



InDepth
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Dear Reader

Written by EDWIN MORAN

At the age of 17, I was incarcerated for a serious crime but was given a second chance. I was lucky because I was given a juvenile sentence that allowed me the opportunity to be released before my 25th birthday but only with good behavior. Throughout my time incarcerated, I began to realize that my life was becoming that of a statistic. I couldn't help but wonder... where did I go wrong?

My support system, InsideOUT Writers and family, were major contributors to my transformation. I was introduced to a righteous path of realization, acceptance, and giving back. I finally began to grow, not just physically, but mentally. I was rehabilitating. This was the reason I was released at 22, before the completion of the sentence. But there were more challenges ahead. Soon after I was back out in the world. Responsibilities and reality struck me in the face as I re-acclimated to society. I enrolled in college with the knowledge that I also needed a job to meet my everyday necessities.

Aside from counseling, love, and understanding, this is where IOW helped me out the most. By creating a position flexible to my school schedule and hiring me as a paid intern, I was able to pursue my education, while having a proper income. IOW is here for us, but we must do our part, accept the help and give back to those in need, as well. Being a negative statistic is not an option. It is time to be productive citizens of the community, someone many people would never imagine us to be, but that we can accomplish ourselves.

Edwin Moran

IOW Alum

The story of me

At the age 5-10
I was becoming a man

At the age 12-15
I became a dopefine.

At the age 17-18
I am cryin' to be a
New Human Being

Kane B., Age 18
CJH, Unit Boys ESU

New Year, Fresh Start

New books, new clothes
One more chance to make it right.

New beginning, 365 days to go
Every day is a new day
to make my family proud
A new chance to work 10x harder

New year, 12 months to go
A great time to begin a new road
Head up high,
You have a path to follow
Leave the past behind you
You have a great year ahead of you

Heidy P., Age 17
CWH, Girls D

New Year's Resolution

Stop being so hard on myself
Focus on me to be better
Connect more with my dad
Be more fit.
Go to church more.
Learn to control my anger
sarcasm, and attitude
To be a better writer
Achieve my dreams

Angelica A.
CWH, Girls D

When I get out, I want to change a lot of things.

First, I want to change my ways, change my circle, set my priorities, and make sure all my priorities are done before anything else. I want to change my ways by being smart in whatever it is I'm doing. I want to make my mom proud, go to school, finish school, and get a job. I want to set a good example for my siblings. Things that can mess me up while going down the road are drugs, coming back to jail, and being in the wrong circle.

Anonymous
CWH, Boys MN

There is a rainbow after the storm

Hold on to your dreams
Be like the hawk—never lose sight

Hold on to your dreams
There is always a reward for great accomplishments

Hold on to your dreams
There is always a tree that's grown big from one little seed.

Heidy P., Age 17
CWH, Girls D

I'm thankful to wake up every day.
I'm thankful for my family.
I'm thankful for my father and Herah.
I'm thankful for my life and my looks.
I'm thankful for my eyes and my body.
I'm thankful for my friends.
I'm thankful for everybody.
I'm thankful for my true self.
I'm thankful for other people.
I'm thankful that I go to school.
I'm thankful for Sammy and her love she shares.
I'm thankful for Marroquin and her support.
I'm thankful for Solis and her happiness.
I'm thankful for Shelton's crazy.
I'm thankful for Michelle and her joy.
I'm so thankful for everything.

Anonymous
CWH, Unit Girls Care

If I want to change, I have to start with myself.

I have to want it and let it be my motivation. I have to start with waking up and telling myself this is what I need to do. It's not going to be easy, but it's a start.

Melvin
BJN, Unit Z2

I keep trying hard to have a future, so I know God has one waiting for me soon.

One thing I know is that I don't like math, but I like writing a lot. That doesn't mean I will become a lawyer. Maybe if I keep doing what I do, God has something planned for me or knows what career I will have. Maybe I'll be a lawyer because I said I wanted to be a lawyer. Maybe my future is beautiful or maybe not. I cannot predict or imagine it at all. All I know is that God has something good or bad for me. All I know is that I'm going to continue going to school.

Juvany G.
CJH, Unit Boys Care

I'm giving myself permission to become a better person.

I'm giving myself permission to become a better person.

I want to become a better person because life is too short for me to always have to worry about enemies or the police all the time. Becoming a better person will allow me to interact with more people, and it would be better for my son and my family to be around me. I give myself permission to be a better person.

