of Maui

**From The Beat: What will the future hold for you and this person? How can you actively decide not be apart again?**

## A Lesson

My freedom was taken because the stuff I've done and making the wrong choices I been making, I thought it was fun.

In the end I was mistaking, I used to cruise and have fun with everyone, like staying up late, until my head started to ache. Chilling at the beach under the sun or at home with my family baking, now there is no fun; can't now with the charges I'm facing. I really regret all the bad things I have done but I just take it as a lesson worth taking.

-Palolo Boy

**From The Beat: A lesson learned from is a lesson well learned. We hope you can see things in a different light now.**

## Screw The World

The way I feel right now  
Is like my wrist got slit  
They don't understand me, not one bit  
To me this place is full of shhh  
Packed with a bunch of little kids who throw fits  
It's like all I need in this life of sin  
Is me and my girlfriend

-Chevas

**From The Beat: Remember what your frustrations when you are out of jail and weight the importance of your decisions so as to not affect returning to these feelings.**

## Girl

I don't know you  
But I'm always thinking of you  
You're always on my mind  
Damn, I've never seen a girl  
So pretty and so fine  
God sent me a message  
I figured out the clue  
It was said to love you  
Sent out to be true  
I'll do what I have to  
To get you by my side  
I ain't afraid of saying it  
What else is there to hide?

-Lunatic of Lanakila

**From The Beat: We hope you get to meet someday and have fun expressing your feelings to this crush.**

## Cope

I just found out my cousin overdosed on heroin  
It's a pretty shhhhh feeling that he's doing that shhh again  
I thank God that he lived and he's still here  
But now he has to go to jail, hopefully less than a year  
Me and him, we're close because of our issues  
But when shhh hits the fan we ain't askin' for no tissues  
I just hope he's ok cause CPS took his kids away  
If I gotta talk to him now, I don't know what I would say  
We lied and told each other that we would do good and stay sober  
But obviously those promises are done and over  
That doesn't mean we're giving up or losing hope  
It's just time to realize that you don't cope with dope

-Alana

**From The Beat: These are very tough and real consequences to dangerous actions. We are glad your cousin did not die, but truly hope that he can overcome.**

## Girl You Need A Man

Girl you're so beautiful, I can see it in your eyes  
Girl got me looking, I'm seeing butterflies  
I feel the pain that you feel, shhhh got me blinking  
Girl you need someone who won't cheat on you, hope these words  
got you thinking  
You need a man to show you love, a man to caress your hair  
A man to show you he loves you, a man like me to show that he  
cares  
Just give the opportunity, just give me one chance  
To show you the meaning of the word "romance"

-Lunatic

**From The Beat: You sound like you would be a dedicated and respectful partner. Thanks for sharing this nice piece.**

## Intoxicating

You're my ride or die  
Bonnie and Clyde  
Promise to always stay by your side  
My one and only  
First prize trophy  
I miss your kisses and when you would hold me  
You're my addiction  
My drug  
You've got me on cloud nine  
I love the way you make me feel  
I'm happy that you're mine

-Chantel

**From The Beat: We hope that you are able to rekindle this loving relationship when you are released and stay out together and not live a life like Bonnie and Clyde.**

## Moms

She said she'll love me no matter what  
But now I'm locked up and she's losing her touch  
I love her so much  
But now she don't care too much  
About me  
Why can't she see?  
That I need her  
She's my mom, moms are supposed to care  
Supposed to be there  
But she's not  
Guess it's time to be independent

-Jail Bird Mahina

**From The Beat: We hope that you and your mom are able to work through this tough time and support each other again. She could be very worried about your future.**

## Struggles

I'm here locked up while my  
Girlfriend is pregnant  
But I'm glad we still communicate  
Write letters and continue talking  
I pray every night that they'll  
Let me out before he's walking  
Because I don't want to miss anything  
About my son  
He's my number one  
I'm changing my life around for him  
I go to church, trying to ask for  
Forgiveness for all the wrong I've done  
I have faith we will get through this  
As a little family  
We've been through all the struggles and  
Hard times, we went through it all  
We didn't care if it was big or small,  
Short or tall  
I'm just glad I'm making a change  
For you guys  
You guys are always on my mind  
As I lay  
I just hope I'm out of here  
Soon because your due date  
Is a month after May

-Self Made of Waianae

**From The Beat: Raising a child is tough work, we hope that you get back and support your family as best you can, and we hope you have that support too. Ask your elders for advice.**

## Love Will Find A Way

I know we're separated and we seem to be lost  
Every step that we choose, there's always a cost  
If I went away, what would you do?  
Would you wait for me like I would for you?  
I love you in ways I cannot describe  
The risk I would take to keep you by my side  
I'll look at this situation as a test  
Are we meant for each other or is this relationship just like the rest?  
I want it to be different, I want us to last  
I want you to wait for me and not be gone in a flash  
Things will get difficult, I'm sure they will  
That's why we have each other and the love that we feel

-Chantel

**From The Beat: This piece displays a real honesty that we can all relate to. Thanks for sharing.**

## Baby It's You

What do I do when all I have is time?  
When you are the only thing on my mind and I just want to cry?  
What do I do when I am missing you?  
When it feels like I can't think straight  
anymore and I can't get through?  
What do I do when I just want to be with you  
but this facility got us locked up and seeing different views?  
Who do I talk to when I'm feeling down?  
When you're no longer here, no longer around.  
How do I pull through without you here,  
when I just want to close I just want you here.  
It's crazy how you got me feeling about you,  
you got me crazy in love not knowing what to do.  
What I do know is that I need you in my life,  
you're the one, my only, you make things right.  
Baby it's you!!!

