

File No. 190392

Committee Item No. 2

Board Item No. 5

COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA PACKET CONTENTS LIST

Committee: Government Audit and Oversight

Date: May 16, 2019

Board of Supervisors Meeting:

Date: June 11, 2019

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Budget and Legislative Analyst Report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Youth Commission Report |
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OTHER

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <u>CEQA Determination - May 2, 2019</u> |
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Prepared by: John Carroll

Date: May 10, 2019

Prepared by: John Carroll

Date: May 30, 2019

[Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Closure]

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the City to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place or places of detention, in a locations approved by the Court, to establish a working group for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund to support community-based alternatives to detention and also support the working group; and affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; ~~and making findings of consistency with the General Plan and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.4.~~

NOTE: Unchanged Code text and uncodified text are in plain Arial font.
Additions to Codes are in *single-underline italics Times New Roman font*.
Deletions to Codes are in *strikethrough italics Times New Roman font*.
Board amendment additions are in double-underlined Arial font.
Board amendment deletions are in ~~strikethrough Arial font~~.
Asterisks (***) indicate the omission of unchanged Code subsections or parts of tables.

Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. Environmental ~~and Land Use~~ Findings.

~~(a)~~ The Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this ordinance comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq.). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 190392 and is incorporated herein by reference. The Board affirms this determination.

1 (b) On _____, the Planning Department determined that the actions
2 contemplated in this ordinance are consistent, on balance, with the City's General Plan and
3 eight priority policies of Planning Code Section 101.1. The Board adopts this determination as
4 its own. A copy of said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in
5 File No. _____, and is incorporated herein by reference.

6
7 Section 2. The Administrative Code is hereby amended by adding Chapter 119,
8 consisting of Sections 119.1 through 119.3, to read as follows:

9
10 **CHAPTER 119: CLOSURE OF JUVENILE HALL**

11
12 **SEC. 119.1. DEFINITIONS.**

13 "City" means the City and County of San Francisco.

14 "Court" means the San Francisco Superior Court Juvenile Division.

15
16 **SEC. 119.2. FINDINGS.**

17 (a) For nearly two decades, since roughly the advent of the 21st Century, youth crime has
18 steadily declined across the country, including in the City. During this time the City has emerged as a
19 leader in juvenile justice reform - shifting the focus from punishment and incarceration to support and
20 care for young people. The City's reform-minded approach and the decrease in youth crime have
21 contributed to a dramatic decline in the number of youth detained in custody. The City's focus
22 increasingly has been on new and innovative interventions that invest in young people, rather than
23 punishment.

24 (b) The budget for Juvenile Hall does not reflect today's low numbers of detained youth. In
25 fiscal year 2017-2018, the City budgeted \$13,322,254 for Juvenile Hall despite the significantly

1 reduced number of detained youth as compared to earlier years. From 2009 to January 2019, the
2 average annual cost per year for each youth detained in Juvenile Hall has risen 127%, from \$123,400
3 to \$279,500.

4 (c) The detention of young people is not rehabilitative, nor does it effectively address public
5 safety. Detention increases the likelihood of recidivism, future incarceration, and homelessness, and
6 results in lower high school completion rates.

7 (d) The majority of youth detained in Juvenile Hall are not charged with serious offenses. In
8 December 2018, 40 youth were detained at Juvenile Hall - filling only 27% of its beds. Of those 40
9 youth, 30% were detained for a misdemeanor offense, and 50% were detained while waiting for a
10 court-ordered placement.

11 (e) Multiple studies have shown that putting youth behind bars fails to enhance public safety,
12 drives low-level delinquent youth deeper into criminality, and increases the likelihood that they will
13 wind up behind bars again. The Arkansas Division of Youth Services studied youth recidivism and
14 identified detention as the strongest predictor of youth recidivism - more so than family difficulties or
15 gang membership. One recent longitudinal study of 35,000 young offenders found that those who were
16 detained as juveniles were twice as likely to be incarcerated as adults than juveniles who committed
17 similar offenses and came from similar backgrounds but were given an alternative sanction or simply
18 not arrested. Another recent study, from Brown University and MIT, found that detaining young people
19 increases by 23% the likelihood that they will be jailed as adults. The study also found that juvenile
20 detention is the single biggest predictor of future incarceration.

21 (f) The majority of youth in the juvenile justice system nationwide have experienced abuse,
22 neglect, trauma, mental health problems, and family crisis. Youth in the juvenile justice system suffer
23 from serious mental health issues at a rate far greater than the general youth population: 70% as
24 compared to 10-20% of the general youth population. Nearly 90% of youth in the juvenile justice
25 population nationwide have suffered a prior traumatic experience, and 30% of that population meet the

1 criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. The needs of youth impacted by these issues are better met
2 outside of the punitive framework of the delinquency system.

3 (g) Detention adds more trauma to the lives of already traumatized youth. Detained youth
4 become more isolated and disconnected from their families and their support networks and, when
5 detained while awaiting their disposition hearings, fare far worse at every stage of their case.

6 (h) The detention of youth negatively impacts their cognitive development at what are critical
7 development stages. Healthy psychological development requires: 1) the presence of a parent or
8 parent-like adult who is involved with and concerned about the young person's development; 2) a peer
9 group that values positive behavior and academic success; and 3) opportunities and activities that
10 foster independent decision-making and critical thinking. These core adolescent development
11 requirements cannot be achieved when young people are detained because those detained are: 1)
12 separated from their support networks; 2) grouped together with other youth who have been charged
13 with offenses; and 3) stripped of their autonomy and self-determination.

14 (i) Most youth will age out of crime and should be supported in a positive developmental
15 process. This requires creating strong relationships with caring adults, inclusion in pro-social peer
16 groups and activities, and encouragement to develop their own interests and potential. By expanding
17 our investment in services that are community-based, culturally-relevant, trauma-informed, and
18 developmentally-appropriate, the City will enable youth to make a positive transition into adulthood.

19 (j) For those youth who must be detained, small, non-institutional settings are most effective at
20 rehabilitating and supporting youth. Services provided to youth should be built on strengths and needs
21 identified by their families, should be delivered by community programs, and whenever possible should
22 avoid institutional placements and their attendant costs and harms.

23
24 **SEC. 119.3. CLOSURE OF JUVENILE HALL.**
25

1 By no later than December 31, 2021, the City shall close Juvenile Hall, expand community-
2 based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place or places of
3 detention, in a location approved by the Presiding Judge of the Court, that will be available for wards
4 of the Court and persons alleged to come within the jurisdiction of the Court. ~~The~~ Any place of
5 detention shall be a safe and supportive homelike environment, which shall not be deemed to be, nor
6 treated as, a penal institution, and which shall conform to all applicable State and federal regulations.
7 Prior to the closure of Juvenile Hall under this Section 119.3, the Department of Human
8 Resources ("DHR") shall provide notice to unions representing affected employees and
9 conduct and conclude any necessary meet and confer under state and local law;
10 notwithstanding the deadline imposed by this Section, the City may close Juvenile Hall only
11 after DHR submits a written certification to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors and the
12 Mayor that the City has satisfied applicable meet-and-confer obligations. Additionally,
13 notwithstanding the foregoing, the City may not close Juvenile Hall until the Board of
14 Supervisors has approved by resolution a final plan following the submission of such a plan by
15 the Close Juvenile Hall Working Group as provided in Section 5.40-6(d).

16
17
18 Section 3. Chapter 5 of the Administrative Code is hereby amended by adding Article
19 XL, consisting of Sections 5.40-1 through 5.40-7, to read as follows:
20

21 **ARTICLE XL: CLOSE JUVENILE HALL WORKING GROUP**

22
23 **SEC. 5.40-1. CLOSE JUVENILE HALL WORKING GROUP.**

24 The City hereby establishes the Close Juvenile Hall Working Group.
25

1 **SEC. 5.40-2. DEFINITIONS.**

2 "CARC" means the Huckleberry Community Assessment and Resource Center.

3 "City" means the City and County of San Francisco.

4 "Court" means the San Francisco Superior Court Juvenile Division.

5 "Director" means the Director of the Human Rights Commission.

6 "DCYF" means the Department of Children Youth and Families.

7 "Juvenile Hall" means the locked detention facility at 375 Woodside Avenue in the City.

8 "Working Group" means the Close Juvenile Hall Working Group.

9
10 **SEC. 5.40-3. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES.**

11 (a) The purpose of the Working Group is to create a plan to:

12 (1) close Juvenile Hall by no later than December 31, 2021;

13 (2) strengthen and expand community-based alternatives to detention;

14 (3) provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place or places of detention, in a location
15 approved by the Court, which is available for all wards of the Court and persons alleged to come
16 within the jurisdiction of the Court; and

17 (4) reinvest any monies saved by the closure of Juvenile Hall in high-quality, effective,
18 community-based alternatives to detention; an alternative, rehabilitative, non-institutional center for
19 youth who are detained; and mental health and educational support for detained youth.

20 (b) In carrying out this purpose, the Working Group shall be guided by the following
21 principles:

22 (1) A juvenile justice system should balance public safety, positive youth development,
23 family and community health, and victim restoration.

24 (2) Detention has a devastating impact on youth, their families, and their
25 neighborhoods, and undermines the safety and health of both detained youth and their communities.

1 (3) The rehabilitative goals of the juvenile justice system can best be accomplished in
2 family-based settings in the communities where youth live.

3 (4) The vast majority of young people in detention should be diverted from that system
4 and given access to developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed programs and services that address
5 racial and ethnic disparities.

6 (5) Youth in the juvenile justice system and their families should have a role in
7 identifying what kind of support would be most helpful to them.

8 (6) Resources invested in Juvenile Hall should instead be invested in youth, their
9 families, and community-based programs, including mental health and educational support.

10 (7) Community-based programs that serve juvenile justice-involved young people should
11 be supported, strengthened, and where appropriate, expanded.

12 (8) Youth in the juvenile justice system should be referred to programs and court-
13 ordered placements in the City whenever possible.

14 (9) Juvenile Hall staff should be given the opportunity, consistent with civil service
15 rules, to transfer to other jobs with the City or the San Francisco Unified School District once Juvenile
16 Hall is closed.

17
18 **SEC. 5.40-4. MEMBERSHIP.**

19 (a) Members. The Working Group shall consist of 13 members as set forth below.

20 (1) Seats 1 and 2 shall be held by representatives of community-based non-profits that
21 serve juvenile justice-involved youth and are members of the Juvenile Justice Providers Association.

22 (2) Seats 3 and 4 shall be held by persons under the age of 29 who were previously
23 detained or incarcerated.

24 (3) Seat 5 shall be held by a parent or guardian of a person who is or was detained as a
25 youth in the juvenile justice system.

1 (4) Seat 6 shall be held by an expert in the design of small, rehabilitative, and
2 education-focused centers that meet the needs of young people who, following their arrest or detention,
3 cannot return to their home or community.

4 (5) Seat 7 shall be held by an expert in youth mental illness, with experience serving the
5 juvenile justice population, and expertise in best practices for serving youth with mental illness.

6 (6) Seat 8 shall be held by an expert in juvenile justice reform with experience in data
7 analysis and the development of alternatives to detention.

8 (7) Seat 9 shall be held by a member of the labor community.

9 (8) Seat 10 shall be held by the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer or the Chief Juvenile
10 Probation Officer's designee.

11 (9) Seat 11 shall be held by the Public Defender or the Public Defender's designee.

12 (10) Seat 12 shall be held by the District Attorney or the District Attorney's designee.

13 (11) Seat 13 shall be held by a representative of the Court if the Court so chooses. While
14 the Court is not required to provide a representative to hold this seat, it shall be invited to do so.

15 (b) Seats 1-9 shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The Board shall strive to appoint
16 members to the Working Group from communities disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice
17 system and from the City's most marginalized communities.

18
19 **SEC. 5.40-5. ORGANIZATION AND TERMS OF OFFICE.**

20 (a) Members of the Working Group in Seats 1-9 shall serve at the pleasure of the Board of
21 Supervisors and may be removed by the Board at any time. Each member in Seats 1-9 may remain in
22 the Working Group until the termination of the Working Group under Section 5.40-7, unless removed
23 by the Board. Any vacancy in Seats 1-9 shall be filled by the Board.

24 (b) Service in the Working Group shall be voluntary. Members appointed to Seats 1 through 9
25 may receive a stipend in an amount determined by the Board.

1 (c) The Working Group shall strive to schedule meetings to accommodate the Working
2 Group members so that all members may attend regularly. Any member in Seats 1-9 who, within
3 a six-month period, misses three regular meetings of the Working Group without the express approval
4 of the Working Group at or before the missed meeting shall be deemed to have resigned from the
5 Working Group ten days after the third unapproved absence. The Working Group shall inform the
6 Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of any such resignation.

7 (d) Subject to the fiscal and budgetary provisions of the Charter, the Director City
8 Administrator shall designate staff to provide administrative support to the Working Group.

9 (e) Subject to the fiscal, budgetary, and civil service provisions of the Charter, the Director
10 City Administrator shall hire and make available to the Working Group an outside consultant with
11 expertise in juvenile justice reform, program evaluation, data analysis, youth development,
12 development of alternatives to detention, and juvenile justice systemic change. The outside consultant
13 shall advise the Working Group, and, to the extent desired by the Working Group, may facilitate its
14 meetings and compile required reports on behalf of the Working Group.

15 (f) Quorum. Seven members of the Working Group shall constitute a quorum.

16 (g) Officers. The Working Group shall elect a Chairperson from its members. The Chairperson
17 shall designate a member to serve in the Chairperson's absence.

18 (h) Subcommittees. The Working Group may establish subcommittees to be convened as
19 directed by the Working Group. The Working Group shall establish a Needs Assessment
20 subcommittee. The Working Group's Chairperson or the Chairperson's designee shall appoint
21 members to the subcommittees, and shall appoint members to the Needs Assessment
22 subcommittee consistent with subsection 5.40-6(a) of this Article. Subcommittees shall report
23 findings and make recommendations to the full Working Group for its consideration.

24 (i) Meeting Frequency. The Working Group shall meet at least every two months until Juvenile
25 Hall is closed and a substitute place or places of detention are available for youth placement.

1 (j) Roles of Members. In adopting this ordinance, the Board of Supervisors recognizes that
2 each member in Seats 10-13 retains their authority and duties under State law and that where conflicts
3 may arise out of members' dual roles, State powers and duties shall supersede the duties that this
4 Article XL imposes on members.

5
6 **SEC. 5.40-6. POWERS AND DUTIES.**

7 (a) The Working Group shall have the following powers and duties in the work focus areas
8 described below:

9 WORK FOCUS AREA # 1: Based on available data review, conduct a needs assessment for
10 youth detained in Juvenile Hall. To conduct this assessment, the Working Group shall:

11 (1) Establish a "Needs Assessment subcommittee" to conduct a confidential
12 review of juvenile delinquency case files to the extent that review is authorized by the Court.
13 The Needs Assessment subcommittee shall consist of the following four Working Group
14 members: the Public Defender or the Public Defender's designee (Working Group Seat 11); a
15 representative of a community-based non-profit that serves juvenile justice-involved youth and
16 that is a member of the Juvenile Justice Providers Association (Working Group Seat 1 or 2);
17 an expert in youth mental illness (Working Group Seat 7); and an expert in juvenile justice
18 reform (Working Group Seat 8):

19 (42) Request that the City Attorney petition the Court and request that the Court
20 authorize the Juvenile Probation Department to allow Needs Assessment subcommittee
21 members to for access to data contained in juvenile delinquency files and related juvenile records in
22 the possession of the Juvenile Probation Department for the purpose of conducting the needs
23 assessment.

24 (3) Submit formal requests for aggregate, de-identified statistical data regarding
25 the children detained in Juvenile Hall from the following departments and agencies: the

1 Juvenile Probation Department, the Department of Public Health, the San Francisco Unified
2 School District, and the Human Services Agency. The data requested shall include, but not be
3 limited to: race, gender, age, charged offense and level, sustained offenses and level,
4 disposition, length of stay in custody, number of prior delinquency contacts, number of
5 probation violations or bench warrants, child welfare system involvement, disability status,
6 prior school records that identify educational disabilities, mental health status, and prior
7 referrals to community-based programs and services. The Juvenile Probation Department,
8 Department of Public Health, and the Human Services Agency shall respond to data requests
9 within two weeks of receiving the request.

10 _____ (2) Track every child detained at Juvenile Hall who is not required by State law
11 to be kept in a secure facility, including but not limited to: (A) children charged with probation
12 violations or technical violations such as home detention violations, (B) children charged with
13 a misdemeanor awaiting disposition, and (C) children awaiting an out-of-home placement
14 post-disposition.

15 _____ (34) Identify gaps in existing community-based programs and services.

16 _____ (45) Evaluate the use of risk assessment tools, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to
17 ensure that all young people who are eligible and safe to be released are in fact being released.

18 _____ (56) Create plans to transition youth leaving Juvenile Hall to appropriate, local non-
19 institutional settings.

20 WORK FOCUS AREA # 2: Plan and design a small, rehabilitative and education-focused
21 center for the placement of detained youth ("Center"). In developing the plan and design, the Working
22 Group shall:

23 _____ (1) Analyze best practices for the administration and management of small rehabilitative
24 non-institutional settings for youth, which may include consultation with designers, architects, experts
25 in alternative models, and mental health and youth development experts. The analysis also may include

1 examination of existing programs in other counties, states, or countries that have demonstrated
2 rehabilitative success.

3 (2) Collaborate with the Real Estate Division, the Capital Planning Committee, and
4 local community-based organizations to identify local land or existing buildings that may be used for
5 this Center.

6 (3) Create an implementation plan for this Center.

7 WORK FOCUS AREA # 3: Determine the community-based residential or day-programs that
8 need to be created, expanded, or reinstated to effectively serve wards of the Court and persons alleged
9 to come within the jurisdiction of the Court who are not ordered detained by the Court. To make this
10 determination, the Working Group shall:

11 (1) Promptly identify a housing option in the City for female youth who, following
12 arrest or release from detention, cannot return to their homes, to replace the Catholic Charities San
13 Francisco Girls Home Shelter closed in 2018 and the Boys Home Shelter closed in 2019.

14 (2) Identify existing community-based day programs and housing options that may be
15 expanded.

16 (3) Identify new services or programs, including day services and housing options,
17 which are needed to serve vulnerable youth populations.

18 (4) In consultation with DCYF, the Department of Public Health, the Juvenile Probation
19 Department, and the Human Rights Commission, create funding plans to ensure both the expansion of
20 existing programs with a demonstrated record of success and the creation of new programs. The
21 programs should include mental health services, educational services, employment opportunities, and
22 mentoring opportunities, which are culturally-relevant, trauma-informed, strengths-based, and rooted
23 in the local community. Where possible, these services should be available to youths' family members.

24 WORK FOCUS AREA # 4: Collaborate with the Department of Human Resources and
25 labor organizations that represent Juvenile Hall staff, to The Working Group shall develop a

1 plan to transition Juvenile Hall staff to jobs in other City departments or jobs with the San Francisco
2 Unified School District or the alternative Center that this Working Group shall create.

3 WORK FOCUS AREA # 5: Develop trauma-informed, culturally relevant transition plans,
4 specialized services, and housing options for vulnerable youth exiting detention, including young
5 women, gender non-conforming and LGBT youth, African American youth, immigrant, youth, foster
6 youth, homeless youth, and mentally ill youth.

7 WORK FOCUS AREA # 6: Develop a reinvestment plan that redirects funds historically
8 allocated for Juvenile Hall to community-based alternatives to detention, the Center, and additional
9 mental health and academic support programs for juvenile justice-involved youth.

10 WORK FOCUS AREA # 7: Develop policy recommendations for the Police Department, the
11 Juvenile Probation Department, and CARC, which divert youth who have been arrested from the
12 juvenile justice system to alternative, community-based programs and support systems.

13 WORK FOCUS AREA # 8: Develop policy recommendations for the Juvenile Probation
14 Department that transform the department supervision model into a strengths-based framework so that
15 young people are not sent to detention for probation violations, including technical violations or
16 violations for low-level offenses.

17 (b) In carrying out its duties, the Working Group shall: 1) collaborate with the Mayor's
18 Juvenile Justice Reform Blue Ribbon Panel; and 2) consult with the Capital Planning Committee, Real
19 Estate Division, Child Welfare Division of the Human Services Agency, Child Crisis Division of the
20 Department of Public Health, the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, Youth
21 Commission, the Police Department, and the San Francisco Unified School District. The Working
22 Group shall invite a representative of each entity identified in this subsection (b) to all Working Group
23 meetings.

24 (c) Subject to the fiscal, budgetary, and civil service provisions of the Charter, and to the extent
25 consistent with open government laws, the Working Group shall investigate juvenile justice best

1 practices by visiting other jurisdictions and request that the Director retaining subject matter
2 experts, as needed.

3 (d) Reports. The Working Group shall prepare and submit a report every six months that
4 describes the Working Group's progress in fulfilling the duties set forth in this Section 5.40-6. The first
5 report shall be due six months after the effective date of the ordinance in Board File No. 190392,
6 creating this Article XL. The Working Group shall submit each report to the Board of Supervisors,
7 along with a proposed resolution to accept the report. The Working Group shall also submit each
8 report to the Mayor, any City department or office responsible for a program identified in the report,
9 and the Director City Administrator. A final report shall be submittedThe Working Group shall
10 submit the final plan to the Board no later than June 1, 2021, detailing the final steps needed
11 to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021. The plan shall be accompanied by a proposed
12 resolution accepting the plan, and the Board may act by resolution to accept, reject, or modify
13 the plan. Each report shall be available to the public, and the City Administrator Director, shall post
14 each report on the Human Rights Commission City Administrator's website.

15 (e) In carrying out its duties, the Working Group shall receive prompt and full cooperation and
16 assistance from all City departments, offices, officers, and employees. All components of City
17 government shall promptly produce all records and information requested by the Working Group,
18 unless prohibited from doing so by state or federal law.

19
20 **SEC. 5.40-7. SUNSET DATE.**

21 This Article XL shall expire by operation of law, and the Working Group shall terminate, when
22 the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer certifies in writing that Juvenile Hall is closed and there is a
23 substitute place or places of detention, approved by the Court, that is available for wards of the Court
24 and persons alleged to come within the jurisdiction of the Court. In that event, after the sunset date, the
25 City Attorney shall cause this Article XL to be removed from the Administrative Code.

1
2
3 Section 4. Article XIII of Chapter 10 of the Administrative Code is hereby amended by
4 adding Section 10.100-376, to read as follows:
5

6 **SEC. 10.100-376. YOUTH JUSTICE REINVESTMENT FUND.**

7 *(a) Establishment of Fund. The Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund is established as a category*
8 *eight fund to receive monies appropriated for fee revenue dedicated to community-based*
9 *alternatives to juvenile detention and other contributions to the fund.*

10 *(b) Use of Fund. The fund is to be used exclusively by the Director City Administrator, for the*
11 *purpose of supporting community-based alternatives to juvenile detention and the work of the Close*
12 *Juvenile Hall Working Group established in Article XL of Chapter 5 of the Administrative Code.*

13 *(c) Administration of Fund. The Director City Administrator, shall administer the fund and*
14 *shall report annually to the Board of Supervisors on the current status of the fund, the amounts*
15 *approved for disbursement, and the number and types of community-based alternatives to juvenile*
16 *detention assisted. The City Administrator Director shall have the authority to prescribe rules and*
17 *regulations governing the Fund.*
18
19

20 Section 5. Undertaking For The General Welfare. In enacting and implementing this
21 ordinance, the City is assuming an undertaking only to promote the general welfare. It is not
22 assuming, nor is it imposing on its officers and employees, an obligation for breach of which it
23 is liable in money damages to any person who claims that such breach proximately caused
24 injury.
25

1 Section 56. Effective Date. This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after
2 enactment. Enactment occurs when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the
3 ordinance unsigned or does not sign the ordinance within ten days of receiving it, or the Board
4 of Supervisors overrides the Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

5
6 APPROVED AS TO FORM:
7 DENNIS J. HERRERA, City Attorney

8 By:


9 JANA CLARK
Deputy City Attorney

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REVISED LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

(Amended in Board, 06/04/2019)

[Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Closure]

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the City to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place or places of detention, in locations approved by the Court, to establish a working group for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund to support community-based alternatives to detention and also support the working group; and affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Existing Law

State law requires that the Board of Supervisors provide and maintain, in a location approved by the Juvenile Court, a suitable house or place ("Juvenile Hall") for the detention of wards of the Juvenile Court and of persons alleged to come within the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court, under the management and control of the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer. In the City, the current Juvenile Hall is the locked facility located at 375 Woodside Avenue.

Amendments to Current Law

This ordinance would require that the City close the existing Juvenile Hall, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place or places of detention, in locations approved by the Juvenile Court, to replace the Juvenile Hall. This ordinance would require that, prior to the closure of juvenile hall, the Department of Human Resources ("DHR") provide notice to unions with affected employees and conduct and conclude any meet and confer obligations. This ordinance would make closure of Juvenile Hall contingent on DHR's submission of written certification to the Board and the Mayor that the City has satisfied meet its meet and confer obligations and the Board's approval by resolution of a final plan for closure of Juvenile Hall developed by a Close Juvenile Hall Working Group.

This ordinance would establish the Close Juvenile Hall Working Group ("Working Group") for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan. The Working Group would have 13 members, with seats 1-9 appointed by the Board, and seats 10-13 serving *ex officio* as follows:

Seats 1 and 2 - Representatives of community-based non-profits that serve juvenile justice-involved youth and are members of the Juvenile Justice Providers Association.

Seats 3 and 4 - Previously detained or incarcerated persons under age 29.

Seat 5 - Parent or guardian of a person who is or was detained as a youth.

- Seat 6 – Design expert.
- Seat 7 - Mental health expert.
- Seat 8 - Juvenile justice reform expert.
- Seat 9 – Labor representative.
- Seat 10 – Chief Juvenile Probation Officer.
- Seat 11 - Public Defender.
- Seat 12 - District Attorney.
- Seat 13 – Court representative, by invitation.

This ordinance would require that the Working Group develop a plan to:

- (1) close Juvenile Hall by no later than December 31, 2021;
- (2) strengthen and expand community-based alternatives to detention;
- (3) provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place or places of detention, in locations approved by the Court, which is available for all wards of the Court and persons alleged to come within the jurisdiction of the Court; and
- (4) reinvest any monies saved by the closure of Juvenile Hall in high-quality, effective, community-based alternatives to detention; an alternative, rehabilitative, non-institutional center for youth who are detained; and mental health and educational support for detained youth.

This ordinance would require the Working Group to focus on eight work areas, including needs assessment, design, community-based programming, Juvenile Hall staff job transition, vulnerable youth services, community-based reinvestment, diversion policy, and Juvenile Probation Department policy revisions.

This ordinance would require that all City departments cooperate with and promptly produce records and information to the Working Group, to the extent permitted by State or federal law.

This ordinance would require that the Director of the Human Rights Commission ("Director") provide administrative support to the Working Group. This ordinance would establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund, administered by the Director, to receive monies appropriated for community-based alternatives to juvenile detention and other contributions to the fund.

Background Information

This ordinance reflects amendments made at the May 16, 2019 meeting of the Government Audit and Oversight Committee and the June 4, 2019 meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

n:\legana\as2019\1900427\01366472.docx



City and County of San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department

ALLEN A. NANCE
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER

375 WOODSIDE AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94127
(415) 753-7556

May 14, 2019

**The Honorable Members of the
San Francisco Board of Supervisors:**

Sandra Fewer – District 1
Catherine Stefani – District 2
Aaron Peskin – District 3
Gordon Mar – District 4
Vallie Brown – District 5
Matt Haney – District 6

Norman Yee – District 7
Rafael Mandelman – District 8
Hillary Ronen – District 9
Shamann Walton – District 10
Ahsha Safai – District 11

**San Francisco City Hall
1 Dr Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102**

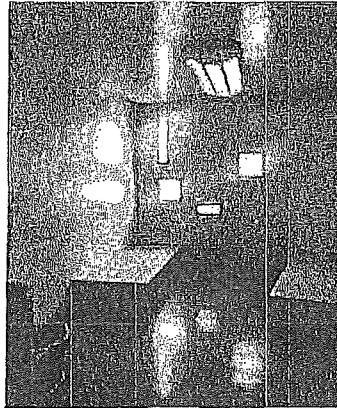
Re: Board File No. 190392 – Administrative Code – Juvenile Hall Closure

Dear Honorable Members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

I write to express my views, concerns, and recommendations regarding Board File No. 190392 – Administrative Code – Juvenile Hall Closure, its impact on youths served by juvenile hall and the juvenile justice system, if passed. The current juvenile hall (JH) is located at 375 Woodside Avenue and is annexed to the Juvenile Justice Administration building which houses the Superior Court and Juvenile delinquency courtrooms, offices of Juvenile Probation, District Attorney, Public Defender, San Francisco Unified School District, Department of Public Health, San Francisco Public Library, and non-profit agencies. Each entity supports the delivery of service to detained youths. If the existing facility is closed in favor of creating an alternative in a separate location, the benefits associated with the services provided by these various offices in close proximity to the current facility would be compromised. In the absence of a clearly articulated plan to replace the existing structure, I am concerned that dismantling juvenile hall could serve to destabilize and adversely impact overall juvenile justice system operations.

Juvenile Hall is more than a secure detention facility. The existing 150-bed facility opened in 2006 at a construction cost of \$42 million. It was built in accordance with state regulations for such facilities as a modern and spacious detention setting. Since that time, programs, staffing, and priorities of the detention facility have evolved as reflected by the youth and family centered, trauma-informed, and goal-oriented, services and resources provided within its walls. Youth who arrive in crisis are stabilized, assessed and treated with care. In 2008, the average daily population (ADP) in JH was 123 youths. That same year, the facility exceeded its 150-bed capacity. Notwithstanding the rated capacity, the facility design consists of 40 double-occupancy rooms, and 70 single-occupancy rooms. The rooms designed for two youths can hardly be characterized as ideally suited for two teens given their size and the presence of a toilet which the youths would be expected to use in

the presence of their peers. For the past five years, all youth in SF's juvenile hall are on single room status. The following photo shows a double-occupancy room in juvenile hall (vacant room without mattresses and bedding):

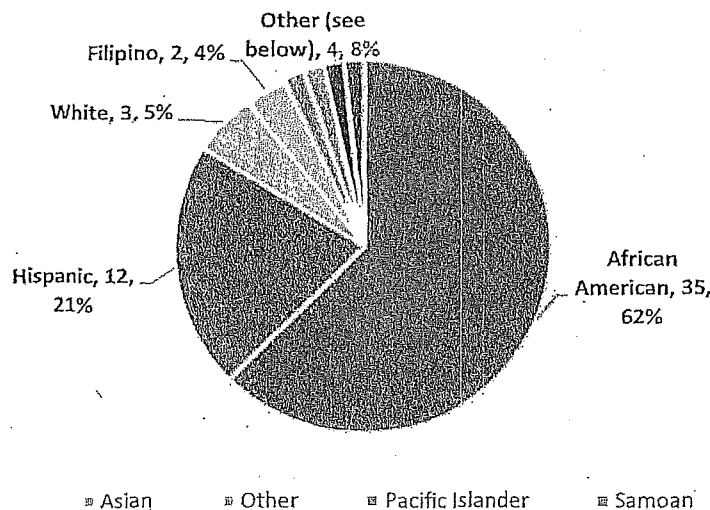


Juvenile Hall 2-person room without mattresses and bedding.

A dedicated focus on the use of alternatives to detention, diversion, and community program investments resulted in reduced reliance on secure detention, improved conditions of confinement, and fewer bookings into the facility. In 2013, the ADP was 76, and in 2018 it further declined to 44. More importantly, in 2018, 695 teens were booked in SF's juvenile hall. The average length of stay was approximately 23 days. Juvenile detention is generally designed to be temporary. The dramatic decline of juvenile crime in San Francisco is a cause to celebrate. Even still, there is more work to be done.

Most youths involved in San Francisco's juvenile justice system do not require secure custody. However, for the approximately 40 youths housed at JH on any given day, the facility represents a safe, secure, nurturing and necessary environment where their needs can be assessed, and a plan for their return to the community can be developed, meeting their best interests and in the furtherance of public safety. As such, judges, probation officers, and other practitioners must weigh the benefits and consequences of its use. The highest JH census thus far this year was on 01/22/2019. There were 56 youths in custody. An analysis of the race and ethnicity of the detainees determined the following:

*Single Day - Juvenile Hall
Ethnic Breakdown on Jan. 22, 2019 (n = 56)*



Closing the existing facility without a clear alternative denies these marginalized, disenfranchised, and vulnerable youths, the very interventions collectively designed to meet their needs. African American and LatinX youth would be impacted the most. The more than two-thirds reduction in juvenile court referrals is a clear indication that our youth are better off today, than a decade ago. Since closing the current Juvenile Hall does not eliminate the county's obligation to detain juveniles, we can ill-afford to suffer a gap between the closure of the existing facility and the creation of an equally effective alternative. It has been discussed that the need would not exceed 15 beds. It is unclear how this number was determined, nor is there clarity as to the manner in which youth classification and housing requirements will be met as promulgated by the Board of State and Community Corrections in state regulations Title 15 and Title 24.

There has been much discussion regarding the offense types for detained youths in San Francisco's JH including the presumption that large numbers of youths are in custody on misdemeanor offenses. For the past 21 years, the Community Assessment and Resource Center (CARC) has served as the City's diversion resource for almost all youths arrested for misdemeanor offenses and infractions. Some non-violent felonies are also diverted to CARC instead of being referred to juvenile court. At the same time, probation and judicial decisions regarding detention extend beyond the offense for which the minor has been charged. The safety of the youth and other factors related to their community adjustment, including pending court matters, also drive these important custody decisions. However, a recent analysis of the offense distributions for detained youths at the end of January, February, and March 2019 shows that the percentage of youths in custody on misdemeanor offenses was 4% or less. The maximum number of youths detained on misdemeanor offenses for any of the dates included in the snapshots was 1 or 2 as indicated in the following charts:

TABLES: JUVENILE HALL BOOKINGS BY OFFENSE TYPE & CHARGE

BOOKING REASONS FOR YOUTH IN JUVENILE HALL BY OFFENSE TYPE

	Youth in Juvenile Hall on:					
	1/31/2019		2/28/2019		3/31/2019	
Booking Offense Type & Charge	#	%	#	%	#	%
Felony Offenses	28	61%	27	73%	30	60%
Warrants & Violations	16	35%	9	24%	19	38%
Misdemeanor Offenses	2	4%	1	3%	1	2%
Grand Total	46	100%	37	100%	50	100%

BOOKING REASONS FOR YOUTH IN JUVENILE HALL BY DATE:

3/31/2019 Snapshot			2/28/2019 Snapshot			1/31/2019 Snapshot		
Booking Offense Type & Charge	No of Youth	% of Youth	Booking Offense Type & Charge	No. of Youth	% of Youth	Booking Offense Type & Charge	No of Youth	% of Youth
Felony Offenses	30	60%	Felony Offenses	27	73%	Felony Offenses	28	61%
Robbery	16	32%	Robbery	12	32%	Robbery	12	26%
Assault w Great Bodily Injury	2	4%	Assault w Great Bodily Injury	2	5%	Burglary	5	11%
Burglary Possession of a Controlled Substance	2	4%	Conspiracy to Commit Theft	2	5%	Cocaine Base for Sale	2	4%
Concealed Firearm in a Vehicle	1	2%	Burglary	2	5%	Assault w Great Bodily Injury	1	2%
Murder	1	2%	Cannabis for Sale	1	3%	Burglary 2nd Degree	1	2%
Street Gang	1	2%	Assault w Deadly Weapon	1	3%	Street Gang	1	2%
Grand Theft Person	1	2%	Sale of Controlled Substance	1	3%	Sale of Controlled Substance	1	2%
Grand Theft Over \$950	1	2%	Rape of Disabled Person	1	3%	Lewd & Lascivious Acts w Child under 14	1	2%
Use of Tear Gas	1	2%	Street Gang	1	3%	Murder	1	2%
Firearm at School	1	2%	Grand Theft Over \$950	1	3%	Grand Theft Over \$950	1	2%
Battery against Person	1	2%	Murder	1	3%	Stolen Auto	1	2%
Assault w Deadly Weapon	1	2%	Cocaine Base for Sale	1	3%	Assault w Deadly Weapon	1	2%
Warrants & Violations	19	38%	Stolen Auto	1	3%	Warrants & Violations	16	35%
WRNT602	11	22%	Warrants & Violations	9	24%	WRNT602	7	15%
Home Supervision	4	8%	Home Supervision	3	8%	Home Supervision	5	11%
Violation of Probation	2	4%	WRNT602	3	8%	BENCH WRNT	2	4%
CTORD WKND	1	2%	Placement Failure	2	5%	Placement Failure WI	1	2%
BENCH WRNT	1	2%	BENCH WRNT	1	3%	WRNT HOLD	1	2%
Misdemeanor Offenses	1	2%	Misdemeanor Offenses	1	3%	Misdemeanor Offenses	2	4%
Battery	1	2%	Battery	1	3%	Escape	1	2%
Grand Total	50	100%	Grand Total	37	100%	False Information to Police Officer	1	2%
						Grand Total	46	100%

The ordinance as proposed, calls for the closure of juvenile hall by December 2021, even though no alternative to the existing facility is identified. No jurisdiction the size of San Francisco or larger has taken the drastic step to close their juvenile detention facility. There is no national model for a shift of this magnitude. Therefore, the focus of the ordinance and its deadline should be redirected to prioritize the development of a plan for a viable alternative. If no plan is developed prior to the deadline, the closure of juvenile hall could place the county in the position of being required to develop an agreement with another county to house San Francisco Youth (*Welfare and institutions Code Section 872*). While the closure of juvenile hall as it is known today is an aspirational goal, the reality of creating the alternative requires a series of concrete considerations that must be managed within the context of various administrative processes, which can often be complicated and protracted.

Respectfully, I offer the following amendments to the current ordinance:

1. Strike the juvenile hall closure date of December 31, 2021. Instead, include language that calls for the development of recommendations that could serve as alternatives to the existing juvenile hall facility. This deadline could coincide with such plan being delivered no later than, December 31, 2021.
2. Alternatively, language should be included to restrict the closing of the existing juvenile hall unless and until the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court has approved an alternative detention facility in place of the existing juvenile hall located at 375 Woodside Avenue.
3. The BOS should fund the exploration and creation of modifications of existing vacant space within juvenile hall to serve juveniles who require inpatient psychiatric care, inpatient medical detoxification, and short-term crisis stabilization for chronically homeless teens who require clinical interventions.
4. The BOS should call for a full needs analysis of existing youth investments funded by the City for youths "at risk" of or involved in the juvenile justice system to include an outcomes study. Such analysis should be conducted prior to the authorization of a Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund.
5. The BOS and the Mayor should combine and coordinate the membership and priorities of the "Working Group" with those of the Mayor's Blue-Ribbon Panel on Juvenile Justice Reform.
6. Future amendments to the ordinance or new legislation will require a legislative framework and plan to support the implementation of any alternative to the existing juvenile hall structure, and should include capital investments, employee retraining and transition to new employment, and a fiscal plan and budget to support programming for any such alternative.

The Juvenile Probation Department is invested in continuing the longstanding tradition of San Francisco as an innovative, creative, and reform-minded community. We wholly support efforts to explore evidence-based and promising practices to reduce the risk factors that drive youth to crime, and are fully committed to efforts to improve the systems designed to respond to their evolving needs. We look forward to working with Mayor Breed, the Board of Supervisors, juvenile justice stakeholders and the public as we seek to adopt policies and practices that further reduce youth involvement with the justice system, advance principles of restorative justice, contribute to community safety, and advance the best interests of the youths we serve.

Sincerely,



Allen A. Nance

Chief Juvenile Probation Officer

C: Honorable Mayor London N. Breed
Honorable Judge Garrett Wong, Presiding Judge, Superior Court
Honorable Judge Monica Wiley, Supervising Judge, Unified Family Court, Superior Court
George Gascón, District Attorney
Vicki Hennessy, Sheriff
Naomi Kelly, City Administrator
Manohar Raju, Public Defender
William Scott, Chief Police Department
Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Joe Arellano, President, Juvenile Probation Commission
Angel Carrion, Chair, Juvenile Justice Commission
Kasey Lee, Bar Association of San Francisco
Mawuli Tugbenyoh, Advisor, Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Kelly Kirkpatrick, Budget Director
Sophia Kittler, Mayor's Liaison to the Board of Supervisors
Paula Hernandez, SFJPD Assistant Chief Probation Officer
Sandra Dalida, SFJPD Deputy Director of Administrative Services

Joseph Arellano, Acting President
Margaret Brodtkin, Commissioner
Suzy Jones, Commissioner
Daniela Maldonado, Commissioner
Luis Montejano, Commissioner
Royce Moses, Commissioner
James Spingola, Commissioner



City and County of San Francisco
Juvenile Probation Commission

Allen Nance
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer

May 9, 2019

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors
City Hall, Room 244
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors:

On May 8, 2019, by unanimous vote, the members of the Juvenile Probation Commission (JPC) approved this letter in response to the ordinance introduced on April 9, 2019 to amend the Administrative Code to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021. The JPC acknowledges the potentially negative impact of incarceration on youth, and commends the Supervisors' willingness to take bold action to reform the juvenile justice system in San Francisco. However, we believe that an emphasis on an evidence informed comprehensive plan, and not on closing Juvenile Hall, would enable thoughtful consideration of all strategic options to yield the best results - mitigating the risk of destabilizing the juvenile justice system in San Francisco and putting youth in further jeopardy of entering the criminal justice system.

Juvenile Hall's incorporation of more relevant, evidence-based programming over the past 10 years, as well as more effective partnerships with on-site and external CBOs, has enhanced its ability to stabilize and rehabilitate youth. As a result, there were approximately 700 youth bookings into Juvenile Hall in 2018 who were provided behavioral health, medical and/or academic services in a structured environment - 25% of which were from neighboring counties. These reforms, and the adoption of policies enabling increased parental involvement and limiting the time youth spend confined in their rooms, have set San Francisco Juvenile Hall apart from its peers in California.

That said, there is great need for additional reforms to the juvenile justice system to better serve our youth and further reduce recidivism. Youth of color, particularly African American and Latino youth, are still disproportionately affected by exposure to crime and violence, limited access to resources, and unstable living situations - a disturbing fact that must be addressed if meaningful change is going to occur in San Francisco. These youth represent some of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our community. They warrant careful consideration of a plan that can adequately assess their individual needs using data-driven methods, and timely, culturally competent and sensitive services.

Therefore, the JPC urges the development of a well thought-out, comprehensive, strategic plan that incorporates a diversity of voices, and considers the well-being of youth affected by our juvenile justice policies, their families, victims of crime, and the residents of San Francisco, prior to any action to close Juvenile Hall.

The JPC shares your commitment to juvenile justice reform and looks forward to supporting the Mayor's Blue-Ribbon Panel to ensure a smooth transition for our youth, and potentially allow San Francisco to serve as a model for the rest of the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Arellano", written over a horizontal line.

Joseph Arellano, Acting President
Juvenile Probation Commission

cc: The Honorable London N. Breed, Mayor
Allen Nance, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer
Sean Elsbernd, Chief of Staff

Carroll, John (BOS)

From: Hosmon, Kiely (BOS)
Sent: Wednesday, May 08, 2019 2:41 PM
To: Carroll, John (BOS)
Cc: Fierro, Naomi (BOS); Truong, Austin (BOS); Gee, Natalie (BOS); Gallardo, Tracy (BOS); Wright, Edward (BOS)
Subject: RE: REFERRAL - YOUTH COMMISSION - Board File No. 190392 - Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Closure
Attachments: 190392 Youth Commission 1819-RBM-13.pdf
Categories: 2019.05.16 - GAO, 190392

Hello all,

Please see the Youth Commission's response (with a letter of support included from our Transformative Justice Committee) on this legislation.

Cheers,
Kiely

The Youth Commission applications for 2019-2020 are now live and due May 12th!