Richard N.
BJN, Unit Z2

We have to let go of all blame, all attacking, all judging, to free our inner self to attract what we want and what we say we want.

In order to achieve what you want, you need to be open, conforming, and willing to change. If you want what you say, you need to put these vibes out there. Everything is about karma. If you truly want good, you need to put good out there. Every man is guilty of all the good he didn't do. I should be a better and nicer person. I need to ask all the people I wronged for forgiveness. I have been rude and disrespectful to many people and I regret it. I have done quite a few wrong things and I hope that everyone I have wronged can forgive me.

Kai F.
CJH, Unit Boys Care

I was born for a reason

God gave me life
Sometimes I do wrong
Sometimes I do right
One day I'll achieve my dreams
I've come a long way
and above all heights
I know I shine a light that's bright
For the people I love
And the ones I take care of
I live for my past, present, and future
I live to die
But I'm crazy
So I'd probably already sold my soul
Before I arrived in the sky

Anije D., Age 17
CUH, Unit Girls D

Better Me

I feel stupid putting myself in this situation. I feel unworthy of family's love because I'm putting them through this. My life is not over, this is the new beginning. A new life with a better me. I'll do things I should've done since the start. I will tell my mom this, so I can give myself the opportunity to start life as a better me.

Armando C.
BUN, Unit G2





Walking Dark Streets...

Walking in the dark streets with my two brothers wondering if any of my brothers' enemies will pass by and blast us. Who knows. I was just a 12-year-old girl walking with her brothers. As one year passes by, I turned 13. I'm the one on the street with my homies. Now, it's me walking looking out for enemies.

Now that I think of it, I should have never followed my brothers, sister, aunt, uncle, and dad's footsteps. I ask myself "Why? Is it because I was always around that since I was a baby? Is it because I saw my brother get shot 15 times when I was 5 years old?" I don't know. I still ask myself that question the more I try to get out of it and stay away from it but I can't. I'm always surrounded by it.

Now I'm here in East Lake Central Juvenile Hall. Where is my family? And siblings?

I wonder when I get out, will I keep walking the dark streets or will I keep doing what I always do. I'm trying to do good. I don't want my baby brother to follow in my footsteps.

Brianna R.
CJH, Unit Girls 0

The other day I asked myself why am I putting my mom through this.

I know that I think about it. I feel awful for what I am doing to her. I wonder how much pain I am putting my mom through right now. After she carried me for 9 months and this is how I repay her? After she took care of me all my life? I feel bad when she comes and sees me. I can see the pain that's causing her by being locked up. When she sees me, I can tell she wants to cry. But she does not because she knows that her crying will not help. It will only just make the problem worse. When she is done visiting me, I know she cries on the way home. But I really don't know what to do. I'm stuck in here and I can't do anything about it. I should have listened to my mom. If I did, maybe I would not be here right now.

Raymond B.
CJH, Unit Boys Care

I lost my niece, but I realized I didn't lose her.

She went to a better place. My and my family should have grown closer but instead, we grew apart. I felt for a while, I lost everything until I came to jail here. I realized that I lost my freedom, but I found my heart and love for others. My family and I found God and got closer to him. It's the happiest I've ever been. I have a lot of masks, but I choose to not let them show because they won't make my family or God happy. My masks are in my past.

Jessica H.
BJN, Unit Girls TV

I think my biggest challenge I've ever had to face was the death of my brother.

When my brother died, I felt like everything else didn't matter. I didn't care about anything or nobody. My life was on pause. I didn't feel like talking to anyone at first, not even my mom, because although it hurt me, I couldn't imagine the pain she was going through. I didn't feel like going to school. All I did was pop pills and smoke weed, trying to make myself numb. It took me a while to put interest in other things. I slowly started to adapt to life again. I had to face life without my big brother. Although I feel like I took a big loss, I feel like I got someone up in heaven looking out for me. I like to think that he's up there with God joking and laughing. Long live my bro.

Maurico F.
CJH, Unit Boys MN

A lot of grief is still building up inside me.

The grief that most likely won't ever go away no matter what I do. I grieve for somebody that I will never see or speak to ever again. This will always be within me because it was the day that my friend got killed right in front of me. I never have witnessed anything like this until that day. I still hold in anger because I came close to death myself. At just 13 years old, my life could've been over. I can't imagine what type of pain my loved ones would have gone through if I was gone. Every day I wake up and thank God that I'm still alive and well. I just want forgiveness, just as I have forgiven.