-Chantel of Maui

**From The Beat: Hopefully, when you are released you can be reunited with this love and your choices will then keep you together, not separated. Keep these hard times always in the back of your mind.**

## Lost Feelings

I'm feeling lost.  
I'm running to find my way back home.  
I'm feeling lost.  
I'm scared no one is here to help me.  
I'm feeling lost.  
I need to relax, I'm hyperventilating,  
Breathe, breathe, breath.  
I'm feeling lost.  
I close my eyes, I need to wake up.  
Is this a dream?  
I'm feeling lost.

-Lost Boy

**From The Beat: Being lost is such an unsettling, scary feeling and one none of us want to experience. When you are feeling like you need to wake up does breathing help? Or do you have friends and family you can go to for support?**

## What Lost Is

There are times when everyone feels lost. Being lost doesn't always mean that you can't find a street or a house. It might mean that you are lost in your state of mind, meaning that you may not know good from bad or whether to go left or go right. When you are stuck between decisions, it might mean that you are lost. Just try to find the right way.

-Christian

**From The Beat: That is really wonderful insight. Sometimes our minds can feel like we don't know which direction to turn, and finding the right choice does not come easy. This poem is very relatable and you did a great job.**

## Lying Eyes

My eyes shield how I feel inside  
And you don't know how much I have cried.  
To truly, to really smile,  
Is something I haven't done in a while.  
I'm protecting you because I love you so.  
This is my pain,  
I hope you never know.

-Natalie

**From The Beat: We hope you don't feel alone when you are hiding how much you are hurting. It can be hard to share our sadness and fears with others, sometimes it can be the only way to find our smiles again.**

## Best/Worst

My favorite food is pupusas because they taste really good. My least favorite is sushi because it tastes hella nasty.

-Daniel

**From The Beat: Are pupusas a traditional food of your culture? Does your family make them or do you have a favorite place to go eat them?**

## Love and Respect

Everyone's relationship is different. They don't work if both people don't put in an equal amount of effort.

I'm in a group listening to how they treat their relationships and it's kind of disappointing. It is disappointing because they think disrespecting is ok and they just expect to get whatever they want. I love my girl more than anything and that's why I treat her with the most respect I can and I plan on treating her with love and respect until the day I die because I love her. That's true love. I can say this because we both put in the same amount of effort and love.

-Rn

**From The Beat: We are so impressed by this piece and the maturity it reveals. It sounds like you have a great thing going, keep it up... treating others with respect and love is one of the most important things we can do!**

## Marin County

## Alternative High School

**We have some new writing from the young minds at the Marin County Alternative High School in San Rafael, California. These creative writers always surprise us with something new, and we are glad they have opened up to us once again. We never know what to expect from the young people at Marin School, who always leave us anticipating more of their thoughts.**

## A Chance to Change

I want to conquer going home and finishing my program.  
I want to find my chance to change my life.

-Aj

**From The Beat: Good luck with those goals! We hope you have a good support system to help you conquer them!**

## Participate!

My opinion on participating is that if you join a certain group you should at least participate so you can get something out of it. And, if the group is mandatory you should at least make the best of it.

-Christian

**From The Beat: It is good to participate when you have to, but do you ever join wholeheartedly? You might find you get much more out of what you do!**

## Food Brings You Back

Generosity can put you in a place of false expectations and you can feel lost. But food can always stop the madness and bring you back to reality, out of denial and your head back into your heart.

-TeacherOne

**From the Beat: Can't generosity, when it is done from a pure heart, be a wonderful thing as well?**

## Nervously Lost

The feeling of being lost is a feeling I do not enjoy. I feel nervous, angry and out of place.

-Kevin

**From The Beat: Feeling out of place can certainly make us nervous and afraid. What do you do to try to escape that feeling?**

## Valentine's Poem

Her eyes are yellow.  
She wiggles like Jello.  
Lemme say hello.  
I tried to stay mellow.  
Voice so attractive.  
Nice lips, no Chapstick.  
Better than my girl...

-Sg

**From The Beat: We love this poem, it has great description and images! Keep up thge good work!**

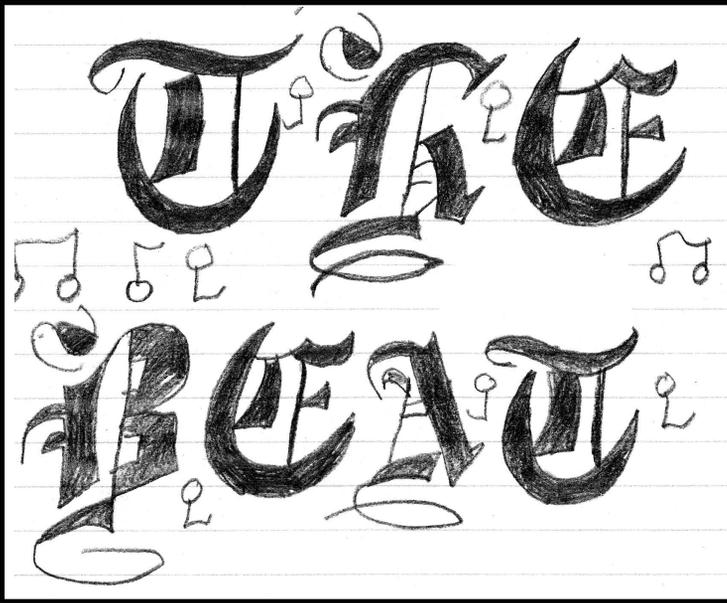
## Never Give Up

Life is long and hard and you are going to go through a lot of stuff  
so don't give up.