Kiely Hosmon, M.A.
Director
San Francisco Youth Commission
Office: 415.554.6464 | Fax: 415.554.6140

Pronouns Used: she & her

Visit the official [Youth Commission site](#) and [YC facebook](#) page.
Sign up for [our newsletter](#).

Complete a Board of Supervisors [Customer Satisfaction form](#).

From: Carroll, John (BOS)
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 2:43 PM
To: Hosmon, Kiely (BOS) <kiely.hosmon@sfgov.org>
Cc: Fierro, Naomi (BOS) <naomi.fierro@sfgov.org>; Truong, Caroline (BOS) <caroline.truong@sfgov.org>; Gee, Natalie (BOS) <natalie.gee@sfgov.org>; Gallardo, Tracy (BOS) <tracy.gallardo@sfgov.org>; Wright, Edward (BOS) <edward.w.wright@sfgov.org>
Subject: REFERRAL - YOUTH COMMISSION - Board File No. 190392 - Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Closure

Greetings:

Supervisor Walton has introduced an ordinance; the matter is assigned to the Government Audit and Oversight Committee of the Board of Supervisors for the City and County of San Francisco. Linked below is a hearing introduction referral. **Please reach out to Supervisor Walton's Staff for any specific questions on the ordinance matter.**

[Referral FYI MEMO - April 17, 2019](#)

If you would like to submit reports or comments for the public record in this matter please forward them to me via a response email, or by post at the Clerk's Office, City Hall, Room 244, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102.

I invite you to review the entire matter on our [Legislative Research Center](#) by following the link below:

Board of Supervisors File No. 190392

Thanks for the review.

John Carroll
Assistant Clerk
Board of Supervisors
San Francisco City Hall, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-4445

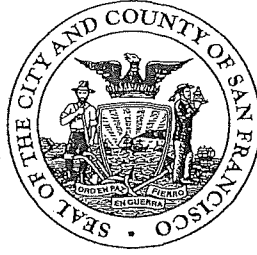


Click [here](#) to complete a Board of Supervisors Customer Service Satisfaction form.

The [Legislative Research Center](#) provides 24-hour access to Board of Supervisors legislation and archived matters since August 1998.

Disclosures: Personal information that is provided in communications to the Board of Supervisors is subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act and the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance. Personal information provided will not be redacted. Members of the public are not required to provide personal identifying information when they communicate with the Board of Supervisors and its committees. All written or oral communications that members of the public submit to the Clerk's Office regarding pending legislation or hearings will be made available to all members of the public for inspection and copying. The Clerk's Office does not redact any information from these submissions. This means that personal information—including names, phone numbers, addresses and similar information that a member of the public elects to submit to the Board and its committees—may appear on the Board of Supervisors website or in other public documents that members of the public may inspect or copy. SPQSF

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco 94102-4689
Tel. No. 554-5184
Fax No. 554-5163
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kiely Hosmon, Director
Youth Commission

FROM: John Carroll, Assistant Clerk,
Government Audit and Oversight Committee

DATE: April 16, 2019

SUBJECT: REFERRAL FROM BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The Board of Supervisors has received the following proposed legislation which is being referred to the Youth Commission as per Charter, Section 4.124 for comment and recommendation. The Commission may provide any response it deems appropriate within 12 days from the date of this referral.

File No. 190392

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the City to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place of detention, in a location approved by the Court; to establish a working group for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund to support community-based alternatives to detention and also support the working group; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

Please return this cover sheet with the Commission's response to John Carroll, Assistant Clerk, Government Audit and Oversight Committee.

* **RESPONSE FROM YOUTH COMMISSION** Date: May 8, 2019

☐ **No Comment**
☒ **Recommendation Attached**

Chairperson, Youth Commission

Youth Commission
City Hall ~ Room 345
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4532



(415) 554-6446
(415) 554-6140 FAX
www.sfgov.org/youth_commission

YOUTH COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

TO: John Carroll, Clerk, Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
FROM: Youth Commission
DATE: Wednesday, May 8, 2019
RE: Referral response to BOS File No. 190392 – [Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Closure]

At our **Monday, May 6, 2019, meeting**, the Youth Commission voted unanimously to support the following motion:

To support BOS File No. 190392 – [Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Closure]

Comments/Recommendations:

The Youth Commission voted to approve the attached letter of support from the Youth Commission's Transformative Justice Committee.

Youth Commissioners thank the Board of Supervisors for their attention to this issue. If you have any questions, please contact our office at (415) 554-6446, or your Youth Commissioner.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bahlam Vigil", written over a horizontal line.

Bahlam Vigil, Chair
Adopted on May 6, 2019
2018-2019 San Francisco Youth Commission

Youth Commission
City Hall ~ Room 345
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4532



(415) 554-6446
(415) 554-6140 FAX
www.sfgov.org/youth_commission

April 9th, 2019
Board of Supervisors
City and County of San Francisco
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

RE: Strong Support for BOS File No. 190392 [Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Closure]
Sponsors: Walton; Ronen, Haney, Mar, Peskin, Fewer, Brown and Safai

Dear Board of Supervisors,

San Francisco Juvenile Hall is under-filled, overfunded, and not a restorative space for our youth. Over the last decade, youth crime has steadily decreased, reaching record lows across the country, including in San Francisco. Currently, over 70 percent of San Francisco's Juvenile Hall sits empty, with the city spending nearly \$270,000 to keep one young person behind bars each year. In January, for example, there were 45 children detained in the Hall, filling only 30 percent of its 150 beds, with nearly 70 percent of those detained being held for a non-violent offense. The city's approach also disproportionately affects African American youth, despite the fact that African Americans make up a dwindling 3% percentage of San Francisco's population.

For many years, the Youth Commission has advocated expanding alternative to incarceration for youth through legislation and our annual Budget and Policy Priorities publications. Our city's budget would be much better used for investment in alternatives to incarceration, like community-based restorative practices. We advocated for these in our recent Omnibus Budget Priorities Resolution. Through these, youth would be able to heal, learn and grow while staying rooted with their community.

Legislation introduced at the San Francisco Board of Supervisors April 9th meeting would require the closure of San Francisco's Juvenile Hall by December 2021. In its place, San Francisco would develop an expanded array of alternatives to incarceration for young people who do not need to be locked up. In addition to expanding community-based alternatives to detention and providing a rehabilitative, non-institutional place of detention, it will establish a working group for the closure plan, and establish a Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund.

We, the Transformative Justice Committee of the Youth Commission, believe that incarceration leaves youth traumatized, disconnected and disempowered. We follow the lead of youth directly impacted by the legal system and thank Young Women Freedom Center and Supervisors Walton, Haney, and Ronen for spearheading this legislation forward. We are excited that the legislation is veto-proof with the cosponsorship of Supervisors Mar, Brown, Lee Fewer, and Peskin. Let's shut down Juvenile Hall and open the doors for community-oriented solutions to community health issues. It's high time to focus on care not cages for young people.

Sincerely,

Transformative Justice Committee
San Francisco Youth Commission

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bahlam Vigil", written over a horizontal line.

Bahlam Vigil, Chair,
2018-19 Youth Commission
Adopted on May 6, 2019

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco 94102-4689
Tel. No. 554-5184
Fax No. 554-5163
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

April 16, 2019

File No. 190392

Lisa Gibson
Environmental Review Officer
Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Ste. 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Ms. Gibson:

On April 9, 2019, Supervisor Walton introduced the following legislation:

File No. 190392

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the City to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place of detention, in a location approved by the Court; to establish a working group for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund to support community-based alternatives to detention and also support the working group; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

This legislation is being transmitted to you for environmental review.

Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board

By: John Carroll, Assistant Clerk
Government Audit and Oversight Committee

Attachment

c: Devyani Jain, Deputy Environmental Review Officer
Joy Navarrete, Environmental Planning
Laura Lynch, Environmental Planning

Not defined as a project under CEQA
Guidelines 15378 and 15060(c)(2) because
it would not result in a direct or
indirect physical change in the
environment. Any physical project would
require environmental review.

joy navarrete

Digitally signed by joy navarrete
DN: dc=org, dc=sfgov, dc=cityplanning,
ou=CityPlanning, ou=Environmental
Planning, cn=joy.navarrete,
email=joy.navarrete@sfgov.org
Date: 2019.05.02 15:42:55 -0700

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco 94102-4689
Tel. No. 554-5184
Fax No. 554-5163
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

MEMORANDUM

TO: Allen Nance, Chief Probation Officer, Juvenile Probation Department
William Scott, Police Chief
Vicki Hennessy, Sheriff
Manohar Raju, Public Defender
George Gascon, District Attorney
Maria Su, Director, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families
Karen Roye, Director, Department of Child Support Services

FROM: John Carroll, Assistant Clerk,
Government Audit and Oversight Committee

DATE: April 16, 2019

SUBJECT: LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

The Board of Supervisors' Government Audit and Oversight Committee has received the following proposed legislation on April 9, 2019:

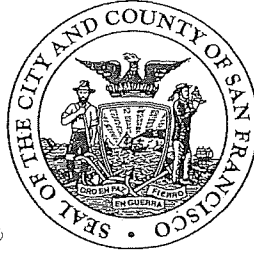
File No. 190392

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the City to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place of detention, in a location approved by the Court; to establish a working group for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund to support community-based alternatives to detention and also support the working group; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

If you have comments or reports to be included with the file, please forward them to me at the Board of Supervisors, City Hall, Room 244, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102 or by email at: victor.young@sfgov.org.

c: Sheryl Cowan, Juvenile Probation Department
Rowena Carr, Police Department
Asja Steeves, Police Department
Deirdre Hussey, Police Department
Katherine Johnson, Sheriff's Department
Nancy Crowley, Sheriff's Department
Cristine Soto DeBerry, Office of the District Attorney
Maxwell Szabo, Office of the District Attorney

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco 94102-4689
Tel. No. 554-5184
Fax No. 554-5163
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

April 16, 2019

File No. 190392

Lisa Gibson
Environmental Review Officer
Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Ste. 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Ms. Gibson:

On April 9, 2019, Supervisor Walton introduced the following legislation:

File No. 190392

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the City to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place of detention, in a location approved by the Court; to establish a working group for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund to support community-based alternatives to detention and also support the working group; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

This legislation is being transmitted to you for environmental review.

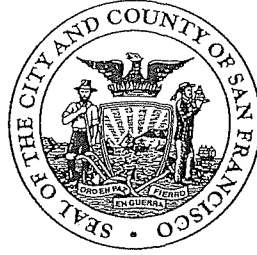
Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board

By: John Carroll, Assistant Clerk
Government Audit and Oversight Committee

Attachment

c: Devyani Jain, Deputy Environmental Review Officer
Joy Navarrete, Environmental Planning
Laura Lynch, Environmental Planning

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco 94102-4689
Tel. No. 554-5184
Fax No. 554-5163
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

April 16, 2019

John Rahaim, Director
Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Ste. 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Rahaim:

On April 9, 2019, Supervisor Walton introduced the following legislation:

File No. 190392

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the City to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place of detention, in a location approved by the Court; to establish a working group for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund to support community-based alternatives to detention and also support the working group; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

The proposed ordinance is being transmitted to the Planning Department for review and determination regarding consistency with the City's General Plan and eight priority policies of Planning Code Section 101.1. The ordinance is pending before the Government Audit and Oversight Committee and will be scheduled for hearing following receipt of your response.

Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board

By: John Carroll, Assistant Clerk
Government Audit and Oversight Committee

Attachment

c: Jonis Ionin, Director of Commission Affairs
Dan Sider, Director of Executive Programs
Aaron Starr, Manager of Legislative Affairs
AnMarie Rodgers, Director of Citywide Planning
Scott Sanchez, Acting Deputy Zoning Administrator
Corey Teague, Zoning Administrator
Lisa Gibson, Environmental Review Officer
Devyani Jain, Deputy Environmental Review Officer
Joy Navarrete, Environmental Planning
Laura Lynch, Environmental Planning

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco 94102-4689
Tel. No. 554-5184
Fax No. 554-5163
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kiely Hosmon, Director
Youth Commission

FROM: John Carroll, Assistant Clerk,
Government Audit and Oversight Committee

DATE: April 16, 2019

SUBJECT: REFERRAL FROM BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The Board of Supervisors has received the following proposed legislation which is being referred to the Youth Commission as per Charter, Section 4.124 for comment and recommendation. The Commission may provide any response it deems appropriate within 12 days from the date of this referral.

File No. 190392

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the City to close Juvenile Hall by December 31, 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place of detention, in a location approved by the Court; to establish a working group for the development of a Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund to support community-based alternatives to detention and also support the working group; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

Please return this cover sheet with the Commission's response to John Carroll, Assistant Clerk, Government Audit and Oversight Committee.

RESPONSE FROM YOUTH COMMISSION Date: _____

_____ No Comment

_____ Recommendation Attached

Chairperson, Youth Commission

Carroll, John (BOS)

From: BOS Legislation, (BOS)
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2019 8:07 AM
To: Carroll, John (BOS)
Cc: BOS Legislation, (BOS)
Subject: FW: Letter of Support - BOS File No. 190392 [Closure of Juvenile Hall]
Attachments: PJDC - Letter of Support - BOS File No. 190392 [Closure of Juvenile Hall].pdf

Categories: 190392

For File No. 190392.

Lisa Lew

San Francisco Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102
T 415-554-7718 | F 415-554-5163
lisa.lew@sfgov.org | www.sfbos.org



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From: Kasie Lee <kasie@kasiewlee.com>
Sent: Friday, May 17, 2019 6:23 PM
To: BOS Legislation, (BOS) <bos.legislation@sfgov.org>
Subject: Letter of Support - BOS File No. 190392 [Closure of Juvenile Hall]



This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I would like to submit the attached letter on behalf of the Pacific Juvenile Defender Center.

Warm regards,

Kasie Lee

Kasie W. Lee
Attorney at Law - Certified Criminal Law Specialist
Law Offices of Kasie W. Lee
315 Montgomery Street, 9th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: (415) 371-9786

Web: www.kasiewlee.com

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Carroll, John (BOS)

From: Board of Supervisors, (BOS)
Sent: Friday, June 07, 2019 9:02 AM
To: Carroll, John (BOS)
Subject: FW: Closure of JJC
Attachments: Closure of JJC.docx

Categories: 190392

From: Board of Supervisors, (BOS)
Sent: Tuesday, June 4, 2019 7:01 PM
To: BOS-Supervisors <bos-supervisors@sfgov.org>
Subject: FW: Closure of JJC

From: Iniguez, Elizabeth (JUV) <elizabeth.iniguez@sfgov.org>
Sent: Monday, June 3, 2019 5:20 PM
To: Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>
Subject: Closure of JJC

ne 3, 2019

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102

It is sad to hear that a facility that's provided so many youth much needed services such as therapy, an education, and a safe place to be out of their immediate (many times dangerous) element - is thought to be unnecessary.

In the last 20 years that I've been here doing thousands of Disposition Reports (and follow up or other types of various court reports), I have not only read the severe circumstances of cases and lives of youth, but have also seen first-hand the amount of time and effort that so many Probation Officers have put into their work and more importantly into "their families" in order to identify and provide the proper services and perhaps "re-route" a kid's future altogether in a positive way.

What I've seen is that sometimes it's the Protocol that needs to be revamped, not the facility shut down. The Juvenile Hall facility is only a few years old and has the potential to house so many needed services "in house" and this does not necessarily mean that a youth has to be isolated. While I don't work in the actual Juvenile Hall facility in the back, I am aware of the types of services and opportunities that have been provided to so many youth who have come through these doors of the JJC. I have worked with all their Probation Officers for many years.

Unfortunately, there are some youth that do need a time out from all the negative influences that they often have no choice (by way of their living environments) to be in; and sadly there are some that cannot run away from their reality. The role of the community as a whole and all the living conditions in and around neighborhoods obviously has a great deal to do with all that is missing from some of these communities. (See an agency called "HELP McCLAREN PARK" for a positive look at what putting minds together, a good plan for a neighborhood, and seeking the help can accomplish.) This too can happen with other neighborhoods and this would equate to a better quality of life for all ages – which then contributes to a better overall community. Youth are often stressed by their lack of opportunities to just "be a kid, be a youth" and be in a safe environment – and this leads to the start of delinquency.

With regard to our facility here at JJC, I've seen over the years how better strategies were developed in order to "monitor the youth" as opposed to just sending them out to sign up and complete programs. The round table meetings sharing information, feedback, and providing follow through is a component that has helped to stay on track and better accountability was achieved -- not only by the community agencies that we were using, but by the youth that were "having to complete" orders of Court or Probation.

Perhaps one of the things that also has helped so much is having services "on site" which is also a much-needed component because without that some youth try to "swindle" the department with non-compliance of what they've been asked to complete.

The school department also on site and all the services provided by John Knox and his group have also helped to "re-route" so many youths who (without those services) would have already been "lost in the school system" and "back on the street to more upscale delinquency".

While it's great that Juvenile Delinquency numbers have drastically been reduced, I firmly believe that SO MANY of these services ON SITE can be used and implemented or re-implemented and/or re-invented with the shared assistance of CBO's, Juvenile Hall as well as ALL the Log Cabin type resources. Obviously, it wouldn't be right to house minors in an adult jail as that would surely be contradictory to the Welfare of the youth and against the Welfare and Institutions Code.

Clearly there are still SO MANY youth that need our services and perhaps to revamp JJC (not close down) and incorporate ALL the services that were previously provided at Log Cabin & the ones that are provided here on site, can be intertwined in order to have more use of this site and achieve better monitoring and compliance. Sometimes it's the protocol that needs a change – and often times in trying to keep up with the amount of paperwork for compliance – there's more paper and less time with a family, which should not happen.

While I don't work in the actual Juvenile Hall (or Log Cabin, when open) with the thousands of reports that I've done over the years I have been able to see where some of the loopholes were and why some of these youth were coming back like a rotation. While the numbers have lowered significantly, there still needs to be a place where multi-faceted opportunities are offered; while still having a place that can and will be used when a youth actually needs to be detained as the ultimate choice. Clearly in San Francisco is where it's the "last resort" for a kid to be locked up.

Unfortunately, juvenile delinquency will not just disappear. The mission should be to re-route and provide multiple skills and opportunities after perhaps short sentences (depending on severity of crime of course)... otherwise, we are sending out the message that one can commit a crime because there's no penalty if you're a minor..... wrong message.

In one of the articles I read in which Monroe stated significant factors as to the reasons behind the delinquency of so many minors – it is true about the environment and lack of opportunities. With that said, it's important for delinquent youth to be offered "mentoring" "therapeutic" "counseling" "educational" "work ethics training and opportunities" "rehabilitation from drug dependency" etc., Health and fitness training awareness; and much of this has already been implemented here on site. In the case of some youth, they would benefit from a short stay out of their "dysfunctional home life or environment" to simply learn the tools they need to "reroute" their delinquent lifestyle in order to help decrease the levels of sophistication that are acquired simply by (again) the immediate living surroundings.

I have so many times seen youth have a complete turnaround while in the course of Probation, simply because they've developed a trust with a Probation Officer or Counselor who has helped them to have a "sense of hope that someone believes in them".

Youth not being able to get a job, creates crime. Many opportunities are offered here to direct youth to the avenues for job readiness. Our staff want the youth to leave here and flourish, not come back.

Youth being lost in the school system and left behind also causes delinquency. An incorrect IEP or the assumption that a kid is ADHD and given drugs is also problematic. The fact is that each kid has a different learning style, and when that style is determined – a kid will flourish with the right support. I have seen that so many youth had simply "slipped through the cracks" of other social service systems or perhaps the school systems – again, because of the protocols to fill out so much paperwork to receive funding, that the amount of paperwork to fit the criteria for funding takes more time than the time spent working with individual youth and families, and once they landed here, for the most part they were able to get re-routed. There has to be consequence. We cannot simply just say, close the doors and let youth who don't want to comply with rules just go astray.

Listening to the initial meeting in March on this subject of closure brought one specific case to my mind from a few years ago. The scenario was: The case of a young girl (15 or so) who was here for prostituting. Mom's boyfriend molested her and told her if she told, he'd kill the mother. She told, he followed through on his threat. Fast forward .. obvious severe PTSD... Now I'm doing her case and see notes that go on for days about "how many Social Service and Mental Health" personnel she had been passed along through. Since the age of 3, this young girl had seen "100" social service workers. I have no idea how that even happens. How do that many people just pass along "paperwork" and keep the kid rolling to the next person who possibly doesn't even read the paperwork, or just passes the youth along to the next and next person... Hence, landing at JJC, and for their "first real opportunity" for support that is and has been provided by the PO's that sit with them to hear their story, meet with their family (dysfunctional or not), go to the schools, the homes, the neighborhoods, and make a plan and figure out a way to best support and get them "out of that cycle"...

On the educational note: There's a book called "ALWAYS RUNNING" by Luis J. Rodriguez, a young criminal living the street life, finding his way eventually out of that life through the power of Words and Education... "We have served that Educational purpose as well" in this facility – for it was with help of the School Department on these grounds that offered youth the opportunity to attain their high school diplomas or GED's while here, away from the nonsense on the streets they are trying to run from, because in all actuality – they're scared and sometimes have no safe home to be in.

The reality of the situation on the street is that criminality is a way of life for many (rich or poor) and if there is "no consequence" that certainly is a HORRIBLE MESSAGE to send out to the community.

We live in a broken system and the PROTOCOL's need to be revamped.

In discussions with an SFPD officer he'd stated that the most upsetting thing to him was when the police department was NOT allowed to bring in a kid who had just committed a horrible crime... They had to (due to protocol) release a youth back to the very dysfunction they were allowed to flourish in and that's where "some" of these kids continue to escalate their degree of sophistication. No consequence is a recipe for disaster.

Here we have offered consequences that have been functional in actually trying to "restore the youth's ability to learn tools and go back to a community where they can now flourish", as opposed to just having locked them up and thrown away the key.

Closing down the Hall to rebuild a smaller one? Waste of money. The space that has already been built and is available should be used to implement (more) CBO and other services "in house". I don't agree it would be "in the best interest of justice, the youth, the family, or the community" to "NOT" have some type of facility for those that do need it; whether it's for maximum or minimum services that would otherwise provide intervention.

I don't feel any other county will want our youth from SF as they have their own youth to contend with.

As it is some young people continue to run wild on the street "armed" and those guns aren't going anywhere. We have dealt with very sophisticated young criminal minds and I'm certain that even some of those youth have had a significant turnaround after being provided multiple opportunities to make positive changes and do something "different". All youth deserve a chance to better their lives. This department has provided so many needed support services in order to help them find that avenue.

It is my hope that all these issues are taken into consideration when deciding fate for a community as a whole, but more importantly for the "Youth and Families" that we have long served not only here in San Francisco, but the many youth that have ended up here in San Francisco from other counties.

Elizabeth Iniguez
Probation Services Transcriber/Records


Carroll, John (BOS)

From: Mchugh, Eileen (BOS)
Sent: Friday, June 07, 2019 9:01 AM
To: Carroll, John (BOS)
Subject: FW: Juvenile Hall

Categories: 190392, 2019.06.11 - BOS

From: Board of Supervisors, (BOS)
Sent: Thursday, June 6, 2019 3:13 PM
To: BOS-Supervisors <bos-supervisors@sfgov.org>
Subject: FW: Juvenile Hall

From: Sabi Sue <sabisue@prodigy.net>
Sent: Tuesday, June 4, 2019 11:03 AM
To: Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>
Subject: Juvenile Hall

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There are many youth that are quite dangerous to the public. Juvenile Hall is a place where they can get the counseling, psychiatric help and discipline they need. They can get three square meals a day, a warm place to sleep, and schooling. Putting the dangerous ones back out in the community for enrichment programs is well meaning but not well thought out.

Some of the kids have been convicted of very serious and often violent offenses. It is irresponsible for the county to let them back onto the street especially if they have raped, stabbed, shot, beaten, or harmed other people

They get all kinds of enrichment programming in juvenile hall in the form of classes, tutoring, counseling, etc. They also are observed and since there are different gangs the security staff (OK, guards) can keep an eye out for any trouble.

OK, your hall is only half full which is wonderful. That means it is half empty. This half empty portion could be used for something else, you know. The population in juvenile hall goes up and down so sometimes you need more units, but when there is a lot of unused space you could use that unused space for some other county purpose I would think.

If a child in one of the proposed enrichment programs continues to violate the law what are you going to do with him or her? Are you going to stick a 14 year old in county jail then? Hand him more enrichment? If he terrorizes a neighborhood or shoots someone what are you going to do? If he breaks his doctor's leg and beats up a bunch of nurses what will you do with him? If he brings a gun to school and brandishes it what will you do?

Yes, some of the kids are released from juvenile hall (during their sentence) and end up in nonpublic high schools and group homes. But that is only after careful consideration by the DA, the juvenile court judge, the psychologists, the counselors and the like. There needs to be that option, the juvenile hall option.

Carroll, John (BOS)

From: Board of Supervisors, (BOS)
Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2019 12:01 PM
To: BOS-Supervisors; Carroll, John (BOS)
Subject: FW: Juvenile Hall

Categories: 2019.06.04 - BOS, 190392

-----Original Message-----

From: Norm Honbo <normhonbo@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 15, 2019 8:49 PM
To: Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>
Cc: Yee, Norman (BOS) <norman.yee@sfgov.org>
Subject: Juvenile Hall

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Re: Ordinance File #190392

Dear Supervisors,

As a concerned resident of San Francisco, I do not see how you can make a decision about closing Juvenile Hall without waiting for the Recommendations of Mayor Breed's Panel regarding the future of this necessary facility. There is no real substitute to the existing services at the Juvenile Hall nor any credible replacement to what presently exists. It is foolish to close this facility before we do have alternatives that can provide the same quality of service and care that should be provided.

Please table this vote until the Panel has made it's Report and Recommendations.

Sincerely

Norman Honbo

184 Los Pinos Dr.
San Francisco, CA 94127

Board of Directors

Patricia Lee
President
San Francisco Public
Defender's Office

Nathan Laba
President
Alameda County Office
of the Public
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Angeles County
Public Defender

PJDC Staff

Burrell
*Chief Policy and
Training Director*

Ben Manning-Villar
*Chief Grants and Projects
Director*

Timur Bowie
Senior Training Attorney

Andrea Butler
Program Coordinator

May 17, 2019

Board of Supervisors
City and County of San Francisco
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102-5689

RE: Support for BOS File No. 190392 [Admin. Code - Juvenile Hall Closure]
Sponsors: Walton; Ronen, Haney, Mar, Peskin, Fewer, Brown and Safai

Dear San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

The purpose of this letter is to express support for BOS File 190393, the ordinance to close juvenile hall by December 2021 and to seek more humane, alternative measures to treat youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system.

The Pacific Juvenile Defender Center (PJDC) provides support to more than 1000 juvenile trial lawyers, appellate counsel, law school clinical programs and non-profit law centers throughout California. We work to improve the quality of legal representation, assure fairness for youth in court proceedings, and promote practices that will produce good outcomes. As a regional affiliate of the Washington, D.C.-based National Juvenile Defender Center, we are also part of national efforts to improve the treatment of youth in the justice system.

Although juvenile crime rates have dramatically decreased in San Francisco over past two decades, the city continues to lock up young people in juvenile hall in large part due to a misguided understanding of the purpose of detention. The function of juvenile hall is to temporarily house only those youth who are a serious public safety risk or a risk to themselves. However, the San Francisco Juvenile Hall is often filled with young people who do not belong there. The youth detained in our juvenile hall are often charged with committing non-violent offenses, such as stealing from commercial establishments. Additionally, although the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP Act) prohibits the incarceration of youth for status offenses (i.e., non-criminal offenses), San Francisco regularly detains youths in juvenile hall for disobeying a valid court order. As a result, a

substantial percentage of the youth who are housed in juvenile hall are there for such non-violent conduct as truancy, violating curfew, running away or running away.

Our practice of incarcerating youth not only fails to address the underlying reasons for their behavior but may make their behaviors worse. Incarceration is inherently dehumanizing. Spending hours in a locked cell and being repeatedly placed in handcuffs sends a message to these youth that they are criminals. Numerous studies show that, once incarcerated, youth are more likely to reoffend later in life.¹ Studies also show that even short-term incarceration negatively impacts a youth's ability to graduate.² Incarcerating youth also leads to both physical and mental health issues that persist into adulthood. One study found that one-third of incarcerated youth were diagnosed with depression, with the onset of depression occurring after incarceration.³

Recognizing the above, California law already requires the release of youth with pending cases absent a showing that they pose a serious safety risk to the community or themselves. To this end, groups like the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) created validated detention criteria and risk assessment tools so that probation departments could utilize an objective measure to determine when a young person should be released or detained.⁴ San Francisco, a JDAI jurisdiction, has adopted one such detention risk assessment tool. However, a recent NBC Investigative News Report revealed that, from January 2017 to July of 2018, the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department had an override rate of 65%. This means that, in 65% of the cases in which the risk assessment tool determined a young person to be suitable for release, the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department nevertheless recommended incarceration. There has also been no transparency surrounding this process, since neither the courts nor the attorneys representing the youth are provided copies of the detention risk assessment reports. The courts and attorneys representing youth also are not notified when an override takes place.

¹ "The Costs of Confinement: Why Good Juvenile Justice Policies Make Good Fiscal Sense," Justice Policy Institute, May 2009. http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09_05_rep_costsofconfinement_jj_ps.pdf

² "The Dangers Of Detention," Justice Policy Institute, 2006. http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/06-11_rep_dangersofdetention_jj.pdf.

³ Holman and Ziedenberg. http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/06-11_rep_dangersofdetention_jj.pdf.

⁴ "Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative," The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018. <http://www.aecf.org/work/juvenile-justice/jdai>.

Research has proven that home-based counseling, treatment and supervision strategies for juveniles produce equal or better outcomes at a fraction of the cost.⁵ Based on the above reasons, we are in strong support of BOS File No. 190392, the proposed ordinance to close down the San Francisco Juvenile Hall by December of 2021.

Sincerely,



Kasie Lee
Chief Financial Officer
Pacific Juvenile Defender Center

⁵ James Austin et al., "Alternatives to the Secure Detention and Confinement of Juvenile Offenders," Juvenile Justice Bulletin, September 2005. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/208804.pdf>.

Close Down YGC!

Report

**The struggle to save the lives of children
The efforts to close down the San Francisco juvenile justice
system**

**Raymond J. Balberan
Alfredo Bojorquez
Real Alternatives Program
1983**

Latinos charge abuse at the S.F. youth center

By Jennifer Foote
Examiner staff writer

A Juvenile Court judge has called for a hearing into charges by representatives of the Latino community that counselors have abused children at the Youth Guidance Center for two years.

Juvenile Court Judge Maxine Chesney, who reviewed a list of 31 alleged incidents of abuse there, said yesterday that it is "the intention of the court to see that there is a complete airing of all these allegations and a determination made whether there is a factual basis."

If evidence of abuse is found, "we intend to take appropriate action," she said.

Chesney said Mayor Feinstein intends to ask one of her standing committees to look into the allegations. Feinstein couldn't be reached for comment yesterday.

The charges were compiled by Ray Balberan, chairman of the child-abuse committee for the Council of La Raza for Education, Assistance and Resources. He works daily with youths at the center. He first presented the charges at a meeting Wednesday of the state Juvenile Justice Commission.

They range from alleged incidents of sexual molestation to complaints by teens at the center that they were left naked in bare cells and denied food.

Balberan, who has an office in the Real Alternatives Program office in the Mission District, has written statements from some of the children who reported abuse, but not all the listed incidents are accounted for in the documents.

In some cases, one teen-ager reported several incidents, listed separately on the roster of allegations.

"Some of the statements are on tape, some in written form and some are still in my head," Balberan said yesterday. The tapes, however, are transcribed and included with the written statements.

Judge Chesney and Chief Juvenile Probation Officer Joseph Botka said yesterday they hadn't seen any of Balberan's statements or heard any of his tapes. Both said they would need the details provided in



Ray Balberan, left, head of the child abuse committee, and Fred Bojorques, Examiner/Gordon Stone

the statements to aid investigations of the charges.

"Both Judge (Daniel) Hanlon and Joe Botka have asked Mr. Balberan substantially before today's date to provide them with facts and any reports he has available," Chesney said yesterday. "He has provided nothing to either of these persons."

After a meeting with his staff yesterday to discuss the charges, Botka said Balberan had never approached him with the complaints but would produce statements in a meeting sometime next week.

Botka said the center's counselors were unable to identify many of the complaints on Balberan's list and concluded that some of the charges did not constitute child abuse.

"We will not tolerate mistreatment or

child abuse," Botka said. "I think Mr. Balberan is trying very hard to find fault with us, and you can always find some fault because we have our imperfections."

Botka conceded that charges about a teen-ager's shoes being taken away could be correct, because the staff sometimes takes away their wards' shoes and gives them special slippers that cannot be used as weapons.

He responded to a May 1983 complaint by a 17-year-old allegedly denied shampoo, saying, "There could be some situation where a kid might not have had shampoo."

Of the incidents where teens complained of being locked in cold rooms in their underwear or naked for hours at a time, Botka said, "We're trying to check that out."

In several statements, wards said they had been denied access to the bathroom and forced to relieve themselves in crumpled towels in their rooms. One youth allegedly drank liquid wax, and another tried to hang himself by his shoelaces to get out of their cells to the bathroom.

Botka said it is possible that when counselors were busy, some teens were told to wait to go to the bathroom. There are two staff members for 20 kids, he said,

and sometimes their bathroom needs cannot be attended to immediately.

A counselor did "throw me in (a bare cell) and left me in there for four hours," wrote one 14-year-old. "They abuse me all up and throw me around."

Two of the three incidents of sexual abuse on the list of charges were investigated by police, and the counselors accused in the cases were exonerated, Botka said.

Another allegation charged that a female counselor seduced a 16-year-old ward twice at her home under the auspices of taking him to a group home. Once at the group home, according to a written statement, the boy was taken by the woman and lived with her for four months before she moved to San Jose.

Another charge, made by a 15-year-old, alleged that a male counselor had shown his wards a Playboy magazine.

Botka said his staff, "couldn't put a finger" on the seduction or pornography charges and would need details from Balberan to investigate the allegations. "Mr. Balberan has a responsibility to produce information."

The chief probation officer, in a letter to Balberan, suggested that if the community worker knew of incidents and failed to report them at the time, his actions could be considered a violation of law.

Capt. Larry Gray of the San Francisco police's juvenile abuse division said he had never heard of Balberan and couldn't recall being notified of abuse.

"We have investigated allegations of abuse at YGC," he said, in reference to the 1982 and 1983 charges of sexual abuse that Botka had mentioned.

"Any alleged abuse against children is investigated," Gray added. "If this gentleman had ever notified anybody, there would have been an investigation."

Balberan said yesterday that it had taken time to compile a list of complaints that pinned down incidents to a specific date and time. He defended himself by accusing counselors at the facility of withholding information about abuses.

"You mean to tell me that people that have been there for 15 years never heard nothing, never saw nothing?" he asked. "People there have been sleeping behind the wheel."

Balberan said he had contacted the police community relations office about the allegations, but Gray said he never received any referrals to Balberan.

Allegations of child abuse at Juvenile Hall

These are alleged incidences of child abuse in 1982 and 1983, from a Council of La Raza for Education, Assistance and Resources report

Incident	Approx. date	Victim
Sexual molestation	Nov. 1982	15
Oral copulation	Jan. 1983	15
Shown pornography	Oct. '82-Jan. '83	16
Allowed to fight, then punished for fighting	July 1982	16
Forced to exercise beyond his capability or be punished	May 1983	17
No shampoo to wash hair	May 1983	17
Use of bathroom refused to the point of suicide	Sept. 1982	14
Not enough ventilation in cells; request for fans to be turned on denied	May 1983	13
Forced to sleep with youth that had crabs	May 1983	13
Locked in room for two weeks straight, with 45 minutes of exercise	April 1983	13
No shoes for four days	June 1982	16
Left in a cold, wet room with no clothes on and no bed	Nov. 1981	12
Twice withheld food within sight, then given it 3 to 4 hours later	Nov. 1981	12
Body slammed, given a knee injury by a counselor	March 1983	13
On a pass, left at a group home, while counselor took off to take care of "business"	Jan. 1982	12
Denied rights to file a grievance	March 1983	13
Denied proper health care	March 1983	13
Denied request to use bathroom	March 1983	13
Denied request to use bathroom; so boy made himself sick by drinking floor wax just to get out	Aug. 1982	15
Not allowed to spit while on medical list	1982	15
Forced to walk in a public place dressed in YGC detention clothes and in handcuffs	April 1983	13
Forced to go without proper clothes (underwear only)	Sept. 1982	15
Truant are truant because of overcrowding in YGC	April 1983	14
Milk was sour, told it happens now and then	May 1983	14

FATHER'S DAY SPECIALS
RCA
VIDEO RECORDER

MODEL
VCR-250

CLOSE DOWN SAN FRANCISCO YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER
by Mission Mediarts Film Workshop
July 12, 1990

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To

Robert Boe, A black boy whose suffering and suicide death in San Francisco Juvenile Hall crystalized the need for fundamental change in the care and treatment of at risk children.

Chapter 1

San Francisco Civil Grand Jury 1976 Report

THE FOLLOWING IS A RE-TYPED COPY OF THE 1976 JUVENILE COURT/YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER REPORT.]

JUVENILE COURT/YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER

I. THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

The Civil Grand Jury is entrusted with the duty of investigating each and every department of government in the City. Even if the Jury had no other business during the year, its investigation of Juvenile Court and Youth Guidance Center would, nonetheless, be incomplete. Some 18 agencies of government in San Francisco are involved in the administration of Youth Guidance Center. In addition, numerous community groups and private placements facilities help to provide a network of roots that leads to a gargantuan spreading tree like system. Accordingly, the decision was made to select parts and portions of the juvenile Court system for investigation and, candidly, to acknowledge that other parts of the system were not investigated.

One reason for limiting the scope of investigation of the Juvenile Court was that in the spring of this year, the Junior League of San Francisco released an intensive and comprehensive report entitled, "San Francisco's Future: A Study of Youth Resources". This report, financed in part with funds from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, relied upon more than 50 volunteer researchers, plus a large staff. The Junior League Report accomplishes more than this Grand Jury could have hoped to, and our single most important recommendation is that the report receive immediate and serious attention from the Office of the Mayor and the Board of Education.

Therefore, this report focuses on several specific concerns about his administration of the system of juvenile justice in San Francisco.

II. AREAS OF INQUIRY

A. The Battle Between Public Agency Resources and Community Based Resources

The system of juvenile justice in San Francisco (as in many other cities throughout the United States) is in a time of transition. For a number of

reasons, the established system of the Juvenile Probation Department bureaucracy has been relying more and more on community based agencies as referral facilities for youth in trouble. In part, the diversion of juvenile offenders free the public institutional system to community based programs has resulted from the ability of some of these programs to compete successfully with the existing system with respect to decreasing recidivism of youthful offenders. The Junior League report studies five community based agencies in San Francisco in some detail and concludes as follows:

Youth alternative agencies have demonstrated their effectiveness in reducing recidivism at a lower cost per client than institutional treatment at YGC and at the Ranches. One of the strongest factors in the success of these programs is the use of staff members who grew up in the same neighborhoods and faced the same problems as do their clients. The shared experience and perspectives greatly facilitate the development of intensive, one-to-one relationships between staff and client built on trust which form the basis of the treatment philosophy. The outreach concept also contributes to program effectiveness, both in the aggressive recruitment and supportive follow-up clients and in the involvement of peers and family in the treatment process.

Problems faces by youth alternative agencies often stem from insecure funding. Many agencies face precarious daily existence after their initial funding (often an L.E.A.A. grant) terminates. Low budgets lead to understaffed programs which cannot develop their full potential due to very high caseloads. Volunteer auxiliaries can ease the caseload burden, and should be developed by agencies now lacking such a program.

Administrative weaknesses also appear in many of the youth alternative agencies. Inadequate records are a common problem, a problem which makes it difficult to measure effectiveness and to demonstrate the justification for continued funding. These agencies also rarely have the technical expertise within their own staffs for the more sophisticated techniques for fund-raising public relations, and grantsmanship. They often need technical assistance which may or may not be available through their Boards of Directors or advisory committees.

Despite the fact that the juvenile justice system has made increasing use of community based resources during the past several years, the Juvenile Probation Department has not move fast enough to satisfy some community based groups, particularly these with agencies in the minority communities. Accordingly, certain of those groups have launched hostile and vituperative verbal attacks upon the Juvenile Probation Department and the Department

has responded by barring representatives of these groups from access to the Juvenile Court. The exclusion of the groups from access to the court process has, in turn raised the level of hostilities so that at present it is not an

exaggeration to say that some community groups would prefer to see the abolition of the entire juvenile court system and that the Juvenile Probation Department would prefer to see the abolition of those community groups that have been the most severe in their criticisms of the Department.

The Grand Jury does not intend to take a position on the actions of the parties involved in this dispute. Suffice it to say that the debate, which thus far has remained on verbal terms, has reached such levels of animosity that it is no longer helpful dialogue. It is clear that time has come for the Office of the Mayor to afford both sides of this dispute a full hearing of their grievances and responses so that the City can look forward to constructive changes with respect to its youth programs.

Many community based groups are competing for public resources for work with youth. This Grand Jury explicitly refrains from endorsing any particular groups or programs. Nonetheless, it does seem to us that the juvenile justice system should expand its use of responsible community based groups for purposes of counseling and supervision of juvenile offenders. We make this recommendation because community based programs have been able to demonstrate the least costly and most effective ways of reducing recidivism among those youth who end up in juvenile court process. We also acknowledge that the varying ingredients that tend to make community based programs successful are the same ingredients that create a potential for lack of accountability of public funds: a sense of informality, a freedom to experiment with counseling techniques, and a loathing of bureaucracy and the myriad written forms that accompany it. Accordingly, if community based groups want to participate in programs with public funds, they must realize that they must adept, organize and establish reliable accounting and business practices. We believe that community groups can receive assistance in this regards through the Youth Service Bureau and that, among the important functions to be served by the Youth Service Bureau are the establishment of criteria for evaluation of community programs and the match-up of community groups with volunteers from the business and legal communities who can provide these groups with instruction and supervision in accounting and business practices.

B. Problems of Institutional Racism at Log Cabin Ranch

Well over half the juveniles arrested in San Francisco come from the minority communities. It is self-evident that there are significant cultural difference between minority youth and white youth in the City. These differences manifest themselves in styles of dress, personal appearance and language. One reason that some community groups have been able to demonstrate effective counseling of minority juvenile offenders is that these groups use staff counselors who are able to bring a common experience to the problems of communications and who are able to speak the same language as youth who are in trouble. Conversely, the minority representation among employees of the Juvenile Probation Department, and particularly among supervisorial employees is astonishingly low. The Juvenile Probation Department has furnished the Grand Jury with statistics as of February 1, 1976, reflecting the racial composition of employees in various areas of the Department and these summary statistics are attached to this report as Appendix A. The plain fact of the matter is that those who run the juvenile justice system are overwhelmingly white, whereas a majority of youth going through the system are black. While it is difficult to pinpoint specific instances of discrimination, one result of institutional racial discrimination is so obvious that it simply cannot be explained away. This example is that, when the Grand Jury visited Log Cabin Ranch, it found that, of the 85 boys ordered to spend time at the ranch (for a period of 6 months or more), 84 of those boys were black. In short, white boys do not end up at Log Cabin Ranch, even though over 30% of juveniles arrested in San Francisco for serious and violent offenses are white.

We should make it clear that we are not holding any person or part of the juvenile justice system responsible for the inequitable racial composition of Log Cabin Ranch. Undoubtedly, black youth are up at Log Cabin Ranch as a result of cumulative decisions that are made at every stage of the juvenile justice process -- from the arrest decision made by the police to the recommendation made by the Probation Department as to placement. Our point here is not to _____ personal responsibility. Rather, our point is that, under rational explanation of facts or circumstances can the racial composition of Log Cabin Ranch be justified, and the racial composition of boys sent to Log Cabin Ranch must be equalized. No more glaring example of racial injustice may be found than the fact that, although virtually 98% of the boys at Log Cabin Ranch are black, not one single employee at Log Cabin Ranch -- from supervisors to counselors to cooks -- is black. We trust that this sort of institutional apartheid needs no further elaboration.

