



InDepth

SPECIAL HOLIDAY EDITION

December 2020

iow
InsideOUT
WRITERS



Fellow Student,

At the age of 17, I was being tried as an adult and looking at life without the possibility of parole. During those long hours, days and months, everything about my life revealed itself to me and I began seeing that what I believed to be true wasn't real. Sitting inside that tiny cell I was thinking, thinking, thinking and did so much thinking that I started tripping. I just couldn't understand why I was in jail for something I had not done but a larger truth came through. Although I was innocent of that crime, I was guilty of a lifestyle that led me right to where I found myself.

While incarcerated, I meet a woman who was genuine with me. She listened to what I had to say and did not judge me based on the people I associated with and acts I was a part of at the time. She believed I was innocent. This was an IOW teacher and shortly after joining the program, I was transferred to an adult facility. I lost my connection with IOW. Even so, I used the tool of writing to sustain myself and grow as a man. After I was released, I reconnected with IOW. The Alumni Program was instrumental to my life. Staff and teachers literally assisted me with everything I needed from job preparation to getting my identification lined back up to enrollment back in school. You name it and they do their best to help you directly or provide you with the exact resource you need.

This lead to a new chapter in my book. I was headed in a different direction from the one I was in when I first encountered IOW.

Sincerely,

**Lionel T.
IOW Alum**

One Christmas morning, knowing that we didn't have much money, I was very anxious about what I was going to get. So waking up at "no earlier than 4:00," as my parents demanded, I ran into my parents' room and woke them up and in turn, they went to go wake up my brother and sister. We met in the living room, and my parents informed me that I was to go first as it was "youngest to oldest" this year. My parents encouraged me to open one specific present. Oblivious to my parent's hidden laughter, I decided to open it. I tore the wrapper off and, lo and behold ... my smelly old shoe! We all laughed and it opened up a nice environment for our Christmas morning as a family.

My parents said I could open another one, and so I opened a rectangular prism-shaped one and out came a giant box with 24 individually wrapped... Giant Dill Pickles, my favorite food as a child. That was the happiest Christmas we had because it taught us we could come together even when we had problems that threatened to bring us down.

by Seth W., Age 17
IOW Alum

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 my head held high
Showing the respect I get
Not the neglect I felt
At the start of a war never commenced
I'm mindful of others
But a mind full of positive vibes
As a sunset rise
My smile deprives
When a storm arrives
But the sun comes out
Like I saw my true colors came out
Not the closet But my personality
Beautiful not true.

by Daisy U.
Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall
Unit Girls TV

In the depth of my mind
I know what I see
the translucent lights
of my past memories
All in my head
the good times
the bad times
my past, passive aggressively
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
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

by Diego R.
Central Juvenile Hall
Unit Boys KL

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 your dreams

by Heidi P.
Central Juvenile Hall
Unit Girls D

My endless walk
Im 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 do i stop, where is my break
Im bottled all up and have no more space
But when do I stop
Where is my break

by Sienna F.
Central Juvenile Hall
Unit Girls C



I will choose to speak up 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 my life.
I choose to have a poetic voice for the better for my anxiety
I will choose to not be a mess up.
I will chose to love myself like 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.

by Preciosa L.
Central Juvenile Hall
Unit Girls Care

Go explore something new
Running from problems
Ask Santa for help
Thankful for everything
Inside and outside you are beautiful
Too smart for the system
You are something special
Determine your destiny
Enjoy life

Vanessa P., Age 13
10W Alum

Christmas smells like freshly baked food. It smells wonderful.

It smells like cookies and hot cocoa
Christmas tastes great.

Tastes like warm milk, tastes like warm cookies
It tastes like Christmas.

Christmas sounds like joy.

When I hear Christmas, I hear faith. I hear love.

I hear kids screaming.

Christmas looks like happiness.

It looks like snow.

It looks like my family opening gifts. It looks like fun.

Christmas feels warm inside my house.

It feels cold outside.