God gives His toughest soldiers His hardest battles.

-Tyler

**From the Beat: That is a very strong statement and we are glad you feel strong! What helps you meet the challenges you face? How do you help yourself when you and others in your life struggle?**



## Marin County Alternative High School cont.

### It's All Good

I like any type of Mexican food and Chinese food, too. All types are good when you get the munchies. Everything's good when you've got the munchies.

**-Hungry**

**From The Beat: Isn't it great that in America we can love all different types of food? Is there one food that reminds you of a good time or of family?**

### I Love It All

I love oysters, but after our group talk I don't know what I like the best anymore. I love steak, potato salad, tacos, burritos, pork chops, buffalo wings, BLT sandwiches, hot Cheetos, pizza and Chinese food.

**-Saul**

**From The Beat: Now we are hungry, too! Food is a great way to connect with friends and family, we are glad you have so many favorites!**

### Life Goals

This week I conquered gaining my credits for the week.

My goal I want to conquer this year is to graduate and move on with my life. My life goal is to conquer and become a fireman, and be an architect for my dad's landscaping business.

**-Steven**

**From The Beat: Those are all great goals and it sounds like you are taking them one step at a time, little by little. Good luck conquering it all!**

### Loyalty

Valentine's Day is coming up and I need to get her something nice. This life is hard and I want a loyal girl to have my back.

**-Tyler**

**From The Beat: We all need someone to help us when life gets tough. We hope you have your girl's back like she has yours!**

### RE: Letter to Youth

Please accept the enclosed essay called, "The Cooties." The "Cooties" is what people treat "ex-cons" like and therefore kids should avoid such "contamination."

Thank you for this opportunity.  
Best regards,

### Dortell Williams

**Dortell Williams is another incredibly talented writer who always sends us his amazing work. In this issue, Dortell writes a lovely piece titled "Cooties" that describes his standpoint as a prisoner. He feels that many other prisoners share his point of view and feelings of being shunned by society. We hope that Dortell's piece will open your eyes and change your perception of those who you feel are different. Dortell comes to us from California State Prison Los Angeles in Lancaster, California.**

### The Cooties

I am a thirty year old man, a prisoner. But I have friends in school places. Yep! They keep me hip. They told me that you guys still play the game "cooties." Ha, that's funny. We played that game too.

For many, though, cooties is a real life experience. An experience that is far from a game. If I remember correctly, whoever has got the cooties is the one all the others runs from. No one wants to be near the guy with the cooties. No one wants to be touched by the cooties because then they'll have the cooties, and nobody wants the cooties.

It is kind of like that with prisoners. No one wants to write a prisoner. No one wants to help a prisoner. And you wear that label prisoner as if it really were the cooties. When a prisoner gets released from prison, they call him a new name, ex-con (short for ex-convict, or one that has been convicted in a court of law).

Ex-cons get treated like they have the cooties too. People don't want to give them jobs. No one wants to rent them a home. They are not wanted.

Usually, prisoners have made some mistake. They have committed some wrong that probably hurt others. They committed a crime. People that commit crimes usually go to prison.

That's what happened to me. I used to sell drugs. Selling drugs is a crime. It ruins lives. I wish I had never sold drugs because someone

close to me was killed due my selfishness. That is what criminal activity is. Not thinking about others or their wellbeing.

I thought I was slick. You know, super-smart. But what I didn't count on is something happening that I didn't plan.

One night, while I was conducting my dirty business, some other criminals tried to rob us and shot my wife. She died. Now my daughter don't have a mother, or father.

This other guy was robbing a store. He had it all planned out. He knew he could steal the money and get away. But he didn't plan on a plain-clothed officer being in the store. The officer shot him in the arm. Now he has no right arm. Some people treat him like he has the cooties, because he is different. But he is cool. I had an open mind and I talked to him. He doesn't have the cooties. He is just missing an arm.

These are the type of terrible things that can happen when you do wrong. I now know that I have to think about everything before I do it. If I ever get out of here I won't commit any crimes. I have learned how to do a lot of other things now. I study and have learned a lot of neat things. Learning is cool. Coming to prison isn't.

If you don't want people to shun you and treat you like you have the cooties, even when you don't have the cooties, don't commit crimes. Keep it clean and stay in school. That is the best way to go. Take it from me, a guy they treat like he has the cooties.

## Hi Beat:

It's been a long time! Off the top I want to send my love, regards and respects to the whole staff and all those participants to The Beat Within! It has been quite some time since the last written and for that I do apologize. But as you may see, you have not been forgotten. There is no way I can forget you the way you stimulate my mind and way of thinking is amazing. I still flourish between my writings as well as others, especially your staff member's words of delight and encouragement that really do help us build strength. That strength that some of us need and at time didn't have. So to this day and in the near future I thank you.