5. Institutional racism at Log Cabin Ranch must be ended by use of the following means, among others:

- a. The racial composition of Log Cabin Ranch must be equalized.
- b. Existing Civil Service job scopes should be revised in the immediate future to eliminate the requirement that counselors at the ranches possess bachelor of arts degrees. Many more minorities must be hired as counselors at the ranches.
- c. The Juvenile probation Department must drastically expand its number of minority employees, particularly in supervisorial positions.
- d. The Mayor's Criminal Justice Council, possibly in cooperation with organizations of attorneys in San Francisco, should study and report on ways to facilitate the establishment of private placement facilities in San Francisco including, if possible, amendments to zoning, building and licensing codes. ...

Chapter 2 CONCILIO DE LA RAZA PARA EDUCACION, AYUDA Y RECURSOS

To: Mayor Feinstein

Our children are being abused and neglected by San Francisoc Youth Guidance Center!

INCIDENT	APPROX. DATE	VICTIM
Sexual Molestation	November 1982	15 yr. old boy
Oral Copulation	January 1983	15 yr. old boy
Showing Youth Pornography	October 1982 to January 1983	15 yr. old boy
Letting the boys fight; then punishing them for fighting	July 1982	16 yr. old boy
Forced to do exercises, beyond their capability or be punished	May 1983	17 yr. old boy
able contracts, or be punished		17 yr. old boy
No shampoo to wash hair	May 1983	17 yr. old boy
Use of bathroom refused, to	September 1982	14 yr. old boy

the point of suicide

Not enough ventilation in cells	May 1983	13 yr. old boy
Force to sleep with youth that have crabs	May 1983	13 yr. old boy
Locked in room for two weeks straight, with 45 min. exercise	April 1983	13 yr. old boy
No shoes for four days	June 1982	13 yr. old boy
Left in a cold wet room with no clothes on and no bed in the room	Nov. 1981	12 yr. old boy
Twice withheld food within sight then gave it to the youth 3 to 4 hours later	Nov. 1981	12 yr. old boy
Youth was body slammed and got a knee injury by a counselor	March 1981	12 yr. old boy
On a pass, youth left at a group home, while counselor took off to take care of "business"	Jan. 1982	12 yr. old boy
Denied rights to file a grievance	March 1983	13 yr. old boy
Not given proper health care	March 1983	13 yr. old boy (all children)
Youth forced to go without proper clothes (underwear only)	Sept. 1982	16 yr. old boy
Truant are truant because of overcrowding in YGC	April 1983	14 yr. old boy
Milk was sour and was told it happen now and then	May 1983	14 yr. old boy
Youth is always hungry, says	May 1983	14 yr. old boy

their is not enough food to go a
around

Always hungry with
stomach pains

May 1983

17 yr. boy

Youth says counselors eat the
food first and they get the leftovers

May 1983

17 yr. old boy

Counselors ate the youth snacks
that mother sent, and has seen them
do the same to other youth

Dec. 1982

14 yr. old boy

Woman counselor sexually seducing
a boy, she took out on a pass twice

1982

16 yr. old boy

Young girl had to pick out
underwear in front of a men
counselors

1982

13 yr. old girl

INSTITUTIONAL CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IS A CRIME
Raymond Balberan CREAR Youth Committee Chair-person

Chapter 3

Suspected Child Abuse Reports (11166 PC)

TO BE COMPLETED BY REPORTING PARTY

REPORTING PARTY [A]

C.R.E.A.R. YOUTH COMMITTEE - RAYMOND BALBERAN
NAME

2901-23 STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94110

ADDRESS

(415) 826-6474 6-20-83

PHONE
PARTY

DATE OF REPORT

SIGATURE OF REPORTING

REPORT SEND TO: (X) POLICE DEPARTMENT () SHERIFF'S OFFICE

(B) (X) COUNTY WELFARE () COUNTY PROBATION

D.S.S. Family & Children's Services
AGENCY

2049 Grove St. SF, Ca
ADDRESS

RICHARD ARTHUR, CES H-51 (415) 387-9010

6-20-83

OFFICIAL CONTACTED	PHONE	DATE/TIME
VICTIM [C] Jaime Pasacio NAME RACE	3515- 23rd St., SF 94110 ADDRESS	9-20-65 M Mex. BRITHDATE SEX

INCIDENT INFORMATION [E]

1. DATE/TIME OF INCIDENT 12-20-82 (1430)

Place of Incident YGC B-5 classroom

(check one) ☒ OCCURRED | ☐ OBSERVED

2. TYPE OF ABUSE: () PHYSICAL (X) MENTAL () SEXUAL ASSAULT (X) NEGLECT (X) OTHER

3. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION: "On the about date our classroom teacher in B-5 Painlove, stated that he is a member of the Ku Kluc Klan and he hate to teach in YGC. On other occasions he brought the KKK grown and pointed hat to show the students and he did not want us to read books. He would often make racist remarks".

Chapter 4

The D.A.

On June 20, 1983 the San Francisco District Attorney received 21 SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORTS, the reporting party was Concilio De La Raza Educacion, Ayuda Y Recursos.

Place of Incident : San Francisco Youth Guidance Center - Juvenil Hall

Suspected Child Abuse Reports (11166 PC)

The victims narrative description of the child abuse incidents:

"Ain't enough food for the juveniles. The counselors be eating before we come and we get the leftover food. And most of the day I still very hungry and my stomach be hurting."

Counselor showed Eric pornography, telling him he wouldn't know what to do if the had a women like this. Counselor showed pictures to a group of children.

Counselor was threatening to beat up Edward and was calling his mother dirty names.

Counselor #1 grabbed a black child by his neck, choked him and repeatedly pushed him against the wall. The boy was screaming for help. Counselor #2 came in and grabbed Counselor #1 to keep him from beating the child.. counselor #1 was yelling, "I'll beat your ass, you punk!" but Counselor #2 did not let him go.

"Every day I'm hungry because there is not enough food to go around for everybody . So everybody gets less food; so that is why I'm always hungry. And we have lunch at 12:00 and eat dinner at 6:00. I think that is too much time between to the next meal."

" I have been here, in YGC, for twenty days and have not been able to wash by hair with shampoo."

"For the first four days when I was locked up they ,Counselors, didn't give me no shoes. I had to walk around barefooted witch hurt my feet."

" There was a counselor named #1. He took us down to the gym, and there two boys had an argument. #1 said, Wait till we get upstairs," And after showers everybody was in their rooms, and #1 got the two boys and said,

"Just go body ", and they went off (fought) right in front of my room.
Note: Counselor #1 promoted and arranged for two children to participate in a violent fight.

" The boy Dan wanted to use the bathroom, and the counselor Mr. T. said , 'In twenty minutes. And twenty minutes went by and the counselor said, 'If you keep asking you're not going to use it. And the boy was getting smart with the counselor and the counselor came and got his pants, shoes, socks and mattress. And then the boy tried to hang himself with a shoe lace. And they took the shoes lace from him and he tried to hang himself again with his towel." Note: D.H. is still detained at YGC as of 8-83.

" I was cold and freezing in my cell every night because the ventilation fans are left on running every night."

" At breakfast there was not enough food; ran out of eggs. I was hungry."

Counselor A.P. (woman) took J. (15 year old boy) out of Receiving Unit-YGC on two occasions, with a pass from a probation officer, took him to a motel and had sexual intercourse with him. After J. was placed in S.F. Boys' Home, Counselor A.P. took him to live with her for four months; she subsequently abandoned in San Francisco.

"The milk served to detainees in B-3 was sour. Counselor K. replied that it happens now and then."

The counselors ate snacks that W.'s mother brought for him. They also eat other children's snacks.

A 13 year old girl in the RU had to pick out underwear in front of men counselors.

"I was forced to do exercise which I could not do or could not keep the same pace as everyone else. And was given severe discipline for not being able to keep the same pace as everyone else." Note: Counselors at YGC are exercising youth beyond their physical capabilities and threatening them with discipline."

"On November 28, 1981 in B-1 cottage in YGC two counselors Mr. X. and Mr. Z grabbed me and took all my clothes off and threw me in a room the cold room #9 for four hours. The room is wet from the fog with no bed. In November 81, by the same counselors I got thrown in my room with nothing on and they left my lunch tray out side my room, then they gave me the tray about 3-4 hours later, then they (counselors) did the same with the dinner. I had no choice but to eat it or go hungry. In January 1982 I was put in placement, M. A. told me he was taking me to visit a group home in Sacramento so that I could look around while he took care of some business. Then he just left me there. In March of 1983 counselor Mr. R. B-2 who weights about 200 pounds picked me up and body slammed me, I hurt my knee. Then he ripped off the scab of a tetanus shot I had and it bled. Then I wanted to fill out a grievance sheet and he wouldn't let me fill it out. Mr. R. said I didn't have the right, but he had the right to do anything he wanted to me because I was in jail. Then he locked me up again couldn't use the bath room, I had to piss in the corner in a towel"

"Sometimes when it is very hot outside and the tar on the roof gets hot and you and you are locked up in your room doing hours in your room, no way for air to get in. I ask the counselors to turn on the fans, but they never do. Note: this abuse is affecting many children at YGC.

"He got a lunch tray in his cell because he was combing his hair. He didn't want to eat his food because it was cold and nasty. He only got half of his food and they, counselor, would force him to eat cold food or receive discipline. Locked up in rooms for more hours 10 to 15 hours a day, it happens all the time."

I was cold and freezing in my cell every night because the ventilation fans are left on running every night."

Counselor was threatening to beat up Edward and was calling his mother dirty names.

"When I arrived at RU at YGC the clerk took my clothes and told me I would get some clothes in the morning. But in the morning I still did not get any clothes so I had to stay in my room for half of the day because they did not have any clothes."

Chapter 5 The Counselor

Wed., April 11, 1984 S.F. Examiner

B5

Youth center critics still unhappy after ex-aide sentenced

By Mireya Navarro

Examiner staff writer

The conviction of a former Youth Guidance Center counselors for contributing to the delinquency of a minor hasn't mollified the Latino organization whose allegations of child abuse led to the arrest.

"We don't want individuals, we want the system to change," said Ray Balberan of the Mission District Council of La Raza for Education, Assistance and Resources, "The lower echelon is just a symptom of the cause of the problem at the Youth Guidance Center.

Patricia Abadesco, 24, was placed on three years' probation and required to perform 200 hours of community service yesterday after pleading no contest in San Francisco Municipal Court to one count of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Accused of seducing a 16-year old boy in custody at the center while she was working as a part time counselor there in 1982, she had been charged with three counts of oral copulation with the youth, but those were dismissed after her plea.

Abadesco's case was among those compiled against the center and reported to the Juvenile Justice Commission by CREAR last summer. The organization's

charges ranged from alleged incidents of sexual molestation to complaints by teens that they were left naked in bare cells and denied food.

Of 31 allegations, Abadesco's case was the only one to reach the courts after an investigation by the district attorney's office.

A two-month study by management audit team released last year dismissed the child abuse accusations, saying they seemed to stem from "some isolated incident." The team's harshest criticism instead zeroed in on the center's physical condition.

In addition, the Juvenile Justice Commission and a committee appointed by Mayor Feinstein undertook their own investigation last June, but they have yet to report their findings.

Stephen La Plant, a member of the mayor's committee, said a report is likely to be released this month following a meeting between the nine investigators and the mayor.

But Ray Balberan, chairman of CREAR's child abuse committee, said, "It's like seeing a crime and you scream and no one comes to the rescue. It's taken more than six months for the report to come out while hundreds of kids are being abused in this city."

The prosecutor who handled the Abadesco case said her office did conduct an investigation that found most of CREAR's allegations without merit or not serious enough to warrant criminal charges.

Assistant District Attorney Susan Eto said the investigators looked for cases of neglect and physical or sexual abuse.

"We found nothing else (other than the Abadesco case) and certainly didn't find any supervisory personnel that were involved in any type of wrongdoing" she said.

The charges against Abadesco involved three sexual encounters that allegedly occurred between February and March 1982.

Chapter 6Western Union Mailgram

4-053856s311002 11/07/83 ICS IPMRNCZ SFOB
1 4158215328 MGM TDRL SAN FRANCISCO CA 11-07 0617P WST

REAL ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM RB
1950 MISSION ST.
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94110

THIS IS A CONFIRMATION COPY OF THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE:

4158215328 MGM TDRN SAN FRANCISCO CA 208 11-07 0617P EST
ZIP

DANIEL J SILVA
375 WOODSIDE AVE
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94127

WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE WELFARE AND CARE AND HEALTH OF THE CHILDREN THAT ARE IN THE PROGRAM AT LOG CABIN RANCH. WE ARE CALLING FOR A INVESTIGATION AND PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING THE INCIDENT THAT HAPPENED AT LOG CABIN RANCH IN LATE OCTOBER. WILL THE COMMITTEE PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY. 1. WAS A COUNSELOR HIRED AT LOG CABIN RANCH. DID HE HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD FOR CHILD ABUSE DID THE COUNSELOR COME TO WORK WITH A THERMOS FULL OF VODKA? DID THE COUNSELOR RECRUIT 4 YOUTH AND GIVE THEM ALCOHOL DRINKS? DID A VIOLENT FIGHT OCCUR BETWEEN THE 4 YOUTHS THAT WERE DRINKING AND OTHER YOUTHS THAT WERE SLEEPING? HAS THE CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER JOE BOTA REPORTED CHILD ABUSE TO THE DA AND SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT? DID THE 4 CHILDREN THAT WAS GIVEN ALCOHOL BY THE COUNSELOR WERE THE YOUTHS SENT TO Y.A.? WERE ANY OF THE CHILDREN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED?

PLEASE INVESTIGATE THIS MATTER. THE LIVES OF POOR CHILDREN ARE AT STAKE. BE FREE TO CALL ON ME IF YOU NEED ANY ASSISTANCE.

WITH LOVE, DIGNITY AND RESPECT

RAYMOND JAMES ALI BALBERAN, YOUTH COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL OF LA
RAZA FOR EDUCATION AND RESOURCES.
414-621-1155

Chapter 7 electric shock torture

At a meeting with the the Mayor's Special Investigator and Mitch Salazar the Director of RAP I express my concerns about a YGC teacher.

Youth has been tortured with a electric shock device by a YGC teacher and counselors. I also said I belive the teacher that makes racist remarks, clams to be a member of the Ku Klux Klan and the teacher that torture and abuse children with electric shock is one and the same person.

At the meeting I produce a working modle of the electric shock device, a portable five or nine pound balck metal box, with a hand crnak built-in on right side and with two four feet electric wires connected to terminals at the top of the modle. I placed the wires in the hands of the Special Investgator and cranked up the the box. He was shocked!

(A) In May of 1984. The Mayor's Youth Guidance Committee Special Investigator had direct information concerning the use electric shock torture to punish wards of the court held in San Francisco Youth Guidance Center.

(B) On July 19, 1984. The Concilio De La Raza Para Educacion, Ayuda Recurosos (C.R.A.R.) requested from the Regional Program Director Administration for Children, Youth and Families of the U.S. Department Of Health & Human Services to arrange a meeting with the California State Attorney.

[THE FOLLOWING IS A RE-TYPED COPY LETTER FROM MISSION MEDIARTS TO THE SAN FRANCISCO JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION]

TO: Ron Fleischer
Regional Program Director
Administration for Children, Youth and Families
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

FROM: C.R.E.A.R
Date: July 19, 1984

Dear Ron,

There has been a local investigation, which we are not satisfied with!

We feel child abuse reporting laws have been compromise. Poor children are unprotected and neglected to the point of suicide.

We have a first hand knowledge of children, who have been tortured by an electric shock device, "The Crank", under the care of teacher and counselors working at Youth Guidances Center of San Francisco.

There is a silent conspiracy to keep children victims of abuse and neglect. Can you please arrange a meeting with the California State Attorney General John K. Van De Kamp.

A good hearted effort is needed to rescue and protect children from violence.

I await your help !

With Dignity and Respect
Raymond J. Balberan

[THE FOLLOWING IS A RE-TYPED COPY LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES TO ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CALIFORNIA]
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES LETTER

JUL 24 1984

John van de Kamp
Attorney General
Office of the State Attorney General
1515 K Street, Suite 511
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. van de Kamp:

This is to refer to your office a request for assistance that we receive from Mr. Raymond Balberan from Concilio De La Raza Para Educacion, Ayuda y Recurson (C.R.E.A.R.). Mr. Balberan believes that the investigations into abuse by San Francisco Youth Guidance Center have been inadequate and approached our office to see whether there was any recourse beyond local authorities.

Because San Francisco Youth Guidance Center is under the Authorities of the Superior Court, we are referring his inquiry to you.

Thank you in advance for whatever assistance you can give.

Sincerely,
Roy Fleischer
Regional Program Director
Administration for Children,
Youth and Families

[THE FOLLOWING IS A RE-TYPED COPY LETTER FROM THE ATTORNEY
GENEREAL OF CALIFORNIA TO THE REAL ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM]

John K. Van De Kamp
Attorney General
State of California

Department OF JUSTICE

August 6, 1984

(c)
Raymond Balberan
Real Alternatives Program, Inc.
1950 Mission street, Room 11
San Francisco, CA 94110

Dear Mr. Balberan:

We recently received a letter from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services forwarding your request that our office investigate the San Francisco Juvenile Hall. Although this office has a broad supervisory authority with respect to local law enforcement agencies, we do not initiate such investigations until all local resources have been exhausted. Included with Mr. Fleischer's letter was a copy of the Mayor's Youth Guidance Center committee Report on the facility dated May 1984. Since these matters are being studied by the local authorities, if you are dissatisfied with their results you should bring the matter to the attention of such local officials as the Sheriff, District Attorney, Mayor and the Grand Jury, which have broad powers to investigate conditions in institutions such as the Youth Guidance Center.

Very truly yours,

JOHN K. VAN DE KAMP
Attorney General

WILLIAM D. STEIN
Assistant Attorney Gene

Date: 1985. Dan Jacobs attorney for Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice phoned RAP/ Raymond J. Balberan from Washington D.C.. To interview him concerning San Francisco Youth Guidance Center child abuse reports.

The phone conversation statement:

I have direct knowledge concerning child abuse and neglect at San Francisco Youth Guidance Center. Children's lives were endangered !

1. Children held at YGC were living in unsafe conditions.
2. Children were suffering from hunger and dirty clothing.
3. Teenagers were subject to physical abuse, mental abuse and sexual abuse.
4. The courts did not have a on-going interpreter services.
5. Wards of the court were under the care of staff that had child abuse criminal records.
6. And for five years, a teacher and YGC counselors were punishing hundreds of children with electric shock torture !

Ray Balberan / RAP/ Counsleor

[THE FOLLOWING IS A RE-TYPED COPY LETTER FROM MISSION MEDIARTS TO THE SAN FRANCISCO CIVIL GRAND JURY]

San Francisco Civil Grand Jury

July 7, 1987

Mr. Alfred Cinell, Forman
San Francisco Civil Grand Jury

Dear Mr. Cinell;

I submit to you the following statements concerning the use of an electric shock device by a teacher and counselors to torture children/wards of the court for over four year.

I make this personal and emotional appeal to the San Francisco Civil Grand Jury to investigate San Francisco Youth Guidance Center/Juvenile Court.

The painful truth is San Francisco children were exposed to electric shock torture. This cruel and unjustifiable punishment was inflicted on defenseless children by a San Francisco Youth Guidance Center teacher and counselors. The punishment and torture took place in a open classroom in front of all the students. This hideous treatment was performed on a daily basis within view of professional and non-professional YGC staff members.

Electric shock torture is cruel inhuman punishment that caused children to suffer physical pain and mental suffering.

Sincerely,

/s/

Raymond J. Balberan
Mission Mediarts San Francisco

Victims narrative descriptions
of the electric shock torture incidents:

Robert Vella

Place of incident: San Francisco

Youth Guidance Center

Date/Time of incident: 1977 or
1978/school hours

Unit: Classroom and B4

The victims narrative description of the
child abuse incidents:

Q. How old are you?

A. Approximately 23 years of age.

Q. Have you ever been in detention at San Francisco Youth Guidance Center?

A. Yes I have. I first had my first encounters, I would say as being a detainee in 1977.

Q. 1977? Do you remember what cottage, or what unit you were in?

A. To be honest with you, I've been in all the units.

Q. Which was B1?

A. Would be B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, and also RU.

Q. Right. And you went to school up there too?

A. Correct, correct.

Q. Do you have any direct knowledge about a Youth Guidance Center teacher that would shock youth with an electric device?

- A. To the best of my recollection, the only gentleman I remember that would, could initiate that type of therapy was a teacher by the name of Mr. Peterson.
- Q. Okay.
- A. And basically what would happen was when you first went into the class, you would be considered as a fish and he would put you on this machine without you knowing the affects, so in other words, what he would do is have you stand outside the classroom, hold two metal handles, he'd close the door, go inside the classroom while all the students are in there and wind it up, and this, what it does, it ignites and electricity that just, you know, shocks the hell of out you and you can't let go. And while he's laughing, getting a kick out of it, you know, the kids over there, you felt, suffering, you know.
- Q. Let me get this straight. He wouldn't do this at night secretly but openly in the class room?
- A. Openly. Right. And staff had knowledge to everything and they would all get a kick out of it.
- Q. What other staff?
- A. Staff such as counselors. The counselors that they had there that would, you know, be supervising the units.
- Q. So this guy done this openly ...
- A. Oh, this went on for a long time. Everybody who has been a detainee and has been in B4 has direct knowledge to this type of therapy, you know. This thing was going on for years.
- Q. Would you describe the therapy? He would have you hold you hold on to two metal bars?
- A. Correct. Two metal handles that were connected to wires.
- Q. Uh huh.
- A. And then it was like a little box that was, you know, converted to a box with a handle as if like those music boxes like you wind up and music comes out of them.
- Q. Right, right.
- A. Okay, with, the electricity would come out of this when it shocked the hell out of you.
- Q. And he would crank it himself?
- A. Yeah, he would do it himself, and this was something he designed of his own, you know, own self.
- Q. Did you witness any other young people get this type of torture, this treatment by him?
- A. Oh, everybody new that came in got it done to them. There wasn't a person there that didn't get it done to 'em.

- Q. How many people would you say that you seen yourself this happen to?
- A. Well ...
- Q. Roughly.
- A. I would say roughly, to the best of my recollection, it would have to be maybe 4 or 5 guys, you know. Because being that I did not get along with this guy too much, I, I, I didn't get to go to school too much because I would not cooperate with his type of methods, because even at an early age, I knew this wasn't right, you know, and it's just his methods, you know, it was just his whole personality. He would come up to you and just talk about you, call you a Nigger, a Mexican, you know, and get away with it. You'd tell the counselor, say, look, this guy just called me a Nigger, he's very racial, whatever, and the counselors wouldn't say nothing. Well you have to put up with it, he's the teacher. And if he told the teachers would lock you up, or if he told the counselors, excuse me, if Mr. Peterson told the counselors to lock you up, it was done like that, you know. So there was no getting out of it, you know, you either had to cooperate or remain detained in your room the whole day until dinner time.
- Q. You say that you thought this was wrong.
- A. I knew it was wrong, you know. That's why, you know, the majority of the time while I was in B4, I did not attend school, you know, and a counselor by the name of Nelson ...
- Q. Nelson?
- A. ... would bring me my books and paperwork because you know me and him had a very good understanding and, you know, he was pretty much concerned of my well-being. He was the only counselor there that, I mean we had a good understanding with. So he would come and say, look here fellow, here's some books, why don't you read these books, here's some other paperwork. And that was how I had to, you know, go about enhancing my, you know, my reading comprehension and my mathematical skills and all that, you know, type of ordeal because of, because of his, that, that, you know, that ...
- Q. Nelson.
- A. ... direct individual there, because of uh, you know, Peterson. I had to go through all these obstacles because of that individual right there.
- Q. When he was doing this, couldn't you let those bars go? Couldn't you just drop them and walk away.
- A. Oh no, that's what I was telling you, it was like if you stuck your hand into a, you know, like sticking a nail like in the socket or plug socket, okay?
- Q. Uh huh.

- A. Now it would be like that. You know how like you can't let it go, it holds on to you for a minute?
- Q. Yeah.
- A. Okay, well this was that much more intense, because once you gripped you got full force. You're gripping the bars, okay, and he tells you to hold on to it tight and you without knowing, being naive to that, because I've never seen it before until I went there. I never knew anything of that nature even existed. So when we went there, you know, everybody would just go, you know, they don't know no better. You know, he says yes, let me see if you can do this, and, you know, he would just basically be at a different philosophy each time for each individual who would come in. He'd tell the detainee of why he was doing this.
- Q. Okay, okay.
- A. Okay? So, there was no way they would have any type of knowledge, you know, anybody would, you know, unless they had been there before and then they would know. You know what I'm saying? And that was how it was, you know, operated. He got away with all that.
- Q. No one ever question Mr. Peterson?
- A. Nolan, Nolan knew about that.
- Q. Who's that?
- A. Nolan was like one of the supervisors, I don't know his exact status.
- Q. That's okay.
- A. But I'm sure, you know, of that nature, like a supervisor.
- Q. Nolan, Nelson. You would say?
- A. He worked up there during the day, teachers there during the day, just knew this was Mr. Peterson's treatment. And they knew about it, they seen it.
- Q. And to your knowledge, do you know if anyone who called the police or took it to the court or anybody complain?
- A. I don't think so because no one, no one paid no attention. The counselors acted like it was okay.
- Q. Uh huh.
- A. You know?
- Q. Uh huh.
- A. Also, Mr. Hull knew about it, you know?
- Q. Uh huh.
- A. Everybody there knew about Mr. Peterson, you know.
- Q. Uh huh, uh huh.
- A. For some reason they liked this guy. Why, I don't know, you know. He was a racist.
- Q. He was a racist?
- A. Straight up.

- Q. ... and he had this special treatment for everyone.
- A. Oh yeah.
- Q. Do you consider this treatment, now that you're older and you realize what it is, do you consider this treatment as a form of torture?
- A. Oh yeah.
- Q. And it caused you a lot of pain?
- A. Yes, oh yeah. Not to mention, you know, the emotional distress that it gives you later on, but not basically the shock treatment, but just from him. You figure every day you got to put up with someone calling you Nigger, a chump, your momma, and he would just straight out, and try and entice you to say something back to him, and as soon as you said something to you, like FU, your momma, out, you know, go to your, go to your room. You know what I'm saying? And that was it. And so you had to put up with this every day, every day.
- A. In other words, he was mentally using you and degrading you and using his ...
- Q. It sounds like to me he was personally attacking you.
- A. Right, right. Not only that, it is just, you know, really just tearing down your self-esteem, making you feel like you were nothing, you know.
- Q. Uh huh.
- A. That's basically it, you know, and it wasn't even operated as a school classroom. It was more of, you know, a therapy work with his own sick ideas, you know, and that's basically how it was operated, you know.
- Q. Do you know if this teacher Peterson is still in the system?
- A. To the best of my knowledge, I believe he is.
- Q. Robert, do you know of any other people that maybe we can go interview or support your statements that you know of?
- A. Yes.
- Q. By name?
- A. Lawrence Lee.
- Q. Lawrence Lee, okay.
- A. Steven Lee, which is his brother.
- Q. Steven Lee, brother, okay.
- A. Uh, let me see. Okay I know these other two brothers, they're Oriental type too.
- Q. They were there in the same year, '77, '78 at the time?
- A. Right. One, I believe that there is another individual, their last name is Lamberson. I believe his first name is Steve, and I can't remember his brother's name, but these two are brothers, and the other two individuals I'm talking about are brothers too. Their last name is Lamberson.

Q. Lamberson brothers, right. Aside from that, what do you think young people who get involve, who get into off-track, who get involved in a system like that, what do they really need?

A. They need counseling, you know, real counseling, you know, not sick people like Peterson in there. They're there to benefit, not to get their mind all distorted and not deal with to develop some type of positive sense of direction, you know, because a lot of them had a rough upbringing, you know, poor people, they had no other choice but to either steal in order to have things, you know, proper clothes, food, you know, that's, that was basically the story back then, you know.

Q. So you're saying that the time there could use a little more ...

A. Right. Oh yes. If alternatives were provided, you know, it would have worked out perfect, you know. Well, someone with that experience in counseling, you know, therapy, you know, with proper therapy, you know, helping them, you know, build up their self-esteem, develop a positive attitude and a better outlook on life and, you know, basically it's benefits, you know. That was what the big necessity was.

Q. The need?

A. Yeah, not sick people like Peterson pretending to be a so-called teacher that he never taught a damn thing, you know. You know, if it wasn't for my own enthusiasm, you know, I would have never learned, and the reason that I was in there, you know, that I would read, because of out of my own interest, you know, and that was it, you know, but the counselor would have never, you know, if Mr. Nelson hadn't been, you know, as, you know, fortunate for me if he hadn't had been as cooperative in bringing me books, I would have just been there looking at four walls, you know.

Q. Because you wouldn't go to school, and you had to stay in your room.

A. Right. They brought your tray to lunch, it was either I go to school and be humiliated or stay in my cell, you know. One or the other, you know, and I preferred to stay locked up because I couldn't deal with him.

Q. You know, for me with so many counselors and people knowing about this person, what do you think was the underlying reason why no one ever confronted him or dropped a dime on him or just say ...

A. Well he is in a fact a criminal, you know, behind his own position, you know, he got away with this. And when it was brought to the attention of, you know, someone in authority, it was just overlooked as, oh, you know, it's okay, he's staff, he can't do no wrong, and that was the type of attitude that all of them, you know, directed, you know, that it's okay, so it was like a never winning battle, you know, like irregardless he can be all 100% wrong, he's right because he's a

teacher employed by Youth Guidance Center, you know, so there was no way that he could be wrong, you know.

Q. Even though he was shocking people ...

A. Right.

Q. ... and cursing them ...

A. Right.

Q. ... and calling them names and locked in your room for whatever amount ...

A. Right, right, right.

Q. ... of time.

A. He was right.

Q. He was right?

A. Because he's a teacher, you know.

Q. Very interesting.

A. I was, you know, trips me out how he got away with it so long, you know.

Q. Well, is there anything else that you want to add to this?

A. Don't, you know I have just one last thing that I would like to add, and that is there is, I could go around with a roster to say approximately 50 people and I'm sure I could come up with at least half that had encounters with this guy, you know.

Mr Carlos Esparza

Date/Time of INCIDENT: 1977-1979 /
school hours

PLACE OF INCIDENT: SAN FRANCISCO

YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER

Unit: Classroom and B4

The victims narrative description of the
child abuse incidents:

Q. Do you have anything to say about Youth Guidance Center?

A. Well, yes I have something to say. I was there numerous times from '77 to '79. I was incarcerated in Youth Guidance Center for many years. For many years I observed and witness mental torture and humiliation by a teacher, I think it is Jim Peterson. I'm not sure of his first name it just, you know, slips by me.

Q. Did he have red curly hair?

A. Yes he had red curly hair.

Q. It's possible we are talking about the same teacher.

A. Okay.

- A. His co-worker was I believe a Lavioris, some kind of ...
- Q. Did Peterson call him Coach?
- A. Coach, yeah.
- A. I witnessed that Peterson gave opportunities, not opportunities, but what ...
- Q. Alternatives?
- A. Alternatives to young individuals like myself to go through the humiliation of either staying in your room all day or being an example for the crank which it was so called.
- Q. The crank?
- A. The crank is an old telephone used from the old days, I don't know what years. In those old days you wind it up to get the operator, you know.
- Q. You crank it up?
- A. You crank it up, and you would hold of these two metal objects connected to the crank and he was standing a distance from you and he would wind it up and once you wind it up and you held on to it, you couldn't let go unless he stopped the crank. So if you was there and he cranked it up and you was in a state of shock jumping up and down or crying or going through the hysterics, no matter what, you couldn't stop whatever you was doing until he stopped the crank.
- Q. Why couldn't you leave it go?
- A. Oh you couldn't stop because of the electrodes that were constantly locating, I guess when he cranked it up, well he kept on cranking it up and you couldn't stop or leave it go. It was just like electricity.
- Q. How often did you see him use this crank, this box?
- A. It was on a daily basis.
- Q. A daily basis.
- A. From, I guess from 1 to 10 people every day.
- Q. 1 or 10 people every day, he would crank and use this torture, this device?
- A. Right.
- Q. Only black people, only latin people, or only white people he used this crank on?
- A. It was numerous people.
- Q. Everybody?
- A. Everybody.
- Q. Did you witness anyone that would cry or fall down? Did he seriously hurt anyone?
- A. Oh, people were actually, like I said, brought down to their knees with tears in their eyes while the whole classroom would just laugh at them.
- Q. In front of the whole class?

- A. He would do this in front of the whole class.
- Q. Were other teachers in the class while he would do this?
- A. While Mr. Peterson would do this Coach would leave the room.
- Q. How long do you think it's been around?
- A. It's been around for awhile.
- Q. Peterson is the guy that brought it in and used it the most?
- Q. Did anyone besides Peterson used the crank?
- A. No he was it. No nobody.
- Q. Was there any attempts by someone to write Mr. Peterson up?
- Q. Did anyone tell someone about this type of treatment?
- A. A lot of people. I believe there was a young individual that told someone and they made him stop. The kids would bring it up again and again and he would bring it out the crank again and again.
- Q. So he was warned to stop?
- A. He was warned.
- Q. And that was his alternative to his being locked up?
- A. Right, see that's it, it's the alternative.
- Q. Okay. Is there anything you want to add to this statement?
- A. No.
- Q. No? Okay. Thank you sir.

Miguel Galdamez

Date/Time of INCIDENT: January 1980

PLACE OF INCIDENT: SAN FRANCISCO

YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER

Classroom and B4

The victims narrative description of the child abuse incidents:

"While I was up there I had this one counselor by the name of Peterson and this other counselor we use to call Coach. Those two people were racist. They were calling people names. They never say anything to white kids just always the minority kids. They (counselor) were always armed. I had one experience, I had a couple experience with them as far as name calling. I had me a major experience with Peterson. I insulted him, because he called me a name and he decide to teach me a lesson in his words. He embarrassed me in front of the class. He produced this box it was a metal box very small, it had two wires coming out of it and those wires attach to two metal bars. Teacher Peterson told me to grab the metal bars and or else he was going to kick my ass. I said a bad word to him but I started to get pressure from the other kids he had pumped up the kids, "this was a manly thing to do" said the counselor. But more or less he was torturing people. He placed the metal bars in my hands and crank the box up, Coach cranked the

box up while Peterson held those bars in my hands! And just as soon I felt the electric rushed through my hands down my body I could not let go those bars it's like it had a hold on me right. And it also embarrass me in front of the everybody at the same time the electricity kind of hurt right. And you know it also made me-it-it just run-run up and down my body and then he make me take a cool shower and just lock me up in my room and threw in your tray of food on the floor like a dog"

Jaime Pascacio

Date/Time of INCIDENT: 12-20-82 / 1430

PLACE OF INCIDENT: SAN FRANCISCO YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER

B-5 / Classroom

The victims narrative description of the child abuse incidents:

On the above date our classroom teacher (in B5) Peterson, stated that he is a member of the Ku Klux Klan and that he does not like minorities. He is ashamed he has to teach in YGC. On other occasions he brought the KKK grown and pointed hat to show the students and he would tell us he did not want us to read books. He would often made racist remarks.

Little Heart (a 15 years old girl)

Place of incident: SFUSD- Classroom

Date/Time of incident: December 17, 1986 at 2:00 PM

The victims narrative description of the child abuse incidents:

"In the classroom on Wed. 17th December 1986 at 2:00 P.M., in front the whole class, one kid asked Mr. Peterson, the teacher, if he used to shock people? Peterson said, "he didn't the guards did". Peterson said, If the kid had a knife and the guards ask for the knife and the kid said no, the guards would shock him through the bars in the cell. The kid would become paralyzed for a quick minute.

Peterson said he worked at San Quentin, YGC and Log Cabin Ranch.

One of the kids in the class room was being a little punk towards Peterson.

Peterson said, "me and you have not touch horns yet".

The kid ask, "what does that mean"?

Peterson said, "you will see".

Connie, said that went Peterson was scolding the kids he would bring his hands up like to hit."

[THE FOLLOWING IS A RE-TYPED COPY LETTER FROM MISSION MEDIARTS TO THE SAN FRANCISCO JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION]

MISSION MEDIARTS

August 31, 1987

Joyce B. Ladar
Juvenile Justice Commission
City and County of San Francisco
Youth Guidance Center
Subcommittee on Public Hearing
375 Woodside Avenue
San Francisco, California 94127

Dear Joyce,

I just got back from summer vacation, sorry I did not get your request for information until now.

I will get back to the families that wanted to speak out and see if they will accept the conditions stated within your letter. You know it is very hard for parents to come forward because the fear is real.

You are welcome to the evidence submitted to the San Francisco Grand Jury.

The question before you is not that electric shock torture is currently being used to abuse children in Juvenile Hall, but (1) how many children were tortured, (2) what are the fixed dates between the first and last child that were tortured by electric shock, (3) the number and names of staff that knew of this routine process, (4) on what dates did the torturers enter and leave the system, (5) how could this cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment exist unchecked for so many years, (6) why are people who work for YGC so indifferent to the health and well being of children and is there a conspiracy of silence?

Are we a land of men or laws?

Thank you very much for asking me to help. I'm standing by to come forward. Please give me a time, date and place.

Very truly yours,
RAY BALBERAN Chairman of Mission Mediarts

Q. Did any of the studies, reports and investigations by the federal, city and state government agencies made any findings concerning the use of electric shock torture to punish children held in San Francisco Youth Guidance Center? yes() no ()

The torturer is a teacher and he is still working for the SFUSD?

Chapter 8 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE INVESTIGATION AND FINDING

[THE FOLLOWING IS A RE-TYPED COPY OF THE LETTER FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE TO THE MAYOR OF SAN FRANCISCO.]

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Mayor
City Hall
San Francisco, California 94102

Re: Investigation of the San Francisco Youth Guidance Center

Dear Mayor Feinstein:

Pursuant to the Civil Rights of Institutionalized persons Act, 42 U.S.C. #1997b, I am writing to inform you of the findings of the U.S. Guidance Center (YGC).

I first wrote to you on March 28, 1985, to give you advance notice of our investigation, and was pleased to receive your responses of April 2, 1985. My staff subsequently met with representatives of your office and the Probation Department to outline the nature of the investigation.

Our investigation consisted primarily of extensive tours of the facility during June and August 1985 by Department attorneys accompanied by a number of expert consultants, and in-depth review of pertinent documents. In the course of the tours, we interviewed a large number of juveniles and staff. The staff included administrators, counselors, probation officers, medical staff, and mental health staff. We spoke as well to numerous juveniles on all units, many of whom had been at YGC for a considerable length of time. During the course of the investigation, we also reviewed

such documents as politics and procedures, population data, logs, grievances, and child abuse reports. We were pleased to have the cooperation of the YGC staff, and especially appreciated the assistance of Chief Probation Officer Denis Sweeney.

Based on our investigation, we have concluded that the Youth Guidance Center is subjecting juveniles to flagrant or egregious conditions that deprive them of certain of their constitutional rights. In coming to that conclusion, we were cognizant that most juveniles held at YGC have not been convicted of any crime; rather, they are preadjudication detainees or only have been adjudged delinquent. The appropriate legal standard that must be applied to the treatment of these juveniles is whether restrictions on liberty beyond initial incarceration are reasonably related to some legitimate government objective -- rehabilitation, safety, or internal order and security. *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520 (1979); see also *Santana v. Collazo*, 741 F.2d 1172, 1180 (1st Cir. 1983). Any juvenile convicted of a crime and being held at YGC is protected by the Eighth Amendment's proscription against cruel and unusual punishment. That standard can be more stringently applied to juveniles than adults, since society's conscience might be shocked by conditions of confinement imposed on a juvenile which might not be considered cruel and unusual if imposed on an adult. *Santana v. Collazo*, 741 F.2d 1179. On the basis of our investigation, we have determined that unconstitutional conditions of confinement exist at YGC and have existed there since at least August 1984.

We have determined that YGC subject the juveniles housed there to punishment that is not reasonably related to a legitimate governmental objective through the repeated and arbitrary use of isolation. While the need to maintain order and discipline among juveniles is a legitimate government interest which can justify use of isolation, the wholly arbitrary imposition of isolation as a disproportionate response to minor or initial infractions of YGC rules constitutes punishment of juveniles not convicted of any crime without due process of law. On at least one unit juveniles are moved to and isolated in a room which is known to both staff and juveniles as the "cold room": mold grows on the walls and ceiling of this room and it is especially cold and damp in the winter. This form of isolation of juveniles constitutes constitutionally infirm punishment unless it is administered pursuant to a clearly articulated, rational standard relating to a legitimate governmental purpose involving security of control at YGC, including punishment for infractions of YGC rules. Moreover, these periods of isolation are insufficiently monitored, and therefore pose a particular risk to suicidal youth.

Second, other measures imposed on juveniles at the San Francisco facility are tantamount to punishment without reasonable governmental objective. For example, juveniles are arbitrarily denied access to toilet facilities and are therefore forced to urinate and defecate on themselves or in their rooms, which, except for the B-5 unit, do not have commodes. Juveniles housed at the Center often suffer from constipation and cramps; medical staff attributed these problems in part to the arbitrary actions of YGC staff that deprives juveniles at YGC of necessary access to bathroom facilities to enable them to excrete toxic bodily wastes. Hence, the arbitrary restrictions to which juveniles at YGC are subjected are grossly unsanitary and cause significant adverse side-effects. Imposition of these restrictive conditions does not further any specified governmental purpose and therefore constitutes unconstitutional punishment.

Third, there is reason to question some of the more restrictive practices relating to outgoing telephone calls. While the institution has a legitimate interest in assuring order when permitting verbal communication after the initial two phone calls allowed on the day of incarceration, juveniles should not be arbitrarily denied the opportunity to make any additional phone calls, regardless of the length of their incarceration. Similarly, while the institution has a legitimate interest in ensuring that incoming and outgoing mail not contain contraband or plans for escape or disruption, an institution may not otherwise censor the mails' content. Nor may an institution retaliate against a juvenile for complaining about conditions there by intercepting mail or withholding for a length of time letter or phone privileges as punishment. It is, of course, the case that an institution may, in the interest of security and order (in the case of adjudicated juveniles) limit the duration, number and frequency of juveniles' calls, as well as revoke for a period of time individual juveniles' access to telephones for appropriate cause. But, total denial of access to telephones for weeks or months would appear to be an exceptionally harsh form of punishment requiring clear justification that is necessary to further an important governmental interest. In this regard, the First Amendment rights of juveniles are implicated no less by an unjustified censorship of all telephonic communications than by such censorship of mail in the absence of some important governmental interest. See *Procunier v. Martinez*, 416 U.S. (1974)

The arbitrary isolation practices, limitations on vital bodily functions and severe restrictions on First Amendment rights without the requisite showing of an important governmental purpose rise to the level of unconstitutional punishment of the unconvicted juveniles at the San Francisco Center.

Remedial measures must be taken to ensure that juveniles are not deprived of rights guaranteed to them under the Constitution and laws of the United States. We propose to enter into a legally binding and judicially enforceable agreement with the City and County of San Francisco designed to eliminate violations of juveniles' rights, provide constitutionally adequate conditions, and provide a means by which compliance with such an agreement may be verified. The following are the minimum measures which may be necessary to remedy the violations described above:

1. Isolation of juveniles not related to a legitimate, expressly defined governmental objective must cease;
2. Juveniles must be permitted reasonable opportunities to eliminate their bodily wastes under such sanitary conditions as will not expose them to unreasonable risk of disease or illness; and
3. Legitimate and expressly defined security and control needs of the San Francisco Youth Guidance Center must be served in a manner that does not impermissibly interfere with the juveniles' First Amendment rights.

We would be pleased to consult with you regarding financial, technical, or other assistance which might be available from the United States to assist you in correcting the deficiencies described. For such information, you may also wish to consult with the Department of Education and Health and Human Services (HHS) to inquire about the possibility of assistance through programs they administer. I am enclosing a copy of the most recent edition of the Guide to Department of Education Programs. Please contact George E. Miller, Regional Director, Department of Health and Human Services, Room 431, Federal Office Building, 50 U.S. Plaza, San Francisco, California 94102, for information regarding HHS programs.