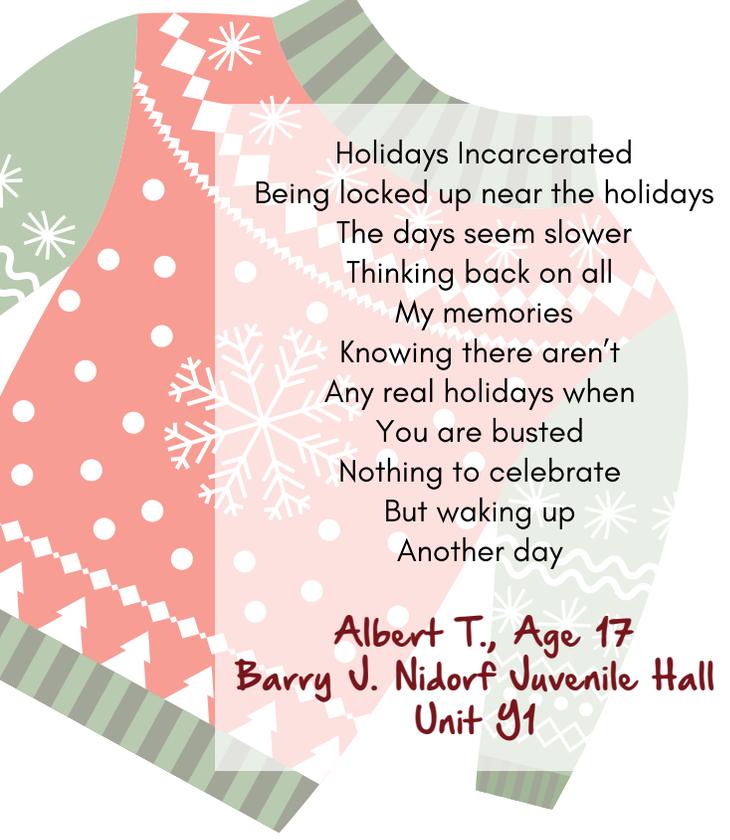
It feels soft when you sit on Santa's lap.

Luis M., Age 15
10W Alum

I see the judge looking at me

The pressure is on. Anything I say or do will be held against me. The DA gives me a dirty look. My lawyer says, "You Ready?" I sit up. The judge begins to speak. He says, "One year probation." My only thoughts is, "Success!" Graveyard on the outside. New Year's Eve Inside.

Romel A., Age 16
10W Alum



Holidays Incarcerated
Being locked up near the holidays
The days seem slower
Thinking back on all
My memories
Knowing there aren't
Any real holidays when
You are busted
Nothing to celebrate
But waking up
Another day

Albert T., Age 17
Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall
Unit Y1



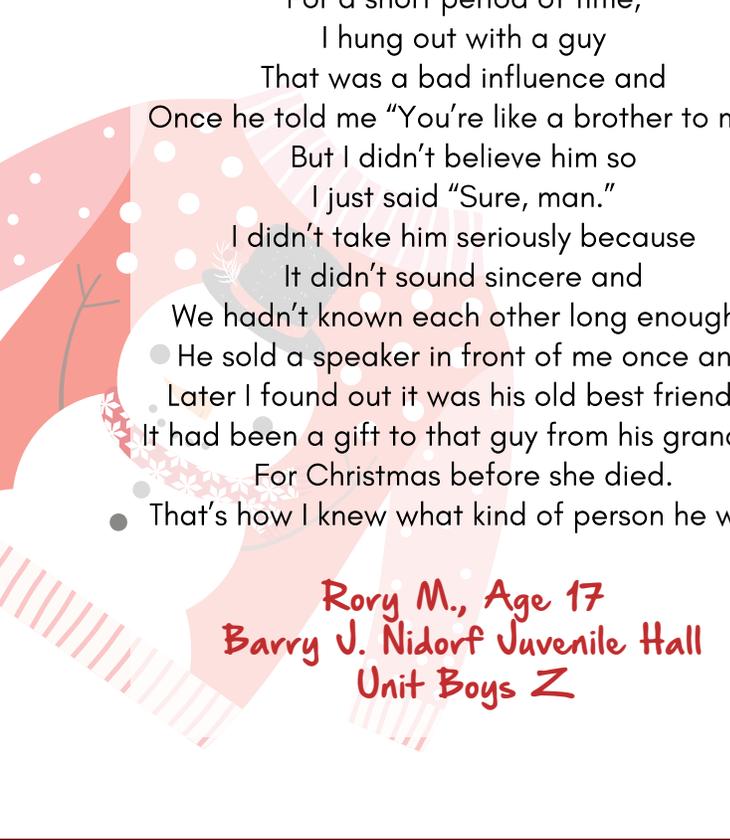
See
my family
I smell tamales
I touch my family
I taste the food
I like
Christmas