Even though I haven't received anything new, I still cherish what I have. All I have is old masterpieces that I cherish, including my own. Now to you readers, writers and listeners, my name is Roland Ascencio and I am a young, educated writer who finds himself doing time. Like most of you fighting and striving for a better day and hopeful tomorrow. I'm still growing and often find myself fighting my inner thoughtful demons. It's hard but I manage and I get by another day. Once you know it, the day, the month, the year is gone. When we all utilize time differently. I utilize mine by writing. I do a little bit of everything but my specialty is writing and allowing my inner souls to flourish into this paper by my pen is my thing. If you are wondering where I've been these past few years, it's been a long journey. Still doing these dreadful years. I just been focusing on me and really bettering myself each day.

It's hard when you find yourself in prison. But I'm fighting it through. Honestly lately I've just been focusing on my freedom. I get out in approximately three years from now and after spending so many years incarcerated, it has become real scary. I sit here and I ask myself some difficult questions. I wonder how it is going to be like, or what I'm going to do. I have plans and I have goals. I'm up for challenges. I've educated myself so the knowledge is there, but those thoughts linger through my mind.

I am an ex gang member, and to those of you still making a name for yourself may just look down upon me, but I've been there and done that. I stopped caring about what others thought of me. That only got me more time and always led me in getting in trouble. At the end you only hurt yourself and those who actually do care and love you and that's your family. You would have to be in it or live it to understand. Prison has its tactics and everyone is in it to win it. In this world it's all about you. No one is going to take the blame for you when it all goes downhill. At the end it's just you. Politics only get you so far and in my world there is one too many pushing the same thing. Who's bigger and badder in the end, it all ends the same. I've been stabbed, beaten, and been standing firm and all for nothing. That center of attention isn't me anymore I learned that all the hard way and it took so much pain and blood. But I finally realized this isn't me or the life I want.

Just the other day I was listening to this older homie speaking, and in some weird and crazy way, I saw myself through his eyes. His story was no different than mine, just told differently. He was telling me that how he was in East Lake Juvenile Hall, Slymar Juvenile Hall, and Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall. He had completed numerous camp programs. The crazy thing about him is that he is much older. He's in this forties, maybe fifties. I couldn't believe we had so much in common. I really did see myself in him. In a crazy way, I put myself in his shoes and pondered on that thought, and that scared me. He's done and no longer has a date. He lives in a place he has to call home. Just the thought of knowing this is the place he will die is heart breaking. He's accepted the fact that he's done wrong. So he is happy knowing this is his home. To me that would be hard. I wouldn't know how to do it or deal with it. I learned from these experiences I inherited. I am no angel. So I'm always reminded by suffering the consequences. Why suffer? Why not go home? Why go through so much pain? I can't wait to get home and not depend on anyone to send me money or wait on mail.

I had this other reflection with a cellmate of mine. I never notice it until I seen his watery eyes. I would often get mail and he didn't. Actually, he never did. I felt bad for him and I wondered what he must feel or go through. I'm sure it's painful and it's the worst feeling ever. You see, we don't see all the wonderful things we throw away. Freedom is the most precious thing and most of us throw it away as if it means

## Rolando Ascencio

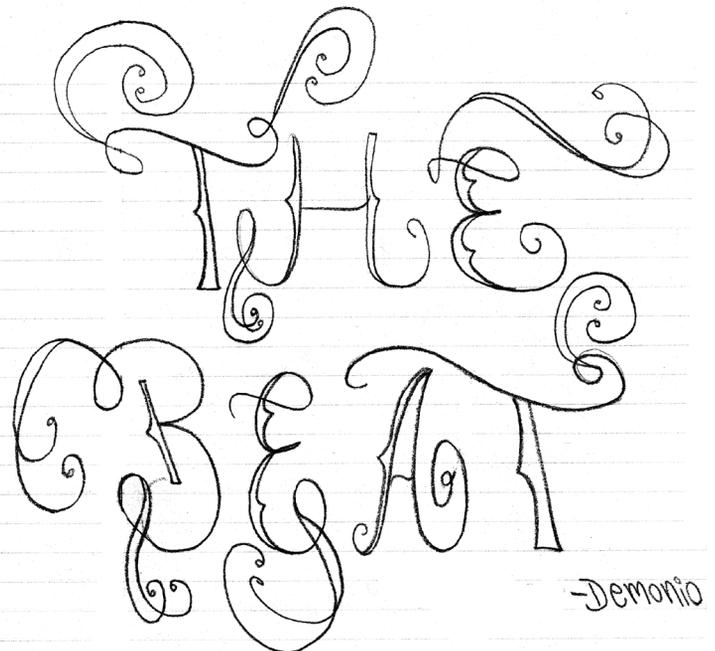
Our next writer comes to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison located in Coalinga, California. Rolando has made a big comeback after a significant absence from these Beat pages. Now that Rolando is back, he shares with us some deep thoughts after having served a decade in prison. Rolando writes about many of the things he had taken for granted, and how much he has changed now that he has had so much time to self-reflect.

nothing. We don't see all that we let go until we are placed in a cell with nothing to do but think. Reality tends to sink in and it begins to eat your heart, your soul, and there is no turning back. You are already here, stuck. We get to writing and hope to receive a letter in the return mail, but sometimes nothing ever comes. You begin to feel lost. As if you are not loved or cared about. You begin to get suicidal thoughts. The tears stream down your cheeks and you watch it all go while you sit and reflect on everything that could have been done differently. From anything that jeopardizes my freedom. I'm surrounded by men who wish they had the chance to be free. I know that those are the ones who are the first to talk mess and the first to hope to see you fail.