We truly appreciate the cooperation that the Probation Department has extended us. We sincerely hope that a cooperative spirit will continue to prevail so that this matter can be concluded promptly and amicably. My staff will contact Mr. Sweeney shortly to arrange a meeting to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

/s/

Wm. Bradford Reynolds
Assistant Attorney General

Mr. RAY BALBERAN
1300 POTRERO AVE., SUITE A-3
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94110* (415) 282-9984

For the Record

Mr. Dan Jacobs
U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division
968 HOLC Bldg.
Washington D.C. 3050

Re: Investigation of the San Francisco Youth Guidance Center

Dear Mr. Jacobs;

We are alarmed at your unprofessional investigation.

Per our conversation, I stated having direct knowledge concerning child abuse and neglect at San Francisco Youth Guidance Center. Children's lives were endangered !

1. Children held at YGC were living in unsafe conditions.
2. Children were suffering from hunger and dirty clothing.
3. Teenagers were subject to physical abuse, mental abuse and sexual abuse.
4. The courts did not have a on-going interpreter services.
5. Wards of the court were under the care of staff that had child abuse criminal records.
6. And for five years, a teacher and YGC counselors were punishing hundreds of children with electric shock torture !

Respectfully, I request the following:

- a. The right to refile the original complaint.
- b. Continue the investigation, particularly towards interpreter services, and the punishing of children with electric shock
- c. request copies of agreements that your office has with the City and County of San Francisco concerning the Youth Guidance Center.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you and Mr. William Bradford Reynolds for the efforts the investigation team made. The efforts to expose the City to the truth about Youth Guidance Center.

San Francisco children need the protection of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division more than ever. "Children have Civil Rights too."

With Dignity and Respect
Raymond J. Balberan

Chapter 9 Robert

"Miscommunication" Blamed in Juvenile Hall Suicide

Teenager inmate who killed himself in San Francisco's juvenile hall was not identified as suicidal apparently because of "Miscommunication" among staff members, Mayor Dianne Feinstein reported yesterday.

The boy, a 17-year-old referred to in the mayor's report on the incident as "Robert B.," hanged himself at San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center on February 14. At the time, he had been locked in his room for more than 24 hours as punishment for causing a disturbance.

Five days after Robert's death staff members directed two young juvenile hall inmates to clean up the mess from the suicide in the dead youth's room.

Supervisors Doris Ward and Willie Kennedy asked the mayor's office to look in the suicide soon after it occurred. A subcommittee of the city's Juvenile Justice Commission is also investigating the incident.

San Francisco Chronicle July of 1986
written by Bill Wallace

-
- Q. When children are separated from their parents and are subjected to institutional abuse and neglect can this psychological strain create a desire to commit suicide?
yes [] / no []

Chapter 10 QUESTIONS

Q. Were children held in YGC abused, neglected, punished and tortured? yes ☐ / no ☐

Q. Is electric shock punishment a form of torture ?
yes ☐ / no ☐

Q. Is long periods of isolation a form of torture ?
yes ☐ / no ☐

Q. Forcing children to sleep and eat in the "cold room": mold grows on the walls and ceiling of this room and it is especially cold and damp in the winter is a form of torture ? yes ☐ / no ☐

Q. YGC staff that deprives youth of necessary access to bathroom facilities is a form of torture? yes ☐ / no ☐

Q. What one word best characterizes San Francisco Youth Guidance Center treatment towards children within their care ?

- a. ☐ responsible
- b. ☐ safe
- c. ☐ spiritual
- d. ☐ indifferent
- e. ☐ professional

Once a establishment has abused the rights of people it will do it again and again no matter how much it is reformed. True or false?

Chapter 11. Cocaine

newspaper report

The director of a youth detention facility who was arrested on cocaine charges will not be allowed to directly supervise any youth until after the case is resolved. James Licavoli, 48, who has been director of the Log Cabin Ranch School on Alpine Road in La Honda for 10 years, was arrested Friday night as he sat in a parked car with two other people near the intersection of

Lauar and Mission streets, police said. A little more than half a gram of cocaine was found, police said. Monday, 12/1/86 San Francisco Examiner

Chapter 12 Supervisor Nancy Walker

Juvenile Hall plan on ballot

Sick leave transfers, comping limits also up to voters

by Craig Maine
of the Examiner Staff

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors has placed a number of measures on the November ballot, including one that would wrest control of juvenile hall from judges and turn it over to a seven-member commission appointed by the mayor.

Written by Supervisor Nancy Walker, the measure would create a Department of Juvenile Probation to handle duties under the direction of the Juvenile Division of Superior Court.

The supervisors voted unanimously to support the measure during an exhausting session that stretched into the wee hours of Tuesday morning.

The seven appointed commissioners would serve four-year terms receiving a monthly stipend of \$100 each. The measure is Walker's attempt to solve problems at juvenile hall, which frequently has faced charges of mismanagement, rock-bottom morale and disagreements over how youthful offenders should be disciplined.

San Francisco voters will also ... November 1989

Chapter 13 A Violent Man

TO: Nadia Stafford Director Probation Services
 FROM: Ray Balberan Real Alternatives Program-Por Vida Component
 DATE 120489
 SUBJECT: Complaint Concerning Juvenile Probation Officer X
 DATE OF INCIDENT: Monday, November 20, 1989
 TIME OF INCIDENT: 10:30 A.M.
 PLACE OF INCIDENT: Juvenile Probation Department
 San Francisco Youth Guidance Center

NARRATIVE OF INCIDENT: Sr. Nighttime Probation Officer X with force pushed Y a minor to one side. Then he slammed into my body, stomped on my left foot and pushed me aside. Walked over to a office desk sat down and put his feet on top of the desk. And in a threatening manner while picking his nose asked another probation officer "What are they doing here?"

His attack cause pain to the left arm and back of the youth. The probation officer was showing disrespect and anger according to a family member who was present at the time of the incident. She carrying her seven month old baby felt threaten.

Please note the youth's back was toward him when he attacked. And I was hit on the left blind side in the process on turning towards him. His attack was no accident. I expressed to my director that this probation officer, on a previous occasion, was ill temper towards me and had tried to prevent me from interviewing a youth in detention.

He physically hurt me. Intimidated me in front of my clients. And was interfering with my community duties. He is a violent man. He has intimidate a Latina and physically abused a youth. Myself and my clients did suffer pain and embracement. I'm fearful for the safety of my clients and my person. He is out of control & dangerous. Mission District Latino families, youth and RAP Counselors, that must relate to the juvenile justice system, must be protected.

I'm requesting Probation Office X not be allow to work with wards of the court and the public.

cc: Damaris Miranda, Ismael Miron, Judy Hogan Supervising Probation Officer, Dennis Sweeny Chief Probation Officer. Juvenile Court Supervisor

Judge Wonder, Real Alternatives Program Executive Director Mitchell Salazar
San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos

Chapter 14 San Francisco Board Of Supervisors

REAL ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM, INC.
1300 Potrero Ave., Suite A-3
San Francisco, CA 94115

June 7, 1990

San Francisco Board Of Supervisors
City and County of San Francisco

Dear Supervisors;

Do not support the Juvenile Probation Budget Request.

We are requesting of you to support the efforts to fight against
institutionalized racism and institutionalized child abuse.

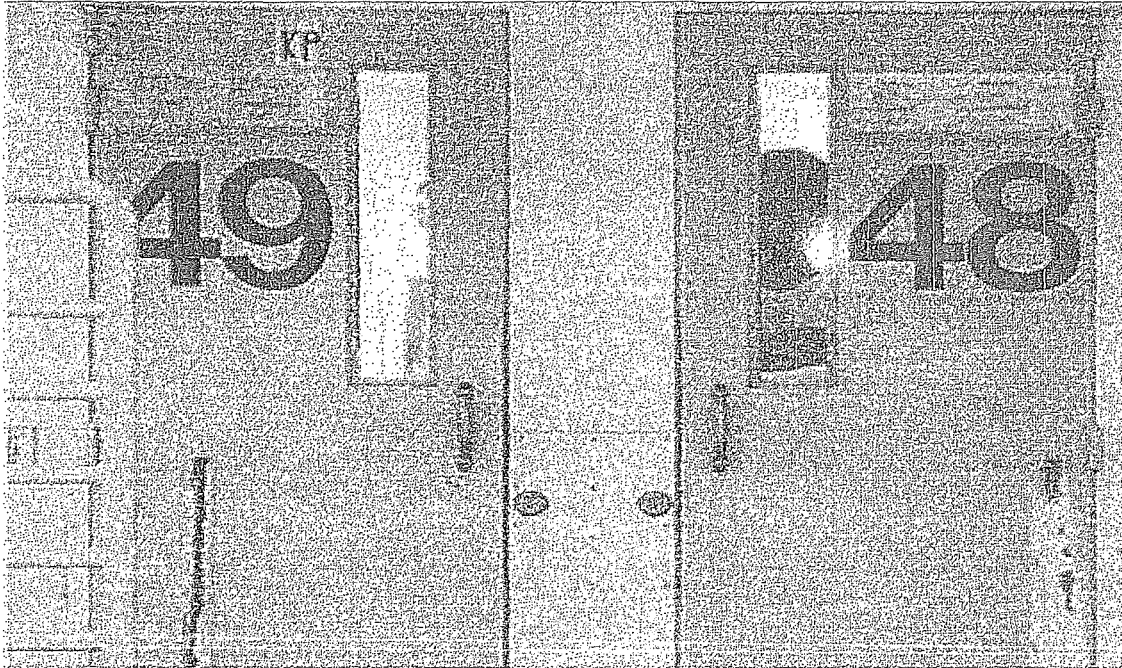
The City, State and Federal legal frame work for its abolishment exists, so do
the investigative methods to verify and expose it. What is lacking is the
political will of the government to put a end to it.

We don't need a reform. We need change.

In the best interest of our children, we are asking the Board of Supervisors
to take this opportunity to work with community. Via formal and concerted
action we can develop community- based group homes, work training
programs, educational and drug treatment programs for the youth at 'at
risk'.

Please direct the Juvenile Probation Commission and The Chief Juvenile
Probation Officer to re submit a budget that will help the community
develop real alternatives.

Sincerely, Ray Balberan Por Vida



LETTERS TO: JUVENILE HALL

Mission Mediaris Archives is screening the film Letters to Juvenile Hall on 18 July Wed. 5-7 pm @ Instituto Familiar De La Raza 2919 Mission Street. Please come and join community advocates, see the film and have some food. The film is 1hr and 20min.

To the community base organizations thank you for your services and support in making LETTERS TO JUVENILE HALL a reality. You gave me the honor to document your love. Thank you.

HOMEY

Mission Neighborhood Center – Precita Center

SAN FRANCISCO JUVENILE HALL

THE BEAT WITHIN

VASILIEIA

INSTITUTO FAMILIAR DE LA RAZA (IFR)

ROADMAP TO PEACE

SAN FRANCISCO UNITED PLAYAZ

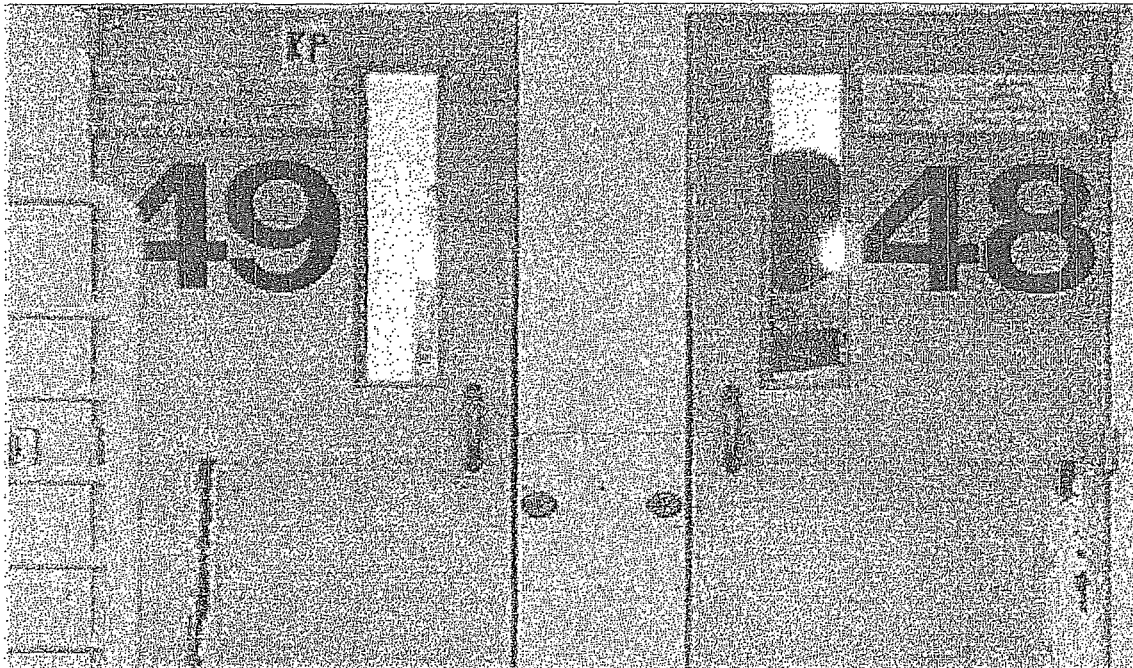
EL TECOLOTE

GRAMMA FILMS

Please confirm your attendance to help us prepare the community space. Thank you Instituto Familiar De La Raza for your support.

Ray Balberan, Mission Mediarts Archives

415 377 5171



LETTERS TO: JUVENILE HALL

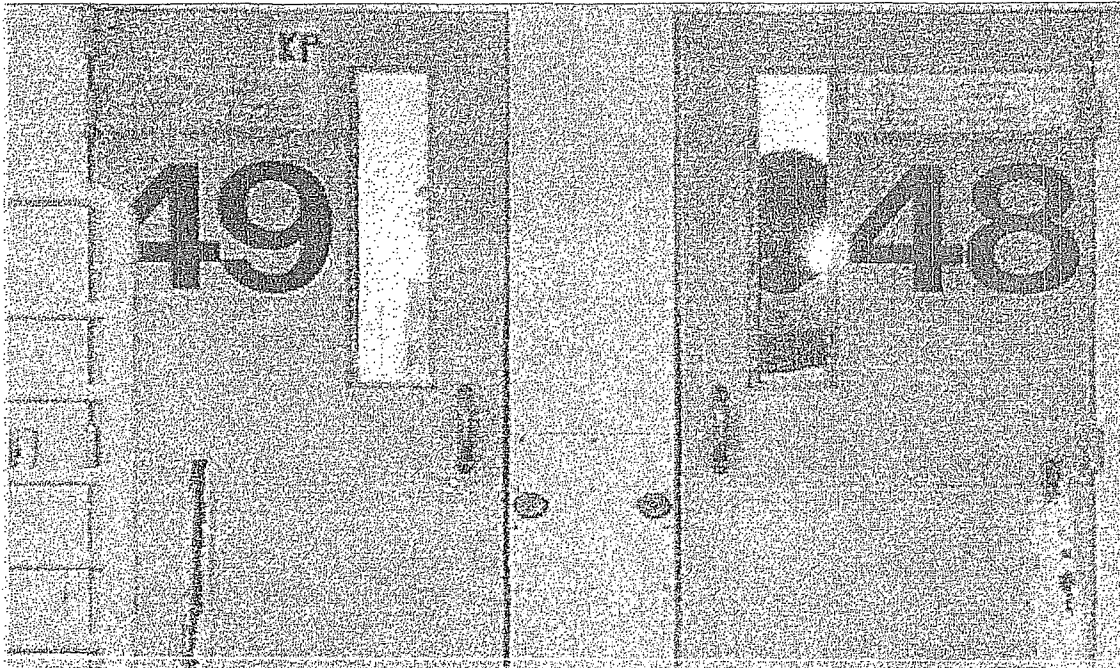
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Mission Neighborhood Center – Precita Center

SAN FRANCISCO JUVENILE HALL

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Ray Balberan, Mission Mediarts Archives

415 377 5171

Photo courtesy Richard Ross/Juveniles in Justice

Girls at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall. The detention center is scheduled to close July 31.

Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall set to close this summer

Eric Pierce May 2, 2019

DOWNEY – For more than six decades, Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall has served as the temporary holding facility for thousands of youth offenders, a detention center for teens (and pre-teens) charged with crimes as petty as shoplifting and as serious as murder.

But Los Padrinos may not exist for much longer.

The L.A. County Board of Supervisors intends to close the detention facility, one of L.A. County's three juvenile halls.

It's not clear what will happen to the youth currently housed at Los Padrinos, or if the closure is related to recent allegations of excessive use-of-force by Los Padrinos staff.

Also unclear is if the closure is temporary or permanent.

A representative for Supervisor Janice Hahn confirmed plans to close the detention center but stressed that details are still preliminary.

City officials declined to comment publicly on Los Padrinos' expected closure. Privately, however, they said they expected L.A. County to repurpose the facility, located at 7285 Quill Drive behind Los Amigos Country Club.

Opened in 1957, Los Padrinos houses hundreds of boys and girls at any given time. Most of the juvenile defendants are awaiting court action or transfer to another facility.

Los Padrinos has been extensively criticized in the past, including for high incidents of depression among the population and youth suicides. More recently, six detention officers were arrested last month for assaulting teenage girls with pepper spray.

This past March, the Los Angeles County Probation Department -- which operates Los Padrinos -- reported a 214% increase in the use of pepper spray at Los Padrinos. Pepper

spray -- also known as OC spray -- is the most significant force option authorized by the department.

A February 2019 report by the L.A. County Office of Inspector General found that detention staff at Los Padrinos feared for their safety and “consistently reported feeling outnumbered and overpowered by youth.”

The county also has struggled to hire and retain staff, which has “destabilized” the facility due to workers going on sick leave and long-term absences.

In addition to the detention center, Los Padrinos houses a juvenile court. Victor H. Greenberg, presiding judge at the Los Padrinos courthouse, confirmed in a letter to law enforcement officials that Los Padrinos plans to close July 31 and the court will close Aug. 30.

“Consistent with the decline in juvenile hall population over the past several years, petition filings have also decreased,” Judge Greenberg wrote.

According to Greenberg, pending court cases at Los Padrinos will be re-assigned to the Eastlake Juvenile Court in Los Angeles and the Compton Courthouse.



The Beat Within



A Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside ■ Volume 24.01/02

WELCOME TO 2012!

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome friends to another amazing issue of writing and art from the inside. Happy 2019! For our first double issue of the year, we're pleased to present you two more reflections from our wonderful interns at Urban School of San Francisco, where students have been transcribing pieces for The Beat Without. Below you'll find a passionate essay written by Lizzie, where she explores how hate isolates people from each other, and how The Beat Within works against hate by connecting people with radically different experiences and perceptions. We're also featuring Sunil, who writes an empowering and motivation letter to his past self, inspired by a piece that he transcribed by one of our longtime Beat Without writers, Vernon Smith. We're deeply humbled to be able to provide this bridge between our writers on the inside and writers on the outside. Thank you for your excellent work, Lizzie and Sunil!

Thoughts on Hate

In 2018 alone, there have been approximately three hundred mass shootings. It seems like nearly every day when I turn on the news I hear about another hate crime against a minority. Every time I hear about one of these shootings, it seems distant; like it's something that doesn't affect me. But then I hear about the shooting near Pepperdine (University), only five hours from my own home. There's no rhyme or reason to these persistent violent crimes, merely that they're formed of hate and exacted through that same evil. In the world we live in today, it's hard to imagine how all this anger can dissipate. It seems as though too many people host anger against others—how can we ever come back from this?

But with this anger then consumes the media, I also hear of vigil's held in honor of the dead. Targeted communities band together in unity as hate attempts to break them apart. With this rage comes a solidification of identity. Hate kills, yet it also reminds us of how important our beliefs and values are. I make no excuse for this hate: people are dying of gun violence and hate crimes nearly every week and there is nothing that can ever justify that. But instead of wallowing and letting terrible acts against humanity define us, we have to unite and combat the hate we're faced with. In order to help the minorities and other groups being targeted, we must align ourselves to band together.

There is no easy solution to the turmoil our country is enduring right now. If there was, we wouldn't still be seeing students killed at school or people being murdered inside a Synagogue. If there was an easy way to stop this violence and hate, it would have occurred when these shootings first started. People have opinions that are formed through their experience in the world—there is little we can do to shape these experiences. But this hate that warrants extreme physical violence is a different evil entirely: that hate is born from ignorance and fear of those who are different. Instead of recognizing privilege, these people run from it. People are terrified of the changes we're observing in our country. Our society is becoming more accepting of others who break the social norm, allowing freedom of speech and expression in a way we've never seen before.

Getting to go to school in San Francisco has brought me into this world of expression that I hope can spread throughout the whole country. Writing for The Beat Within has allowed me to connect with others with wholly different experiences than mine. Hate stems from isolation and a lack of connection to others different than yourself. This hate can be worked through, but it will take time. We need to accept each other for our differences and move past the fear of change in order to eliminate this violence.

-Lizzie, Urban School of San Francisco

Self-Love, A Letter to Myself

Of all The Beat Within pieces I read, I think I was the most inspired by Vernon Smith. He was genuine and honest. He had a tough past, and so much of his piece was about learning to love who he was, and who he is now. He healed himself through self-love, which is one of the hardest things in the world to do. I rely so much on the love of others to get me through hard times, and often cannot find a place to love myself.

In his piece, Vernon Smith referred to a higher power who inspired and guided him. Whether you believe in God or not, the amount of inner power Smith had to pull himself out of depression

is astronomical. Not only did he climb out of this mental hole, but he also found peace within himself.

Reading his piece has inspired me to write a letter to my own past self.

Dear Sunil,

I know you think that you are wasting time. You think you're wasting life, but all the roads you take lead somewhere. You will find new people to love, and one of those people will be yourself.

You will make a lot of mistakes, but those will seem like nothing in the grand scheme of things.

You will be strong, despite how weak you may feel right now. Every challenge that gets thrown at you will build your character, even though it feels like it's destroying you.

You will have hard choices to make. You'll have to decide what you want to do with your life. You will have to decide what and who you want to be committed to. When making these decisions, turn to the people you trust the most. Look to your friends and family, because they love you, and will always help you make the right decision.

But most of all, trust yourself. At the end of the day, you choose your own path. You have the power to choose, and don't give that up to pressures from society or from your peers. Your life is yours to live.

You will hate yourself. Everyone does at some point, but no one is perfect. Don't focus too much on what you could have done and who you could have been. Love yourself for who you are right now.

Look in the mirror. Always try to know yourself. When you forget who you are is when you make the decisions you'll regret the most. You're changing a lot, and will not always be the same person you were yesterday. Recognize that this happens, and always strive to maintain a relationship with yourself.

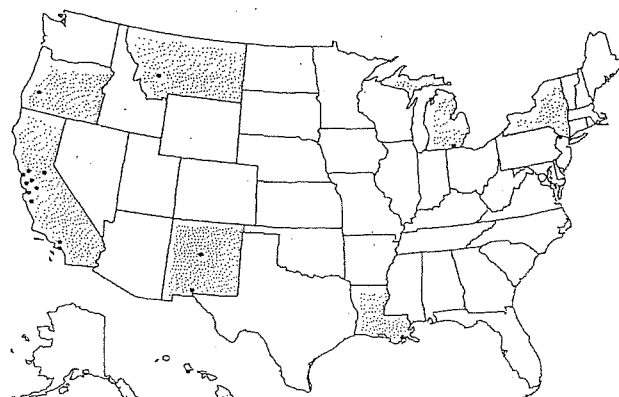
Don't hurt other people. There is no point in being someone you're not. You would never hurt anyone. It's how you were raised. Be proud of that.

Life is always worth it. You may be in a deep rut, but there is a way out. Don't lose sight of the light at the end of the tunnel. And if you do lose sight, always remember that it's there, you just have to push through the dirt.

And lastly, learn from others. Don't let your judgments of someone inform how you take their words. The only reason I am writing this letter is because someone else inspired me. You can always learn from your fellow human beings.

-Sunil, Urban School of San Francisco

We certainly hope the wisdom of Lizzie, Sunil and our many-many readers inside this amazing publication of writing and art will inspire you to be the best person possible. We all have a role in making this world a better place and we can't thank you enough for not only reading this work from our young and old, inside and out, but also having the courage to contribute and share your truths with our many readers all over the USA. Thank you again for your continued support in our work. Don't hesitate to reach out if we can be of any service to you. We can't do this work alone, it takes working together as a community in support of one-another. All the best to you in 2019! Drop us a line anytime.



The Beat Within workshop locations

BEAT TOPICS!

24.01 Topics

1. My Tree Will Look Like... All of us lay the groundwork for our futures by committing to ideas, beliefs, and even materials that eventually give us results, either positive or negative. Imagine that the things we commit to are the seeds we've planted, and what we've experienced thus far are our roots. From these seeds and roots, a tree will grow. What will your tree look like?

2. I Turned On The TV and I Saw... When we watch TV, we all flip through the programs with our remote control in hand. Some of us only a few channels to choose from while others have hundreds. Our question to you is, when you turn on the television what do you see? Or, don't see? Or would like to see? Be creative, but be honest.

3. Cheating, and getting away with it — All of us have cheated and gotten away with it at some time in our lives. Maybe it was during a test in math; or maybe we cheated on a loved one we promised to be faithful to; or maybe it was towards our own mother by lying to her. Take us on a journey into the past when you got away with cheating and — until now — have never talked about it.

4. Words From The Wise, Quote of The Week — Word from the wise, quote of the week - "If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello." - Paulo Coelho (b1947) is a Brazilian lyricist and novelist. He is best known for his novel *The Alchemist*. Do you agree or disagree? Tell us of a time you bravely said goodbye to something. It could have been to the old you (lifestyle), a friend, a family member. How did it turn out? Share your thoughts."

24.02 Topics

1. Where did you go to school? — This week we want you to tell us where you went to school and what your school experience was like. If you want to list all the schools you went to, please do so, but also give us the details and tell us, good or bad, what made these schools memorable for you. What is/was your favorite subjects? Did you have support around your education? A favorite teacher or counselor? Who if anybody made your school experience exciting?

2. Feeling Despair — The dictionary defines despair as the complete loss or absence of hope. This week we want you to describe a time you felt despair. Looking back on your life, can you recall a period when you were denied or lost something in your life, did that bring despair? Or, what about being given a negative label that you did not deserve? How did any of this impact you? Did you initially give up, or did it make you work even harder?

3. The Wait — What is it like to wait? Is it something that was taught to you? Explain waiting. For those of you incarcerated, did time teach you how to wait? Thinking of all the waiting one does (incarcerated or free)... waiting for rec, for chow, for count time, waiting for mail call, for visits, waiting to walk in the world without thinking constantly about danger, waiting for freedom. Waiting to hear back. This week we want to hear from you around waiting. Is it easier to wait when you are free, rather than locked up?

4. Words From The Wise Quote of The Week — "The best thing we could do is work as hard as we can for what is right and what is good." - Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (born 1989) is an American activist, community organizer, and politician. She just became the youngest woman elected into Congress representing New York state. Do you agree with this quote? Does it work for you?

Subscription

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☐ 1 Single Issue \$12

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SUBSCRIBE!



From The Beat: As you know, hundreds of incarcerated youth participate in The Beat Within writing workshops each week and it means so much to them to be able to see their writing in print. We cannot make this happen without the help of our Beat Within family. Please consider a subscription for the new year.

The Beat Within publishes a bi-weekly magazine of writing and art by incarcerated youth. We are a member of Intersection for the Arts. Intersection provides resources, community and cultural space in order to contribute to the sustainable practices of artists and arts organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. Visit www.theintersection.org.

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. If published, your work becomes the property of The Beat Within, but you authors are free to publish elsewhere.

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.

Founder: David Inocencio

Senior Editor/Director: David Inocencio

Program Director/Volunteer Coordinator: Lisa Lavaysse

Graphic Designer: Manen Pau

San Francisco: Ali Moss, Lisa Lavaysse, David Inocencio, Michael Kroll, Emily Durandetto, Simone Larson and Liz Vanderburg

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Santa Clara: Alison Nugent, Sam Spangler, Simone Larson and Liz Simons

Marin: Kathy Ellison and Fred Goldfarb

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Sonoma: David Inocencio and Michael Kroll

Sacramento: Alyssa Maano, Adam Musser, David Inocencio

San Mateo: David Inocencio, Lisa Lavaysse and Simone Larson

Los Angeles: Andrea Flores, Robert Galinsky and Gary Purcell

San Bernardino: Jennifer Tilton, Bobbi Cauldwell, and The University of Redlands

San Diego: Jose Lopez, Matt Kruger, Nathan Head, David Inocencio, SDCOE, Mindy McCartney and the SD Probation Department

Hawaii: Melvea Hardy

Portland, Oregon: Pam Guzman, Portland State University

New Orleans, Louisiana: Mike Mosko and Aram Bingham

Albuquerque, New Mexico: Linda Gonzalez

Roswell, New Mexico: Mary Lou Trujillo and Daniel Kasuboski

Missoula, Montana: Free Verse, Claire Compton and Brittani Hisson

Yolo: Daniel Mendoza, Adam Musser and Jessica Cardenas Montanez

San Francisco County Jail: David Inocencio and Michael Kroll

San Quentin State Prison: Kid CAT, Michael Mackey and Phillipe Kelly, David Inocencio, Michael Kroll, Ali Moss, Sheila Jordan, Zach Wyner, Caille Milner and Peggy Simmons

Urban School of San Francisco: Yudi Feng, Aron McConnell, Tara Kamali, Sally Cobb, Melia Fillipow, Kirby Hammer, Lizzie Sunding, Sunil Prabhu, Alex Taschetta, Harrison Weinstock, Ryu Tada, Leo Fine, Julien de Bord, Katelyn Flanagan and Sean Hart

Jewish Community High School of the Bay: Anat Gillian-Steinberg

San Francisco University High School: Draper Dayton and Tulasi Holdridge

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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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The Beat Within

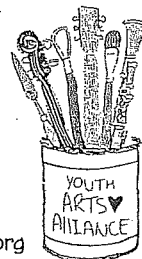
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We would like to thank Stat Delivery Service, Inc for their generous support towards our work in LA.

the
art of
yoga
project
Morning, Evening, Afternoon

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Resilience Orange County, Santa Ana, CA



Resilience Orange County

Resilience Orange County (ROC) was created in 2016 from the merging of RAIZ (est. 2011) and Santa Ana Boys and Men of Color (SABMoC, est. 2013). RAIZ since its inception worked to address the criminalization system, which is the intersections of the criminal and immigration systems, and the impact that it had on our communities.

RAIZ stopped over 20 deportations with its "Free The People" deportation defense model and changed policy locally around criminalization.

SABMoC led in addressing the school to prison to deportation pipeline in Santa Ana and throughout the county by changing the policies that the Probation Department used to send youth to immigration officials and by creating a culture in the Santa Ana Unified School District that promotes and adopts restorative justice practices.

Since merging ROC has been successful in building youth organizing and political power in the county with its programming, organizing and youth voter engagement efforts.

In 2017 ROC was able to advocate along with local partners to create the strongest "Sanctuary City" policy in the country, to successfully remove I.C.E. out of the Santa Ana County Jail, and to create a city fund that provides legal representation to Santa Ana residents in immigration proceedings. This past year in partnership with KRC we created a movement to #DefendSanctuary that has made Orange County and California ground zero in the fight against Trump. Thanks!

To contact ROC, they can be reached at <resilienceoc.org>

-ROC

From The Beat: We welcome back our friends at Resilience Orange County. A big thanks to Claudia, Dulce and Alba for giving us the time to discuss and build on our new partnership. We hope you enjoy the second installment of writings from our latest Beat writing workshop. Again, enjoy the pieces from our friends at ROC, they are doing the good work, making a difference, and have plenty to say.

I feel very blessed that I was introduced to such an amazing group of people who introduced me to organizing and taking action.

From Maya

The quote from Maya Angelou says, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude." I like breaking this quote apart and thinking of the meanings behind them.

The first part of the quote is saying don't be afraid of the outcome to change something. As long as you know you're making a change to the world. Like, if you know that something is wrong, then go out and change it.

To me, the second part of the quote says if you can't do it the way you were doing it before, start brand new. Change it up. That is what this quote means to me.

As a youth, I can relate to this quote because being in Santa Ana, at Resilience Orange County, has really opened my eyes to many new things. As this quote implies, many changes are yet to come.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We all want changes in life, for the most part, but whether we're trying too hard or not trying enough, change may not always come. If the changes don't happen, we shouldn't get ourselves down further in life. Stay motivated and always keep a positive outlook on life.

That Label: Santa Ana

People think Santa Ana is ghetto.

But it's better than Irvine!

The label we give it is...

the strength that makes Santa Ana a gem.

Santa Ana's elteros are our business people, our hustlers.

Our moms pushing their strollers

waiting for the bus

are our safety,

our guardian angels.

Our youth outside

in the park,

chilling,

are our educators and warriors.

Santa Ana isn't ghetto and it should never be Irvine.

Santa Ana is power, it's beauty, it's home.

-C

From The Beat: Certainly sounds like a gem! Lovely depiction of the hardworking folk of Santa Ana! Beautiful imagery. Your words capture the power and beauty of this place.

My Message

I know I haven't gone through many of these hardships and I am grateful for that. I have gone through some types of hardships, but I've gotten through it. My message is to persevere and strive in your life. Although there may be some obstacles in your life, don't let it stop you from achieving something in your life.

Don't let anyone ruin your hopes and dreams. You are an amazing and wonderful human being and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. I've read this quote on the Internet and it goes like this, "Don't let the world change your smile, let your smile change the world."

It hit me really hard because I believe in the power of people and that we have the power to change our community if we all come together. Back on track, even when you are at your worst or when you feel horrible, just remember that you are valuable and loved.

When you feel lonely, know that there is someone that loves you and wants to be with you. Just remember to keep on pushing and striving, regardless of all the hardships. Keep your head up and think about the positives in life

with care.

-Oscar

From The Beat: We love this message and we do hope people out there are able to keep their heads up and be as positive as possible despite what obstacles get thrown their way. Keep spreading your message!

Being an Agent Of Change at ROC

I think being an agent of change can be hard at times because a lot of people see a lot of things that could be better but won't do anything to change things. Our generation has been known to really just post about rather than keep up with it. It's rare to find youth who will speak up and take action.

I feel very blessed that I was introduced to such an amazing group of people who introduced me to organizing and taking action. Sometimes you don't need the money to feel privileged. I feel privileged, as a youth that organizes, and will one day be a future leader in a small city.

I have these resources that not many have, and I couldn't be more thankful. We will be the change. We have a voice. For the ones that are coming before us, right now we are their voice.

-Leslie

From The Beat: We all have a voice! But some voices are louder than others, and that's not always a good thing. Change is hard and our generation is known for more bark than their bite, but you can help turn things around for the generations to come!

Resilience Orange County, Santa Ana, CA

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!**The Idea of Being an Agent of Change**

I agree with the idea. A lot of people talk about wanting to change. For example, a lot of people talk about wanting change for racism, stereotypes, etc. But many people who say this do the same thing. They say they want changes but aren't really serious about it.

Or they just don't have the time to push for the change they want. Another thing people do is talk about change that should happen but decide to leave it to other people rather than doing it themselves.

-Angel

From The Beat: You're right, people talk a lot but not many people do a lot. Maybe its fear? Maybe its not caring enough? It isn't fair to always rely on other people, so you're right, if we're going to talk change, we better make some changes.

Change Is Human Nature

No matter who it is, everyone is always seeing change. It's human nature. People always desire, and they are never satisfied, yet they are too lazy to bring around that change.

It just takes a lot of work, work that most people are not willing to put in. They are also scared of change. Scared that things won't end up better. But no one knows until they try it out.

What can motivate people to commit to change? It seems like there is no real answer to that. Maybe if something threatens their way of living, like deportation.

-Jose

From The Beat: You make a really good point. Many people change when faced with a very difficult situation, but not all do. Is there anything you would want to change within yourself?

You Got This!

Hey, you! Yes, you! I am speaking to all of you who are currently going through a big challenge in life. Whether it's an educational, personal, work-related, or family struggle, I just want you to know that I see you and I feel you! You got this! YOU GOT THIS!!!

I am here for you and I will encourage you to persevere through all these obstacles that are currently gluing you down! I've been in your shoes. Trust, there were times when I no longer wanted to continue with my vision in accomplishing my goals!

It sucks that you feel like this because you are a beautiful soul that shouldn't feel this ugly thing we call pain! One of my favorite rappers once said, "There's beauty in the struggle, ugliness, in the success!"

Embrace that struggle that is currently stopping you from obtaining the joy you desire in life. To me, undergoing all this pain and suffering makes the accomplishments all more worthwhile. YOU GOT THIS!!!

-Jesus

From The Beat: Pain is an ugly thing and we all experience it one way or another. But without pain we wouldn't be able to grow and help others who may experience it in different ways. We encourage you to continue encouraging others. Thank you for your positive thoughts!

Scared that things won't end up better. But no one knows until they try it out.

LifeQuest, Albuquerque, New Mexico

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!**Music**

When I was young, probably four or five, I got a drum-set from my dad. That kind of started something bigger, because that was the initial spark to my love and passion for music.

I make my music with the same elements that I used when I was a young boy. I've been gifted with people in my life who have made it possible for me to make music.

-JD

From The Beat: Keep making your music. It could be a hobby or even a career. Never give up on something you love.

I've been gifted with people in my life who have made it possible for me to make music.

Tooth Fairy

When I was a little child, I believed in the tooth fairy. I sought and enjoyed the money I received, usually five bucks a tooth. I basically started a way to get money. I would bite hard and grind my teeth with the end of a tooth brush and my teeth would get loose and come out.

When I was five I barely had any teeth because I kept pulling teeth out like that. I learned the tooth fairy wasn't real because I stopped getting money. I said, "She isn't coming through any more. She burned me of my money." Then I figured out it was my parents and so that's my tooth fairy experience.

-JV

From The Beat: This is a funny but sad story. Please keep writing! We'd love to hear more from you.

From The Beat: We welcome the latest installment of writings from the young people who participate in The Beat Within through LifeQuest in Albuquerque, New Mexico. We are grateful to John Jones and our dear friend, Linda Gonzalez, from LifeQuest, who leads The Beat Within workshops in New Mexico. LifeQuest is a 501(c)(3) organization. Their staff and volunteers provide support services to at-risk young people in the juvenile justice system throughout New Mexico. LifeQuest can be reached at www.lifequestusa.org or 505-341-9383.

LIFEQUEST
nurturing a future & a hope

Mission:

As an extension of the local church, providing life on life relationships to at-risk and incarcerated youth helping them to achieve their goals as productive, fully committed followers of Christ.

Christmas

When I was younger, Christmas didn't mean much to me. I'd see other kids with new toys and stuff and I was jealous. My family was too poor for my parents buying drugs to get gifts for me and my siblings.

So, I stole toys for them. They would eventually be pawned off but my siblings enjoyed them while they lasted. It's something I intend to change when I start a family.

My kids will get what they want within reason. I'll be there and we'll celebrate as a family should with good food, presents and love. The whole point, like Thanksgiving, is to be grateful!

-TD

From The Beat: We are glad you have made this decision for your future family. You will be a great dad and great example for others!

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

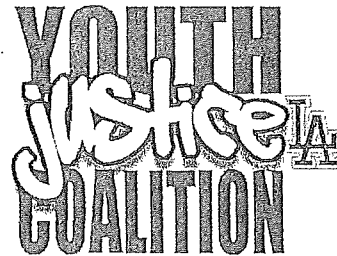
Youth Justice Coalition/Free LA High School, Inglewood, CA

Youth Justice Coalition

The Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) is working to build a youth family, and formerly and currently incarcerated people's movement to challenge America's addiction to incarceration and race, gender and class discrimination in Los Angeles County's, California's and the nation's juvenile and criminal justice systems.

-YJC

From The Beat: Here's the third installment of writing from our workshops at the charter high school, Free LA High School, located at Chucos in Inglewood, CA. The students have plenty to say about their lives and their community. A big thank you to Kim McGill at the YJC, and lead teacher, Jesus Trigo for hosting our workshops and building on our partnership. We already can't wait for the next installment!! To learn more about the Youth Justice Coalition, please go to [HYPERLINK "http://www.youth4justice.org"](http://www.youth4justice.org) www.youth4justice.org, or to inquire further about Free LA High School, head on over to [HYPERLINK "http://www.youth4justice.org/yjc-high-schools/free-la-high-school"](http://www.youth4justice.org/yjc-high-schools/free-la-high-school) www.youth4justice.org/yjc-high-schools/free-la-high-school



Who Am I?

Who am I? A young project baby growing up in the trenches. I like working out. I have been trying to get my size up since I was behind them cells. I get angry fast. I lose my temper pretty quick.

I am trying to make it in the hood for myself because nothing came good with that. I'm 5'6", a loyal person, truthful and trust worthy. I'll never rat on my guys. I'm an Aries.

-Julio

From The Beat: Be who you think you are, be who you want to be, be you! Nothing is more truthful than being the person you want to be.

Change

I changed a lot because I feel like I wouldn't care about school as much. I wouldn't care about my high school diploma. Now I actually care. I wake up early, go to school, and get done what I have to get done. Also, I don't be out on the streets no more like how I used to.

I actually stay home and just do my homework and chill. I also plan on going to college and having a good job. I also don't have friends that make me do bad things when I'm with them. I changed over a year ago because I feel like I have everything planned out. I actually care about my life and everything I do.

-Melissa

From The Beat: You'd be surprised how people can overlook the act of caring. Caring takes a lot more than just going through motions or doing things because you have to or because you don't want to let others down.

My Boy, Kevin

I look up to my boy, Kevin, because he just has a lot of knowledge that he shows me. I also see the way he carries himself with respect and humbleness. I've only known him for about a year now and we vibe, like he has been my brother since the sandbox.

I learn a lot from him as well as show him he has a lot to learn. I envy the part about him where, he's just all around a solid friend. By solid, he is a just person I could always kick it around. I really want to see the best for him and I would love for him to accomplish his dreams and goals in life.

His example of chasing dreams just makes me more determined to accomplish mine. He also shows me that I need to pay a lot more attention to my self-reflection. I also appreciate his honesty and realness.

-Da'Ron

From The Beat: Sounds like a great person to look up to. We immerse ourselves in those who we relate to, we share things in common with, and sometimes we immerse ourselves with those who complement us.

Thanks Be To God

I'm Basilio S. I was born in Guatemala. I came from Central America where I lived on the streets. I grew up on the streets. Here, I looked for a job and started experiencing life. A lot of things happened in my life but God helped me to figure things out and start looking for my goals, how all men start.

First, I changed myself. I took care of myself and started building better things for me. At the end of the day, it was really hard but through everything I learned to not give up. Never give up on your life. Don't waste time on things that don't matter. Life is hard but you have to learn from it. No pain, no gain. Experiences matter.

Thanks to God for my life and how hard it was. Now I can see a different world and I can build a better future for me. Everyday in the morning, I show love and take care of myself.

-Basilio

From The Beat: Continue to show love for yourself. And never stop taking care of yourself. We're glad you can look to God, or into someone for support in times of trouble. We all need that whether we're willing to admit it or not. Figuring things out is a never-ending cycle of life!

Time of Resentment

A time I felt resentment was when I was at school and a friend wanted to start helping me make money. He gave me some merchandise to sell. On that same day, I gave the merchandise to another friend who I thought I could trust. He told me he wanted to see his brother because the two of them were thinking of buying it.

As the day went on, he hadn't come back. I waited for his brother, too, but they had already left. I felt all types of feelings in that moment. I eventually overcame it the next day and I forgave him but I'll never forget it.

-Jacob

From The Beat: We applaud you. Not many people can get over something so quickly, especially if they had put their trust into them. That shows just how mature of a person you are!

Attitude Adjustment

If I were to give a speech about who I was a year ago, I would say that my attitude has changed as well as my interest in what I want to do in life. Reason why I picked attitude was because I have a "don't give a flip" type of attitude. I didn't really care about life or the consequences.