Francisco V.
CJH, Unit Boys KL

The mystery began when she lost herself.

She was confused, her whole life was one big question mark.
The mystery began when she followed the darling in search of the light,
stumbling in her path trying to keep herself up.
The mystery began when her soul broke down,
in search of joy from all places but not knowing where to look.
The mystery began when she finally pursued her journey alone.
The mystery began when she fell in love with herself and didn't know what
to do from there.

Amari B.
CWH, Unit Girls D

I Can't Live Without You

Your love, your touch, your entire presence
You took me in when I had no place to live
You fed me, you clothed me
You were there when my own flesh and blood wanted nothing to do with me.
You helped me find myself when I lost myself
You treated me with unconditional love, respect, and care.
When I no longer wanted to live, you became my reason to stay.
Because of you, I know what it feels like to be loved
and how it feels to love someone back.
Because of you, I know what it is like wanting to give someone you love the world
like you did for me.
We are apart, but you left your mark and I'll never forget.
I want you to know you've been my only true friend.

Melina R., Age 17
CWH, Unit Girl's CARE

Once before my grandma passed away,

she told me that if I kept going in the wrong direction, it would lead me to a
terrible place I wouldn't want to be in. I turned my grief into hate because I
wanted to show her that I could be a better person. She was my superhero when
times were rough, and I had nobody to cry to, she was always there.
But I know she wants to see me in a better position and become a better man.

Omario G.
CWH, Unit Boys KL



Role Model

I really do not have a role model.

I'm my own role model.

I don't follow someone else.

I learned from what I did.

Won't do it again.

Told myself I can't make jail home.

I have a little family who loves me
and cares about me.

They are my role model.

Jose M.
CJH, Unit Boys P

Granny, your life made a difference in my life.

You made me the man I am today. I see your smile when I see darkness. When the war is going on in my head, you make a difference to me. Your songs make me feel. You make me want to do better as a man. At first, I could not see what must be left. Nothing is real to me. But now, I see I can not let anyone put me down... your old school song spark's a moment, and I cry.

**Kaelon S.
CJH, Unit Boys KL**

If I was a father I would be cool and not be overprotective.

But I would still make sure that my kids were doing the right thing. I give them presents and money, but I would make them do chores, so they don't become spoiled.

**Andrew F.
CJH, Unit Boys CARE**

As a young boy, life was tough.

Growing up with no mom or dad as a role model did set me back, but it never stopped me from moving forward... I grew up around nothing but gang members, so it made me think that lifestyle was right.

As time went on, I turned to the "homies" looking for comfort. It brought no good but only trouble. I'm in and out of jail. I feel it's time to do something different.

**Tomas H.
CJH, Unit Boys KL**



The sweetest sound I have received is my parents' honesty.

Especially my father's. When my dad tells me he loves me, I cherish it and I know I can never lose it. Those words don't often come but just at the right times when I need them most. The sweetest sound can only come from the ones I love, the ones I trust, and the ones I cherish.

The sweetest sound is affection at all angles and perspectives even when I'm upset or depressed.

Jordan M.
CWH, Unit Girls C

The sweetest sound I've ever heard is laughter.

The sound of my little brother's laugh, the sound of my mom's, just laughter in general. Knowing that life isn't easy for anyone, people still find a way to laugh. Laughter is beautiful to me because it's the one thing that's hard to fake, successfully, at least. Unlike a smile, you can tell when a laugh isn't genuine. The best thing about any laugh knows you were the cause of it. It sparks something like joy inside you, something unexplainable. Laughing can also be a cure. For example, yesterday I was really going through it, but after getting some genuine laughs out, I couldn't do anything but feel great. Laughter is one of the best medicines imaginable. It's just often taken for granted considering it happens so many times a day.

Amari B.
CWH, Unit Girls C

The sweetest sound to me is my daughter's hiccups.

I say my daughter's hiccups because she's so little and cute.

My baby's heartbeats when I first open a bag of chips.

It's like music to my ears.

I love hearing my baby's heartbeat because I know she's alive and because it's different from my heartbeat.

It just makes me feel so warm inside.

I know I am not alone.