I see it every time and I live it everyday. I've been in the system ten years and I've seen it all. If someone says differently, than either they are not keeping it real or they are just simply caught up in the game I broke away from. When I speak to those who are simply young and don't know any better, I know during my younger days I didn't have anyone there to kind of guide me. I know the people who tried didn't know the system as I know it today. So you are hearing this from someone who knows it. It all depends on you. At the end you can either choose to do better and try to do something with your life that leads to a brighter future, or you can keep doing what you are doing and live in misery. Trust me, when the years began to sink in so will you. You begin to get older. You start thinking different. You begin to think, "why didn't I just do things differently?" I know that I was on that side and being young I thought I knew it all, but I didn't know half of what I know now. That was hard for me as I had to learn the hard way. It's up to you. Remember now as I excuse myself.

Thank you for hearing me out. You all remain strong and know change is possible. You just have to mean it and want it.

Lastly, thank you for your guidance Beat. I hope to be remembered as I remember you. With love and respect. God bless. I'll be back within your pages. I hope.



## Dear Beat Staff and Volunteers:

I hope all continues to be well. Hey I folks, I had a transfer to another prison which has been very disruptive, but I have more thoughts, which may be found to be of value. Thanks for providing the means by which I may do so.

## The Tool Box

Anger (The mechanical aspect)

I think that you should know right now!

That anger shares a mechanical relationship with our body.

Knowing this, it becomes very easy to turn it off.

Regardless of how strong the emotion may be,

Without resorting to complicated psychological methods and boring dogma.

Here is how it works,

Anger can only surface at the expense of breath (our breathing becomes very shallow).

So to rid yourself of that anger, all you need to do is to forcefully breather in and out

And like magic, poof!

It's gone!

And this very simple and easy to remember technique is also effective in eradicating all other undesirable strong emotions as well.

## Gratitude

Did we forget to say that you are beautiful?

The best of our best;

Confused, alone, hurting and angry?

Did we forget to say that you are still beautiful?

The best of our best

Condemned by peers,

Condemned by family,

Condemned by law?

Did we forget to say that you are still beautiful?

The best of our best,

Yeah, you lied, you stole, and you killed;

Yet, did we forget to say that you are still beautiful?

The best of our best.

Even though the rose has thorns, do we not say that it is still beautiful?

The best of our best.

Gratitude, and eternal love

The best of our best!

## Posted In The Hall With Three-Hundred-and-Sixty-Five Over My Head

What's up Beat? Well this is going to be a long year in the Juvenile Justice Center. They gave me three-hundred-and-sixty-five days in the hall. I was supposed to get four months, but I decided to threaten a staff and they gave me three hundred and sixty-five days. But I'm not trippin'. I'm a thug through my time. I'm just sitting here talking to Tye Dogg. He's in the same program I'm in, called New Horizon Program.

Man, it's crazy in here. We can't even fight. If we fight we get kicked out and get sent up to California Youth Authority. It's crazy though, just a couple days ago we had a little riot. Man I wanted to get up so bad, but if I had gotten up, I would have been maced and slammed.

Damn, I get sentenced to three-hundred-and-sixty-five days at the age of fourteen. I turned fifteen in September. I've only been here for two months and still have ten months left. I'm hoping to get an early release. Man, it's hard to get through the program, but I will try my best to get through.

Well, let me tell you a little bit about me. I'm from Calwa, Fresno. I am a gang member. I chose this life because the homies show me lots

## James E. Smith

James E. Smith has sent us some great work targeting those who have found themselves in similar situations as himself, and need to hear some comforting words. James comes off as a very caring individual who would like to reach out to anyone who is feeling desolate or hopeless. Knowing that there is someone out there that is concerned about you and feels your pain can make a big difference in your well-being. We hope James' writing is able to make an impact and make your day a lot brighter. James sends his writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, California.

I have more, but it is chow time, more stuff next time. Stay of strong in will and character; yet, easy come, easy go. See ya!

## Survivor Tool

Are you sitting there in deep thought, wracking your brain, trying to figure out how you shall survive when your release date finally comes around? Need food, shelter, clothing and a job, but, have no resources, family, nor friends?

Well, I have a certain means by which you can acquire most if not all of your basic needs. It seems to be a secret but it should not be. The "way" is to serve others within your community or greater society. Stop by or call your local social service organizations. Visit them and volunteer your labor as service. Distribute food at pantries, perform necessary chores at your local monastery, make friends there and network with all of them. This is the basic plan, expand it to suit your needs, and soon you will be self-sustaining. (Key Phrase: being of service to others, always)

Hey! I have more, but it is chow time, more stuff next time. Stay of strong in will and character; yet, easy come, easy go. See ya!

I love you too Beat Within staff and volunteers, and I always read the editor's note first. Don't forget that readers (Smile)

Sincere and Dedicated,

Lastly, you have my permission hereby given to print this article in its entirety and don't forget to send me a copy when published.

## Lil Gizmo

Our next writer goes by the name Lil' Gizmo, and has a lengthy sentence ahead of him. Lil' Gizmo tells us a little bit about himself and how he ended up in the situation he is in today. We hope this time behind bars will allow Gizmo to reflect on the negative path he chose in life and strive for a better and brighter future. We know you can do it Gizmo, you show a lot of courage and potential. Lil' Gizmo's ends his piece by encouraging others to avoid the lifestyle that landed him in the Hall and to do better. Lil' Gizmo comes to us from the Juvenile Justice Center in Fresno, California.

of respect. Man this whole time I've been thinking they forgot about me. They've been locked up in detention side. I'm in commit side. It's better on this side. A lot of things happened since I got locked up. One of my people was killed. I wish I could have seen him one last time, but instead I'm locked up with ten months left. Rest in peace. Gone but never forgotten.