My attitude was more of getting respected and known. I would see people doing bad stuff getting money and being respected, known, and loved by others. My interest in life changed because before I didn't know what I wanted to be. All I was back then was a nobody doing wrong and trying to be someone on a road to death, the way I was viewed.

-Fernando

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with working towards being respected and known. It's just how you go about it! There are positive ways to gain respect. Can you think of some?

Youth Justice Coalition / Free LA High School, Inglewood, CA

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!**A Letter To Me**

Dear Blakk,

I don't know about you, man, but I know the life I'm living right now is good no matter what, because you have family to help support you. I believe we should keep the name Blakk because we fit that name.

Me, in this part, is that you, you should have believed in to keep situations the same and be able to garner confidence to not be so nerve-wracked. Realize everything happens for a reason and not everything is towards you.

You make who you are and when you find your true self always embrace it no matter what other people's perception is. You're strong but you trust too much. You make the right choice. Don't be forced into it. Watch everybody. No matter what.

-Jacob

From The Beat: That's a letter many should send to themselves! Keep your confidence, and when you lose it fake it until you make it.

Freedom

Freedom is about standing up for people who have the rights. All people, all equal. All equal with all the laws. Most people think freedom is to do "what I want." (Unfortunately) Freedom is conditional.

People do have the right to speak, act, and pursue happiness, ideally without anybody or external restrictions. Freedom is important, though, because it leads to enhanced expression of creativity and original thought. It leads to increased productivity and overall high quality of life.

The most important parts of freedom are the freedom of religion, of speech, of the press, and to petition to right the wrongs in which to have what we have. The American Revolution, our war against the British forces, eventually led to a declaration of independence within these United States, i.e. our Declaration of Independence.

-ST

From The Beat: We agree that freedom is important and that we must do our best to protect it. What areas of your life do you feel the most freedom? Where would you like more?

An Elder

My grandpa is important to me because when he was alive I would talk to him about how I like to play instruments with him and sing on his microphone. He was the only person that would help me so I could get better. I would go to his house every Tuesday, so I could have piano lessons with him or he would give me new instruments to play.

My grandpa and I were close, and I never had a problem with him. I remember when he used to take me to this park so I could watch him and his friends play the drums. It sounded so good. I went with him every Sunday. Sometimes if my grandpa could not have piano lessons with me he would tell my uncle to help me because my uncle knew how to play instruments.

Before my grandpa died he was teaching me how to play the clarinet and I learned how to play it but I forgot how to play it after he died. I wish he were still here to finish teaching me how to play different instruments. My grandpa would make videos of him and me playing instruments and singing.

It would just be him and me but sometimes my little brother would come with us. He liked some of the instruments. My grandpa had a lot in his house and backyard but I only remember the name of some of them. I miss my grandpa and I wish he were still here to teach me more.

-Shaquana

From The Beat: Your grandpa was an amazing man. Continue to practice and play instruments. Pass on that knowledge to your own kids. Your grandpa will forever live through the beautiful things he taught you in life.

The Difference

The difference between me now and me from one year ago is that I see life totally differently. I'm only seventeen but I've changed a lot since my last birthday.

At first, I saw life as a joke and everything was about having fun. All I did was party, smoke, and do dumb things with my friends who usually got me into trouble. I felt like I had nothing to lose, so I started running around in the streets with a crowd of boys and girls that like getting into trouble as much as I did.

We would go to the mall to steal, rob people on the streets, and even steal cars. My first time going to jail was my on my fifteenth birthday.

At first, I thought going to jail made me look cool because of all the attention I was getting from family and friends. So, I started staying in the house more and took a break from social media.

I kept to myself. My dad just recently got out of prison from doing fifteen years and he'd been giving me a lot of life lessons on acting like a man and not like a boy. He tells me not to depend on anyone but myself. He's one of the reasons I want to succeed.

-Damien

From The Beat: Doing dumb things in life is a given. We are all taught the right and wrongs way to live, but doing wrong in life doesn't make you a wrong person. You're human, you were young, and you still have a lot of growing up to do. Do your best to succeed in life. We know you can do it!

A Speech

I am Camron from the Youth Justice Coalition. A year ago, I went to Crenshaw High. I kept getting in trouble, not listening to the teacher, getting kicked out of school, fighting etc.

What really made me slow down was when I went to Sylmar Juvenile Hall. Now I'm at Chuco's. They help with a lot of things that a regular school didn't do for me.

Today, I plan on going to college when I'm eighteen. Chuco's saved me from a lot of things and helped me. I learned how to ask for a break when I needed it. I learned how to do most of my work. I learned how to communicate with my peers.

-Camron

From The Beat: We're glad you were able to receive the help you needed and glad you benefited from it. We encourage you to stick your plans. Learning to do your work and communicating with others are very important!



FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Young Women's Freedom Center, San Francisco, CA



YOUNG WOMEN'S
FREEDOM CENTER
The Center for Young Women's Development

Young Women's Freedom Center

Our mission is to empower and inspire young women who have been involved with the juvenile justice system and/or the underground street economy to create positive change in their lives and communities.

-YWFC, 2019

From The Beat: We are thrilled to bring you readers the second installment of writings from our most recent writing and conversation workshops with the YWFC in San Francisco, CA. We cannot say it enough, we love the YWFC and these incredibly talented ladies. We truly cherish our partnership and look forward to building with YWFC in 2019. A big thank you goes out to all involved at the Young Women's Freedom Center.

School and Me

Well I started at Head Start when I was a kid. I loved taking the naps and eating snacks. I went to Fairmont Elementary School. I had multiple friends, and we loved shooting hoops and playing kickball. I went to Visitation Valley Middle School. I was on the basketball team and we never lost a game. Even though there was one girl, she was a ball-hog.

The security that worked there were cool people. The Principal, Mr. Durky, was very creative too. My favorite subject is math. I love counting money too. The subject I dislike the most is science. I've always had support, still do 'til this day. To be honest I literally had one day to get my things together to graduate middle school, but I did it.

I started at Burton High School, but I wanted to go to Galileo High School so badly that my mom transferred me. I loved it. I had joined ROTC and we had off campus lunch. Then my mom moved to Richmond so I went to Kennedy High School.

It was a big school. It was difficult because I didn't know anybody. I couldn't seem to get what I needed done, so I got transferred to Greenwood Academy. Then I finally ended up going to Five Keys. My educational goal is to get my HS diploma, I'm thinking about going to Duke University for basketball. My mother is my support. She makes me go harder.

-LaLa

From The Beat: Sounds like you changed schools a lot growing up. How were you able to adjust and make friends? Good thing you had your mom to push you and help you through!

Disparity

Feeling despair makes you feel like life ain't fair
Sometimes it has to do with your actions
So, you need to subtract some things, or people, and do a fraction
You may be lacking, but as long as you always stacking
The good will always come with the bad
And sometimes it makes you feel sad.

-Kimberly

From The Beat: What makes you feel despair? What do you do to get through it? What are your goals going into the new year?

People selling me wishes and
enough real ones
I wish they could stop trying
to program me
And give me some real solutions

Where I Went to School, My School Life

Growing up in Valencia Gardens the School bus would pick us up in the front courts. If you lived in the VG's back in the days we would call it "the courts."

Bus would go up the hill on Potrero Hill and we would go under the seat and hang down. These were the things we would do to find happiness and forget about the things that were happening at home.

I went to Star King Elementary School. Everett Middle School was different. 6th grade back then we wouldn't have no uniforms. When I had worn a red sweater, I was targeted in my own school sending me home, all due to a color and barely in the 6th grade. Not a thang.

Fresh out of elementary school, I can say the best time was our yearbook. Three years I was picked for "pretty eyes." My art teacher was dope. This is where I learned my skills of art and tattooing. I learned a lot in middle school by my teacher's actions, other's, and mine.

International Studies Academy for freshman year was dope. I knew everybody. We would all come together. Best school year, volleyball, soccer, my history, and math teacher was dope. No lie, I would cut school, do my homework at Twenty-Fourth Street and Mission McDonald's, then I would finish my homework then I would run the streets.

My English Teacher spoke with me: "You have A's in your work but you are never here, how is that?" Sophomore year and the rest of school years I spent in Juvenile Hall.

-Young A

From The Beat: Sounds like you went to a bunch of different schools but had teachers that supported you at all of them. What did they teach you? Do you still use those lessons in your life now?

The Bait

Can't put no face to tomorrow
Can't trust no one
People selling me wishes and enough real ones
I wish they could stop trying to program me
And give me some real solutions
The wait, 300,000 per person, dang, I'm not even human
Just a box on a cement belt like inventory
Three years down 300,000 multiply by three that's 900,000
What would that look like if they invested in young folks?
I'm just waiting for my time to be done.

-KB

From The Beat: How do you wish you had been invested in? What do you wish had been done differently?

My Wait Is On My Time!!

The reason I wanted to write about question three is because it makes me think of everything I'm going through today.

I been waiting for a job, waiting for money to come in, and just waiting for everything to come together.

Another point is being incarcerated. I feel like that type of wait is different. When you are in jail, your only thing is when am I getting out? At that point it's just I want to be out with my loved one's and friends.

When you're out the wait is different because you are around a lot so it makes you forget about the wait. That's when you mess up. I've been waiting a long time for a lot of things but as soon as I forget something bad happens. I don't like to wait but I've been learning that everything takes time and I can't rush it. I just do what I'm supposed to do to make the wait shorter.

-Tenaya

From The Beat: That's a really interesting point. Do you think being in a situation where you have to wait is better for you then? Or what can you do when you are out to not forget and mess up?

Donald E. Long Detention Center, Portland, Oregon

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!**Creating Life Inside****Act I***Performer: Z*

I want you to know how I express myself.
 My words
 are like bullets that pierce through people's hearts.
 My words
 are so sweet and warm.
 Like a Pop Tart.
 My words make sentences
 that
 shouldn't
 be
 taken
 apart.
 My words cannot be stolen.
 People should feel a connection
 to my words when they hold them.
 My words
 have true meaning.
 People pick up my notebook and can't stop reading.

a. Performer: Devon

If these streets could speak
 they would say,
 "Stay home more."
 They would say
 "no more violence."
 And I would ask them,
 "How can I stay away from you?" (streets start creeping in)
 If these streets could talk, I would ask them
 why they took my cousin Julio!
 I would ask why they stay around.
 If these streets could speak
 I would tell them,
 "I'm done with you! No more will I be a slave to you!"

b. Jeff's piece**"I'm Heated"** Performer: Devon Percussion: Amari

I'm heated.
 My knuckles are bleeding.
 My heart is speeding. Faith is leaving.
 I have multiple demons.
 What should I believe in?
 I can't stop breathing.
 Just gonna keep dreamin'.
 But I'm sleep walking.
 Haters keep talking.
 Try to stop me? Well I ain't stopin'.
 Picking up the slack like I'm moping.
 I do it for the fun not for the profit.
 All the extra stuff, I need to drop it.

Act II*Performer: Devon*

Pressure pushing down on me but I'm still here.
 Pressure pushing down on me but I still gotta keep my head above water.
 Pressure pushing down on me but I'm not drowning in regret or sorrows
 Pressure pushing down on me but I know my worth. I did what I did. It won't make me or break me.
 Pressure pushing down on me from the weight of this case. I can't allow myself to worry about my fate.
 Pressure pushing down on me but it's OK. I got myself and I stay in a good headspace.
 Pressure pushing down on me but I gotta get through and get back to my peoples.

Act III

From The Beat: We are certainly excited about the next chapter of writing workshops that will be re-launching inside the Donald E. Long Detention Center in Portland, Oregon in January, 2019. We have a solid team of facilitators and with the great support of juvenile probation we are ready to go! A big thank you goes out to Stephanie Bolson, Pamela Guzman and all their colleagues for making this partnership a success. The following collaborative piece was sent to us by Pamela Guzman and with her permission we are happy to share with you readers. This amazing piece was put together with the support of Rogue Pack and the young men in detention. We were fortunate to hear the audio. It was so inspiring we thought it would be great to include in our pages. To learn more about Rogue Pack you can visit them at < <http://www.roguepack.org> >

*Performer: Dre***"Tomorrow Ain't Promised"**

This is something I wish I would have taken seriously a long time ago. As I sit in my cell, staring at blank cement walls, I think about all the things that I wish I could do. The people I wish I could see. As I think about these things I realize that tomorrow really isn't promised. And although I'm blessed to be alive, I'm going to prison. I am restricted from doing the things I want to do. I'm thankful that I'm alive and will be free one day. And this experience is and has helped me understand how much things can change in one day. And not to take the little things for granted.

#2*Performer: Obed*

People see me smile and laugh wit them but what they really don't know is that I don't feel that way inside. I'm going through a lot. But I don't show it. Because some people don't know what it's like. I'm only 16 doing half of the time I've been alive for. How do they think that makes me feel? Makes me feel hopeless and disappointed that the rest of my childhood is going to be spent behind brick walls. But I gotta' stay strong for my family. That's why when I see 'em I put on a fake smile to keep 'em happy.

#3*Performer: Jeff*

I want you to understand my pain when the judge tells me I won't see the streets again for years. I want you to feel the pain I feel on a daily basis. Not because I want you to suffer or hurt. But because I want you to understand what I go through before you judge me. Before you decide I am a monster or you hate me. Before you assume and make an ass of you and me I want you to understand what it's like to have everything you love taken from you. To not be able to see all the people you love. And more than that I want you to understand what I've been through And why I am the way I am. To understand the pain I've dealt with for my entire life, And the pain I continue to face every day. These are things that only someone who has experienced the same things can truly understand. But I wish you could too. Maybe then I'd be home with my loved ones, not locked up being secluded from safety.

Act IV*(ensemble repeats "Everyone who knows us knows")*

(Dre) Everyone who knows us knows that loyalty is key and disrespect isn't tolerated.

(Z) Everyone who knows us knows that there is no competition between brothers, blood relation or not.

(Jeff) Everyone who knows us knows that you keep it 150 no matter what the circumstance could be.

(Obed) Everyone who knows us knows we aren't a gang. Just brothers together with a goal to succeed in this world of diversity.

#2 Performer: Amari

Can you hear me now?
 I'm locked in a cell
 Screaming for help.
 I pound my fists into these blank cement walls.

continued on next page

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Donald E. Long Detention Center, Portland, Oregon

continued from previous page

I'm yelling my loudest trying
to tell everyone I'm not a monster.
I've been taken from the
people I love and locked away.
Can you hear me now?
Now that my life has been put on pause.
Now that I'm chained and shackled.
Now that the threat has been eliminated.

Now that I lay awake at night with regret.
Now that I'm going to corrections for 10-12 years.
I will be free again.

Everyone: Will you hear me then?

-Amari, Jeff, Obed, Dre, Devon and Z, from the Donald E. Long
Juvenile Detention Facility in Portland, Oregon

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Alumni Corner

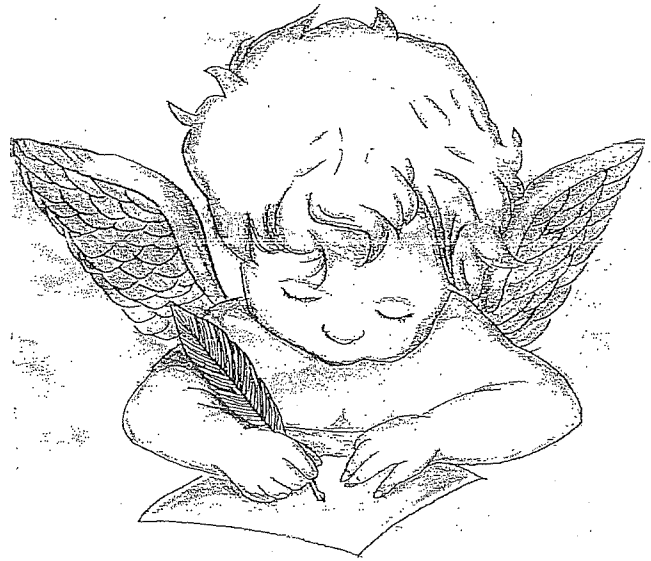
From The Beat: Though the piece is short and sweet, those of you who have been following our dear friend and colleague, Hayden Beaulieu, know the challenging journey he has been on. We truly appreciate this latest update and look forward to being a support to him as he works hard to better his life and the new challenges that face him

A New Taste of Freedom

I am finally free from the system in Arizona. It feels great to be able to sleep at night without having to worry about judges, prosecutors, and probation officers. My case was finally dismissed after a long uphill battle against the State of Arizona. I received word that a judge was granting my petition to overturn my conviction, and sure enough, the court clerk confirmed this. I am a completely free man now.

Despite this, I am still reluctant to celebrate just yet. I am homeless and jobless. I live in one of the most expensive areas of the country. I will need to work hard to make ends meet. I am grateful that I have a good support system where I am now.

-Hayden Beaulieu, Arizona



I am grateful that I have a good support system where I am now.

★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Caged Animal

I'm stressed. I've been incarcerated for a while and it's starting to be a real burden. I feel like every day I'm getting sicker and sicker. It's taking a toll on my mentality. And the worst part is, I don't know when I'm leaving.

I try to hide my stress by being playful and telling jokes. Sometimes, the harder I try to do a good program, it feels like the more pressure there is on me, which doesn't help me with the stress.

I feel like I'm alone in here, like nobody wants to help me, to work with me. People tell me what a likeable person I am, but then they turn around and throw shade. I try to make the best of everything by laughing and playing. I let a lot of things go that I usually wouldn't.

-Lil Dame, Alameda

From The Beat: Incarceration is a cancer and it has spread to our society's essential organs. It makes sense that this cancer is felt most acutely by young people living behind bars. You can beat this, but you need to stay productive. Set achievable goals and work toward those goals. Don't beat yourself up for feeling lonely, angry or sad, but respond to those feelings with determination and love.

The Saints

The New Orleans Saints are my favorite football team because, for one, it's my hometown. I like the players and have been liking the players since 2009 when we won the Super Bowl.

I know we are winning the Super Bowl this year, 2018 - early 2019.

Reggie Bush was my favorite running back.

In 2005/2006 when we had Hurricane Katrina it was tragic. It was horrible. Everyone had to stay in the Superdome and the Superdome was even coming apart and a lady even jumped off the top of the Superdome and killed herself.

It was sad, but in 2009 it was great. We won the Super Bowl. It was amazing. Everybody went crazy, I even went crazy. It was like a riot, I swear. Nowadays we have better players. Drew Brees has the most passing yards in NFL history!!

-Clyde, Harvey Louisiana

From The Beat: You have been through so much with Hurricane Katrina and all the struggles of the city. The ability for the Saints to lift your spirit and bring you happiness goes to show how important the team is in the culture for the city!

To My Brother

Hello to my brother, that's the ninja who raised me
I wish you were here, you were supposed to meet my lady
You left your son with me, so I treated him like my baby
If something happened to him, I swear I'd go crazy
Keep watching over me, I know I'm acting wild
I'm going to change soon, I've got to make you proud.

-Lala, Solano

From The Beat: Your description of your relationship with your brother is so tender. He raised you and watches over you. You took care of his son. With that kind of love, you will find the strength to change and make your brother proud.

Remember Me

Damn, these things are really killing me. You probably don't know me, but I am going to make sure you remember me. It's my third time being here. When you get to these types of places, you're going to see who your friends are.

Can't even get mail, can't get no money or no phone, and when you get to these types of places you have to put in work. I'm going to have to spend my birthday and Christmas in here, but it doesn't matter, 'cause all we've got is time. Happy Christmas to all out there.

-Spooky, Marin

From The Beat: That's a powerful piece. We're pulling for you to make it through and not be back for another birthday or Christmas. Keep up the writing. Maybe it will help.

Bad Advice

I got bad advice from my drug counselor. I was about to run away from my placement when my drug counselor told me that she would rather I steal than sell my body. I think it was bad advice because I started stealing just to get money to eat and have somewhere to sleep. Now I'm in jail. It also affected my baby because he's not with me anymore.

-Noemi, Los Angeles

From The Beat: Not all advice given is good. But just because you're given "good" advice doesn't mean it's the correct one. Everyone tries to advise people in hopes for a better outcome—ideally, of course. There are those who will purposely steer you wrong but you shouldn't lose trust in all people.

Improving The Schools

I think that they should put more programs in schools. They are building more jails when they should be building more schools.

I also think that they should put more money into our community and into schools. They should eliminate unnecessary things and add the needed things like arts and crafts, sports, poetry, spoken word, color guard and encore programs.

-Young B, Solano

From The Beat: We couldn't agree more. Your recommendations for school improvement are excellent and specific. That's what we love about your writing.

Bad Urges

Temptations are often very deadly. I have ten days left in custody and on probation. While I won't have a PO breathing down my neck, I'm going to have a constant daily battle to fight my temptations.

I'm going to be telling myself "Don't tuck that bottle," or "Don't buy that substance." All of them (whatever they are) are going to be creeping up on me constantly. I just hope I finally have the mental strength to win the fight.

-Butch, Marin

From The Beat: That's very powerful. We believe you have the mental resources. Cultivate them. Be strong. Be vigilant. Be patient. Stop and think for that second or two before you act. Good luck!

If You Don't Want To Wait, Don't Go To Jail

In jail, you ain't got no choice but to wait. These people got complete control over you in jail. My advice to people in jail, is, try your best not to come back. I know it ain't easy, because I'm in the same position as y'all, but sometimes we gotta think a lil' bit more.

I don't like having to wait, because I don't like the fact that my freedom is in the hands of somebody else. And that while I wait, I have to have somebody tell me when I can eat, shower and watch TV, and having to agree on something to watch.

I'm the youngest of nine kids, so I'm used to not having to agree on things like TV. I pretty much get my way all the time. So, jail is completely different. My only advice is, if you don't want to wait, don't go to jail.

-Heaven, San Francisco

From The Beat: Great advice. Seems like you're ready to take it, yourself. As the youngest child, how do you get your way most of the time? Youngest kids don't get much input into anything that happens! You must have special magic!

Pressured

I've been pressured to do some things that I didn't like.

An example is being pressured to skip school, go to the store and shoplift which is not good.

Being pressured to go inside someone's house and rob what they got.

Being pressured to beat someone up for a stupid reason.

Being pressured to join a gang.

Being pressured to do something stupid that I didn't like.

People who say they are your friends, they never pressure you to do something stupid or even tell you to do something stupid.

-Jc, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You clearly see the consequences of pressure. And your last line is an excellent message for all. True friends will never pressure you to do what's not good for you. Remember that.

Dear World

Dear World,

Why are the police killing people of color? What are we doing that makes police want us shot? Why can't we be in peace? If only we can be shot for a good reason. White people are killing us people of color. I heard a black man was shot because he had a gun, but even though he was a security guy in a bar, that I call "racism", because there was no need to shoot him as a security guard.

I hear there are a lot of rich people out there in the world and every day I ask myself what they do with all that money? They come from a poor neighborhood and they can't give back to their community?

My parents came from a poor country and I know when I become someone in this world, I will give back to their community and if I can, I will help the whole world that needs the most, like Africa. Right now, they are in a drought. They need the most help they can get, because without water, you can't live without water. One day I wish I can get out of here and be someone. I want to give back to the world.

-Giver, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have beautiful instincts and heart for the whole world. How would you help the poor world, who needs all of our help so badly now? We hope for now you will continue through your writing. You are teaching many of us through your words. You'll make your parents, yourself, all the world proud.



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

A Better World

You have to live with yourself and learn to respect yourself, because you won't respect anyone else otherwise. Living with yourself means you've accepted all your flaws, and accepted who you are.

Then you won't judge others for their flaws and you can learn to love one another. I believe that if we can all live with ourselves and accept each other regardless of our looks, color, and personality, this world would be a better place.

-Carlos, Harvey, Louisiana

From The Beat: The world would indeed be a better place if people had your attitude. Sometimes we judge others for flaws that we also see in ourselves. If we learn to accept those flaws in us, we can learn to accept others for who they are!

Feeling Despair

I have had times more than once that I've felt despair, but I wanted to make this paragraph about my worst experience of it.

My worst experience was when it was my first time getting arrested back in December of 2017. It was also my worst experience in juvenile hall of where I didn't have control of anything. A lot of things were going on that really stressed me out, most of which was happening on the outside. I felt hopeless and fell into a great depression, causing me to have suicidal thoughts. It took time to get over my problems and sometimes get depressed thinking about it, too. Overall, I got rid of my despair by changing my mindset of my life, which is, I keep on going, because this life still isn't over.

-Alberto, San Francisco

From The Beat: Despair can feel overwhelming. We are glad you were able to overcome these feelings of despair. What would you tell someone who was going through the same thing you experienced? Teach us! Now you've changed your mind set, what are your new ideas for your future?

Feeling Despair

I'm feeling despair right now at the age of sixteen. I feel despair. I will turn seventeen in a couple of days. This will not be my first birthday locked up. Actually this is my second birthday locked up in a row.

Somehow out of all my times being in jail this is different. I feel as if I have lost hope in the streets, love and my situation right now. I feel like my problems are starting to pile up. I am stressed out about my life right now. I might be going to DJJ (youth prison) with two strikes. I feel like the girl I love is probably messing with somebody else. I feel like a fool.

I have been in the streets since I was fourteen. It has taught me at a young age. The streets were my first love. There is actually nothing good coming from the streets. Only death and jail. I guess I had to learn the hard way.

I have been through group homes and different probation programs. Through all of my time I only learned to become a better criminal. This time is different. I'm going to make sure that it is different. This time around I'm changing my ways.

I have graduated high school at sixteen and am taking CBT classes and social skills classes. I am actually learning and applying these concepts and knowledge. I have taken it upon myself to even work by myself and separate from the streets, negativity and everything else negative in my comfort zone.

Me bettering myself has also kept me from stressing and tripping over my problems. This is how I am overcoming my feeling of despair. By changing my mindset and behavior I figured I can change my situation and feelings. These are just my thoughts and feelings that I can't vent to anybody else because I'm not that open, nor do I think anybody really cares. I have a lot more to say but not enough paper.

-King D, Solano

From The Beat: This is a fantastic piece! It is honest and says so much about the self-knowledge and wisdom you have gained from your life experience. It shows how much you've changed and how far you want to go in your life. Keep moving forward one step at a time. You have already shown you have power to overcome times of despair and take your life from the streets into the classroom. Keep us in the loop, your voice in our pages is important!

Eye-Opener

The last twenty-seven hours I've been in Rivarde have been an eye-opening experience for me. I've had so many thoughts since I've been in my cell. The feeling of loneliness and silence brings up thoughts and has opened up my eyes to all the things you miss out on in the free world. Especially when the TV is on and all the commercials about the world come on (Burger King, Dave and Busters, etc.).

If I can make it out of here (I have hope), I'm going to isolate myself from people that influence me or encourage me, putting me in the way of trouble or danger.

-Kevin, Harvey, Louisiana

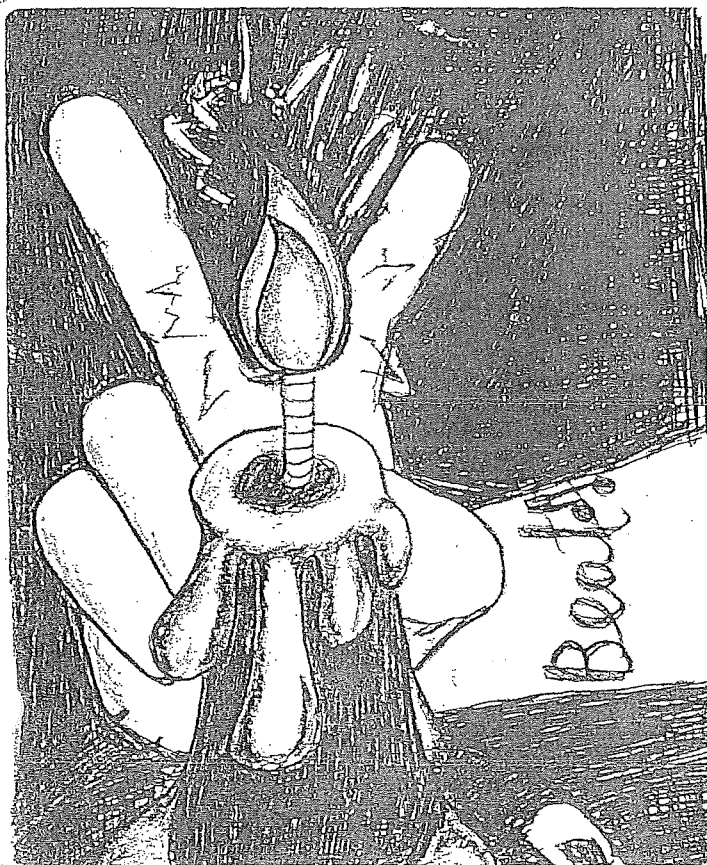
From The Beat: Isolating yourself from bad influences is definitely a good way of staying out of trouble. This is often easier said than done, though. How will you find the inner strength to resist this temptation?

How I Feel

I'm sorry for what I did, but in real life I'm a prove
That I'm a good person, I got a lot to lose
They always see me chillin' but inside is a bruise
I gotta do my time, the clock is my dude
He gone tell me when I'm out and his hands be makin' moves
When I'm in the cell, I feel alone in this zoo.

-Kevin, Harvey, Louisiana

From The Beat: These are great lines! What kinds of things will you do to prove that you're a good person?



My Heritage

I was raised around revolvers and cocaine sellers
 I always had an uncle fresh out of jail
 Them homies with tattoos, wife-beaters and Dickies
 All I ever smelt was malt liquor and old English
 I see low riders going by hitting switches
 I seen foo's getting beat, all 'cause they were snitches
 On every wall, you'll see graffiti of a gang
 Kill and die for your hood 'cause you ain't got none left
 I got family on rock
 I got family on black
 I seen a fool OD on rocks
 I seen a crack couple get jacked by cops
 You better watch out from them dark alley ways
 'Cause all you'll see is dark hoodies, beanies, knives and baseball
 bats up close
 Funk now, how gangster is that
 You ever look someone in the eyes as he's bleeding to death
 That shhh will make you sick in the head
 Growing up all I ever heard was oldies and stories about prison
 My mama taught to keep my father's lifestyle so hidden
 By elementary, he was in the penitentiary
 I found what he was, said that's who I'm gonna be
 I ain't never stopped to think about my mama and her misery
 I'm clapping at these suckers over things they did to me
 Now I gotta ride the streets
 This is my heritage
 You wouldn't even breathe the air I breathe.

-Ft, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a very powerful and painful poem. You clearly understand your heritage, how you have come to value the things that you do. It's good to take pride in your past, but it's also good to question what you have been handed and to ask if you need to continue the parts that cause suffering to yourself, your family and others you love.

You Saved My Life

I know you're in a better place right now, but your death will not pass unnoticed. You were shot and killed two nights ago. You were killed while I was in jail. I couldn't do anything about it.
 You have saved my life. You have gotten me out of situations where I could have been killed. You treated me like a little brother. You made sure I had food and a place to stay. I'm never going to forget you, Errol.

-Yung Money, Solano

From The Beat: You have captured your grief over your friend's death in such a fresh, painful way. We're so sorry this happened.

One Photo

One photo I will want to have for my long adventure in here is a photo of my boyfriend and I. This photo was taken in Rio Hondo Park. It shows us having a picnic, laughing, and having fun.

The reason why it's so important to me is because it was one of our first dates together as friends.

When the day started to become night, he had finally asked me to be his girlfriend. From then, he's been my #1 support, best friend, and family. He knows my strengths and weaknesses, my perfections and imperfections, but mainly he accepts me for being me.

He also knows that I am in here and he's still supporting me. I talked to him about my court proceedings and he said, "Just, relax, and do what you have to do to get out of here." On my baby sister, Deliah, I am truly waiting for him.

On the twenty-fourth of this week, we're going to be a year. Couldn't ask for anyone better because this patient dude has a hook on me.

-Angelic, Los Angeles

From The Beat: That's the most romantic thing we've come across in a while. We hope you make it back to him soon. How can you make sure you are not separated again?

Feeling Despair

A time I've felt despair is right now that I'm locked up. I've failed my mom, filling her head up that I'm "going to change," but never do.

It's about to be Christmas, my birthday and New Year's and it's gonna be two years now that I'm incarcerated during those holidays. The only thing different is that I'm in a different county now.

I don't even know if what happened was worth it. Part of me makes me feel like it was because I was with the person I love. But at the end of the day, I know I threw myself in a hole. I'm not ready to go back to San Mateo County and hear my judge and POs.

Free me tho.

- Ashley, Alameda

From The Beat: You would have disappointed the person you love but you did disappoint your mom, another person you love. What about YOU? What do you want for yourself? Did you disappoint yourself?

Doing The Math

The first school I attended was Las Fuestes. It was in Guatemala. I liked that school because the teachers were nice to me.

I was on a soccer team and I used to practice every day after school with my teacher. I moved to the US, so I had to leave the team.

When I came here, I went to Coleman. I was in the fifth grade and made a lot of friends there. But I didn't like my teachers because I didn't know how to speak English, so I didn't understand them.

I graduated from elementary school and I went to DMS. I made new friends, but I started to hang around with bad influences. My favorite subject was math. I was really good at math.

When I was in the seventh grade, I met this girl who was from El Salvador. I started to hang around with her. She introduced me to drugs and alcohol. I started to get bad grades and I stopped going to school.

In eighth grade I did the same thing, I stopped going to school. I started to do bad stuff, and I didn't like school anymore. My grades were really bad and I didn't care. I got into fights at school and I started to get suspended. I didn't want to go to school anymore. I didn't graduate from middle school.

Now I'm going to County and I have good grades. My favorite subject is math (even though I don't really understand math). That's my favorite subject.

I'm glad my life changed and school is the most important thing to me now. My educational goals are to graduate from high school, go to college, and have a good job to help my family.

- Baby Smiley, Marin

From The Beat: It's so great to hear that you're doing well again with school and that you still like Math. Be persistent, remain positive, and you should graduate high school.

Pain And Sadness

Have you ever looked at something so saddening it made your heart ache? Not like some fake-ass stuff, it really, truly hurt your heart.

Like seeing a disabled person trek up a hill in the rain, or a movie with such a sad storyline you shed a tear or two.

That ache in your heart will hurt so bad, it'll make you turn your back on the hardest situations and the most desperate people in need of help. Because that ache will hurt you in so many ways. It'll make you want to run from it, it's so bad, and never look back. No matter whose life depended on it.

- Kb, Marin

From The Beat: Though this is a sad piece it's a wonderful piece of writing. Do you think it's right that we walk away from pain and sadness?



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Carelessness

Growing up I've never really been the type to not care about anything. I cared what people thought about me, I cared about my grades, I cared about school period, I cared about my friends, I cared about fitting in, I cared about being happy, I cared about holidays, I cared about my health, I cared about my biggest dream to be a dancer, but most importantly I cared about LIFE itself and my family. The family my number one person in my life gave me - God.

If you didn't catch the word before I got to this part, I cared, E-D. Past tense. I cared but it all stopped when the most encouraging, beautiful, intelligent, and loving woman I've EVER had in my life was quickly taken away from me. Too soon, too fast, too early, and out of nowhere. It felt like a part of my life was stolen from me and I blamed God, I blamed myself, and I blamed my little brother.

My sadness soon turned into anger, then to hate, and last to my topic—carelessness. I stopped caring about my life, first, then I stopped caring about my education, second, then I stopped caring about my family, fourth, and I eventually stopped caring about my dreams, hopes, what people thought, just everything.

I became aggressive because I was hurt. I dropped out of school, fell into drugs, disrespected my body, fought everyone and anyone, ran away, and now I've ended up in jail but that, believe it or not, was my blessing and the best thing that's happened to me since my mother died. I fell deeply back with God and now I'm getting my life back together.

Now, most importantly, I finally care again about everything I used to care about. Now I cherish my life, through God, and I want to do better, not just for me, but also for God and my family.

-Jekima, Los Angeles

From The Beat: We're glad you were able to pick yourself up from the downs you had experienced and we're sorry you had to experience them. Picking yourself up from the aftermath is what will make you a stronger person. You'll learn from the mistakes and view life differently. We're glad you are able to care again. It's easy to rise, and easier to fall, and the hardest thing is to rise again from a fall. Continue rising.

My Cat, Snickers

Something I miss is my cat. I remember when I rescued her in Vio Vista, she was just a baby kitten. I was on the run at the time, trapping out in a car, and she was my comfort,

I named her Snickers. I took her around everywhere. Then when I finally went home, my mom let me bring her with me, even though I already had two cats at home.

Snickers has got cream colored fur and a mixed brown colored tail, She's so wild. Man, I miss her.

-Lexi, Solano

From The Beat: Your description of Snickers is so vivid, we can see her. We understand why you love her and miss her so much.

Never Forgotten

I still see your shadows in my room
Can't take back the love that I gave you
It's to the point where I love and hate you
But I cannot change you, so I must replace you
Easier said than done
I thought you were the one
Listening to my heart, instead of my head
You found another one, but I am the better one
I won't let you forget me.

-RunitupOpi, San Francisco

From The Beat: Tender, sad poem. Sometimes it's natural to love and hate someone at the same time. Do your heart, head tell you, you might be better off forgetting this guy? Even if you're alone, you'll have your sincere, honest self.

Patience Is The Key

Waiting can affect people in different ways. If someone doesn't have patience, then waiting can be very hard for that person. Most people don't like waiting for anything. They just want their stuff right away. But if you're patient things will come and most likely those things you wait for will be a lot better than the things you don't wait for and just take.

-Quis, Solano

From The Beat: Wow this is a very wise piece! Did you learn this about patience from your own experience or did someone teach this to you? Tell us next time how you have experienced this in your own life.

Blessings

The wait is crazy

A blessing would be amazing

Feels like they just grazing

My son I needs to be raising

Despair killing me mentally

Feel lost and it really gets to me

Worried about an education

Them people hatin', tryin' to beat a case

Tay-k couldn't do a race

The world and mind a different place

Scared to kill the old me and catch a case.

-Howard, Harvey, Louisiana

From The Beat: You captured the frustration experienced sitting and waiting to find out your fate within the court system. Don't be afraid of change as change will bring you and your son a better life away from the system.

It Should Come To A Stop

Dear The Beat Within,

My name is Carl. I'm from Richmond, CA and I'm just writing you guys to say thank you for what you're doing. I like that you guys go to different juvenile halls and county jails to speak to kids and adults like me and others that want to change.

I also wrote you to say whoever wrote the editor's note is 100% true, and young people know what he is trying to say.

I think there will be change in the world. For example, this rap shhh gets in a lot of young people's heads. They talk about drugs, sex, killing, dead ones, and stuff like that. I think if there was more people talking out in meetings and stuff that would change street violence, gang violence, killings that're going on in the world, and it should come to a stop.

Every day someone's mom is crying, another innocent bystander gone, another black person gone, another person in prison. It's sad. I'm fourteen years old. I seen this happen a lot of times. I pray in my cell every night for better days, but it seems to never come.

The reason I wrote you is because I would like to change and it's a lot of young people like me that want to change, but someone has to start speaking up 'cause this is crazy that someone loses their life over some stuff they don't even own, no matter how long you stayed in some dirty apartments.

No one should have to lose their life over nothing. Just like the "B" word no one likes that word and if you from the hood, you was taught to never let anyone disrespect you or call you that word. But it's crazy how people can take someone's life over a word.

I got to go in my cell but thank you guys, please write back.

-Carl, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you so much for this very kind and very real letter. We're so happy to be here for you, and to know that you and many young people like you are speaking up and demanding a different way of life, one that brings you joy and success, one that you deserve. Never stop speaking your truth, we need more voices like yours. We hope to hear back from you!

Mi Mama y Mi Familia

Pues para empezar yo tengo una sola persona por la quien podría preocuparse. Esa persona, bueno esa gran persona, es mi mama. Muchas veces platicaba con ella, nunca pude decirle lo mucho que la quiero.

Es la persona que me regaló la vida. A pesar de que nunca tuve un abrazo o un "te quiero" de ella yo entiendo porque no tuve el cariño de madre como el que yo quiera. Pero a pesar no tuve ese cariño cual yo quería lo pude dar. Tal vez no tuve amor de madre, pero yo me siento muy orgulloso porque gracias a Dios que me dio una madre muy trabajadora y una persona tan especial que a pesar de todo lo que nos paso, sigue luchando.

Aunque me parte el alma saber que, aunque no la pueda ayudar contra una enfermedad muy mala que es la diabetes eso me hace pensar todos los días en ella aunque yo le hice una promesa que todavía no la puedo cumplir. Me parte la vida. Me siento mal porque yo se que esa es una promesa muy tonta pero mis palabras la última vez que hable con ella fueron:

"Mama la próxima vez que yo tomé el teléfono, será para decirle que soy alguien en la vida", no me gustaría hablarle y decirle que estoy encerrado por motivos muy tontos y sin razón."

Lo único que pido es que ella esté bien y lo demás ya no me importa. Solo quiero que mi mama y mis hermanos tengan lo que una vez soñaron y quisiera que ellos supieran que yo estoy muy bien. Solo quisiera ver solo una vez más a toda mi familia feliz como lo que solo en mis sueños existe. Gracias por todo.

-Luis, Yolo

Del Beat: Estamos muy contentos de que hayas podido ver la grandeza de tu madre. Cuando tienes que avanzar y luchar, a veces tienes que dejar de lado tus sentimientos. Tu madre es una madre maravillosa y estamos seguros de que estará orgullosa de ti. Esperamos que puedas volver a ver a tu familia pronto y que tus sueños se conviertan en realidad.

My Mom And My Family

Well to start off, I only have one person who I could possible worry about. That person, or should I say, that amazing person is my mom. Even though I often talked to her, I was never able to tell her just how much I loved her.

She's the person that gave me the gift of life. While I never got a hug or an "I love you," I understood why I couldn't get the love that I craved from my mom. Despite all of that I feel very proud, because thank God, he gave me a mom who is very hard working and that is such a special person despite everything that we have been through, she keeps on fighting.

While it breaks my heart that I can't help her with a very serious medical condition, that being diabetes, I think about her every day. I promised her something very stupid, but the last words I said to her the last time I spoke on the phone with her were:

"Mom the next time I call you, it will be to tell you that I am someone in this life." I wouldn't like to call her now and tell her that I got locked up over some stupid meaningless stuff. The only thing I ask for is that my mom be okay. Nothing else matters to me.

I want my mom and my siblings to have everything they ever dreamed for and for them to know that I am okay. I would like to see my all my family again, to see them happy like how I see them in my dreams. Thank you for everything.

-Luis, Yolo

From The Beat: We're very glad that you were able to see the greatness of your mom despite her inability to give you the love you desired. When you have to move forward and struggle on sometimes you have to put your feelings aside. Your mom is a wonderful mother and we're sure she'd be proud of you no matter what. We're sure you will be back with your family soon and your dreams will come true!

Tempting Temptations

Temptation. I want to go smoke weed when I get out. But I would fail my drug test and come back. I want to text my ex who has a restraining order against me. If I did, I would be right back here.

However, I am not going to give in to my temptations. Freedom is more important to me than stupid temptations.

-B, Marin

From The Beat: Great insight. Stay focused on just how much you value your freedom. Should be all the incentive you need to avoid giving in to those very real temptations.

I Lost Myself

I agree with "If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello," because I understand it. When I said goodbye to someone, it wasn't just one person, it was a couple.

I didn't just say goodbye to the person, I said goodbye to my happiness, to the love I gave them, to mostly everything I worked on giving them. When I said goodbye, it was to someone I really cared about, but sometimes you can't go back to the things that aren't good for you. Just hope better things will come your way.

The reason it wasn't just one person was because I lost myself, and when I lost myself I completely shut out everyone, even though I was already losing them because I was choosing that person over them. I didn't want to admit it until I caught myself.

I know it was being selfish, I guess you can say that. I learned to say goodbye to the person for good, no matter how many times he will come back and message me for what? To keep using me? To keep lying to me? To betray me? He's selfish but I can't be. That makes him foolish, right?

-Lindsey, San Mateo

From The Beat: The love you give someone is never wasted, even if it doesn't work out the way you were hoping. You learn about yourself in the process and know how to better navigate similar situations in the future. Solid breakdown in your writing.

Slurpee Day

I remember the day like it was yesterday. July 11. If you didn't notice, that's 7-11, or National Free Slurpee Day at 7-11.