Jazmine W.
CWH, Unit Girls C

I Will

I will choose to speak and beat my silence.

I will choose to be a better person each and every day.

I will choose to be a young independent lady.

I will choose to do better even when temptation is around me.

I choose to have a poetic voice for the better and for my anxiety.

I will choose to not be a mess-up.

I will choose to love myself as I've never done before.

I choose to let myself know that I care about life and every choice I make.

I choose the lifestyle that leads in my world of tough love to myself.

I choose to find myself in a world that's cold.

I choose to speak up from now on because I refuse to be misunderstood.

I choose to be outspoken even if I shout for attention.

I choose to be golden.

Preciosa L.
CWH, Unit Girls Care

What is Home to Me?

Home to me is somewhere I feel safe, loved, and people that push me to do better to be something in my life. Home is somewhere I can talk to someone about my problems without anyone putting me down. Home is where I don't have to feel uncomfortable but instead, have my own space to think and not worry about anything.

London M.
CJH, Unit Boys MN

Home is important because that's the only place you could truly be yourself.

You're not scared to bring out the kid in you that you once were. You have your own personal bed, your own room, and your personal stuff like a closet filled with clothes you own and a restroom you could use anytime you want. There's a fridge that's filled with food and a house filled with family.

Home is the only place you truly belong.

Adrich R.
CJH, Unit Boys MN

I think I am the product of my environment because if the things and people around me were different,

I would have a different life. I think if I weren't exposed to drugs, money, and guns, I would live a very different life. If I were introduced to a family and community with money, I wouldn't have to find a way to make it. I wouldn't be sitting in a jail cell because of it. I wouldn't even know what it felt like being in jail if my environment was a rich and safe place to be.

Maurico F.
CJH, Unit Boys MN

Growing up, I always felt like that one missing puzzle piece that will never be found and always is lost.

Agustin
BJN, Unit G2



One of the things that I miss is cooking.

I remember making bomb breakfast for my girlfriend all the time. I used to make giant omelets with eggs, cheese, mushrooms, bell peppers, tomatoes, ham, sausage, turkey, and other stuff. I can also make delicious crêpes with powdered sugar and lemon juice. I also like to make good smoothies. My girlfriend loves it.

Andrew F.
CWH, Unit Boys CARE

The hardest thing I ever had to learn is,
"A second life is not promised!"

I am scared to die now because I love this world, but I hate the life I'm living. Even though I have much many more years to see, I know eventually I would grow out of my fears. For now, I have to live every day like it's my last day.

Semaj K., Age 17
BJN, Unit Y2

What I've missed the most is fried chicken... and my family.

I miss my best friend and my home girls. I miss real food and a real bed. I miss my phone and my shoes and clothes. But what I missed the most, and what I will always miss, what is not in my hand... P.S. fried chicken. The sweetest sound is when I hear the chicken touch the grease. It makes me so happy and it's so satisfying I start smelling the food, and it just makes me happy.

Shana M.
CWH, Unit Girls C

The hardest thing for me to learn was how to live life. The hardest part about living life is living life itself.

Paul D., Age 18
BJN, Unit Y2



Music is a way for me to get lost.

Not lost in a bad way but in a good way. One thing I truly believe is that one voice can speak with wisdom. I believe that an Artist, you really enjoy listening to, can speak to you by the music that they make. Although I don't really hear the music physically, I can hear it in my head. The good music that I enjoy plays over my head. It entirely takes me to a place of peace. One song can really spark a moment present or past.

Francisco V.
CWH, Unit KL

Jazz

Jazz, you make me feel calm and relaxed
Jazz, I like how you blow the sax
Jazz, ooh you sound so nice
Jazz, I just listen to you all night,
the way Sade uses her voice makes me feel just right
Jazz, you were before my time
Jazz, when I have you on the radio
it's like I was born around that time.
Jazz, Jazz

Asia W., Age 17
CWH, Unit Girls D

JAZZ



Too many days
Too many months
Almost too many years
So much pain that causes weakness
It's hard to wipe away my tears
Surrounded by 300 bricks
A million roaches
And the smell of the last dude
That was here
How many days
How many months
And how many years
Would I get it if I gave it back?
To those that I caused so many tears
Asking my heavenly father
"Why Me"
Praying for all the time I lost
And all the blessings I left behind
Asking for
Many Days
Many months
And many years

Semaj K.
BVN, Unit 92

Untitled

While I sit locked away in this place
I'm isolated like the stars that sit in space
I think about the days I was sent away
Even if I'm locked up, I'm free mentally

I'm a poor young man
with a lost soul
I lost my dad then my heart grew cold

I never did change
I'm still a lost boy that stayed the same
I've been lost for 17 years
I got locked up at 14
I sit in this cell and shed these tears

I sit in a dark place with my broken heart
It hurt me but tore my family apart
while I sit in court I see my mom and ...

