

A vibrant field of yellow flowers, likely rapeseed, stretches across the foreground and middle ground. The sky above is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene is bright and cheerful, representing the spring season.

InDepth
SPRING
2026

INSIDEOUT WRITERS

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InsideOUT
WRITERS

The following collection of writings emerges from the voices of students at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall and Camp Vernon Kilpatrick. In this edition, their words carry the weight of worry, the quiet ache of sorrow, and the raw truth of pain with each line etched with honesty, each page a testament to their lived experiences.

We are immensely proud of every student who contributed to this edition of InDepth Journal. Our youth are not only resilient, but they are profoundly insightful writers who transform hardship into reflection, and reflection into something powerful enough to be shared with the world.

I WORRIED

I worried about what people think of me. If they see that I am a sorry person or a scared little girl. If they see my full potential or possibly a great person. Or do they just laugh in the background?

I worried that I would never let go of my trauma. That it would take over me and control me and show people who I really am. Or who I once was.

I worried my family would never understand. Will they still see me as a bad little girl that will never change no matter what? How much I try to prove it to them.

I worried I wouldn't stop worrying. That I would be a disappointment to everyone and be just like my mother. But I could never be. I work too hard to not be like her, but I still worry I'm not enough.

But I am enough, and I will show the world. Finally, I see that worry has come to nothing. I am just myself. I just need to prove it to myself.

by Jayla L.

WHAT IF...

What if I never got in trouble
What if my dad never died
What if I didn't grow up feeling alone

What if I was a better boyfriend
What if I never caused my mom problems
What if I had more money

What if music didn't save my life
What if I wasn't so loyal to people
What if I wasn't in jail

What if I never make it with my music career

I wonder if I'll reach the happiness I want
I wonder if I'll make my mom proud
I wonder if my little brother will be better than me one day
I wonder if I'll have the support I'll need
I wonder if I'll ever make a song with youngboy

I wonder if when I make it, people will forever remember my name
I wonder if when I make it my music can help others

I wonder if I'll be home soon
I wonder if I'll have a kid some day
I wonder if all of my dreams will come true

by Jakhai B.

I WONDER

I wonder why I always seem to be angry
I wonder why I tend to hurt others when I am
hurt

I wonder if my parents really love me
I wonder what it feels like to have a good
relationship with a family

I wonder why the justice system can't see that I
am trying to do better

What if my cousin didn't pass away
What if I never joined my brother's footsteps
What if I didn't get shot at
What if I never cracked my skull

What if I never did that one error that got me in
here

by Gerardo A.

NO MERCY

God have mercy on you
Because I won't
Horrible things are going to catch up to you
For messing with the wrong me
the peaceful me
the calmful me
for that you will pay,
for that horrible things are in your way
God have mercy on you.
Because I won't.
I won't pardon you, excuse you, forgive you
I won't have mercy or compassion for you
If you see me, unsee me.
Dont look at me
God have mercy on you.
Because I won't.

by Josue H.

TO BE BROKEN


Being broken doesn't mean it's over. Being broken means you can fix it, whatever "it" is. If you were broken before, that only means that you are capable to get back up and keep going. There are a lot of people who give up on the first try. I could fall 100 times, but I'm going to get up 101 times.

Being broken creates character, and it makes your experiences more valid. You can't have happiness without pain. You can't have sunny days without rainy days. We got to take the good with the bad. I always manage to see the beauty in the ugly, and the lesson we gain from the pain. Being human doesn't mean we have to be perfect. Everyone has their own flaws. Being broken makes you unique. Not everyone has it in them to be different.

by Jorge C.

With heartfelt gratitude to our Writing Program
Teaching Artists, who play an essential role in bringing
our students' voices to light.

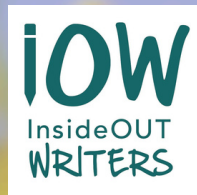
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ALEXA STEBBINS
ALEXIS PAZ
APRIL HONG
ANDY VALENTE
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KATHERINNE GAMEZ
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LAURIE SHIERS
LETTY BURIN
MARCUS GARCIA
MICHELLE GUBBAY
MOLLY OTT
MONICA VEGA
SUSAN CUSCUNA



The 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.

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