So to everyone out there in different halls, do good in there so they don't try and give you three-hundred-and-sixty-five days like me, or worse! I'll let you guys go now. Stay up!

## Think Of What You've Done

I took a pillow and held it over my head.  
 I surely wanted to be dead.  
 Oh what a miserable life I lead.  
 I was worse than any story you have ever read.  
 I stole a blind man's cane.  
 I fed a diabetic a candy cane.  
 All in an attempt to make myself a name.  
 For what I've done I am not ashamed.  
 Nor do I hold anyone but me to blame.  
 I ran away when I was young.  
 I thought I wasn't hurting anyone.  
 Then one day my father said "come home son."  
 I knew he knew everything I had done.  
 "So you were out and had some fun?" he said  
 I could feel myself wanting to run.  
 "It's your mother you hurt is what you done."  
 I started to speak, but he would have none  
 "She lies awake at night while you are out having fun."  
 "She never knows if you'll be shot and killed by someone's gun."  
 "So stop and think of someone else my son."  
 Hurting someone else really isn't fun.

## His Own Name

If there is one thing in life I'd change  
 It's what happens to our kids  
 And I know we are to blame  
 We send them to school  
 And give them a name  
 We expect them to be like us  
 And get mad when they are not the same  
 We want them to see that life is not a game  
 When in reality society is to blame  
 We teach our kids to look for fame  
 In ourselves we should be ashamed  
 For no two people are the same  
 And just because they carry our name,  
 Doesn't give us the right to ask them to change  
 And this may sound strange  
 But I want my kids to stumble and fall  
 And be responsible  
 And take their own blame  
 And as much as it'll cost me pain  
 With nothing left to lose  
 And so much to gain  
 My son is an individual  
 And has his own name

## Live to Fight Another Day

I sit in a cell  
 Lonely as hell  
 I sit and wait  
 For the ringing of the bell  
 Once for food  
 Twice for showers  
 Three times for work  
 As the guards they to  
 Make sure no one gets hurt.  
 There's always someone  
 Who is bored and wants to have some fun  
 But it ain't no fun  
 When the rabbits got the gun  
 They better pick the right one  
 Or it will back fire  
 And his ass will be on the run  
 That's what boredom gets you  
 When you're trying to have some fun  
 They say you live by the gun  
 You die by the gun  
 I say leave it alone  
 And live to fight another day  
 Out of trouble you will stay.

## Leonard Reinke

Now we have Leonard Reinke giving us some insight and strength. Leonard is eager to share his struggles, pain, and life changing experiences. Finding yourself in Leonard's situation doesn't come easy to anyone, and we hope his words will inspire all you young readers to learn from his and your own mistakes. Leonard write to us with the goal that he will be able to change the mind of at least one youth from continuing on the wrong path. Leonard's concern for others is very noble, and we anticipate that he is able to accomplish this goal. Leonard writes from Oregon Department of Corrections located in Salem, Oregon.

## The Beat Within

Greetings. I'm blessed with the opportunity to share with the kids some strength, wisdom, and love. I pray I can change just one life, and inspire one person. That is all it takes. I am enclosing four of my latest. You may publish one or all, it's a gift that keeps on giving.  
 Much Respect

## A Game

I hear the inmate yell in pain.  
 As the scream races through my brain,  
 I wonder what has caused him that strain.  
 To make a man scream out in pain  
 Has he fallen and can't get up  
 Or does he lay in some blood stain.  
 I don't even hear the guard moving.  
 What a shame.  
 I'm pretty sure I don't even know his name.  
 I don't even know who's to blame  
 For all I know it's another convict game.  
 Maybe he is just another lame,  
 Who cares if he is lying there in pain.  
 Nothing in prison ever remains the same.  
 The guards always looking for an inmate to blame.  
 And the convicts trying to run some game.  
 All I care about is the screaming running through my brain.  
 And is that man really in pain?  
 I'm alive.  
 I still feel.  
 I hope it's just a game.

## Now I Know What Jesus Felt Like

All the things I should have put first,  
 My family and my friends.  
 That seems to hurt the worst.  
 I had one foot in the grave  
 And one foot waiting for the hearse.  
 It seems that drink and drugs had become a curse  
 When my lies I had to rehearse.  
 I started to believe them.  
 What could be worse?  
 There before me sat a judge in black  
 His hair all slick back  
 He sentenced me to twenty-five and that's a fact  
 He said the state is tired of me and he wasn't holding back.  
 Then he gave me some other sentences to add to the stack.  
 He said I guarantee you won't be back.  
 With my head bent, and my jaw slack  
 I realized I didn't want to come back  
 I did it to myself and that's a fact  
 This time there is no turning back.  
 And no matter how much I want to hate the man in black,  
 I never gave anyone else no slack.  
 So this burden I alone carry on by my back!