I see the tears that fall from her eyes
so I close to mine, so I won't face the judge
so I go back to the halls
and keep spending these lonely nights

Jose H.
CJH, Unit Boys P

The room is dark and I am quiet.

My rights have just been read to me after having surgery. I lie in the hospital bed with a gunshot wound and a shattered femur with only one thing on my mind, "what's going to happen to me?"

Andres E.
BUN, Unit Y2

Throughout the days, throughout the nights, I am being taunted day & night.

I'm tired of seeing the things I see. I'm wishing one day that I can be smiling on the other side of that glass but on the inside, I am trapped. My ankle has a chain and a lock with a code I cannot seem to break. Although I think about what it's like to be free...to have my freedom back, to be happy like how I always wanted to be. I wish I can be free like a child running around the playground, having a time of their life outside this cruelty of the world. We have no choice to be around sick people around the world

Mynna T.
CJH, Unit Girls Care

Clouds

High above,
Above you all,
Cruising slow,
But moving forward.
In my own little trip.
A trip to nowhere,
But somewhere.
Wish to touch those I love,
But can't, so I just strike those I can.
Clouds.
Somewhere but nowhere.

Lucio S., Age 18
BJN, Unit G2

Untitled

You go to the dark,
You go to the light,
But when you're stuck,
Which one to pick.
There are two ways.
But why can't there be a third way,
Where whatever you do,
Does not happen to you.

Christian G., Age 17
BJN, Unit G1

You don't know me

you just know a
Mistake I made
In life, you get drained
My life it's so insane
That's why I take
Everything so serious
No, it's not a game
my parents always
Told me to always
Use my brain
Because everything
Can change
I try
Not to be negative
And switch lanes
You see differently
And not the same

D. Ellis
BJN, Unit G2

Past

The past is the past
Don't you forget
but keep it a secret
Hold it and learn from it
Expand your mind from it
But don't you expose it
The past is the past
The present is the future

Lucio S., Age 18
BJN, Unit G2

Free Me

When I was 14
entering the halls
and was out for 5 months
thinking
It will be fun to get
Into trouble but turns out
I'm the only one getting
In trouble
Then I turned
15
entering the halls
yelling Free Me

Seven

There are seven days a week
Spending seven days in a cell
For 2 months
eating the same meals
Making one call
out of the seven days
Being locked up
Seven days
for 2 months.

Kelly O.
CWH, Unit Girls Care

In the depth of my mind

I know what I see
the translucent lights
of my memories
All in my head the good times
the bad times
my past
I used to do things out of
impulse
Scar of love, hate, and pain
all out of impulse
this is what is in the
Depths of my mind
But it's my short bit of
The life that seems like
Forever
It's not even a lifetime
I know in the future
I will be dwelling on these lines
In the depths of my mind

Diego R.
CUH, Unit Boys KL

He struggles

While he's in chains
Counting all the bricks
Like every mistake, he's ever made
He searches for a way out of the cycle
But he can't break out

Brandon Oxlay
CUH, Unit Boys MN

I laugh, I cry

I speak, I write
I hate the day, I love the night
Just so I can live inside my
Dreams
I'm an underground king that
Has never been crowned
I am a child in a man's body
That cannot be down
I am caged, thrown with gorillas
But almost royalty in my town
Conversations with mom
My life is a mess
I ain't coming back
Everything going right
I ain't going left

Diego R.
CUH, Unit Boys KL

The Real Me

The judge doesn't know the real
me. They only know what I have
done or what they have been told.
The real me is nothing like the one
in right now. I grew up in a bad
neighborhood and I made bad
choices. I can't go back, but I could
make my future better

Anonymous
BUN, Unit G2



On freedom –
One choice could take our freedom, in a second, our life.