Rashad C., Age 14
Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall
Unit E/F



As a kid
Christmas full of
Presents, Joy and Happiness
16 years with my family
Enjoying the holidays
Now, I don't have any of that
The only person trying to give me a present
Is the Judge

The present he wants to give me
Is a life sentence in prison
If I get that present
I won't be out to enjoy the holidays
With friends and family
But it's just not Christmas
It's also New Year's, Birthdays
And all the other holidays
That would be happy memories
Now there is no hope of me
Having a family of my own
And giving a child
The same love I received



Close To Me
For a short period of time,
I hung out with a guy
That was a bad influence and
Once he told me "You're like a brother to me."
But I didn't believe him so
I just said "Sure, man."
I didn't take him seriously because
It didn't sound sincere and
We hadn't known each other long enough.
● He sold a speaker in front of me once and
Later I found out it was his old best friend's.
It had been a gift to that guy from his grandma
For Christmas before she died.
● That's how I knew what kind of person he was.

Rory M., Age 17
Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall
Unit Boys Z

Saul A., Age 17
Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall
Unit Y1

My Innocent Side!

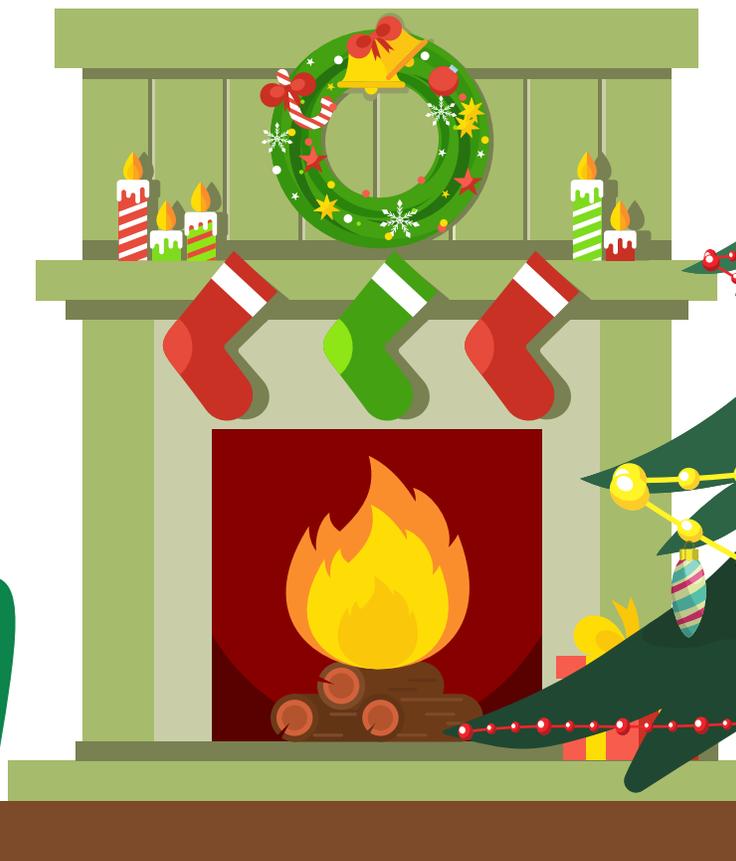
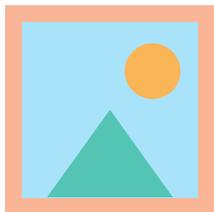
Pure and innocent inside...
Not a drop of disobedience in his soul
Only six years old...

I passed out and woke up a few hours later in California's hospital with an aching pain to my right hip. Like someone was in my stomach and cutting their way out from the inside with a rusty jagged dagger. (Ugh). Moans and roars seeping out the side of my dry mouth...tears falling down my face. All I can think of at the time was, why Lord why? My pure innocent soul and body. I felt numb but the pressure of my Mom and Grandma brought the feeling in my hands back. I was rushed to the E.R. for a surgery to be put in action, a long needle collapsed into my skin. I fought to stay awake but the morphine was too strong.