## Live Like 'Dis

In the streets

Everybody think they got to live life doing something bad  
Do something bad then get bagged  
And wished they never had  
But life is about choices  
So choose good not bad  
If you don't have, get up off your ass  
And do something that'll make Allah, you, and your mother glad  
People that have and do bad  
Want a name for themselves and get bagged  
And the only thing they got to do is ask  
'Cause they people have  
So why do you want to do something bad  
When a person that don't have  
Think that the only way is to do something so bad  
So they can have  
But believe in God and you already have  
But people don't think like 'dat  
Like me  
But now I see  
'Cause I don't have  
But only thing I had to do is believe  
Now I wish I had  
Sin is bad who never had  
But make you a better person  
So don't live like 'dis if you had and changed  
I am happy and glad  
When them doors close and you in that cell  
That's all you get is time to think and change  
So you can make better choices than you had  
I put in my work  
So no more bad  
Am not trying to live like 'dis  
And am glad

-EW

**EW, this poem has a lot of great internal rhyme. We love the repetition of the words "have" and "bad" to demonstrate your point about making better choices. Why do you think so many people want what they don't have? Are there ways to create a name for ourselves without doing something negative?**

I ended up back in jail facing  
thirty years  
Now, I'm just hoping that she  
will forgive me  
And still be there for me

## What is a Promise?

Promise is a word  
Promise is strong  
Promise is something you hold onto  
Never let go on your promise  
Because if you do  
People will never believe you again  
About a promise  
Stay Strong Old Head!

-DJ

**DJ, we love the way you connect the promises you make to other people to believing the promises other people make to you. What do you think is the relationship between promises and trust? We cannot wait to hear more from you!**



## The Free Minds Book Club and Writing Program

**Our friends from the Free Minds Book Club and Writing Program have made themselves present in these Beat pages once again. Their work really stands out and shows a lot of talent and honesty. These young writers seem to be getting better every week and we cannot wait to see what else they have in store for us. Coming to us from the Washington DC Jail, we present to you the fantastic work of this exceptional program.**

## I Made a Promise

I made a promise to my mother  
That I was never going to get locked up again  
When I came home in December of 2012  
But I made a mistake  
Because my mind wasn't right  
And I ended up back in jail facing thirty years  
Now, I'm just hoping that she will forgive me  
And still be there for me

-DS

**DS, we admire how open and honest you are about your experiences in this poem. It can be hard to own up to our mistakes and ask forgiveness from the people we care about. What can you do to stay focused on your goals and keep your mind right moving forward?**

## Your Word

I promised many things  
But never kept up with the promises  
From females  
To my mother  
To friends  
But I remain on my own promise  
To stay in school  
To get my high school diploma  
The only thing you got in this world  
Is your word  
So I'll own up to mine

-CE

**CE, we love the lines, "The only thing you got in this world, is your word, So I'ma own up to mine." What changes do you need to make in your life to transition from a person who never kept up with his promises to a man who keeps his word?**

## My Promise to Keep

I met this pretty girl named Trinity  
I promised her the world  
Of diamonds and pearls  
I love her so much  
I'll do anything for her  
I'll jump in front of a train for her  
I'll sleep in the rain for her  
Just know that I'm in love with her  
And I'm keeping my promises to you!

-JW

**JW, we appreciate the imagery in this poem. Your passion really shines through! Why do you think it's important to keep promises to the people we love?**

## To The Beat

Here goes some more "Push-Pull-Strive" work that I wrote recently to be placed in your upcoming magazine. The piece is titled "Let's Tie These Rags Together." Hopefully it's worthy of placement in your magazine. Me, and my team members thought that this was good topic and a strong subject to tackle. An additional member wrote a rap song as well with the same title. We felt this was our call for all to change. I also wanted to ask you if you could send us a copy of the magazine.

Thank you!

## Let's Tie These Raggs Together

Let's tie these raggs together  
 Let's change the game like God changed the weather  
 It's better to start now then never  
 I can see ten years from now the world is gonna be better  
 It's time to unite and uplift each other  
 Let's not let a color, or a symbol kill each other  
 I'm speaking to Hispanics, and brothers  
 Those that come from broken homes and were raised by single mothers  
 No father in the house so we strive from our own hope  
 We all come from poverty and live off of two choices, and that's to rob, or sell dope  
 They view us a hoodlums that spread gang violence throughout the urban community  
 Temptation gets hectic so we wind up in the cell block praying for immunity  
 Some have good intentions, we just made wrong decisions  
 So we end up on prison with long convictions  
 Sometimes it's too late, so we lost faith and live with hate  
 So I advise you brothers with a second chance to get out and live with faith  
 Let's Tie These Raggs Together

-Tyrece Jefferson

## Tyrece Jefferson

Next up we have some interesting work from Tyrece Jefferson and his affiliates Marcus Jones, Richard Cooper, and Michael Simpson. Together they have formed a group they call "Push, Pull, and Strive." They share a belief in peace and unity among all people, as well as putting the many differences we have aside. Gang involvement is definitely a big issue, and Tyrece presents some of his attention-grabbing ideas to help us find some relief. Tyrece, Marcus, Richard, and Michael all come to us from State Prison at Corcoran in Corcoran, California

## The Truth

Bangin' isn't worth nothin'  
 Cause being dead in a cemetery  
 Or locked up in prison  
 Isn't my destiny  
 But just part of my generation  
 I'm from the hood  
 So I'm guilty by affiliation  
 I have pushed, pulled, and strived  
 So that I'll make it  
 And never went against the grain  
 'Cause I got good intentions