Be impeccable (truthful, real) with your word
Always do your best
Don't take anything personally
Don't make assumptions
Always keep moving

Mario Ruiz
CJH, Unit Boys P



Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his famous speeches and inspiring quotes.

What I see in the mirror...

In the mirror I see myself, but that's not all.
I see a girl who can be doing better in life.
Not only that, but I see a girl who has gone through a lot and hates the world for it.

When I look in the mirror, it sets something off in my head that causes stress.
When I look into the mirror, I don't only see my face but also the background and the place that I'm in. I get stressed a lot because I know I can be doing better and bigger things with my family on the outside world to benefit myself and family members as well.

Another thing I see is a growing individual who has caused a lot of problems and has created some issues that I wish I never did. I will be taking the consequences but if I feel that I've learned my lesson and will be better. I see someone trying to better myself. I also see someone who misses her family and wants to go home. This girl is learning steps in life and is going into different areas in life and is realizing the rights from wrong.

But in the mirror, there are some things that I wish I were able to see.
Isolated in my room, the walls are dirty, it's the toilets that you get tired of seeing.
I miss seeing my own active life and for a place where I truly belong.

Rodjonae H.
CJH, Unit Girls O

Rain

Rain is life
Rain brings deep thoughts
Reading your sorrows
Rain washes away your yesterdays
And brightens your tomorrows

Anonymous
CUH, Unit Boys RS

Hold on to your dreams

Hold on to your dreams
There is a rainbow after the storm
Hold on to your dreams
Be like the hawk, never lose sight
Hold on to your dreams
There's always a reward
for great accomplishment
Hold on to your dreams
There's always a seed from a tree that grows big
Hold on to your dreams

Heidy P.
CUH, Unit Girls D

My endless walk

I'm on my feet all-day
I go and I go
So I have no time to stay
Ruff skin, red heels
I keep going so I have no time to deal
But when I do stop, where is my break
I'm bottled all up and have no more space
But when do I stop
Where is my break

Sienna F.
CUH, Unit Girls C

I Wonder If Anyone

I wonder if anyone really cares about me.
I wonder if anyone really wants to see
me succeed.
I wonder if I truly am loved in life.
I wonder if the cops will stop treating me
like a criminal.
I wonder when racism will change.

Alexis H.
CUH, Unit Girls CARE

The air has changed from boiling hot to ice-cold

Trees are starting to lay down to rest across streets
Before you can step out, you have to have a bundle of three on.
The sun is hotter than I last remember
The air is fresher than ever
My freedom to move, explore, and life is back and better than ever.
There are more people at my house on this day than ever
We are all laughing, smiling, loving, and drinking.
We scream and jump as the counter hits 1.

Kyla M., Age 17
CUH, Unit Girls D

How could I ever forget being in a Central Juvenile Hall.

Being here has been a real learning experience for me. Yes, it's been hard. Yes, tears have been shed, but yes. It was needed. Being here gives you a lot of time to think. Although I don't agree it's a good thing, many may argue that it is. Today, well yesterday, I started reading a book called "Before I Fall", and I love that book. It's so easy for me to get lost in it because it's so relatable. It's about a girl who dies and relives the same day over and over again. Even though I'm not dead, being in her feels like a repetition of the same day over and over. In the book, the main character says "hope keeps you alive" and that quote has been keeping me alive and motivated.

Amari B.
CJH, Unit Girls C

No one is able to see through us.

People only see what we let them see. They have no idea of what you go through or the things that happen that make you who you are today. Some don't give a damn about us unless it affects them in some way or if we are dying. Even then, life still goes on and that's the sad truth. There is hardly anyone who will understand things that we do or why we do what we do because we each have a different perspective about things. What we might see for an easy grab, to feed ourselves or our family, someone may see us as animals. No one out there is perfect. We all make good and bad decisions. We sometimes get judged for all that and sadly for some people, it paints a picture of yourself. They just don't understand us. They haven't been in our shoes to judge us.

Pedro B.
BJN, Unit Z1

It's easy to fall into negative thoughts and be influenced to do things that will deteriorate your sane state of mind.

Those negative occurrences will only affect your overall progress, and you must find a way to avoid those negative influences. Sometimes you may have to cut off ties with people, other times, you must re-evaluate what you should be doing and create yourself a 'new policy'. I must find a way to create that 'new policy' for myself because of this point in my life, things have gotten serious. I am not even 20-years-old and on the verge of making adult decisions. Therefore, I need to be more aware of my thoughts and decisions. In the end, anything I do will affect me and my loved ones. I must be very careful with what I do.