I walk into my local 7-11 convenience store with the intent of filling a freshly purchased Dollar Tree flower vase with Coca-Cola Slurpee. I walk into the store and immediately notice that there's no one besides the cashier in the store. I just thought I was lucky and wasn't gonna have to wait for my Slurpee. Little did I know all of the slurpee machines were out of order.

Then I was in my brother's car feeling sad, I was looking out my window and noticed a squirrel just sitting on the side of the road. As we drove by, I continued to watch it, and as I was turning away, it jumped into my car's tire. I just sat there in shock and got out of the car looking at its shock-riddled body. One thought came into my mind: "DAMN!"

-Butters, Marin

From The Beat: Nicely done. We do hope that you get your Slurpee next time and manage to avoid the squirrels of your future. And keep writing!

Fresh Air

What is it to wait?

Well it feels long

But I guess that happens

When you take

You give everybody else despair, but

Don't seem to care

And I don't think it's fair

I wish I could give back

The things I took, but I can't

I have to sit back

And think about the places I could've been

Now I wait on the when

As when I can breathe

Fresh air again.

-Lucky, San Diego

From The Beat: We all wish we could take or give back the things we regret. We see you working through your mistakes. Remember that those mistakes don't define you. You will breathe fresh air again. Stay positive!



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

That Worse Advice

The worst advice I've ever taken was probably in ninth grade. My old friend once told me, "Stealing is better than buying. You'll have to be slick but it's always best to save yourself some coins rather than to spend it."

At first, it sounded kind of crazy, but then I actually agreed to it. I then started stealing makeup, clothes, shoes, money, etc., but it never went to the extreme.

I was stealing out of Target doing what I normally do, the thought of getting caught never crossed my mind when suddenly, I'm walking out the front doors and "loss prevention" held me back and told me they were calling the police.

The police came, gave me a ticket with a fine of \$300, waited for my parents to come pick me up and then left.

This was one of the most embarrassing moments that had ever occurred and it honestly wasn't even worth it. This affected my family because it all fell back on them. They were the ones who had to pay that fine.

I learned not to believe everything that comes out of one's mouth. Just because you haven't gotten caught red-handed certainly doesn't mean you won't.

-Gabriela, Los Angeles

From The Beat: Stealing is definitely not better than buying! It might be a quick way to get something we want but it eventually catches up with us. We all get caught eventually.

Emotions Going Out of Control

It's been a few times when I felt despair. It feels like you lost your heart or something. You feel like all your emotions are going out of control, like you want to just do everything in your power to bring that person or thing back.

-Mario, San Francisco

From The Beat: Well expressed! What caused and how did you deal with it and get over your despair? We're so sorry if you've lost anyone you've loved.



Compassion and Ambition

I been to a whole lot of schools but I didn't really get serious until high school. At first, I was messin' up and stopped going altogether. I felt like I didn't have time for school, like I had more important things to do.

Eventually, I transferred to an independent study, but I still didn't go. Only when I was on the verge of getting kicked out and a teacher showed me how I could turn it around, did I really commit and start going consistently.

My teacher showed me what school can do for me. She showed me how, if I didn't graduate, it would affect my income. Her compassion gave me ambition. I started going four times a week and getting my work done. Unfortunately, doing good in school wasn't enough to keep me out of jail.

-Ambrose, Alameda

From The Beat: Maybe it wasn't enough to preserve your freedom, but you learned a valuable lesson that will serve you well in the future. Your teacher recognized your potential and challenged you; you answered that challenge.

I Still Believe

I have been through so many trials and tribulations in my life. I have also made many poor choices that have landed me in situations like this precise one, but I still believe that I can make a positive change in my life.

I believe that school will take me a long way. I believe I will make it big in my life.

Lastly, I believe that there will be many ups and downs throughout my journey in life, but I will get through them and be happy and successful.

-Cassandra, Los Angeles

From The Beat: School will take you a long way, but school can only do so much for you. The rest is all on you. There will always be ups and downs. Just don't let the downs get you down so far that any ups cannot bring you up.

An Act of Courage

When I was younger, about 9 or 10, I used to go fishing a lot with my older brother and cousins.

This one time he asked my mom if he could take me fishing by the rocks in Malibu and she told him, "No, because it's too dangerous." I begged my mom to let me go, since I loved fishing, and she did. My brother picked up my cousins and me then took us on a long drive, about an hour or two.

When we finally got there, we got all our rods and fishing gear and put it on the sand. My brother told us to catch bait, like sand crabs and stuff, so we did.

Afterward, we walked down the beach for a while until we saw, like, five to seven giant rocks in the water. Then I realized why my mom said it was dangerous. The water was high, so if one of us fell in, we'd drown. My brother said to be careful because we had to jump from rock to rock where we fish but I slipped on one of the rocks and fell into the water. I couldn't swim because the current was too strong. I started drowning but my brother dropped the rods, bucket of bait, and jumped into the water after me. He grabbed me and started swimming to the beach. He put me on the sand and gave me CPR and a bunch of water came out of my mouth and nose. It was so nasty, especially since it was salt water. Basically, my brother showed courage by jumping into dangerous waters to save my life.

-Isaac, Los Angeles

From The Beat: Sounds like an amazing brother. Your mother was just looking out, as parents do, but don't shy away from things that scare you. Your brother won't always be there, but if you channel his courage and strength he won't need to always be there.

Positivity

I love being positive because I feel like positivity is a choice and when you're positive, you're happy. I don't know why people choose to be negative all the time when something doesn't go their way.

They're basically making themselves more mad or sad. So, I want to let everyone know you can always turn a negative into a positive any time you want to. Just always look at the good things.

Every negative has something positive in it, you know why? Because, next time, you're going to know how to avoid it.

Thank you everybody for reading. Keep your head up and be positive and have hope no matter what.

-K, Sacramento

From The Beat: We love how positive you are! You are completely right. When you choose to be positive, you automatically become happy. Your mental strength will take you very far in this life, keep it up!

Reflections

My goal is to first get out of here. Hopefully, I get out before my senior year is over so I can still attend prom, walk the stage, and attend senior ditch day.

Since I've been here, I've learned a lot and appreciated what I have outside. I noticed who is really here for me, so I know who to hang around. I know I have a lot of people that care about me and I never really noticed them.

Even though I've been here for six days, I have to be here longer than that. In here, all you have is yourself and when you're in your room, that's when you really find out. All you have to do is write, sleep, exercise, read, and a whole lot of thinking.

I took a lot of things for granted on the outs that I never even realized in here. I really miss my family, especially my baby brother. He was like a son to me.

When I had a visit, my mom told me that he would go to my room and go on the bed looking for me which really broke me down. But once I'm out, hopefully soon, I pray it's sooner than later, I will go out to eat and enjoy life how I am supposed to - the right way.

When I'm in my room, I think of myself taking a jog in the morning. I've been thinking of nature a lot lately. Hopefully everybody stays the same.

-It, Sacramento

From The Beat: We hope that everything turns out in your favor! Being locked up definitely puts things in perspective. We are sorry to hear about your baby brother. What are you going to do to be a better example for him?

I Made A lot

Made a lot of them promises

I'm ashamed that I broke

'lot of the lies

I'm ashamed I done told

I'm tryin' to be honest

And recognize I was wrong

'cause all of this pain

Is putting a burden on my soul

I know I ain't perfect

Do you know you not perfect and you ain't God

I know I'm not I God and all of this drama

Start to get to my noggin'

It makes up notches

And I get high

I take pride I ride or die

I try to do right in my life

I stay awake at night

Afraid of dreams I don't like

I don't like.

-Tf, Sacramento

From The Beat: Your honesty with yourself is something that a lot of people don't own up to. We are proud of you and how much maturity you show throughout your work. What do you dream about that you try to avoid?

Despair?

Shhh

I go to the hood

Pick a bottle up

Sip my pain away

Drop some

Feel better

In this forever

I love the game

Fell in love with it

At a young age

Lost too many people

The ones alive

Be the main ones dead to you

It be the ones dead to you

Hurting you the most

Stick to my beliefs

It comes to my relief.

-Yhmg Manny, San Mateo

From The Beat: We hear that you're hurting, and want you to know that we're here for you. Even though you love the game, we know deep down you know that this lifestyle is not a healthy lifestyle for you!

The Wait

What waiting has taught me is that when you think about what you're waiting for too much, it takes way longer to get there. When you distract yourself from what you're waiting for, time passes much quicker.

An example is being locked up and waiting for your release date. I learned that I have to figure out ways to keep myself busy and not think about the future because that's how you make time fly by. If you just sit in your cell waiting on court, it makes the days way longer and boring. When I'm locked up, I try to have as much fun as possible and make the best out of the situation.

-Jake, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We agree that making the best out of the time you have will help it fly by. You can still think about the future. You should, so you can plan for when you get out. But great to keep busy and find fun where you can while you wait!

Bright Side

Well let's see

Let's look at the bright side

Yeah, I'm locked up

But I'm perfectly fine

Thanks to my staff

Always got my back

And they never let me fall

I'm thankful for this opportunity

To be able to change my ways

Got a roof over my head

And a bed where I can lay

There's a lot of drama in this place

But I rub it off, and keep my head up

Can't even explain how much I've been taught

My staff just knows when there's something wrong

Time flies

And I'm glad this is where I ended up.

-Ana, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You're making the best of a hard situation and it's great that you really notice and appreciate when the staff helps you out. We love how you "rub off" the drama and keep your head up. Beautifully said!



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Waiting Will Test Your Patience

Waiting will be difficult if you are not patient. It's very hard when you're waiting for someone/something, that you begin to be impatient and being impatient will make you uncomfortable.

This leads to losing hope in ever achieving your goal. Waiting will test your patience and if you have no patience then you can't wait for too long before giving up.

Good things come to those who wait. Be patient. Don't lose hope.

-Jose, San Diego

From The Beat: Thank you for this reminder! Patience not only gives you the power to wait for those good things, but it also gives you the power to work for long-term success. Keep your head up and stay patient!!

To Wait Is To Simmer

To wait is to simmer

To wait is to think

To wait is to blink

And be patient to eat

To wait is to be patient

When what happens next is not up to you

To wait is to be cool

And do what you have to do

To wait is to be still

And told what to do

To wait is to count down

The days and hope to be free.

-Trisby, San Diego

From The Beat: We love the poetic voice of this piece, and your detail of how patience shows up in so many different areas of our lives. What are you learning while waiting?

Schools Need To Start Adjusting

I previously went to Woodside High School and Carlmont High, but I got kicked out of both schools. I hate school. They need to teach us how to do taxes. Teachers always think that they are right, but they are usually wrong.

School doesn't work for me. Most schools don't teach things that help us in everyday life. I think that schools need to start adjusting to accommodate all learning difficulties. I wish to find a school that will suit me properly, and to graduate.

I also wish to go to college and possibly graduate school. I want to get a good job, I want to make lots of money.

-Wynn, San Mateo

From The Beat: We totally agree with you that schools need to accommodate different styles of learning, and should also be teaching more life responsibilities, like taxes. How would you describe your learning style? Continue advocating for yourself and what you want out of your education!

A Palm Tree

My tree will look like a palm tree. My tree will have roots deep in the earth because that's where my life started, at the bottom. My tree will have a strong, long trunk that only moves up.

My tree will have unique leaves like a palm tree because my tree (my life) is like no other type of tree. It's of a certain breed. The top of my tree represents my goals. I want to sway high in the clouds gracefully, and with no worries.

-Deep Roots, San Mateo

From The Beat: You've painted a wonderful picture of what your tree would look like. Keep pushing yourself, you will reach those clouds! By the way, we respect your thoughtful writing.

A New Me I Found

My tree will look grand and stand tall

My roots and past will support it when it tries to fall

The seeds continue to grow

Slowly going on with life slow

My future will be all about me

And all I want to be

And all I want to see

The judge looks at a paper and doesn't understand

I'm tryin' to plant my seeds and live grand

Instead of roots it's a thousand in my hand

In my pocket another rubber band

Living it up with my hand in the California sand

Lots of people want to cut me down

Or give me a trim

Rainy days make my life grim

I believe I will make my own choices

In the courtroom is where I hear the voices

Trying to tell me who they want me to be

Tryin' to cut off my leaves

When they leave nothing for me

My tree will be about my education

Each leaf representing

Regrets and goals I'm facin'

Trying to cut me to the ground

But a new me I found

I am my own tree.

-Koi Kut, San Mateo

From The Beat: We love this piece! You use great imagery and metaphor throughout, and we really get a sense of who you are and where you've been. No one can tell you who you are, except for yourself. You control your destiny!

Will I Go Home?!

Court on Tuesday, mama told me there's a ninety-five percent chance I'm going home. Will I go home, or will I be forgotten and denied? Santa got me tired of wishing. Ever since I was a kid, I would ask Santa, "Can I go home this year?"

One of the guards asked me if I thought about what I want for Christmas, that maybe she'll get me it. I told the guard to her face that I've thought about it: "All I want for Christmas is to go home." As soon as "home" came out of my mouth, the guard held me, told me she could not complete my wish.

-Spookes, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're sorry for the harsh reality that not even Santa can grant your wish to go home. We hope you're out soon. We're rooting for you!

Feeling Despair

A time I felt despair was the night I got locked up. I lost my freedom and I thought to myself "damn. I'm doing life. I'm never getting out of this." It hit me hard, but I later thought to myself that I might just be able to get myself out of this.

It won't be easy but I'm still going to try and do everything within my power to get out not just for myself but for my family and loved ones. In the meantime, I continue to educate myself as much as I possibly can and will strive for the better.

All of you shall do the same. All my gente incarcerated behind the walls. There is always hope for something. So, continue to strive for it no matter the circumstances and all odds. Much love!

-Shadow, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We love the inspirational take you have in this piece. Continue to educate yourself and striving for what you want and what you deserve. We support you!

Ditching School

I went to Menlo Atherton High School. It was cool at first but when I got to my junior year, it started to get frustrating because I started falling behind in all my classes and younger kids started to come and it didn't feel the same anymore.

So, I started to ditch most of my classes and it got to the point where I was ditching so much that I was lost in all my classes. So, I stopped going to school and when I went back I was even more lost.

I had a lot of support from my teachers, but I ditched so much that the teachers stopped asking if I needed help or if I needed the worksheets.

-Nike, San Mateo

From The Beat: You tried to get back on track with school, but there wasn't a lot of support provided to you, because it sounds like the teachers assumed you too gave up on yourself. We understand how discouraging this must have felt and hope that you're able to get the support you need to graduate! Make 2019 the best year!

The Truth

See, I told you from the jump baby girl, just don't lie to me
If I get caught up would you ride for me
You told me from the jump baby please don't lie to me,
I know I screw up a couple times but you need to put your heart in me

Momma told me from the jump don't hide who you try to be
My dad told me from the jump son, don't you ever try to be like me
Now I can't go home, I'm in the hall writing this song
Yeah, this song
Now I'm in the hall writing this song
I got a visit from mom and she said everything's gonna be ok
Your bro got an attorney and he's gonna see a better day.

-Eclipse, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You mention other people telling you who to be or how to be a few times in this, but the real question is, who do you want to be?

Don't Let The Past Define You

Don't let the past define you
Let it remind you, it's always behind you
Take time to understand, now you turning into a man
And even if you locked up, you gotta have a plan
Have dedication, resist temptation
Love is real, just try to have patience
Dreams are real, it's just a thought in the making
You against the world, and you're destined to make it
Just find the special ones, the ones you can't replace quick.

-Young At, San Mateo

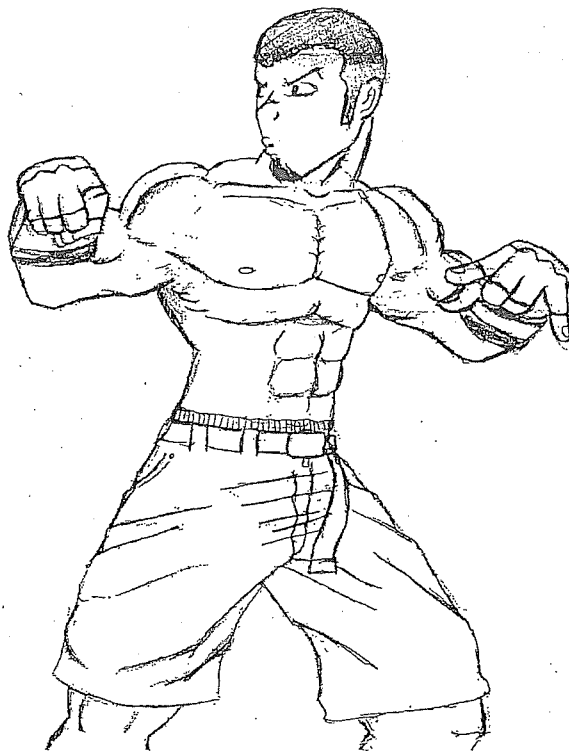
From The Beat: We love what you say about the past not defining you, but reminding you. How have the lessons you've learned in your past help you make better decisions for your future?

Nobody Waits For You

Waiting is a waste of time.
I'm a patient person, but I hate waiting.
When you're incarcerated all you do is wait,
but nobody waits for you.
Your life is on pause,
but on the outside life goes on.
I've had so many people tell me they would wait for me,
but I know it's a lie.
I respect those who tell me they won't wait or can't wait
because I prefer the truth over any lie.
I let go of those I know who aren't gonna wait
because there's no point in holding them back.

-Timeless, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's very selfless of you to not want to hold people back. Who's showing up for you now while you're locked up? Remember that you can still grow and learn even if you feel your life's on pause right now.



The World Hurts

I say this truly in life
Things will hurt you brutally
Homies get shot
Women get bought
Because of this
All souls of people all rot
Men see women as things
Kids all wait to see what the world brings
I'll tell you
You won't find all rainbows and shiny things
The world is no joke
Seen my cousin
So much blood he starts to choke
I heard his last breath
Bleeding with a seven-inch hole in his chest
How'd we get in this mess
Cops all out warrant for my arrest
Yeah the world hurts
I believe this completely
Wonder who or what's next to try and beat me
Sister's out all night
Sellin' stuff too cheaply
Locked up in here waiting for my family to see me
Well they ain't show up
I want to fall over and burst
But think instead
Yeah the world hurts.

-Rb, Sacramento

From The Beat: How powerful is this piece! You speak from experience, and we appreciate you opening up to us with your reality. The world is definitely a brutal place. It takes people down all the time, however, we know you have the resilience to get through anything that comes your way.



★ PIECES OF THE WEEK! ★

Cold Game

Cold game
Ain't nothing sweet about it
One day you could have a smile on your face
The next you could be running from the jakes
Two faced snakes all around you
So keep a small circle, no new dudes
Go with fate
Trust that you goin' the right way
Long nights
Thinking in a jail cell
Reminiscing 'bout the old times
Never thought it was gonna be like this
So, I just gotta suck it up and make a wish.

-Jay-P, San Diego

From The Beat: You can do more than wish about it, you can be about it. What can you do now with the time that you have to make sure that you don't end up back here, or anywhere that you don't want to be?

The Wait

Doing time, the unsure is scary, the uncertain. But you need to realize you put yourself here, and you need to realize actions have consequences.

This world is a beautiful place and there's no need to make it ugly and dull. Add the color.

-Yours Truly, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What you just wrote adds color! It can be hard to do when you're scared and doing time, but your words will help some people rise above their difficult circumstances.

I Was Wrong

I was wrong for not listening
And going down this road -
I was wrong for picking up that pole -
I was wrong. See, I can finally admit it.
But who would have thought
It would take me lookin' at a five-year sentence?

- R, Sacramento

From The Beat: These rhymes are precise and powerful! Thank you for sharing your truth here. Has your sentence helped clarify other things in your life? What are you most excited for when it ends? How will celebrate and make things right?

Victim To The System

As a youngin', plenty a times I've fallen victim to the system
Young hearts, old souls cast me aside to share their wisdom
Just another sheep casted out of society
So, the wolves could get me
Another peasant kicked out the kingdom
But they won't forget me
Guarantee I'll make my mark before I die
By the hands of the system
Seventeen doin' twenty-five
Show me mercy, I'm the victim!
So much hate for all my kind
We fallin' victims to the system
Murder by the hand of liberty
Rest in peace, her victims can't forget them.

-Lil' Martin, San Mateo

From The Beat: This poem is very deep and very real. Instead of seeing yourself as a victim, can you find empowerment from this situation to change the injustices you see affecting you and others?

My Waiting Days

On that day in November, 2017
They took me away from my family,
Locked me up between these white walls
Where I can't escape from this horrible nightmare
The facility where they keep kids away
From their families for their mistakes
Today in December, 2018
Still away from my family
It's been one year already
I miss my family a lot
I'm just waiting
On the day these white walls let me go home
'Til then I'll be waiting
For that day they let me go home
Right now I'm feeling lonely in my cell
It's a struggle I hope you understand
My waiting days.

-Luis, San Diego

From The Beat: We hear you on missing your family. It's really hard to be away from loved ones and we're sure many people understand your struggle. How can you be productive with your time, to help it go by faster?

Hasn't Been Easy

I've been in here for four months and this shhh hasn't been easy.
I see the day go by from my room and it hurts to know your life's going to shhh while you here. But, I like to think all this is a matter of time, a chapter in my book.

In my story book, I can't take back what I've done so I just have to take it. Take advantage of the programs in the camp I'm going to for twelve months, so when I get out, I can get a job as a cook.

-A, San Mateo

From The Beat: Every hard time is a chapter in our book. We're proud of you for keeping a level head in all of this and getting what you can out of it. We're excited that you want to be a cook! What kinds of food will you want to learn about?

Can't Cheat The System

I cheated the system everyday by doing illegal activities. I sell drugs, I speed over the driving limit and I do drugs.

One day I got caught up and someone ended up dead. Now, I'm in Juvenile Hall thinking about how all that cheating the system caught up to me.

-Jose, San Diego

From The Beat: Cheating can have serious consequences, but you can learn from these experiences and make better decisions for your future.

The Look

They can confine me
But they can't define me
Put me in a cell
But it don't change a thing
I'm missing my mom
But they say I'm crazy
That's why I say
I am who they say I am.

-Moguttah, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're glad that you're not letting the system define you! We're sure your mom misses you, too. Tell us more about how you define yourself.

I Admit I Was Wrong...

I was wrong for many things in my life.
I was wrong for leaving the good job I had.
I was wrong for turning my back
on some of my loved ones and close ones I have.
I was wrong for not listening to my Jefa when I was young.
I was wrong when I thought I would be just fine
without any of my loved ones or close ones in my life.
I was wrong to not appreciate the things I had that are now gone.
The loved ones and close ones I can no longer see anymore.
I look at myself in my mirror in my cell and tell myself every day
I was wrong, the whole time.

-Martin, Yolo

From The Beat: Admitting that you were wrong is no easy feat. It's hard to come to terms with and accept the blame. It is necessary to see one's own mistakes in order to heal and to do better so we can learn and grow to be better people.

Away From The Dark

Life can be hard, do your part
All I see is bars, tryin' to fly my way free
I'm holding on but it's slippin' from my grip
Livin' life at the bottom, I was in it to get rich
Don't cry, don't shed a tear
'Cause even when you gone, you always will be here
In my heart, away from the dark
Where the light shines bright
Like the moon in the night.

-Young At, San Mateo

From The Beat: You have such a bright heart, and we see you holding on as best you can. Keep striving, staying true to that light within. We're here for you.

She's It

She's it, she's everything
She's the standard by which I'll judge beauty
For the rest of my life
I'll measure every touch to her breath on my skin
Every voice to her voice
Every mind to her mind
Every heart to her heart
My measure of perfection
There was nothing better than her
The name carved into me
If I could, I would lie with her under the stars
Until my heart burst.

-Five/Eleven/Sixteen, San Mateo

From The Beat: You use such beautiful imagery and poetic voice in this piece. We can tell this person meant a lot to you. Know you will find love again, if you're willing to keep your heart open to others.

All I Have is Time

From the moment the screechy intercom system wakes me up in the morning, the only thing I have is time.

With time comes waiting. Waiting for food, to go to school and to be sent to my room, to do more waiting. Waiting for what?

Life to its core is just waiting, waiting for the next minute, next hour, next day, week and year.

They say the only certainty in life is death. I say the only certainty in life is we will wait and wait and wait until death comes to end the wait for good.

Now I just have to make the wait worth its while.

- J, Marin

From The Beat: Great rhythm to your writing. And a quite profound sentiment. We hope you can make the wait well worthwhile. Good luck.

Amends

I would like to make amends with myself because I've been through a lot and I've been in and out of institutions. I know I can be rehabilitated because I've learned from my mistakes based off of my stay in the YDF facility.

Amends is something I've always wanted to do, because if you don't make peace with yourself first, why would you want to make peace with someone else if you still have weight on your shoulders?

I made peace with myself a couple of months ago when I was sitting in my room, thinking to myself, what can I do better and how can I fight to make it through another day?

I've been incarcerated for one whole year and a couple of months, away from my family, missing holidays and birthdays, and missing out on things that I can't get back. That always got me thinking what can I do different, or do I even know how to do something different?

People always tell me I can't, or they say I'm a failure at everything I do, which I think is funny because I'm about to graduate high school and I'm in programs that will help me be a successful person on the outs.

I can use the skills that were taught to me, to someone else on the outs one day, so they can be successful too. I will like to make peace with my grandfather because I haven't talked to him for awhile since me and him bumped heads when something went missing on my behalf.

I would like it if I could apologize to him when I get in contact with him, because I'm still in contact with his sons - my uncles. I will hopefully be seeing him when I get released pretty soon, because I want to make peace with him even if I am not in the wrong.

I will like to make peace with my mom, for putting her through a lot of stuff, even though I know she still loves me and will always support me. I know that for a fact because I am all the way in Sacramento, and she drives all the way out here from Modesto, CA., my hometown.

So, I would like to thank my mom because I put her through a lot and I have been in and out of juvenile hall. She could have left me, but she never has, and I love her for that because this is my seventh time in jail.

I'm ready to change my life around because jail is not helping me out or my family as you can see. It's just helping me get new charges, more recorders, and a bigger rap sheet - something I don't want.

I'm pretty sure no one wants a rap sheet because it's nothing good on there so I'm happy my mom never left me to rot inside of a cell. Thank you to my family and my father for supporting me.

-M, Sacramento

From The Beat: We are sure that your grandfather would love to make amends with you as well. Although things may not be our fault, sometimes being the bigger person will make us feel better about things. Keep treating those who support you with love and make amends with those who need it.

All you have to do is
write, sleep, exercise,
read, and a whole lot
of thinking.



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

To You

Little One...

What are you doing?

I miss you

asking me to buy you Hot Cheetos.

I'm glad you're doing good in preschool.

I owe you a lot.

I'm sorry I took me away from you.

I know you're wondering where I am.

Sorry I tell you I'm on vacation.

You will understand one day.

I love you so much.

When you grow up

I promise I'm gonna be there for you.

-Lj, Sacramento

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this sweet and loving message to your little one. How they must miss you! We are inspired by your love and the promises you make for your future. Thanks for sharing your pictures with us too!

Feeling Despair

A time I felt despair is when my boy Ali died in a shooting while I was locked up. I felt like I could've done something to prevent it from happening. I was angry as hell, and I held that anger for a long time. The police never found who did it because the people that did it were missing, and still are to this day. My guess is they got what they deserved.

My point is, I never felt despair like that and I was angry and wanted to retaliate so bad but I couldn't when I was locked up. The weird thing is when I got out I didn't feel like doing nothing to them people no more. Maybe it was 'cause I couldn't find them, maybe 'cause I knew deep down they was already six feet under. I don't know.

I just miss my boy and felt hella bad he had to die so young. I mean, maybe if I wasn't locked up, I would've gotten locked up for something drastic for what happened to the cuddy. This is when I felt despair.

-Sebastian, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're so sorry for the loss of your friend, it's completely understandable that you feel anger towards his murder. Retaliation could jeopardize your own life, and also continue the cycle of hurt. Who can you turn to now to help you cope with this despair? For now, we are grateful you have the skills to articulate your truths on paper, we are listening.



Patience Makes You A Stronger Person

I had to wait to be released from juvenile hall and for supper plenty of times. It made me more appreciative of the little things in life because it gives you time to think about the importance of something.

My grandpa showed a lot of patience throughout his whole life. Patience makes you a stronger person mentally.

-Andrew, San Diego

From The Beat: We couldn't agree with you more, that patience makes you a stronger person. Patience becomes easier the more we practice it. Your practice of it now will prepare you for hard situations in the future.

Crazy Life and Feeling Despair

It's crazy. I really be rocking Domo on my T-shirt. I thought I was going home. Then the Judge gave me nine more months, and I took it on the chin. I thought Chano was going to slide that weekend. Now he's tatted on my skin. Life be mainey.

I felt big despair when Chano, my cousin, died. And then Domo died, my brother. Then my cousin Daryl died. So, I feel lots of despair every day. I think about them every day. Long live my fallen soldiers. Love you. I will never let your names die. They all died to street violence. That's why I am so aware.

-Li'l Don, Solano

From The Beat: You have every reason to feel despair. So much loss. So much pain. We can only hope the tattoo helps you remember to keep yourself safe and aware.

Admit and Change Our Choices

Based on my past, I need to change my thinking and my actions if I want to have a better future, which I do. I'm looking forward to that, so people can know it's never too late to make a sacrifice.

I'm here to admit that my choices that I've made weren't the wisest choices to make. For one, I've been to jail many times, away from my family that always supported me in a good way since I was a little kid growing up in a bad environment.

Let me take that back - hanging around the wrong crowd which I thought was the right thing to do at the moment, because they always had nice things or just fast money that comes and goes.

I thought that was cool because for one, you got a lot of attention which I liked, but now I think it's stupid because you're doing illegal activity. Why would you want all that attention that's going to bring you down sooner or later?

I'm willing to make a change because I have more priorities that I have to take responsibility for, like going home to my family and my newborn nephew that needs my support on how to be a man.

He needs to know how to make good choices, so he won't have to go down a bad road or won't have to ask for anything. That's why I want to go home.

For example, if I got out today, I would make the sacrifice to get a job and to change my environment, but I can't do that by myself.

So, I'm going to reach out to programs like Bridge Network or GAP or any other successful programs that I have been attending since my stay at the YDF Facility that made me think to myself that I can make better choices and do anything I want.

I just need to put my mind to it because now I'm not a little kid anymore. I'm a young adult that knows he has a better future in front of him that can get a second shot at life.

-M, Sacramento

From The Beat: This is an amazing piece that you put a lot of thought into. You are such a bright and intelligent young man, and this piece of writing shows it. You have the ability to be the role model for your nephew. You are on the right track, keep it up!

★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Rewriting Your Own Story

I was a young boy growing up in a bad neighborhood. I wanted to be just like my father but better, in a bad way. I grew up in Oak Park, Sacramento, CA.

I always wanted nice things, so I started selling drugs at the age of eight years old. I was the youngest on the block and had to fight a lot of people to show that I am not a punk.

I ended up getting kicked out of elementary school in fifth grade because I was barely attending, and I was fighting a lot. I always lived with my grandma and when she moved to the south area when I was nine years old, that's when I started getting in more trouble.

In that neighborhood, people didn't like me because where I am from. I started fighting a lot over there also. Then I started getting shot at when I was ten or eleven years old. So, I started keeping guns on me just in case I get shot at again.

I felt like it was my life or their life. When I turned twelve, I caught my first case for assaulting some dudes that ran with the opposite hood. My first deal was four years and I truly didn't care how long they gave me. I felt like I didn't have anything to live for.

My attorney ended up getting me six months and probation until I'm twenty-one years old. When I was released for good behavior, I started running the streets more and more. I started catching more cases back to back.

When I turned fifteen years old, I had my first child. Then like a week later, I caught another case for another gun. I did a couple months for the gun charge and I ended up getting sent to a half maximum security and half general population unit.

A couple weeks went by, then my little cousin got sent to my unit. He got a deal and got out the next week.

They then had finally released me back to society and I went to get another gun.

I started moving around too reckless and didn't feel any remorse for what I was doing in them streets. I was driving around in my opposition's neighborhood and got blurred by the police.

I had my older cousin with me and this female who actually was from our opposition's hood with us. I took the police on a high-speed chase and ended up getting away, but the police had a warrant out for my arrest for that.

I ended up getting caught up a few weeks later and got sent back to half max and half general population unit. My big brother got sent there a few days after me and my brother was going to court back to back. He finally got released after a couple months.

I was still in there fighting my case and got to plead guilty for a deal. I ended up getting sent to placement in Los Angeles, CA for six months. I got released from placement in LA, CA., and went back home to my family.

I was smashing hella little broads at a young age. All the females liked me because I was always fly, had money, was respected and feared by many. I stayed getting new cars. Even though I was in the streets I showed much love to my loved ones and the ones loyal to me.

If one of my patnas needed somewhere to stay, I would take them with me to a female's house or to where I laid my head. If they were ever in any trouble I would slide for them with no talking, no questions about it.

When I started spending time with my son, I totally got attached to him. I didn't have my parents, so I felt like my kid was the motivation to stay out. I already did all the stuff you could do in the streets.

I spent all my teenage years locked up. I started to be less in the streets. When I did go to the streets, it was only for money or doing skits. I caught another case, but this was the biggest one.

I now reside inside the Sacramento Youth Detention Facility in one of the maximum-security units for murder. At sixteen, I caught a murder charge and now I'm starting to realize that life is not the life I want for me, nor my kids.

I'm seventeen years old now, and I'm ready to live life for my kid and my family. I'm not happy in this situation but if it wasn't for this exact situation, I would still be running them streets, terrorizing them, living as an outlaw.

Now, I see the true meaning of life. Now, I want to come home and get a good paying job, finish college, get married, and live a better life.

-Bu, Sacramento
From The Beat: Wow! You have overcome so much in such a short life! You are a true soldier and you should be proud of how mentally strong you've become. You have witnessed traumatizing things at such a young age, and you are still standing. We are glad that you are safe and in a space of growth and elevation. Don't ever let anyone or any circumstance hold you back from greatness. We are behind you and are rooting for you every step of the way.

★WEEKLY WRITINGS!★

Alameda County

Waiting

Waitin' to get sentenced can get really irritating. I just hope I don't get charged as an adult and that I get released before my twenty-first birthday.

-Nuno

From The Beat: Twenty-one is still a long way off. If you end up inside for a couple more years, what can you do and how can you grow while you await release?

The Juvenile Waiting Game

When I was waiting seventy-two hours to go to court it was frustrating because I didn't know if I was getting out or not, or if I was going to do a lot of time or not.

I was feeling frustrated but I got through it by putting positive stuff in my head, like my family, my bed and my music.

-Treshaune

From The Beat: That wait sounds confusing, challenging and, as you say, frustrating. Sounds like you have a powerful strategy. We hope your positive thinking carries you through this and to a better next phase in your life.

Write for The Beat on the outs!

The Beat Within workshops at the Oakland Public Library!

Saturdays 2 PM

Main Library Teen Zone
125 14th St., Oakland CA 94612

SNACKS!

Community Service Hours possible.
(510) 761-9363 with questions.

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Alameda County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Barely

I went to James Logan High School and got kicked out, barely attending school. And when I was at school, I was beating up someone's daughter.

Then I started going to this school named Conley and I only had to go half a day. I just ended up going to school every day and did my work and got my grades up. I ended up finding out my favorite subject was history.

-D'Nayah

From The Beat: How do you feel about school in general now? Would you be able to go full days again if the subjects interested you more? What is it that you like about history?

The Wait

By the time I go back to court, I'll have been here for eight months, and they still ain't told me a damn thing.

Can't wait to see my girlfriend. Can't wait to get back into the real world so I can do better.

As for right now, I'm just playing the waiting game. But I can't complain because I knew what was going to come with that street shhh. I'll be home soon.

-Scarface

From The Beat: Hang in there. The wait is an excruciating grind. According to The Beat's writers, the best way to overcome it, is to set achievable goals—read books, get in shape, work toward your diploma—and pursue them every day.

My Goal is to Get Out

I agree with the quote, "The best thing we could do is work as hard as we can for what is right and what is good" (by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez), because if you feel like something is right or good for you, you should just work hard to accomplish it and pursue your goals.

Everyone should set goals in their life, and the things that are good, you should work hard for. The only goal I really have right now is to get out.

-JayBenji

From The Beat: Glad you have a goal to guide you. What are some of the actions you take because of your goal?

Getting Back On Track

The school I went to was Montera. I had a good experience because back then I was hanging out with my people, smoking and having fun.

Also, I first started playing football when I was in middle school. Then after that I was done with sports.

After sports, I just started hanging out more. If I could go back to sports I would. All I'm going to have to do is bring my grades up.

-Jack

From The Beat: It sounds like you connect playing sports with good times and a positive lifestyle. What do you need to do to get your grades up so you can get back to sports?

Free Me, Free Us

Free my family. Hope they doin good up in Rita. Crazy how it had to go down like that. If y'all get to read this up there, know that I love y'all. Heads up. Y'all gonna be aight. Free us all. Until we meet again.

-Nuno

From The Beat: There's power in this list, but unfortunately we can't let you give us a list of names, but, if you really want to do your family justice, tell us some stories. Who are these people? Give us details! What is the community losing by locking you all up?

School to Life

I went to school at Community Day and it was pretty cool. What made this school memorable was that it was fun.

My favorite subject was science. I did have support around my education.

My favorite teacher was Mr. Michael.

My school was not challenging or painful.

My educational goals are graduating and being a real estate agent.

-Jaurus

From The Beat: It sounds like you have positive experiences to build on and goals to guide you. Do you know any real estate agents you could meet with and job shadow? Knowing what steps they took could help you create an achievable plan.

School to Here

I used to go to Inderhum. School was cool, it was alright.

My favorite subject was math. I've always been good with numbers. It came easy to me so I enjoyed that class. I really didn't have nobody to help with homework so I didn't do it.

I got suspended for fighting the first week. I skipped classes and cut at lunch. Then I got arrested three weeks into school.

-PayMeZay

From The Beat: This raises a few questions about school and about you: Would you have a different relationship with school if there was no homework? What would make school a place you'd like to be, rather than a place to avoid? And what strategies do you have to transform your instinct to fight into an instinct to be your best self?

Put Down / Come Up

It's some people that don't want you to come up in life or go down the right path. It's some people that would tell you one thing, knowing that you're doing well, to make you screw up so they could get a moment in the spotlight.

Some people will bring you down by giving you a bad label, so other people won't be around or in yo' circle. But you have to tell yourself that you don't care what other people think unless it's something positive 'cause all the negative and rumors that come my way are going in one ear and out of the other.

My momma always told me, "Keep your head up and high no matter what or who or comes yo' way, 'cause nothing could stop you until you're six feet under and only God could judge." So until then, I encourage people and youngstas to keep their head up and even if you're sitting for a couple of months you'll still get a chance to eat.

-Cece

From The Beat: We know ignoring all the negativity can be hard. Congratulations on being able to do it. What does "coming up in life" mean for you and your life?

The Bid

I hate to wait, especially while I'm doing this bid, while they're giving me monthly court dates.

They just need to hurry up

and do what they're going to do with me, you feel me?

There is no point to do dead time

while I can already be getting my time started in a placement, you feel me?

The worst wait is waiting to be released and having to leave when the judge says you can leave.

This bid has made me impatient and hecka mad.

The staff is taking way too long.

But I'll be home soon. Free me.

-Zell

From The Beat: The wait must be absolutely exasperating. What are the things you do to keep your anger and frustration from getting the best of you?

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

San Francisco County

I Can Do What I Want When I Want

I don't like waiting.
I don't feel like I should have to,
because I can do what I want when I want to.

-Stubby

From The Beat: You may be able do whatever, whenever on the outs, but you always have to follow rules. As a teenager, you have to obey your parents and adhere to your school's rules.

Everything Would Match in the House I Design

If I designed my own house,
I'd have everything matching.
I'd live in Berkeley, CA, in a big house,
with a view of the city. Made of tan stone.
I'd have a long, wraparound couch
with a glass coffee table and a fireplace.
I'd have three bedrooms, a kitchen.
Each bedroom would have its own bathroom.

-Dd

From The Beat: Sounds awesome! Have you seen such a house? Why Berkeley? What will it take for you to one day have this dream home? Tell us your plans!

Waiting Means Time Wasted

I hate waiting, especially in here. Waiting feels like my time is being wasted. I was actually waiting to go to court today inside the holding cell.

-Dd

From The Beat: While you wait for anyone, anything, can you observe what's going on around you? Talk to people? Read? What happened in court today?

Mixed Emotions

At times I feel love, but mostly, I feel hate. People say I'm beautiful and smart, but I don't feel like I am. I'm just confused. Sometimes I'm happy and feel good.
Most of the time I feel ashamed. But I am only human and I got the power to change that. Lord, I pray I don't feel the same. Amen.

-Naay Babey

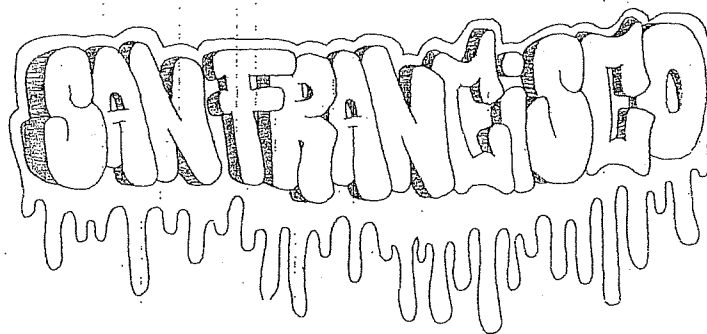
From The Beat: Can your sense of shame stop you from messing up? How can you develop whatever makes you happy? Proud? There's no shame in any emotions you have. Behavior? That's on you! We wish you great happiness!

Bad on My Own

I can do bad on my own
And good by myself
I need it, you ninja
You wasn't right there
You need me, lil' ninja
I'm still gone be here
My vision was blurry
And now I can see clear
You wouldn't believe
What I made in a year.

-RunitupOpi

From The Beat: You're right, you don't need anyone to mess up. Do well. Are you writing about money, art, whatever you made in a year? Whatever, we so hope it's not illegal!



I Can't Go Back To School

School. It was lit when I was there. I only went to high school my freshman year. Other than that, I was in juvie or on the run, and now I can't go back, 'cause I'll be locked up or sent out of state.

It was easy when I was going. I could go across the street whenever, to spark up at my friend's girl's apartment. Class wasn't a problem, 'cause I could always get help.

-Da' Kid

From The Beat: Where does education fit into your life now that you are in such a position? What do you want or need to know that school can provide for you? If you don't do your own very best in school or wherever, why should others do their best to help you?

Would You Be My Friend?

If I was down and ain't had shhh
Would you be my friend?
If I slide through with no tint
Would you still get in?
Sometimes I might reminisce
About the shhh we did.

-Tanna

From The Beat: You seem you'd be loyal to anyone who was your friend. You deserve the same from them. Please write about your adventures!

I Turned on My TV and Saw...

I turned on my TV and saw "Fortnite, a Building" and "Third Person Shooter" games. I also see Netflix.

When I go to Netflix, I watch my old childhood movies or I watch a lot of scary movies. Can't get enough of those.

Or when I turn on my TV, I see "You Tube", listening to music, such as a boogie, "Quando Rondo", "NBA Yeah, Youngboy".

-Daniel

From The Beat: You have a lot of favorite games, movies on TV. Have you seen any other shows, movies you didn't know about?

Dropped Some

"If you're brave enough to say 'Goodbye'
Life will reward you with a new 'hello'.
I dropped some of my old jawns
And life gave me back a ten

-Fayzo

From The Beat: You dropped your former girlfriends, and a beauty walked into your life? With that luck, what are you doing being in juvie instead of home with her?

San Francisco County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!



I'm No Joke

I'm not a dropout
I'm not dumb
School got boring
Kids start hating
Sit in class, broke?
Naah, they not gonna
Take me as a joke.

-Tanna

From The Beat: Good! You know who you aren't, so who are you? What would you like to learn? If you were a school principal, how would you make sure school was right for all?

Open Up

Come kick it with me
I need you in my world
Don't get caught up
In yo' feelings
Let me show it's real
Open up.