I get respect form ninjas on all sides

And maybe that's because  
 I've been doin' this for a long time

Before I die  
 I want to get things right  
 And no longer be the reason  
 Of why momma's cry  
 So from this day on,  
 I'm going to live my life  
 Without lookin' back  
 Now let's tie these raggs together

-Marcus Jones

## Straight to The Top

Don't let the drugs kill the mind  
 I'm gonna show you how to eat without the crime  
 Your name on the building, now that's how you shine  
 If it ain't about money, I ain't got the time  
 Moving forward yeah, it's push, pull and strive  
 Straight to the top, so we're all gonna rise

## This Truth

Isolated yet motivated we find a way to overcome obstacles in our paths (many times strategically placed) to keep us blind to truth, at each other's throat or somehow aiding in our own oppression. Sometimes it's hard to see the truth that stares you in the face on a daily basis when our lives consist of intoxication and chasing the fast dreams.

We say we want better, but at times put progress on the backburner as if we have time to wait or relax. Hard work, dedication, and constant studying are tools needed to move ahead. How can one procrastinate when you're staring at the back of the race? Are you even conditioned to make it to the finish line?

Statistics show us that these revolving doors (jails) are designed to keep us in constant rotation until our last breaths. I say this because there is few to none that speaks on the root causes to much of this madness, which keeps us ghetto dwellers from reaching our full potential. If a person only puts a band aid on a gunshot wound to your stomach, does that stop the internal bleeding? Keep in mind now that the same person who shot you is the one putting on the band aid! Or look at it as a ten-mile racer. Yet your opponent is given a seven mile head start.

We all want this "American Dream", yet we refuse to accept the facts on how this dream was a nightmare for countless souls. Many of them full of pigmentation (color). Murder, rape, kidnap, slavery, assault, torture, mayhem, etc. Yeah, all of the above is what you have to do to achieve this dream. But yet nobody tells you this.

A lot of the words used today are a smokescreen to keep one from accepting or facing head on the blatant contradictions in our lives. Western, capitalism, imperialism, free trade, democracy, America,

## Mr. Daniels

Mr. Daniels is a consistent writer to The Beat Without, so it is no surprise that he has made it to yet another issue. Mr. Daniels switches things up by writing about some controversial issues in today's society, and his point of view towards them. He also writes about what he feels contributes to people's lack of motivation and how this can be changed. Mr. Daniels piece gets very deep so we hope you enjoy what he has offered up. He writes to us once again from California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA.

etc. We hear all of these words through many different mouth pieces on television, yet many of us fail to realize that oppression, racism, murder, rape, exploitation, Eurocentric points of view, class war, divide and conquer can be used in their place.

We never question what is taught to us, so many times we willingly walk into a decadent street (troubles). Sometimes it is people who profess to love us that cause us the most pain. We let words mislead us when in fact we should let a person's actions speak for them.

We are led to compete, and by any means get what we want, even if it's at someone else's expense. Usually you are screwing over someone who looks like you and this is looked at as normal. Have you ever asked a person who taught you something how did they learn it? What is the good, bad, and ugly of a situation? Or what other choice is there?

Knowledge is power. Once you know the truth, no one can take it away from you. So one should use these times now to gain all that you can to better prepare you for all that is ahead. Study cultures, history (not his-story) and more non-fiction than fiction. Liberate your mind from enslavement and the body will follow. One love, one struggle.

### Final Note

Can you please place everything from my poem in the book. I'm posting it on the internet also making this my front page website. I love you all The Beat Within. You helped me make it through. Thanks and I will contact you all when I'm free. You are a part of my plans along with my poems, clothing lines, and music. God bless. Thanks again.

### Marlon D. Fleming

**Our next writer Marlon D. Fleming has written a piece filled with hope and inspiration. Marlon's piece is about finishing up one chapter of his life and starting a new one. This chapter seems to hold much more potential and optimism. Let us welcome Marlon to The Beat Without pages and don't hesitate to take a look at his unique piece. Marlon comes to us from Columbia Correctional Institution Annex in Lake City, Florida.**

### It's Over Now

All these years,  
I've given my tears,  
Eaten three meals,  
For fifteen years.  
Struggled and tried,  
A lot has died,  
So many times,  
I've swallowed my pride.  
Living in the dark,  
Waiting for the light,  
Through all of this I prayed at night.  
Dreams were broken,  
But now put back together,  
My date is soon,  
It used to be never.

Fifty-eight years I was sentenced to do,  
Time on my hands,  
I had no clue,  
God stood by my side,  
And showed me how  
For 2014, it's over now!  
An inmate in FIA Department of Corrections  
Who was sentenced to death-row,  
Had his sentence overturned to life  
With ninety years in 1998.  
Fighting hard  
2006 sentenced to fifty-eight years on an illegal sentence.  
Now 2014 pending to be released back to freedom  
It's over now,  
If he can do it, you can do it  
To those in the struggle, stay strong.

## The Beat Within



A Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside

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**I** know during my younger days I didn't have anyone there to kind of guide me. I know the people who tried didn't know the system as I know it today. So you are hearing this from someone who knows it. It all depends on you. At the end you can either choose to do better and try to do something with your life that leads to a brighter future, or you can keep doing what you are doing and live in misery. Trust me, when the years began to sink in so will you. You begin to get older. You start thinking different. You begin to think, "why didn't I just do things differently?"

read the rest of Rolando Ascencio's BWO piece on page 54