Abel D.
BJN, Unit Z2

You Don't Realize

Dear You,

You got me out of so many situations. You made me a better person without realizing it. You're just like everybody else, but you're different in many ways. I'm happy to have you, but I regret making you my everything. You hurt me without realizing it. I tried my best to treat you like a queen. I always treated you right. I'm not perfect. I hurt you sometimes, and I don't realize it. I tried to make you my life but why? Do you want to know what I never realized? You're just a human. I had a crush on you then made you mine. I treated you like I love you all the time knowing you never loved me. You treat me like you love me, but then you don't. I try to make this relationship work because you're really the only girl I see in my future. I see a family, a home, 4 kids, a good job, I see you. But you don't realize. I love you but I mostly love myself. You love me, but you're mostly caught up in your head. I know you're hurting, and you need someone to keep you company.

I give you everything, but you don't realize.


You hurt me but you don't realize.

I hurt you but I don't realize.

We don't communicate, and you don't realize.

I truly do love you, but still, you don't realize.

Divine C.
CWH, Unit 0



I am a female, a girl
But my life is a twirl
Although my hair doesn't curl
I see a long path
Just as a single strand
Straight, not gay
But a lot of love from my side
To LGBT Pride
I always held my head high
Showing the respect I get
Not the neglect I felt
At the start of a war
I never commenced
I'm mindful of others
But a mind full of positive vibes
As the sunset rise
My smile deprives
When the storm arrives
But the sun comes out
Like I saw my true colors came out
Not the closet
But my personality
Beautiful and true.

Daisy
BUN, Unit Girls TV

Learning to Love Myself

You were my Everything.
How can I love someone?
Who hurts me so bad?
Who made me so sad?
But then made me glad
Not because of what you did
But when you kissed me
You always made my face lit.
You were my Everything,
Thoughts of a wedding ring ...
But now
I'd rather love Me.

Destiny G., Age 15
WHT, Unit Girls Care

I have a lion's heart

I am very smart
I'm a woman
Phenomenally
Phenomenal woman
That's me.
I am pretty within and out
At least that's what others think and see
I'm a woman
Phenomenal woman
That's me
I'm coming through the front door
So there's no need to lock the back
I walk through with no strings attached
My confidence makes people step back
I'm a woman
Phenomenal
Phenomenally woman, that's me.

Malaysia S.
WHT, Unit Girls D

Phenomenal Woman

As I meet new people in the world,
No matter time, place, or setting
They never fail to tell me I'm beautiful
Even though I protest against the state,
My beauty is somehow still seen
They say I could be a supermodel or actress
Moreover, they try to enforce that
But I simply say I am just me
and don't strive to be
Nothing more
Because I am already phenomenal
Phenomenal woman, that's me.
I'm the height of an oak tree
with medium length leaves
I have two wonderful holes
on the side of my cheeks
A blinding smile
That can light up the darkest of the darkest
rooms there is.
My voice is like lavender,
Sweet but strong.
My mind a monkey's playground
Filled with endless adventures to swing into.
Because I'm phenomenally me,
Phenomenal woman, that's me!

Kyla M.
WHT, Unit Girls D

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

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... and to our current teachers who continue to inspire, guide, and
encourage our students to express themselves one word at a time.

our current and past teachers

Fax Bahr

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Davion Davis

Shelley Diamond

Jacques Edeline

Dunia Elvir

Gary Gilbert

Michelle Gubbay

Sally Hamilton

Gale Holland

Lesley Hyatt

Howard Ibach

Deborah Kanter

Johnny Kovatch

Ben Lear

Gina Loring

Ken Mirman

Matt Mizel

Hud Morgan

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This mission of InsideOUT Writers is to reduce the juvenile recidivism rate by providing a range of services that evolves to meet the needs of currently and formerly incarcerated youth and young adults.

Using creative writing as a catalyst for personal transformation, these young people are empowered with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully re-integrate into our communities becoming advocates for their future.

InsideOUT Writers

1212 N. Vermont Ave, 2nd Floor

Los Angeles, CA 90029

Office: (323) 660-1866 | Fax: (323) 660-2072

insideoutwriters.org/donate

development@insideoutwriters.org

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