-Tanna

From The Beat: Who are you writing this to, or is it for everybody? How do you show people you're real? If you're as open as you recommend, terrific!

The Wait

I've been waiting for this group home for about two months now, and I wish I never would had did them thangs in my past, because that's not who I am. I'm really hella smart, but I never really be focused at school.

That shhh ain't worked for me. I know I disappointed Mom and Grandma, but it's myself that I got to change. I can't speak for the past, but I can speak up on the future.

-Naay Babey

From The Beat: You've learned a lot about who you were. Who will be the new you that you become? How will you achieve your plans and dreams through an education that can help you with whatever want for yourself, your future?

The Wait!

They got me down
But I'm ready for the shake back
But every month
The judge pushing my days back
They talkin' years
You ain't never have to face that
They playing gangsta'
Told Brody quit tryin' to fake that!

-Fayzo

From The Beat: Talkin' years is no joke. All big talk aside, what's the plan to get through this time if you are to do it?

RIP

RIP, Lashy.
Only seventeen.
Gone. Rest in peace.
Stuff ain't been the same without you.
We ain't been the same.
People false, claiming you and shhh.
We still keep your name lit.
House ain't been the same.
Shhh mainy. Rooms was always smoky.
We had a whip.
If Lash Money was still here,
everywhere I go or we go, we would have a whip.
I'd trade any of these ninjas. Bring Lashy, back.

-Slimmy

From The Beat: We're so sorry about your friend. Although you're sad, angry and grieving, please don't let your pain sabotage your freedom and life. What plans do you have to live a decent, productive, fun life on your own?

Food At School Nasty

Food at school, that shhh nasty. I don't know why kids eat that shhh.

If I was in charge, I'd be serving some good shhh, like pizza, burgers, ham and cheese...

-Hungry In School

From The Beat: What do you bring to eat when you go to school? Or do you eat out? Some kids really are in need and are grateful for school food.

Brother of Mine

How you real, but you condoning all this sucka shhh?
Ain't looking out for Moms, miss me with that brother shhh
Shorty trippin', said I'm messin' with another chick
Tryin' to get on me, but not the opps, that's some otha' shhh.

-Baam

From The Beat: It must be awful in juvie when you can't make better any family, girlfriend drama on the outs. How can you encourage your brother to take better care of your mom?

Cruising In My Mitsubishi

When I was driving at fourteen years old, I gave my mom some gas money at Lake Merritt. My mom was happy, because I was drivin' in my 2003 Mitsubishi. I started drivin' to Oakland, CA., going to the gas station.

The boys was talking to me at the gas station. The boys said, what was my phone number? I said, "No!" I was filling up my gas tank at the gas station. I started listening to music in my car, listening to SOB x RBE, and going to the Eastmont Mall.

Getting out my car, going to Shick's Shoes in Eastmont Mall, when I think about Mom. I was listening to SOB x RBE, stuck up. Why I was I thinking about my mom? She was proud of me.

-Ajanay

From The Beat: How did you start driving at fourteen years old? How did you get your Mitsubishi? Your mom is proud of you because you have a car? Or for other reasons, too? In what ways are you proud of yourself?

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Santa Clara County

To My Lovely Staff

What can I say?
 Never had a real friend
 Everyone turns their back
 And acts hella fake
 But I came in this place
 And found some real ones
 They ain't none of the females in this place
 It's my staff that I'm talking about
 They never switch up
 Never turn their back
 Keep it a hundred with them
 Until I walk out them gates.

-Ana

From The Beat: We're glad that you have such respect and affection for the staff, and we're sure it's mutual!

Baby Boy

Love don't change
 But when it hurts, I can make it better
 And if it works, it's gone be forever
 Been through the worst,
 Made it through the weather
 Love, don't change.

-Bay Baby

From The Beat: Love can really help people get through those tough times. So beautiful and true!

Scars

I knew a girl who liked to draw
 She drew pictures that nobody saw
 She was most artistic at night
 In her bathroom out of sight
 She didn't tell a soul and her gallery grew
 Her pictures were different
 No pencils or pen
 But needed a bandage now and then
 We stood by the river and under the stars
 She rolled up her sleeves and showed me her scars
 She looked so embarrassed and looked at her shoe
 I rolled up my sleeves and said I draw too.
 -by poet Derryn Whitaker

This is to my best friend, Franky. It reminds me of him because he would always be there for me in times like this when I needed him. He would always kiss my cuts and I love him for that. I love you and miss you best friend.

-Lil' Hustla

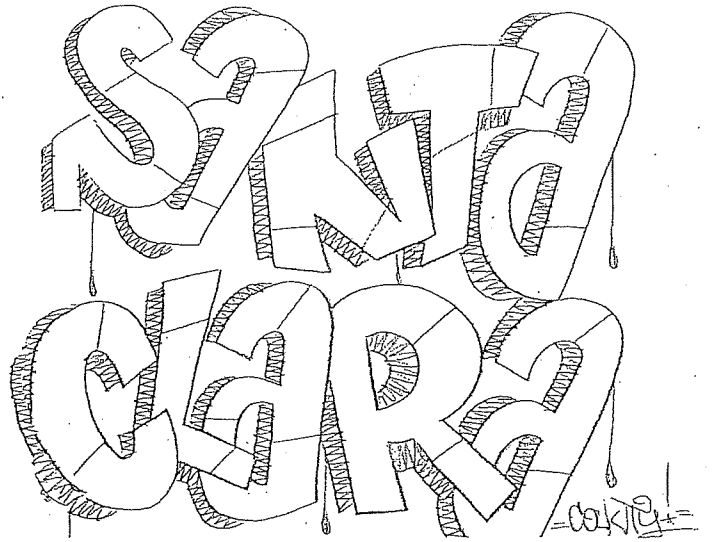
From The Beat: This is so sweet that you dedicated such a beautiful poem about accepting and loving a person, to your best friend. He deserves it!

This Life

Live everyday like yo' last
 'Cause this life too fast when you racin' to the cash
 Pedal to the metal, high speed on the dash
 I gotta come in first hah, I can't be last.

-Bay Baby

From The Beat: What happens if you slow down and take a moment to breathe and to think? Maybe there are problems we can solve if we take our pedals off the metal and pause to figure stuff out? Sometimes we all have to get off the freeway!



My Last Beat

What's poppin' Beat? This is going to be my last Beat. Thank you for always letting me express myself. I will be released this Tuesday and I hope not to come back.

But you already know they always find a way to make you come back. I have a lot of goals set for myself. I'm going to be someone big in life.

-Nallely

From The Beat: We hope and believe they won't find a way to make you come back and you will stay true to the goals you set for yourself. Sometimes the things you want in life can take a while, but stay focused!

Waiting

Waiting for my court date to come. It freaking sucks but not even knowing what's gone happen sucks more. A ninja a tryin' to say he finally get out because they got me with assault with a deadly.

Shhh, got caught up. All bad. Ain't trippin. They can't hold me locked up forever. I'll be out soon!

-J-Living

From The Beat: We agree that waiting while you don't know what's going to happen is the worst kind of waiting. We hope you get some answers soon and are treated with justice.

The Waiting Game

Waiting for my boo to get released. He's been down a year and damn this just keeps getting to me. In hopes of the best but am expecting the worst.

I will never get tired of you despite all we been through. You're still the one making my heart skip a beat. I know you don't like me being locked up, but I am glad 'cause these are the only times I get to see you. I thought it'd be years, but I'm glad I can just see your beautiful smile.

It hurt me seeing you get locked up. It sucks they didn't even let us have a last kiss. But like I said "Baby Boo." You'll get out real soon and I'll be waiting. You are my best friend, lover, bd, husband. Loyalty above all laws. My love for you will never die, not even when I'm dead. Always.

-Queen Nallely

From The Beat: We hope you two can be together again soon, for real. Sad that it takes being incarcerated with the one you love to get to see him. We love how you describe your feelings for him, so powerful!

Santa Clara County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

School, Roommates, Waiting

I went to school at OYA. It was a good experience. It was a good experience because I could work in my own pace. My favorite subject is US history. My favorite teacher was Ms. Bravo and my favorite mentor was Daniel from New Hope. My educational goal is to graduate on time and join the union.

I felt despair today when I lost my roommate. He's not dead, he just got moved rooms. This really make me feel despair. I had a negative label when I first started playing football. This made me work harder to become the best football player, but I quit to stay 4/20 blazing.

Like I mentioned, I felt despair when they took Gio from me today. But I'm fine now because I don't want a roommate. It is easy to wait. You just need to have patience. Yes, because it is boring you don't even notice how fast time flies. It is easier to wait locked up because time goes by way faster and there are great people.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We hope the time continues to fly by and you can get back to school and pick up again learning history and other important things that keep your mind stimulated and take you places beyond the classroom. You can do it!

When I Get Out

When I get out, I'm a probably finish school. Finally go to Indie 'cause it's pretty cool. Probably just finally ball up all the time and mack, and also just chill. But yee, when I get out it's free me and forget the rest.

-Nieto

From The Beat: Very cool that you're planning to finish school! School can really be your route to better things!

Tired

I know you tired of me
I know you tired of doing time with me
I know you tired of busting lies for me
If you wanna go, then baby that's fine with me.

-Chicano

From The Beat: This sounds like a sweet song. We'd love to hear more about your relationships.



The Wait

Cons

I already know how to make my bed
I know how to dress properly
I already did hygiene on a daily basis
I've already been taught my morals
I already read on the daily
I would further my education on the daily

Pros

Interaction skills
Patience
Learning to focus on myself
ABI program

-Jesus

From The Beat: While you may feel like you're wasting time in juvenile hall, we see that you're also taking in a lot of information, and practicing in areas of your life that could use strengthening. Keep your head up!

What's Poppin'? My Update, My Thoughts

What's up Beat. I'm bored as hell. I haven't been able to write 'cause I was on c-level. I'm off now, but I still ain't on the level I need to be on to go to The Beat. I'll give it a week. If this gets published, I should be on, but enough about that.

I've been takin these college classes and this long ass construction course, it's kind of hard, but I'll get through it.

I just been waiting to go to court and see what's poppin' with that. They tryin' to send the kid to county or the "Y" (youth prison) and give me two strikes on top of that 'cause they trippin' hard. A young lil' ninja tryin' to better himself and this is what I get. It's cool, I'll be out in a couple years.

I ain't really trippin' 'cause I've done it once before, and it went by so quick. Now look, I'm 'bout to do a couple more. Whatever happens, happens. I just would like to say free me and my lil' bro locked down. RIP to my pops and all my people who ain't with us right now.

-Jr. G

From The Beat: Thank you for taking the time to write us even if you're on c-level. We're proud of you for taking those college courses! Use the time you have wisely, so that when you're free, you're on the right track to succeed!

Baby Girl

Baby girl I just wanted to say
That you're the finest person that brightens up my day
When you smile
I can see it from a mile
Your goofiness makes me laugh
Even though sometimes you're a pain in the ass!
I know at the moment you're not mine
But that's because you're going through rough times
Hopefully sooner or later, I'm who brings nothing but shine
When we first kiss
That's something I'll never resist
When you hold me in your arms
I feel like I'm your good luck charm
Shorty I promise you the best never the less
When those words, "I love you," come out
That's sum I'll never forget about
Baby that's all I have to say
Just know you have a female feelin' some type of way.

-Tiny

From The Beat: Your love for Baby girl really shines through. It's beautiful how you say you can see her smile for a mile and her goofiness makes you laugh even though she can be hard to deal with at times. All very real!

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Santa Clara County

Looking Back

Looking back to the times when I was always deep with like ten friends. Well, that's what I used to call them. Called most of you my sisters and half of you my brothers. I came to realize the girls I called my homegirls were just mad and scared to be my enemies.

So, the second time I got caught up, you run right to my ex. You'll claim you loved your boo but was all up on every homie from his hood. I asked you what kind of "homegirl" does that and you said, "Palabra."

I didn't "palabra" bro stuff, you sound so dumb and now you can't even look at me in my face, so how that work, sis? Still had the guts to come to my door talking bout sorry this and sorry that. You're so nasty. I ain't never want to listen to my mama though.

No hard feelings boo and I ain't even mad 'cause I guess you wanna be me so bad. All of you don't really mean shhh to me. I don't even wanna hear from you 'cause look at me. Posted at the hood, going to school and getting them grades. But damn, karma's a B. This my third time in here. New charges new cases new roommate. These are old charges though, so hopefully I'm out soon.

-Katy

From The Beat: We hope you're out soon too and keep getting those grades. And we hope you find the right people to be with, people who truly care about you.

Going To Have To Change My Ways

What's poppin' with The Beat? Yee I'm still in here. It's all good though. I'm a get sent to a group home for a couple months. I'm hella mad. They don't want to release me to my mom. So now my sister is trying to get custody of me.

My sister lives in Morgan Hill, so now I'm not going to live in San Jose no more. I'm going to miss it, but it's all good. I'll come back to San Jose to visit my friends and family once in a while.

It's going to be hard for me to change, but I'm going to have to do it to better myself in the future. I think I can change my ways and do better. I just have to put my mind to it. I know it's easier said than done, but I know I can do it.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We know you can do it too, especially if you really want to. And we really hope your sister gets custody. Families should get to be together.

Hear Me Out

You all swear you from the gutta

See I was raised in San Jose

Home of the hyphy baby you know how it goes

Needed money in our pockets, so we started kicking doors

When you hear that siren it's really time to kick foes

Man, these streets really mainy, yeah, the streets really cold

Mama prayin' for my safety beggin' me to come home

Ma, I hate to see you cry, I hate to do this to you

But with my money on my mind man what else can I do?

I regret the shhh I did 'cause now I'm locked in a cell

Less time if I snitch, but I was raised to never tell

Can't switch up, he ain't switch up on me

I'm really down to the set, I really ride for my team

Just starin' at these bricks, yeah that's all I do

Been thinkin' 'bout my past and all the shhh I been through

Lost my dad when I was eight, he was an addict to the drugs

Screamin' rest my pop's soul, now he in heaven up above

Rest easy pops.

-Lil' Hustla

From The Beat: We're very sorry you lost your dad when you were so young and that the "money on your mind" drove you to do things that made your mother cry and put you in the hall. What can you do to escape the cycle? We believe in you, especially when you start believing in yourself, that you can do more than ride for a set.

Santa Clara
County

Learning While Waiting

It's sometimes hard to wait because it gets boring. I think I was taught to, but only when I would want something. Waiting is being patient. Yes, I think it did because I'm still waiting and not complaining. I think when you are free because you have no choice but to wait.

While I'm waiting, I work out and when I'm not working out, I read a lot of Chaser books which I've really read.

I also find school interesting, I think because it makes time go by faster. We mostly learn simple stuff in here like weather and how the ocean and the water evaporates much faster than normal.

We also learned about the walkouts in the 1960s, which I found interesting because it shows a lot about Chicano culture and how kids got assaulted by cops for walking out of school.

Another thing a lot of people do is write raps. I think a lot of people use it to express their feelings instead of writing or talking to someone.

I feel that waiting makes a lot of creativity come out that was hidden before, and it also gives people time to realize the mistakes they've made.

-World Learner

From The Beat: Waiting and being patient is not an easy thing to do. But your approach to creativity and self-reflection while waiting is inspiring. You're learning about some really cool things!

The Wait

When I'm waiting for something, I get anxious. I could be waiting for something big or small. I will be anxious either way. Sometimes I feel like I already know what to expect, but when it doesn't turn out the way I hope for, then I get disappointed or very let down.

I feel like once I learn not to get my hopes up so much, then I won't be able to be let down so much. Right now, I am waiting to find out my future. The wait is so unfair, but I have no choice but to wait.

-Babynik

From The Beat: You describe what it's like to wait and be disappointed over and over again with such clarity. We wish you didn't have to put a lid on your hope. We hope your waiting ends soon and that there are good things ahead for you.

Lupe

She's the one I choose

When I first met her, my heart flew

With her, I want to make my life new

I want her in it and lil' Jr. too

She my honey, nah she's my boo

Even though sometimes, she's a lil' cool.

-Cuete

From The Beat: We're glad you have someone so special and important in your life. How do you two support each other while you're physically apart?

Santa Clara County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

Waiting

I have to wait for everything.
Sometimes you get tired of waiting.
Waiting for mail call, for visits,
waiting for activity times,
waiting to hear back from the outside world.

-O

From The Beat: What do you do when you're tired of waiting for things? What are your plans going into 2019?

Keep Waiting

Never give up hope
when you feel like time is stuck.
Make sure you keep your head up
'cause your time will come
and when your time comes,
you need to be ready.

-J

From The Beat: Feeling like time is stuck is a relatable feeling for many. What do you do to keep hope when you feel like this?

When I Heard The News

Dear Beat,

The last time I felt despair was when I lost my cousin in a car crash. When I heard the news about it from my mom, my heart dropped. I felt sad because he didn't get to experience his full life. I love you, cousin.

-Oso

From The Beat: We're very sorry for the loss of your cousin. His spirit and legacy live on through you. How will you honor his life moving forward?

Go-Karts Are Fun

I like driving my shifter kart. It's a type of go-kart but it has gears, that's why it's called a shifter kart. The speed tops out at eighty-six miles per hour.

It's very fast, the ground clearance is only one and a half inches off the ground. It has no suspension, so the ride is very rough and bumpy. It's fun to drift.

-Richard

From The Beat: We learned something new! Shifter karts sound like a lot of fun. Make sure you're safe when you're driving them!

Hatin'

Hi, I'm just trying to shine like I'm 'pose to
Remember walking everywhere
But now a young ninja mobile
And I just got your letter
And I just wrote you
These people hating but still watching like a Roku.

-Li'l' G

From The Beat: We love that you're trying to shine and it sounds like people are thinking about you, writing you? What are you writing back?

Free Me

Free those that never told
The ones that will never fold
I'm gonna say it every time I come in
And every time I leave
Free me, free us.

-Nieto

From The Beat: We hope you can be free soon so you can be with your family and the people who love you.

Marin County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

MARIN
COUNTY

Patient

Being in here for three whole-ass months taught me how to be patient. It made me realize who's real and who's fake.

- Stephanie

From The Beat: Patience can be a great strength. Ask yourself what you may need to be more patient about in future. How can you use this strength?

Learning From Waiting

Waiting taught me to be patient.
I've been here for a week.
I regret being in here.
It taught me to not do drugs
and to be sober.

- Denise

From The Beat: That's a great thing to take away from this experience. We hope you continue to feel that way. Keep this as a reminder.

Nothing But Time

"Wait" was taught to me
the first time I got arrested and put in the cells.
Waiting to see when I have court,
or having to wait for when I get released.
The waiting thing becomes normal after a while.
These four walls in cells hold nothing but time.

- Lokey

From The Beat: It's true that you have to wait a lot. But what else could that cell hold? Could you use that time constructively in some way? Could you do more writing for example? Or reading?

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

Marr County

Desperate

I've been desperate to have freedom and get away from the system. I've been down for half a year now, and all I think about each day is my release date. I've been desperate to be with my family.

Lil' sister's always asking about me and wondering why I'm never home. It sucks being locked up, but I know they're not going to hold me forever, this is just a temporary thing. Streets been calling my name and I'm desperate to bounce back. I'll be home soon. But 'till then, it's still "FREE ME." July of 2019 baby!

-Lokey

From The Beat: Great writing. Stay positive. Keep thinking of your family and little sister. They will be there for you when you get out.

Desperate Desperations

Desperation. The day I got arrested was the most desperate day of my life. I tried to do everything to fix what I did, but I couldn't. Instead I came to Juvenile Hall where I found my next desperation, wanting to be released.

-B

From The Beat: This is powerful. We know you will get another chance to make things right. Use your time here to be ready to take that chance.

Hard Work Pays Off

"The best thing we could do is work as hard as we can for what is right and what is good."

What this quote means to me is that I should work very hard for the stuff that I want in life, such as attending college, supporting my family and girlfriend when they need me.

Also, this especially makes me think that I should never quit to reach the goals I have. All this hard work that I put into my entire life will impact me positively.

-Jae

From The Beat: Great sentiments and positivity. Maybe you should keep this piece handy for when things get hard and you get a bit down. It will serve as great encouragement.

Looking Forward To Better Food

When I get out of this place, I want to go to this one restaurant to eat some shrimps wrapped in bacon, beans and rice, and it's really good 'cause the food here is not good at all.

-Shrimp Lover

From The Beat: Sometimes it's the simple things we miss the most, like our favorite foods. What other simple things do you miss? Make a list.

Being Pressured

Once I was being pressured to drink a whole-ass bottle and damn, that night I didn't remember anything. So then here I am, locked up, waiting to be released.

-Denise

From The Beat: It's hard to resist peer pressure, but it's going to be really important for your future. Start thinking about ways you can do that.

No Homework

I've been to three high schools. The first was Drake High School. It had a bunch of annoying kids that thought they were cool. All of them were some nerds though. It had too much homework and not enough females. Everyone smoked and was wack. Then I got kicked out and went to Tam.

Tam was more fun, but had a bunch of nerd-ass kids from Mill Valley. Then I got kicked out of Tam and went to County.

County is small, but it is easy. There's no homework and it's fun.

-The Mover

From The Beat: Thank you for your honesty. What are your plans from County? Do you want to stay there or go back to a regular high school? Af

Why San Andreas Was Better

I can't remember about half of my high school experience. Between Drake and San Andreas, I got four suspensions, and I was asked to leave Drake.

San Andreas is a little more forgiving. I was caught with an ounce and about seven grams of wax, and they only suspended me for a week.

I was so happy when Drake asked me to leave. I was getting in arguments with my teachers just about every day.

I couldn't stand another minute with the security guard, L. She once followed me all the way to Safeway when I dipped school, and she spied on my friends up at the cut with a telescope.

San Andreas was so much better. They even let me leave campus at the breaks to smoke cigarettes.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Thank you for your honesty. What are your new educational goals moving forward? What plans do you have for yourself going into 2019?

Can't Dwell

I agree with this week's quote for many reasons. First off, personally, if I want to be able to approach my family, girl, and girl's family, I need to fix my own issues first to be able to live with them in happiness.

If I can't fix my own problems, I won't be able to live with my family. I can't dwell on my past issues and move on and go on the right path to success, so my family, girl, and girl's family are all proud of me.

-Young J

From The Beat: We applaud your self-awareness. It's clear that a better future awaits if you get that first step right and fix your own problems. Stay focused on that and you'll do well.

Being Pressured by Friends

One time, I was with two of my friends walking from the park to my house. On our way to my house, someone called one of my friends on the phone. We stopped walking and we were talking about the past.

Then they started to smoke, and I didn't want to smoke, but they pressured me, and I said no, like, five times. But they were still pressuring me, and I finally smoked without thinking about the consequences. I got tested the next day, and that's how I ended up here again.

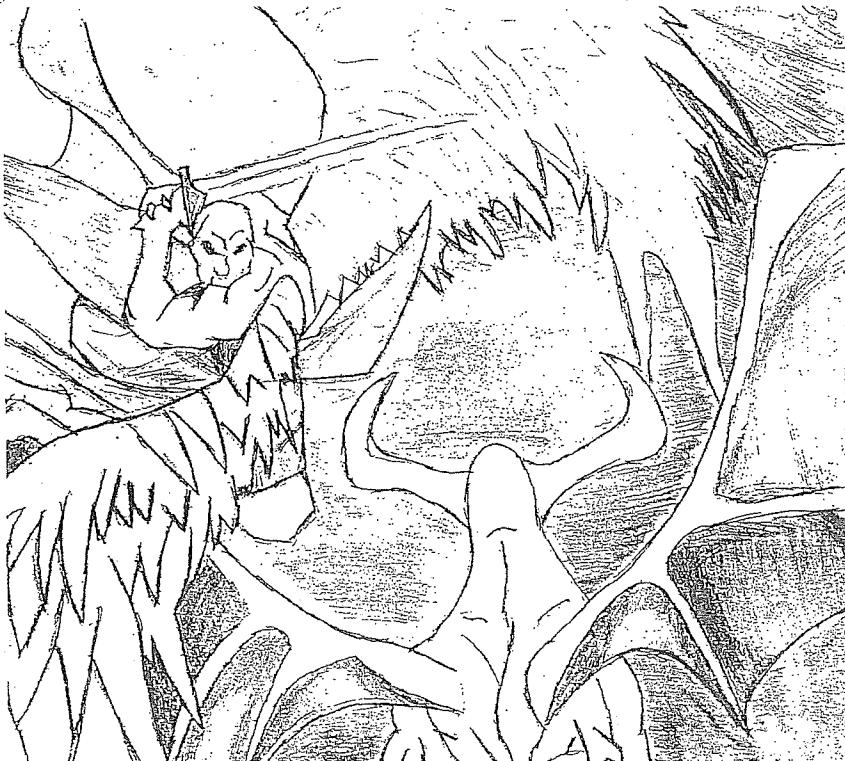
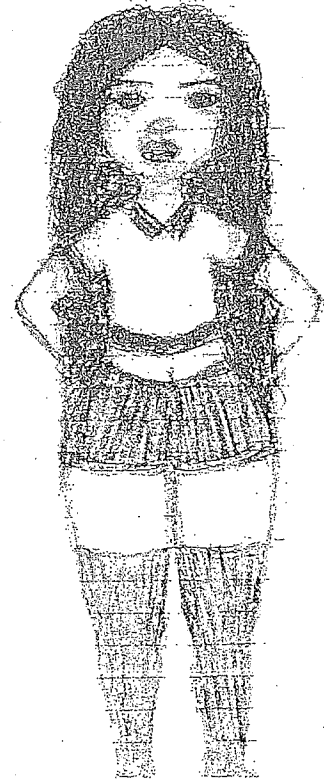
-Baby Smiley

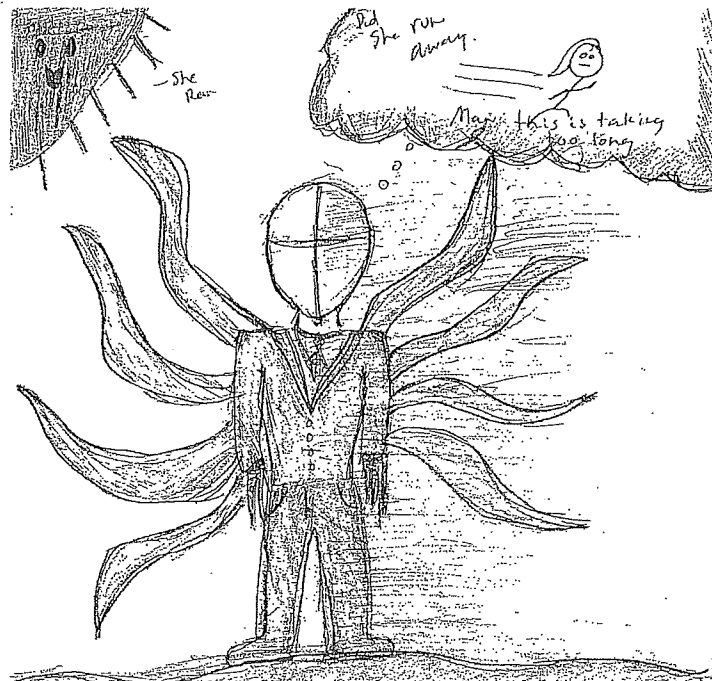
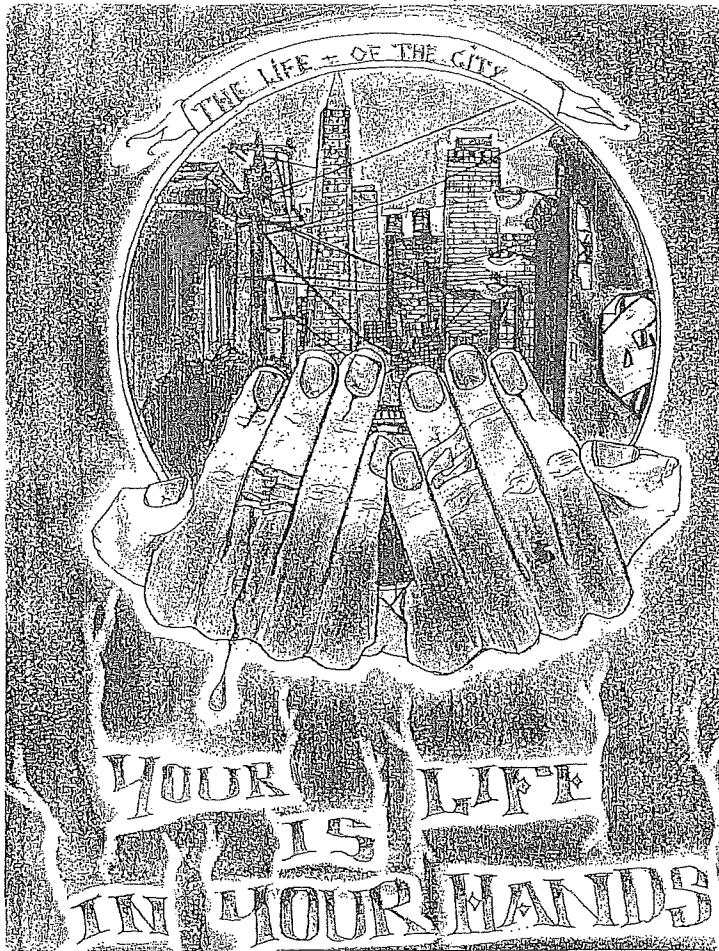
From The Beat: When you get out you need to have a talk with your friends. If they value your friendship, they won't pressure you to do anything that might put you back inside. Make sure they understand that.

ART GALLERY

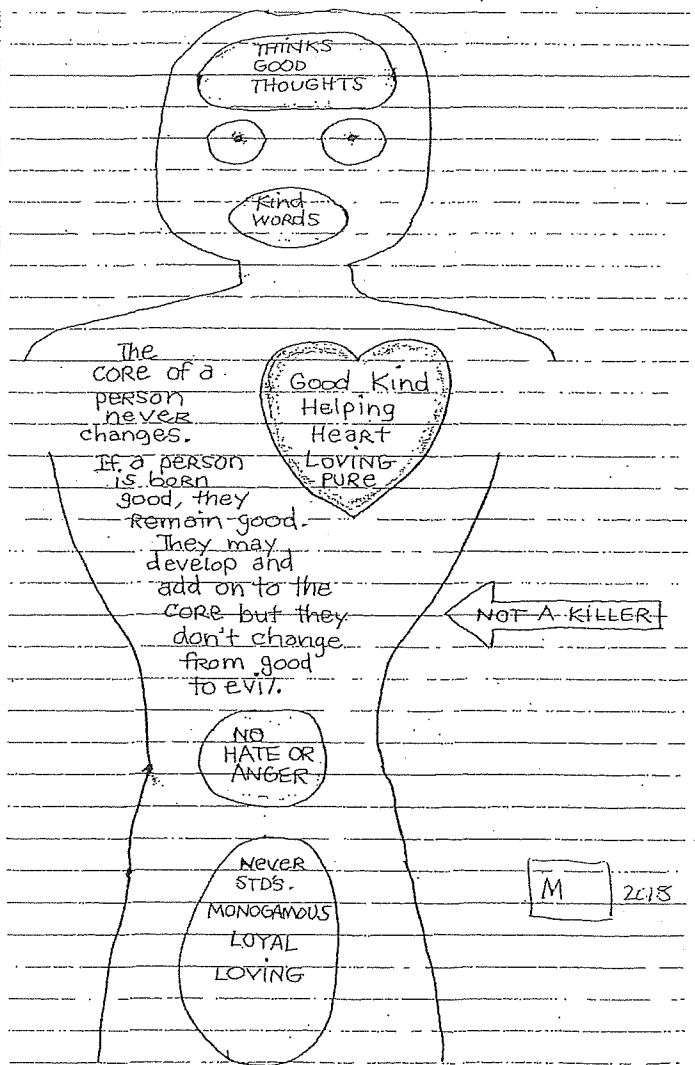


RINA





THIS GUY WAITS FOR THE PERFECT
MOMENT TO TAKE SOMEONE'S
CHILDREN!
WATCH OUT!



★ ART GALLERY ★

Santa Cruz County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Live With Myself

The quote, "before I can live with other folks, I've got to live with myself." What does this mean to me? I need to see the light within that shines bright within myself in order to work with other's darkness.

-Francisco

From The Beat: When we read your writing, we see the light and desire to help others.

Good Pressure

I've been pressured into going to school when I didn't want to, but my mom made me and I had a test that day, so if I missed it, I would have failed. So, I'm glad she made me because I did good on it.

-Angel

From The Beat: There are studies that show that parents who nag their children produce kids that grow into productive adults. You've learned the lesson.

Tempted

I am tempted to get out of here, so I can have my freedom and get through this BS. And so, I can be with my family and not have to spend the holidays locked up.

-Lance

From The Beat: So when you are out, what temptations will you face that might cause you to lose your freedom again? Spend time thinking about that.

This Temptation

I'm tempted to hit licks. It's like a job to me. I live off the money I make. I know it's wrong but I'd rather risk getting arrested than work 9 to 5. This brought me to great temptation because how easy it is and the money I was making.

I still need to learn how to overcome it because it's addicting. When I get out of here, my highest temptation is to stay out of trouble. I don't know if I can resist, but I'll try.

-Jazper

From The Beat: Being locked up is a lot harder to handle than a 9 to 5 job? Here's some advice find work that you like and find to be meaningful. That's a great way to make legitimate money and keep your freedom. We have faith that you will find that kind of job.

Consecuencias

Chales, son las consecuencias que siempre están en el futuro. Por eso no hay que hacer las cosas que sabes que son malos.

-Santos

Del Beat: Siempre hay consecuencias por nuestras acciones por eso hay que pensar las cosas bien.

Consequences

No way, it's always that the consequences we always face in the future. That's why we shouldn't do things if we know that they are bad.

-Santos

From The Beat: There are always consequences for our actions that's why we must always think things through.

Live With Myself

Yes, I agree with week's quote, ("Before I can live with other folks, I've got to live with myself") because in order to work around other people you have to learn to work with yourself because you are a person, too.

-Jaden

From The Beat: You are the most important person to you. Please treat yourself with respect and care.

Hay Veces...

Hay veces me desespero por andar a fuera y saber que andan haciendo mis hermanos y mi novia. También me desespero por hablar con mi papa. Me has sentido mas presionado por mi mama cuando me decía ve a la escuela ve al trabajo y eso.

Mi tentación son las mujeres, luego son la marihuana, pero ahora creo que no lo es para mí. Antes de vivir con otras personas necesito vivir conmigo.

-Mano

Del Beat: Va a ver tiempos difíciles lleno de tentaciones y desespero, pero tenemos que mantener la calma. Con cada reta, hay una lección importante para aprender, y esas lecciones te van a ayudar hacer una mejor persona.

Sometimes...

Sometimes I get so anxious to be free and to find out what my brothers are doing, and my girlfriend too. Also, I get so anxious to speak with my dad. There were times when I felt pressured by mom when she would tell me to go to school and to go to work.

My weakness are women, and sometimes weed, but now I feel like that's not for me. Before you can live with other people you have to learn how to live with yourself first.

-Mano

From The Beat: There will always be hard times and challenges that'll make you feel anxious and desperate, but remain calm. With each challenge there will be a valuable lesson to learn and those lessons will help you become a better person.

No Influence

I've never been pressured into doing anything. Everything I've done, it's because I wanted to do it. The consequences were what led me to where I am today. I would never let no one influence me to do anything I wouldn't want to do.

-C

From The Beat: You take a lot of pride in your independent thinking and we don't doubt that you believe that no one ever influences. But pressure can come in very subtle ways and no one is immune. Perhaps you have been influenced by your community, your friends, your family, by what you see on TV or the Internet. Give this some thought.

My Truth

I been hugging the block
I been chugging
I'm forever be my brother's keeper
I stay one hundred
If they get to tripping, we gone
Show 'em who ain't fronting.

-Rude

From The Beat: Cool poem. But we question the meaning behind it. Where has this attitude gotten you?

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Solano County

Waiting

Waiting 'til I go home. All this time going by, nothing new. New faces, same faces catching new cases. I sit here watching them come in and out, waiting for my time to come. But it just doesn't come.

I lose more hope each time they say I don't have any more courts. But shhh, I'm thuggin' it out. I'll be home soon.

-J-Money

From The Beat: Your realistic description of the difficulties of waiting is so honest. It is easy to lose hope, but you will come home!

SAZONA

2019 I'm Free

Pocketful of blues flossing

Running up that bag that's Lil' Don

Moving mean, not worried about a thing

Jesus piece around my neck I'm feeling holy

Free the thugs out the cell, they're my broties

Free me out the cell they can't hold me

Always keep it stitch lip, what my cousin told me

I'm coming home fast, not slowly.

-Lil' Don

From The Beat: Despite the negative imagery in your rap poem, we feel the energy, the hope and the zest for life. Keep rapping. You will be free.

The Truth

Nineteen days until my birthday.

Just graduated this year

I'm straight to the green.

I got a job in Challenge

I'm doing my yea yea.

Forget you suckers.

Y'all can't tell me I ain't felt the hurt.

-Yzidro

From The Beat: Congratulations for graduating, for the job, and for triumphing despite the challenges. You are on your way!

That Bad Principal

I went to school at Fairfield High, and it was fun. But my principal didn't like me. So, he made it a little hard. He would always try to find a way to get me locked up. He didn't like me because he knew I'd been locked up before, and he heard about an incident that got me expelled.

So, he was just out to get me. He got me suspended one day for taking my shirt off at lunch, and then I cussed him, and the yard duty then called the cops and said I was threatening them, and he needed me restrained.

-Fried Chicken

From The Beat: It's hard not to react when your principal is prejudiced against you. Maybe next time, you can think of a different response when he is being unfair, one that doesn't get you into deeper trouble.

Where Did You Go To School?

I went to school at Jesse Bethal High School. It was cool. I played on the freshman football team. I had cool grades. We won four games. My positions were running back and wide receiver. I stopped playing because I came to JDF and I messed up my freshman career.

When I get out, I'm going to go back to school, be with my friends and my girlfriend, and get my grades up.

-Dame

From The Beat: We hope you will also consider playing sports when you go back to school. That's a way to stay cool and keep out of this place.

School History

The schools I went to were Jesse Bethal High School and Napa Hall. Both were really good, but Bethal had some down side to it, like the teachers weren't really engaged with the students and had a lot of favorites. I would like to graduate from high school and get my diploma.

-Shie

From The Beat: We agree, teachers who have favorites are a pain. Meanwhile, if you want to graduate and get your diploma, we know you will.

Waiting

Do you know how it feels to wake up every day, but you're lying in a cell? They say it's breakfast time, but the bread is stale. People say they're writing you, but you never get mail. Man don't anybody mess with me, unless I'm dead or I'm locked up.

I had to learn that the hard way. It seems like days are getting worse. I'm just waiting on the better days. I'm coming home soon. I'm just waiting 'til they free me. I've been down nine months. The system's trying to do me shady, but I'm going to keep waiting.

-Lala

From The Beat: Your description of the despair you feel in being incarcerated is painful to read. But hang in there! You are coming home soon!

Waiting Game

Waiting sucks

most of the time

because everyone wants things

to be fast and quick.

But waiting takes patience.

Without it, you can't get anywhere in life.

-Shie

From The Beat: You are right, waiting takes patience, and you are wise to know that patience is important in getting ahead in life.

Blurred Lines

I had good and bad experiences. Most of them were bad, but I never let the bad ones hurt my mindset.

My aunt's house got shot up when I was locked up, and I didn't feel anything but anger.

They locked me up for my birthday and Thanksgiving. It's not easier to wait in jail, especially when I didn't do anything.

Sometimes people's lines are blurred and don't know what's right and wrong.

-Anon

From The Beat: We admire you for never letting your bad experiences hurt your mindset, even though you have had so many.

Solano County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

SOLANO
COUNTY

The Schoolhouse

I went to school at Armijo. My school experience was cool. I wasn't learning anything at school because the teachers didn't want to teach. They just had me sit in class. My mom was my educational support.

The homies and the little ninjas made school fun for me. What made school challenging was the police officer and the snitches, if you know what I mean. I'm trying to complete school, get a better paying job and start my barbering career.

-Oso

From The Beat: Your school experience sounds very familiar. But wanting to complete school now so that you can have a career sounds like you are more motivated now. Is your mom still supporting you around your education?

Message From The Cage

Sitting down facing all this time
Asking God why? I ain't do that crime
But it's good, I'm gonna beat the case or do the time
Staying solid, I will never cry, keeping my head high
Ask about me, they're gonna tell them lies
I miss my normal life all 'cause I was toting that iron
Now I'm facing twenty-five
They say court's looking good
I hope they ain't lying.

-Young T

From The Beat: Waiting to go to court can't be easy. You say you will never cry, but do you ever let your scared, anxious feelings show or do you stuff them down and feel numb? It's a good thing to think about. Maybe you'll tell us next time.

Thoughts On Topics From The Beat

I went to school at Armijo. It was both good and bad because I did my work, but they said they couldn't read it. And it was good, because I made a lot of friends.

I felt despair when my grandma died, because it made me really sad, because I didn't get to say goodbye to her, and she took care of me.

Waiting sucks because I don't like waiting in my cell/room to be let out because I don't like to be restricted. If you work hard enough, you can achieve anything

-Thoughtful

From The Beat: You have responded to all of the topics with brief, informative statements. Maybe you can choose one of the topics and expand on it more fully next time. You have a lot to say.

The Despair

I felt despair when my great-great grandmother died. I was really close to her, so when she passed away, it hit me. She was around ninety when she passed, and she was all the way in the Philippines.

I was really down about her death, but I knew she would not want me to be. So, I try my best to keep myself up. After her death, it got me motivated to do things a lot better and to not give up.

-Shie

From The Beat: Your great-great grandmother would be so proud to see that her death, painful as it was for you, motivated you to improve your life and not give up.

Fly Past

Sometimes, waiting for something that you really want would have you anxious and thinking.

While I am incarcerated I've learned to deal with it a lot and to just watch time fly past and let things come to me.

-Mula

From The Beat: Most people are too impatient to just watch time fly past and let things come. We at The Beat would love to hear how you have learned this valuable skill.

I Heard

I heard it's a check on me

These females and ninjas wishing death on me
I told my momma I love her and they ain't gonna get ahold of me
The DA is trying to put some time on me
Thinking about life and wish I could rewind the key
But I'm riding out this plan God's got for me.

-Bae Bae Kid

From The Beat: What do you see when you imagine rewinding the key? Can that same image be an image of your future. Before you say no, think about whether that's really true.

High School

I went to Rodriguez freshman year for a couple of months. Then I went to Armijo from ninth to eleventh. It was Lit. I had a lot of fun. I miss going to Armijo.

I came in here in the eleventh grade and I will graduate in here. That sucks, but it is what it is.

I will always remember Armijo High School. The best was being around my brothers, but my favorite was the girls! I wish I could get out right now and go back!

-Li'l Don

From The Beat: We are sorry you won't be going back to Armijo High, but we are pleased you will graduate. Don't knock it. Graduation from high school is big.

I Had it Turned at Armijo

Before I came in here, I was at high school for the wrong reason, but I had it turned. I was really just going to get money and shoot dice. Ask my friend Arab. He knows.

When I get out, I am looking forward to going there for the right thing and to get something out of it. You hear me?

-Mula

From The Beat: We believe that when you get back to school, you will get the most out of it. Have you thought about what courses you want to take?

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Solano County

Court System

Forget the court system and the DA. Also, they see us as numbers. They see us like the movie, Freedom Writers, getting in trouble all the time, without giving us second chances. All I got to say is forget the court system.

-Los

From The Beat: We sympathize with your anger and frustration. Being treated as a number crushes the soul. Maybe writing it about it will help you find peace.

Shout Out to The Beat's Daniel

Shout out Daniel Mendoza.

He taught us a lot. He works for The Beat. He's a cool dude. Challenge Academy in Solano thanks you.

-Li'l Don

From The Beat: It's wonderful to hear that The Beat has taught you a lot. We thank you for the shout out and will make sure Daniel knows you appreciate his story and wisdom.

Continuation School

I went to school in all continuation schools from seventh grade till now. My goals in education are to graduate high school and go to trade school. I may possibly go to college for a four-year degree. That's it.