I woke up in a cold room, colder than ice. Half naked, just a paper gown covered me. I thought I was in heaven, but my Mom's beautiful face filled with tears told me I wasn't. My appendix was removed five seconds before it exploded. Three days before Christmas. I couldn't walk or feed myself, but my terrific Mom and Grandmas were there every step of the way.

God blessed me, but why did he test me? I was an innocent child!

*De'Shun B.
Camp David Gonzales*





A cold day is my favorite
It's the best time to be with a girl
Winter represents love
To most it may represent sadness
But to me never that
Winter is perfect for me and a girl
Who has my heart
You can walk around on a dull, windy, cold day
Have your girl by your side
You hugging her, trying to keep her warm
While you try to sneak some body heat into yourself also!
Or if you are home with your girl
You can cuddle with her
Have a hot cup of cocoa
And that will feel the best...
Well at least it used to when I was home
When I had a girl "Remember me" Is what I told her
That moment of silence I could tell by her breathing
She was hurt
She was trying to find the right words
So I told her just to listen I told her I'm fighting life
She stuttered
By the way she was whimpering

Anonymous

How These Words Make Me Think or Feel
I was never able to stay in the same Neighborhood.
Forever I went from foster home to foster home,
Not feeling as if I can vent.
Sometimes I feel so Empty and alone.
People think I just want sympathy but
I really just want love, peace, joy and happiness.
My Childhood had more downs than ups.
2 years after 4, I was in my first placement.
That is a statement I wish I was not able to say.
I was not able to stay with my mom
Because of something she did.
The reason for me being bounced around was her fault,
But after many seasons, it became my fault
To have to continue to bounce and
I can't deny that an ounce.

*Ana L., Age 16
Central Juvenile Hall
Unit Girls ESU*



Once upon a time, there was an elf named Brownie. She was the tallest out of all the elves. Her favorite colors were blue and white. She was always a holly jolly elf. She cheers everyone up. One day, she stumbled upon a girl. Her name was Sanchizzle. She was all alone in the corner. Brownie wanted to help her decorate the sleigh. She asked her if she wanted help. Sanchizzle smiled and said, "Yes, please". Brownie smiled with her dimples and made Sanchizzle laugh with silly faces. She laughed for almost an hour. As soon as they finished, Santa flew away. Brownie and Sanchizzle cheered because it was successful. Then a snowman came in and danced. Oh, how they had a holly and jolly their Christmas was! At the end, they prated and made gifts for everyone. They said, "Have a Merry Christmas!"

by Holiney B.
Central Juvenile Hall
Unit Girls ESU



A SPECIAL THANK YOU

We extend our gratitude to the staff at Probation headquarters,
Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall,
and Central Juvenile Hall.

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

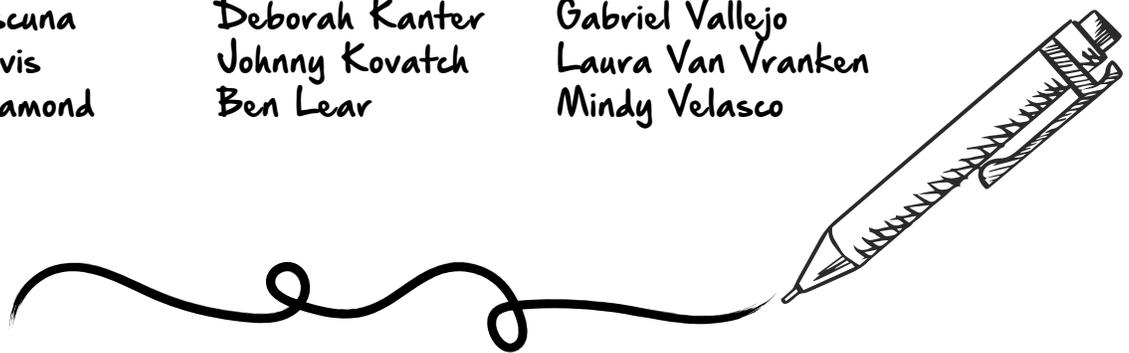
our current and past teachers

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Aaron Bergman
Alessandro Camon
Anna Carey
Elizabeth Cooper
Jason Cruze
Susan Cuscuna
Davion Davis
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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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