-B

From The Beat: You have great educational goals. What kind of support do you need to help you meet those goals?

Take A Loss, Get Back

Looking back on my life, I can recall a few losses, some major and some minor. The things that are minor are that I lost money while gambling. And the things that are major were when my people who I was close to passed away.

-Mula

From The Beat: From your title, we presume that you have learned to "get back" after the major loss of people close to you. That is so hard. Maybe you can write about that some time.

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Yolo County

Little Ones

The little ones are my sisters and my little brother that is two years old. They are special to me because they are always there for me and they are never gonna let me down.

I always respect them, and they do the same thing back. I appreciate that, and I know they won't let me down that's why they are special to me.

-Pedro

From The Beat: We have to love and support the next generation. They are the ones that will carry on our struggle and it's important to pass down to them the knowledge that we have acquired throughout our own journey. Keep your little ones safe and close to you.

Mi Vida

Pues cuando estaba pequeño tenía 14 años y fue cuando me metí de pollero y coyote. Y pues me iba bien. Ganaba buen dinero, pero cuando hacía algo mal me costaba lo que hacía. Tenía muchas chicas mayores como si fuera adulto. Pero un día me junte con una y tenía un ahijado y me quería como su papá.

Pues mas adelante cuando empecé a consumir el alcohol con mis amigos, me termino y ese día no supe qué hacer. Y pues tuve que olvidar las aventuras que vivía con ella. Pues aun la recuerdo, pero tuve que salir adelante y ayudar a mis carnales y a mi bien estar.

Pues y yo seguí trabajando hasta que me agarraron y me encarcelaron y hay días que sufro, pero olvidó lo bueno que e vivido para no sentir depresión. Y espero salir de la cárcel para casarme.

-Kevin

Del Beat: Muchas veces nuestros vicios se interponen entre nosotros y los que amamos. Cuando nuestros vicios comienzan a interrumpir nuestras vidas nos tenemos que preguntar si valen la pena. Tienes que seguir tu corazón y todo caerá en su lugar.

My Life

When I was fourteen years old I became a poulter and a coyote I did pretty well for myself. I earned good money but whenever I messed up it, that mistake would cost me. I had a lot of older women, like if I had been an adult.

But one day, I got with this one girl who had a son. I became a stepfather and that child loved me as if I was his real father. Later on, I started drinking alcohol with my friends which led her to break up with me. I didn't know what to do.

I had to forget about the adventures I lived with her. I still remember her but I had to keep moving forward and help my brothers out and look out for my own well-being. I continued to work until I got picked up and I got locked up.

There are days I suffer, but I try and forget the good times that I have lived to avoid suffering from depression. I hope to get out of jail so I can get married.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Our vices often come between us and the ones we love. It's when our vices begin to interrupt our lives that we have to ask ourselves if they are worth indulging in. You just have to follow your heart and everything will fall into place.

Lecciones de la Vida

Cuando yo tenía 12 años yo pensaba que todo lo que hacía estaba bien pero no y yo aprendí cuando estaba en la cárcel.

Yo aprendí mucho de la vida y pasando experiencias tristes. Quiero enseñarle a mi familia que no soy como ellos piensan.

-Kevin

Del Beat: En la vida, muchas de nuestras lecciones vienen a través de experiencias. Nuestra juventud nos engaña para que creamos que somos invencibles y que sabemos todo. Y aunque nuestra juventud nos permite ser ambiciosos, también nos permite ser tontos. Es importante que puedas reflexionar sobre tus experiencias y que las conviertas en algo de lo que puedas aprender.

Life Lessons

When I was twelve years old I thought everything I did was right, but it wasn't.

I learned that being locked up. I have learned a lot from life and from sad experiences. But we should not let those things get in the way of living one's life. I want to show my family I'm not the way that they think I am.

-Kevin

From The Beat: In life, many of our lessons come through experiences. Our youthfulness tricks us into believing that we are invincible and that we know everything. While that allows us to be ambitious, it also allows us to be foolish. It's important that you can reflect upon your experiences and that you turn them into something you can learn from.

San Mateo County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

SAN MATEO
COUNTY -PHILLY

My Life

The quote, "God gives His best soldiers the worse missions," means to me that God gave me a special mission that takes the best to complete and it's me, my people and my soldiers that ride with me. So, we go get it done, but sometimes you just gotta be alone. Also, you gotta be patient and get through it 'cause this mission is my life.

-Ghost

From The Beat: You've got a lot on your plate, but you don't have to handle this alone. Look around. Who's there for you now that you can lean on?

Cheating And Getting Away With It

I once cheated on my girl and got away with it. I ain't gonna lie, at first, I didn't feel bad but then after I went to see my girl I started feeling some type of way. I started to feel kind of guilty because she looked so happy to see me and surprised me with some new Jordan's.

I felt bad because she didn't know nothing about it and never knew our whole relationship. I still got those Jordan's and every time I be wearing them I think about what I did. She bought me some nice ones, too. Everybody be breaking their necks when they see me rocking them Jordan's.

-Sebastian

From The Beat: When we betray the ones we love, we ultimately end up hurting ourselves the most. What would it look like for you to take accountability for your actions and do right by your girlfriend?

It's A Hassle

My wise words for the week are, "hope for the best and prepare for the worst." I am having court on Tuesday. I am hoping to go home because I am tired of not going to my mother's house when I want. It's a hassle not being able to be with my family on the holidays and on the birthdays of my family members. I wish I could go home and finally be at peace with myself and my family.

-Spookes

From The Beat: Your wise words are a good motto to live by, balancing both optimism with being realistic. Do what you can with the time you have now to make sure that you don't end up in this situation again.

Once My Baby Is Born, My Plans

My tree will look like positive things once my baby is born. He will definitely be in the picture in two months.

What would also be in my tree is my education. I want to finish high school on time and that will be in June, hopefully.

I want to get my high school diploma to show my mom how hard I have been trying in school, and ever since I got on probation I got on my ass to finish school and not be a drop out.

Probation was also on my ass to go to school, so that was the good part of it. But the bad part of it is getting locked up, being in a cell by yourself and staring at four walls, how depressing it is being in there.

-Cr

From The Beat: This experience has given you a lot to consider and has motivated you to do better. We're really proud of you! We can see your tree blooming already.

One-Third Of The Way Home

See, I was just in my room staring at the wall in front of my stool, thinking when I'm a get out of here, now it's the morning. My room was dull because there was no sunshine shining through the window. I close my eyes and two seconds later my room is bright with sunshine all over my room, and it really lifted up my spirit. It's in these times where I know God is with me.

I had court yesterday. I plead guilty to my biggest charge and the other eight got dismissed. DA offered a deal, so I took it. I was going to be looking at out-of-state-prison, but due to that deal and my lawyer's wisdom, I'll only be looking at nine months, hopefully. Today is my hundredth day being incarcerated so I like to look at it as one-third of the way home.

-I

From The Beat: We like that you're looking on the bright side, both physically and figuratively. You have a lot going for you. Believe in yourself and do the best you can with this time to prepare for when your freedom comes.

Me and The Cop

There was a time I lied to the police and got away with it. The police officer asked what was my name and date of birth (even though I had just got off probation, I still lied). I always get nervous when I'm around cops, even if I have done nothing wrong. I gave them a name of "Vanessa Rodriguez" with a date of birth as January 8th, 1999. After he went back to his car and ran all three names at the time, I was with my friend and my boy. We were going to a quince.

The cop came back and said we were all good and that we could take off, just with a warning not to be "speeding." After the cop left, my boy laughed and said I was supposed to use the year 2000 because the date of birth I used was the age nineteen, after I told the cop I was eighteen, but he was too stupid to figure that out or maybe he knew?

All I know is that it was funny. I didn't feel guilty. I just wanted to get out of the situation. There's my small story of when I lied to a cop. After all, it was all good we made it to the party and had fun.

-Smooth Talker

From The Beat: You got away by the skin of your teeth! When we take risks, even if it's something small like speeding, we're compromising our time, money, and freedom. Is it really worth it?

Still On The Wait

It's been a little over six months. At first, I thought we'd be one again. As time passed, I realized if I didn't say goodbye, I would never get my new hello. I was stuck in the past. So as painful as it was, I didn't look back and physically said goodbye. It's been a little over six months and I'm still on the wait for my new hello.

I'm not rushing, I'm not looking because like I said on my last piece, "she's the standard by which I'll judge beauty for the rest of my life." Even though I have yet to see and find out if I'll ever get blessed with something like that again. I'm powerful, I'm unique, I'm pure, I'm everything. The wait is unbearable, but it will pay off.

-Five/Eleven/Sixteen

From The Beat: You made the right decision in letting go of what no longer was working in order to find something that does work. The journey is long, but we're confident that you will find what you're looking for. Stay open.

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

San Mateo County

Cheaters In The Hood

I remember this one time I was posted in my hood's park, and I witnessed a couple arguing. Apparently, the male had caught his girlfriend cheating on him. The boyfriend was reading all the text messages out loud as the girlfriend was attempting to grab the phone by pushing and shoving him.

Instead of me and my homies intervening, we pulled out our phones and began recording via Snapchat. A few seconds later the phone the boyfriend was holding began ringing. He answered and began talking reckless, saying, "Pull up!!" A couple days later I seen the same girl pull up to my hood's park with a different dude!

-Young Manny

From The Beat: This is a dark yet funny story. At what point in others' conflict do you change from being a bystander, to intervening?

Money Game

A time I cheated was when I was playing a game with some strangers. It was in Mexico, and we were playing the game for money. So, I decided to get more money when they weren't looking.

They never noticed I took extra money away from them. I ended up keeping the money after I went to the store and bought some snacks.

I didn't feel guilty or nothing because they were some random people that I didn't even know. I never talked about it, or even told anyone, but I will always remember.

-Samantha

From The Beat: Even though you don't feel guilty, this experience has stuck with you. We'd like to hear more about why that is!

Speechless

There was this one time when I was dating this one girl and I cheated on her with her best friend and I got caught, and I was speechless and didn't know what to tell my ex-girlfriend. It was pretty darn embarrassing and I ended up breaking up with her and that was that. That's my experience on cheating.

-Young Johny

From The Beat: That is a pretty embarrassing experience. What did you take away from this situation that could help you make better relationship decisions in the future?

Leaving With Credits

I planted a seed in education in the hall this year when I got locked up. I'll be getting a total of more than fifty-seven credits in these four months I've been here, more than I have on the outs within nine months. I've decided to focus on my school this time I've gotten locked up.

I don't want to graduate high school in here, so I plan on leaving with two-hundred and ten credits. I also attended a ten-week course with three college classes which I'll be getting college units for, as well as high school credits.

Joining this program planted another seed in education because it will be easier to enroll in college. I'll for sure be going to CSM (College of San Mateo) and hopefully get myself a career. I did psychology, English, and Keys to Success as my college classes. I got inspired.

-David

From The Beat: It's so exciting to hear that you're being proactive with your education! Congratulations. You're using this time to get back on track, to get ahead, and to prepare for your future. We're very proud of you.

Truths

Cops on the block
Tryin' to take us away...
Rent goin' up
To push us away...
Kids in the parks
Slowly losin' their way...
Two thugs in the park
Who get up to spray...
President don't give a ...
Just blame the whole race.
President don't give a shhh
As long as he is getting paid...
Forget the world and focus on feeding us.
The things people do jus' for the media.

-Young At

From The Beat: You touch on a lot in this poem. What inspired your words? What is the solution to your frustrations? What are you going to do to better your life?

Good Shampoo

I have been chillin' in the unit, waiting to get out, getting letters. Can't wait for Christmas because we get good shampoo. But yeah, I can't wait to get out, so I could have some fun.

-Darwen

From The Beat: Being locked up isn't fun, but we're concerned you're focusing too much on getting out, and not on what you'll need to do to stay out. What can you do to stay out and not come back?

So Much That I Ain't Did Before

Sorry momma
I was in that cell
You came to visit though
You told me, "Stay in school"
You praying for me, I ain't listen though
Facing double life, so much shhh
That I ain't see before
Fifty felonies, three strikes
So much that I ain't did before.

-Boss

From The Beat: There's a lot of sadness and hopelessness in this piece. How can you show your mom that you're working on bettering yourself, even in these hard circumstances?

At The End Of The Day

I had cheated on my girlfriend one time. I called her, and she started talking, saying, "Hey." I didn't get the "Hey baby," so I was like, in my head, what's going on? So, I tried thinking about what happened and she found out I was trying to talk to some other girl.

Anyways, she started crying out of nowhere, so I was telling her I loved her, but she was saying I'm a liar and I don't love her, so I got into a big fight with her and I said disrespectful things to her, but then we made up and said sorry.

I learned not to cheat on her 'cause she ain't like these other girls bopping it around and smoking every day, fooling around with every boy they see. So, I'm cool with all that. But if anything, at the end of the day, it's just me and my hood.

-Serio

From The Beat: We think it's interesting what you say about "other girls" when there are also many "other boys" doing the same thing. But aren't getting judged for it the same way. What do you think about this double standard? Remember, being loyal to the hood is a dangerous commitment. Is jeopardizing your freedom worth it?

San Mateo County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Twelve More Days

What I'm waiting for is getting released. I got twelve more days and I'm gone. I'm getting fed up with all the system thinking they sick, but when I was in camp they was acting hella cool, but it's all good. I'm a get out soon. When I get out I'm a be with the soldiers at the market then I'm a buy a burrito and be chillin'. Post a video, shouting out.

-Serio

From The Beat: We see that you're excited to get out, but make sure you make mature decisions, otherwise it's all bad! We've loved having you as part of The Beat Within, but we much rather you stay free.

Hard to Wait

I am a very impatient person. It is hard to wait when I'm locked up. When I am on the outs, there are so many things to do.

-Impatient

From The Beat: There's definitely a lot to do on the outs. Be choosy with what you prioritize!

When I'm Not Patient

I can't wait to get out so I can have my freedom back. I want to eat better than the food we got here.

I learned to be patient in here because the staff be making us wait in our rooms, trying to make us go crazy. So that's why we give them a hard time in here. That's how I learned to be patient and it helps me a lot because when I'm not patient I get mad.

-Darwen

From The Beat: Being locked up definitely tests your patience. How do you think patience will help you in your future?

Waiting for a Blessing

Growing up in the streets I done learned a lil' something
Learned to duck down when the forties was going
Been down for a lil' over six months, stressin'
Real good, waiting for a blessing.

-Spookes

From The Beat: Instead of waiting for a blessing, what blessings do you recognize that are happening to you right now?

Better Grades

I went to Westmoor High School in Daly City. It was weak. Staff always hated on me. The only good about that school was that some of my good friends go there.

They wouldn't let me transfer back because of my credits, so I go to Thornton. I get better grades.

-Chris

From The Beat: We're sorry you didn't have a good experience at your previous school, but glad that you're getting better grades now. We'd love to hear more about how this school's culture is different than your previous one!

Time Passes Fast When I'm Free

It's easy to wait when I'm free because time passes by fast, compared to being locked up right now, waiting for a letter or court.

It's hard to wait. Just sitting in my room, singing, waiting for day after day to pass by. Hoping for days to go by faster to get outta here and do my thing.

-Samantha

From The Beat: We see that you're ready for this time to pass so you can get back to your life outside, but what are you learning with this time to help prepare you for when you're free?

Touchdown

Since I been down, I've had to wait to be released and this month marks a year since I've been down. It sucks not being close to my loved ones.

I learned that I can get through time if I have to. Twelve months ago, I didn't think I could be patient and wait, but now I can do it. I touchdown in February and will stay out and go to school and get a job.

-Yung Jay

From The Beat: We're so proud of you for having grown in your patience! You've come a long way and have a successful future ahead. We're excited to see you grow!

My Life

I went to Menlo Atherton High School. My school experience was okay. The school is good, it's just the people, their bad influence.

My favorite subject is math. I did have support. I had a separate class that would help me in class.

My school work was challenging. School work is really hard but I'm trying to graduate so that I can accomplish being an IT, so that when I go to college I can practice my coding.

-Cesar

From The Beat: The people you go to school with can make a big difference in someone's success at that school. You have some big aspirations, and we're confident that you'll accomplish them with determination and perseverance!

The Wait

The wait's almost over call
The homies and the soldiers
It's a celebration every time I
Touch down, that's why I'm the
Top opp
DA gave me a few years
That's why I'm heading to the Y (youth prison)
It is what it is
Tell the homies I miss them
If I don't come back
Tell my family that
I love them
The wait.

-Moguttah

From The Beat: The wait is long, but the freedom is worth it. How do you plan to use the years you have at the Y to prepare you for your path forward?

Right Things First

I agree with the quote because when people work for the better, a lot of people around their community get affected in a positive way. When people do right things in life then other people want to follow and do right things first. Many times, people want to do the right thing but for no reason, until they see someone else do it.

-King

From The Beat: We always have the opportunity to influence those around us, and it takes a lot of maturity to lead by positive example. How have you lead by positive example in your community?

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

San Mateo County

The Love

My life has gone through a path that confused my own self, heading in and out of high schools and here I stand today serving time at Hillcrest (juvenile). Never had I ever thought I would stand where I am now.

-Filthy

From The Beat: You stand here now, but with insight and knowledge that you didn't have before. What have you learned from this hard place you're in?

The Wait

It is hard to wait and I was taught to have patience. It is easier to wait when you are free. You can do things while you wait. I waited for my day to get out by doing things to get over the wait.

In Hillcrest you have to wait for everything, to eat, to shower, to come out your room, and to talk or see your family.

-Kim

From The Beat: When we're in hard places, we try to make the time pass faster. Time is still valuable though, regardless of where you are. How are you valuing your time now?

Come A Long Way

Looking back, I have come a long way. Maybe not all is positive, but I have learned a lot. May I say I have no regrets. I am where I am now searching for hope that I will make it.

-Filthy

From The Beat: You're able to hold optimism and reality at the same time, and we really appreciate that. Tell us more about the places you're searching for hope.

The Longest I Will Be Here For

Waiting is like a stressful thing that can affect me in my life. The time I'm doing this time is the longest I will be here for.

Having to wait is easier when you're outside because when I'm in here, I feel like time is going by so slow, and when I'm out of here I feel like I can wait for days or not even wait at all, with also not worrying about anything.

I'm waiting for my phone call and waiting for the day until I'm out of here, which is late January. Then after that for my son to arrive, and also waiting for the day when I'm gonna be done with high school.

-Looking Forward

From The Beat: You certainly have a lot to look forward to! Your life is just beginning, with so much joy and success ahead of you. Congratulations about your son's arrival! Honor the time you have now to prepare for his arrival.

Forever

She make me wanna sing, that's how much I wanna love her
She my ride or die, yeah she don't need no other
She my Bonnie and I'm her Clyde
That's how it's going to be forever
I was taught to never fall in love
'cause them girls ain't gone be there forever
She gone give me her heart
I just hope I know what I'm doin'.

-Ghost

From The Beat: Loving someone means being vulnerable with them, which can be very difficult, especially if it hasn't gone well in the past. How do you support and show love to the people you chose to let into your life?

My Life

I went to school at Menlo Atherton, but they sent me to Redwood to get my credits and get my diploma easier. So, my favorite class is science, 'cause I think science is easy for me. They sent me to Redwood because I need credits, not for bad behavior.

I hope I can get my credits on time and graduate on time. I hope I graduate this year so that I can get a better job and help my mom. My dream is not to ever come here or to jail again.

-Juan

From The Beat: That's an achievable dream! Your mom needs you, and we're glad you're able to get the credits you need to graduate. Science is an interesting subject and isn't easy for many people!

My Aunt

A time I had to let go of someone was my aunt. She passed away because of cancer and it was hard to let go. I did not get to see her much because she lived two hours away from me and I would barely go over there because my mom works a lot.

She would never have time to take me and if I were ever to see them, they usually came to Redwood City and that one last time I was gonna go see her was around the holiday, Easter of 2013, and the sad part was that she was going to give me chocolate. It is hard to say goodbye.

-Missing Her

From The Beat: It is definitely hard to say goodbye, especially when we lose loved ones to such horrible illnesses. Cherish the memories you have with your aunt and know that she lives on within you.

Cheating The System

First day of my sophomore year I didn't expect my probation office to come pee test me, so when I got called out of class the campus staff told me it was the probation coming to do a physical check, so I got to the office and I had butterflies in my stomach.

She told me to pee test, so I said okay, walked to the bathroom, and knocked on the door. This kid was inside, so he told me, "Hey, I'm using the bathroom," so I told him "Yo, pee in this cup for me and I'll pay you fifty bucks." So, he agreed. I walked back to my PO and passed the pee test. I cheated my probation, but also cheated the kid because I didn't pay him.

-A

From The Beat: This was a close call! We hope this experience motivated you to stay clean and on track!

My Presence was There

"My presence was there, but not my head." Went through five high schools doing nothing. Now I'm at Hillcrest, graduating at the end of 2018 while everyone my age still has 'til June to graduate. I guess I got lucky, very lucky. My presence was there, but not my head.

Now I'm finishing school with no new knowledge in my head. Will I struggle in life? I don't know. Does that mean I failed? Who knows. Life works in mysterious ways but all for a purpose.

-Shy One

From The Beat: We agree that life works in mysterious ways, and it also works how you work it. You have the power to create the life you want for yourself!

San Mateo County

Sacramento County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Lacking

Before I even went to Turlock I was down for anything and everything with my brothers, friends and big homie(s). But when I got separated and went to Turlock, I had started hearing voices and got put in a scenario where a gang wanted my head. I was scared, ready to fight, and a couple other scenarios. But that helped me realize that I need to be a stronger person with and without my brothers.

- Lil T

From The Beat: Internal strength - the kind that doesn't depend on others - is difficult but powerful. How are you stretching and developing those interior muscles? How can we all be stronger in and for ourselves?

A New Hello

Don't be afraid to say goodbye
A new opportunity will bring someone by
Search around and soon you will find
That loneliness is something you can leave behind
Say hello to the new me
I can't tell you how I be makin' it
Say what's up to my new life
Tellin' you now I ain't fakin' it
I'll pay for the food
Rather than be takin' it
I'll be straight to the trust
Instead of shakin' it
Hello new me
Don't you see I'm different?
Lookin' at the world
These eyes so sufficient.

-Rb

From The Beat: So good! You are a very creative soul and your rhymes show that! What do you mean by being able to leave loneliness behind? If you had to explain this to someone younger than you, what advice would you give to be able to do that?

Goodbye

I said goodbye to a girl, to get me something better, like a girl that has more money or has something better going for herself. She has a job, and owns things like cars or a house.

I've moved on to better girls, like grown women that has stuff going for herself. She's not just sitting at home every day doing nothing with her life.

-H

From The Beat: We are happy to know that you leveled up. A lot of the times, your significant other can either make you a better person or hold you back. We glad you chose the right one!

Keep It Real

Real eyes, realize, real lies.
You want to tell the truth
But your tongue tied.
I see my fallen guys
Every time I close my eyes.
You say you hard
But where were you when it was time to slide.
Free me and my fam'.
Till then....

- Lil DBR

From The Beat: That first line is stunning! Poetic wordplay at its finest. We'd love for you to focus and sharpen your talented, skillful word magic more often in these pages. We would love to read more from you!

I Was Wrong

I was wrong when a boy I had fought was about to get beat up by me and my brothers because he was gay - because my big homie said so. But in time I realize that it's not right to be gangin' up or fighting for your big homie or anyone.

- Lil T

From The Beat: How and when did you come to this realization? Did anyone convince you or try to persuade you? Did anyone try to argue with you once you realized your truth? Did you have to stand up and defend your realization?

Dear God

Dear God I be praying for better days
I'm getting older
Getting smarter
Have to learn from my mistakes
Life is like a maze
You have to go through the snakes
You not with us in a cell
They can't tell us about our pain
Getting told what to do
Feeling like a slave
I'm really homesick
I always think about them days
Fell in love with the chips
I ain't talking 'bout Lays

-At

From The Beat: Nice! You have real talent with your words. What do you miss the most about being home? You mentioned falling in love with the money, do you have any regrets? What mistakes have you had to learn from?

Address and Redirect Old Habits

I will address my old habits by not putting myself in that situation. I was smoking weed on the outs but I was never influenced - I just made the decision to smoke because I wanted to do something that kept me busy or something that just made me feel good instead of depressed.

I never did any other drug because I always thought there was no need to do that because people are really strung out in the outside world. I will correct my old habits by being a better person by not surrounding myself around people that want to see me fail.

Life is too short to be making mistakes. The people say they love you but haven't written you. My old habits were criminal behavior anger issues, but I am working on that because that won't get you anywhere in life. It will just leave you in jail for your personal issues.

I've been working on that. I'm working on getting my honors back, so they can know that I'm really trying to get my life together. When I first came to juvenile hall, my behavior was bad.

I didn't think about the future because I was on a bad path, trying to run the streets, not thinking about the future. I was only thinking about money, which you can call fast money, because it comes and goes - something you don't want.

Since I've been in YDF, my behavior has improved. I listen to the staff, which I never did before. At first, I never liked listening to others or taking orders from people I don't know, that's why I don't like coming to jail.

I don't plan on coming back based on my behavior. It has improved a lot so all my old habits that I had in the past will always lead me to think, what can I do better?

-M

From The Beat: We are very excited to hear about your progress and we know the future is bright for you. We can only imagine what it's like having to listen to people you don't even know. We don't doubt you'll make it out just fine.

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Sacramento County

On The Block Every Day (Not No Mo')

When I get out, I'm going to change my life and stop going to jail for my baby mom's and for my child that's on the way.

At first, I was on the block every day, all day, doing stupid stuff. At the time, I thought it was cool and cute. Doing it now, that shhh isn't cool to me or cute to me because I keep going to jail with a baby on the way.

So, when I get out, there's going to be a whole change with me and how I act. When I get out, it's going to be just me and my baby mom's - ain't no more posted on the block.

-K

From The Beat: We are happy that you have matured so much and are able to see what needs to be done for the sake of your child! Your decisions are no longer just for you. Always think of your family now when you are tempted to go back to your old ways. Congratulations!

Words For The Wise

First, let's focus on ourselves

Second, let's stay dedicated and motivated

And last but not least, educated

Let's focus on the bigger things

Such as family, education, and work

Forget about the smaller things

Such as partying, paper chasing

And watching them twerk

Stay focused watch and learn.

-Pt

From The Beat: You sound like you have your priorities in the right order! Dedication, motivation, and education are three important things. Keep on this right path and you will find yourself leveling up the right way.

I Cheated, Forgive Me

I remember I cheated on my girl and I did not regret it.

Now that I think of it, I was in the wrong and I am so sorry for hurting your feelings and not being there for you. Please forgive me for all my wrongs.

I hope you have a wonderful life and make the best of it.

-T

From The Beat: This is a very nice piece. We are glad that you have owned up to hurting their feelings and have owned up to the mistake. Understanding this shows maturity. Is there anyone else you feel you need to make amends with?

Understood

They don't understand our pain

The streets turn us insane

But there is no one to blame

This is part of the game

We don't do it for the fame

We won't ever be the same

'Cause you was never in the rain

We'll never be the same

'Cause you ain't ever felt my pain

The system tried to spit me down the drain

Like I'm the one to blame

But the streets made me this way

Still long live James

Forever screaming his name

I was raised by the game

So I know we not the same

Peer pressure in my city

People doing it for the fame.

-Bu

From The Beat: We can tell that you have been through a lot just by this piece. A lot of people try to understand your pain, but they will never truly know. Keep educating and spreading the wisdom you've learned from your upbringing.

Smart Decisions

Smart decisions made me strong

When I'm given

Like I'm changing the channel

On a new television

Faithful to the painful

The color is called crimson

Addition to subtraction

Multiply and division.

-J

From The Beat: Nice rhymes! What do you mean by being faithful to the painful? This line sounds like you can explore a deeper topic. Being faithful to the painful may be something that a lot of your peers can relate to. Great job!

Keep Strong Be True

Keep strong be brave

Don't fall

Here comes a wave

You made it through

That's good for you

Don't care what others think of you

What they say ain't really true

You do you

Do whatever it is you plan to do

Keep strong be true

Let haters hate

Be true to you

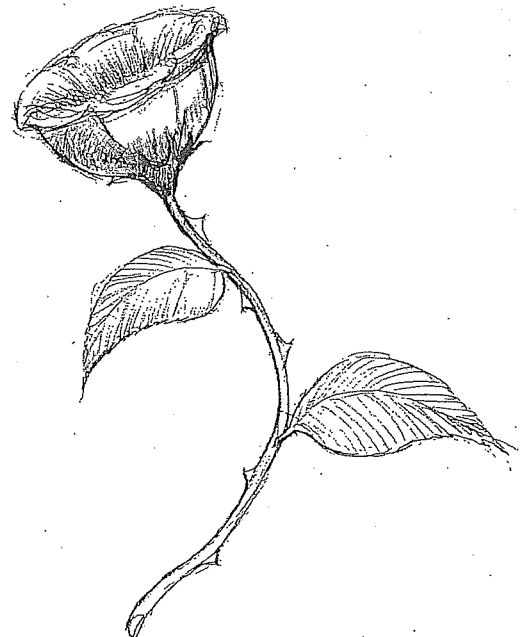
That's all that really matters

Keep pushing back up

Don't dare to give up.

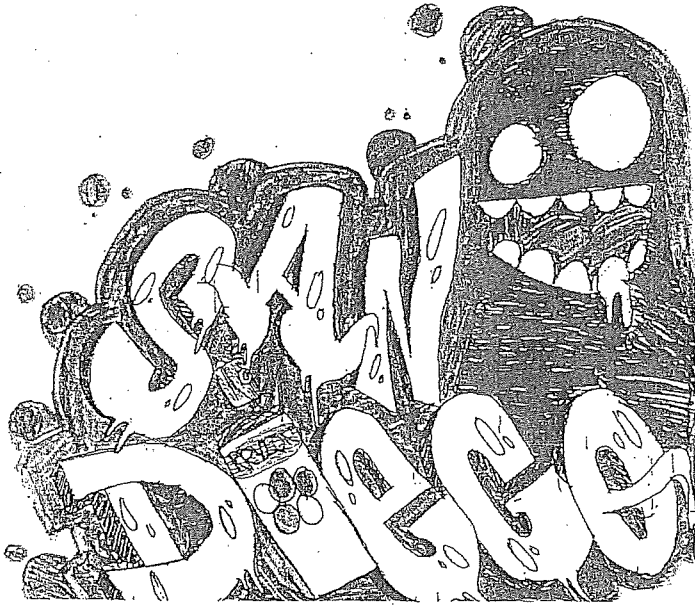
-Rb

From The Beat: These are great words and a lot of people your age needs to hear them. It's easy to get swept away by the negative influences in your life. Keep creating positive impacts.



San Diego County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!



I Cheated

I cheated on my girlfriend two times.
I didn't really care
because girlfriends come and go.
I also cheated on some tests.

-Ramon

From The Beat: You probably didn't care but did you ever stop to think about how she would feel? Relationships are all about respecting the other person's feelings.

Being Productive

What is it like to wait, honestly I'm an impatient person. So it sucks for me especially being locked down. My temper goes up. I can't stand being in my room.

What I learned though is being more productive like reading books, working out and doing work. I daydream most of the time when I got nothing to do.

-Eduardo

From The Beat: We're proud of you for using your time wisely, like exercising and reading. Your practice in patience now will last you well into your future!

Got Away With It!

I have cheated and got away with it many times. I don't feel regret or shame because there's plenty of females out there in the world. To me, as long as the female doesn't find out it won't hurt her feelings.

I have only been cheated on one time and I didn't care because I knew it would come back around. I'm trying harder to be more loyal to my females and keep a solid relationship.

-Devon

From The Beat: Sometimes it gets tempting to cheat when we get away with it over and over again. Now that you realized it's wrong, you can do things the right way. You wouldn't like anyone cheating on you.

We Can't Have It All Right Away

It is hard for me to wait for everything. I am impatient for everything. When I want something, I get the urge to have it right away.

Waiting has always been a problem for me. I learned that you have to wait in life for some things, and to get what you want you have to work hard for it because we can't have it all right away.

-Isidro

From The Beat: The harder you work for something, the more lasting the reward will be. What are you working hard for now?

Despair

The first time I felt despair was when I got locked up for the first time. It was the worse time, I disappointed my mom. I got locked up for dumb things and bad choices.

I remember being locked up in my cell alone, thinking to myself and realizing how no one was really there for me, not even the ones that said they would. I worked through it though. I just thought to myself, at the end of the day I was going to be alone and that's the way I live my life every day and that's what gets me through the day.

-Nico

From The Beat: You mentioned you were locked up in your cell alone, thinking no one was there for you, well, what about your mom? How are you two doing? Is she in your corner? What are your plans after serving this time?

Dead Time

My first time busted I felt a great loss of hope during all the dead time I was doing.

I would go to court and come back with no hope of getting out any time soon. I would try different things to help cope with the struggle like working out and reading was one of the major keys that helped me pass a lot of time.

Right now, I write letters and use phone time to make the time fly by. Sometimes waiting for a court date or release date made me angry and anxious.

-Clumsy

From The Beat: Waiting is not easy, especially when we don't know what's on the other side. We're proud of you for finding positive ways to cope with the wait! Working out and reading are also productive ways to spend your time!

It Sucks to Wait

It sucks to wait. It's really boring and you start to think a lot. Being incarcerated does not help me. It just teaches me how to do evil things slicker. I do not like waiting.

-Frank

From The Beat: We hope that in the time you're thinking a lot, you have thoughts about how you're going to create a stable and safe future for yourself.

That Feeling

The feeling of despair is to lose hope and give up on your objectives. To overcome this you must be patient and look for that little window of hope and take that opportunity to give yourself strength to achieve your goals. A crucial factor to overcome despair is to never lose hope, be patient and wait for your time to act. Your time will come, don't give up. Be patient.

-O

From The Beat: Can you give us an example from your own life on a time you had to be patient and it paid off? We're listening! Thanks for breaking this down!

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

San Diego County

I Cheated On My Love

Once I cheated on my ex-wife, while she was loyal and a rider, but temptation caused me to fool around. I thought I could've been sneaky about it, but she turned into the police and I started getting distant and she found out everything. I was embarrassed and felt guilty.

-E

From The Beat: If you are in a relationship with another person and you really love them, you just have to remember that next time. If you are unhappy you can always express your feelings to see what you can do to make things better.

San Diego
County

-MARCOS

Cheating!

I don't think cheating is good. To cheat is a short cut of life, but there are different ways of cheating in life. I've been cheating myself this whole time in life.

-Eric

From The Beat: You're right, the only person we cheat is ourselves. There are no such things as short-cuts in life. We all have to work hard to get to where we want to go.

Cheating Myself

I was cheating myself on the outs by not making wise decisions that got me locked up. I was smoking robbing and avoiding probation.

-Nashon

From The Beat: When we cheat, we don't cheat anyone except ourselves. This shows maturity and now that you've learned we know you will do better!

The Waiting

What is it like to be waiting?

Being in the halls

Wasting my time away

Sometimes people get lots of time,

Because what they get locked up for,

A crime thing,

And get lots of time in the halls,

That's how you'll wait,

For your time.

-Troy

From The Beat: Since you are in the hall, take advantage of all the opportunities to better yourself! Draw! Write! Read! Do the programs that come your way! You have plenty to offer!

Grew Up Seeing People Cheat

I cheat a lot on females, tests and pretty much anything I can. I know it's not right but sometimes I feel like I have no other idea. I know, I know, but I grew up seeing everybody cheat on something.

-D'Lor

From The Beat: As we grow up, we tend to mimic and do the things that other people do. Now that you know that cheating is wrong, it's up to you to break that bad habit.

Waiting Can Teach You

Waiting is like waiting to die. But waiting can be stressful to some people.

Other people like me don't wait, I make people wait for me. Waiting can teach you to appreciate your own life.

-Johnny

From The Beat: How do you appreciate your life in ways that you didn't before?

Incarcerated

While being incarcerated, I don't have no choice but to do the time and wait.

I got incarcerated because I went on the run.

I did not want to deal with probation.

I knew I was going get locked up

when I went on the run.

-Ramon

From The Beat: What have you learned from this experience? Would you do it differently if given another chance? What are your plans upon getting out?

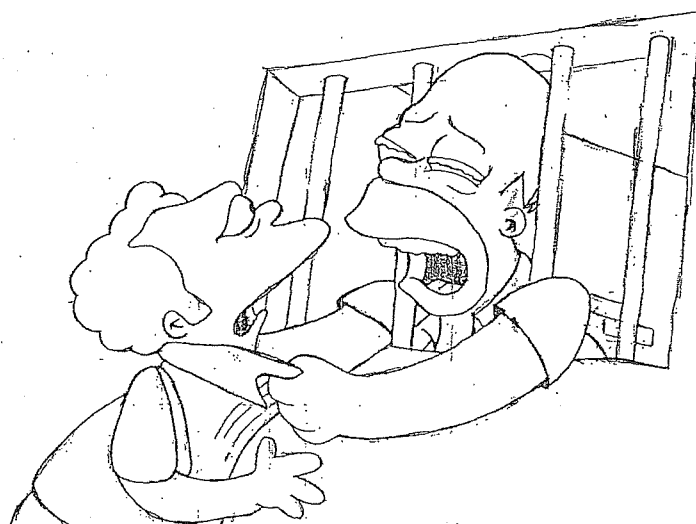
Cheating, and Getting Away With It

I cheated death one too many times and also cheated on a test. I cheated the law and got away with it. I also cheated in relationships. I hurt the ones I love by being in jail.

That also means I cheated myself because many of the times I knew my worth but didn't live up to it.

-Montrel

From The Beat: We know you are capable of doing good. Don't let your past mistakes define who you are. Learn from them, don't repeat them, and we know they will make you into a better person!



Harvey, Louisiana

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

A Letter To The New Me

I think I should think before I do stuff. When I say to myself, "I'm going to go jack somebody." I'll just do it. I want to change that about myself.

I also want to tell myself that the pain is only temporary and that when I get older I am going to be rich.

-Young A

From The Beat: It is important to identify your thoughts before you act upon them. This is a powerful step towards maturity. The pain you are experiencing is only temporary.

Living With Myself

Before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. I would be able to live by myself, and I could live with other folks. But how I feel about it all depends on the person.

-Devin

From The Beat: This requires self-acceptance. Which parts of you are you proud of? Which parts of you do you find harder to accept, and how can you change that?

Love Your Flaws

I think this quote of the week is true. I say that because nobody is perfect. Everybody has flaws, and if you can't find a way to love yourself even with all those flaws, then how can you live with someone else and their flaws?

If you're not happy with yourself the way you are, then you can never be happy with someone else.

-Joshua

From The Beat: This is so true! Everyone has flaws, and your flaws are just as much a part of you as your other traits are. What are some of your flaws? Have you found a way to love yourself in spite of them?

Life And Changes

Life is like a game of chance. You live and learn from your mistakes. It's about if you learned from those mistakes that make you who you are. Everyone has a past but we can't judge them off that.

But what we can judge if they realized what they did wrong and corrected that issue to better themselves. Never let anyone tell you who or what you are. Sometimes that change is for the better.

-Carlo

From The Beat: You're right! It is so important that you keep this attitude moving forward as well. It's too easy to fall back into those old ways. The path ahead is always filled with obstacles, temptation, and outside pressures.

Good Things In Life

I've been waiting to go home and do good and positive things when I get there. I want to do good and go places. I want to play the PS4 and go for a walk or stay inside sometimes. I want to do good things when I am home. I want to go shopping with my family and I don't want to come back to jail.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: It is important for you to know that you need to recognize the good things in life. Chase them. It is easy to fall back into the same situations once you finally do get out, but stay focused. Only you can keep yourself from coming back here!

Just Wait

Look, sometimes waiting is good, because you never know if God has you waiting for something that is about to happen or something that you've never seen before. But some people are impatient, so God makes them leave before their time. There's a time for everything, so sometimes waiting is good. So just wait on it!

-Carlos

From The Beat: Patience is definitely a good trait to have. Sometimes it's easy to call on it, other times it's harder, especially in situations like yours. How do you hold onto your patience? What gets you through the long days?

Back Again

It's been a minute. I've been thinking about my past, I've changed my actions. I'm back in Rivarde again, but it's my last time here.

My advice for y'all who are locked up is to think about your next positive action you'll make to stay out of juvie, or prison, or maybe even jail. Stay out, young'uns!

-Oscar

From The Beat: Good advice! Focusing on positive goals will definitely help you stay on track and stay out of jail!

Uno Person

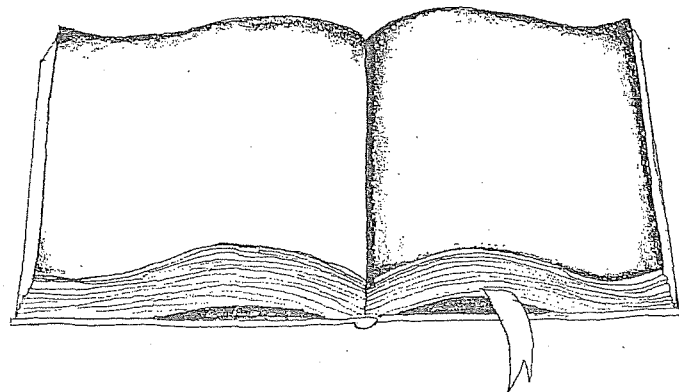
"Before I can live with other folks, I've got to live with myself!"

I'm only one person and I only have one mind. I been mad at a lot of people, but I been keeping my cool. I've learned to never hurt the next person if they hurt you.

You should still show your best to them and you will be respected. Also, remember to always respect your father and mother.

-OnePerson

From The Beat: You are absolutely right! You cannot control others actions, you can only control your reaction. Remember that it is your reaction that ultimately determines the outcome of the situation.



The Hometown Saints

The Saints are my favorite team because it's my hometown team and me and my family are big fans and always support them. When they won the Super Bowl, we were very happy. We cooked and celebrated.

It was so important to the city because after the hurricane, the people fixed the city up and the Saints came back and cut up for the city, and they won, so it was good for us.

-Ke'mon

From The Beat: We remember that Super Bowl too, and how important it was for New Orleanians everywhere. Remember that the important part was that you could share it with your family. Without community a sports team is just another business.

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

Harvey, Louisiana

Have Faith and Don't Despair

Have you ever felt despair? If so, don't worry nor give up. You're not alone, everyone goes through tough times at some point in life. And I've learned that when times get hard it's a challenge for God to make you stronger.

He's calling you to Him so He can help and give you faith and to show you that you are never alone. Don't ever feel that you are the only one with a problem because you are not.

-Carlos

From The Beat: You have great insight and wisdom. Your awareness of God working in your life to make you stronger and bring you closer to him as well as your awareness that everyone goes through struggles shows how enlightened you are.

What I Want

When I go home I want to do positive things and stay inside and do good and play games with my brother and chill and go for a walk sometime and come back home and eat and chill at my new house and play the game all day at my house.

I want to stay out of trouble and stay out of jail and do good things at my house and make my parents proud of me in life.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: You have a good plan for when you get out. Stick with it. It sounds like you have really good options. Focus on your family and home life.

The Saints and Me

The Saints are my favorite team because of Drew Brees and when Reggie Bush played for the Saints. I liked the way they built up the team to be a Super Bowl team. Drew Brees put a lot of money towards the city and winning the Super Bowl gave the city a lot of confidence. We came a long way from Hurricane Katrina and I am thankful that we grew from that.

-Nickiyah

From The Beat: Drew Brees and Reggie Bush really did do so much for the city. It's really inspirational. The Saints have so much influence over the city and can really lift its spirit.

Desperate Moments

Living without a job can sometimes be a desperate moment. First, get your mindset right. Learn right and not the wrongs. Then you can be a millionaire, and God would be with you!

-Oscar

From The Beat: We hear you that having no money is stressful, but also money isn't everything. What are your plans going into the new year?

Inspiration Over Motivation

If you want something in life you got to go get it
Don't let them knock you down
Just stay on your mission
You are a blessing or a lesson
Because that's how I'm feeling
Don't be a fool
Stay up in school
Don't let nobody judge how you look
Just do what you do.

-Travv

From The Beat: You are right! You can't worry about what other people think. Stay focused on yourself and do what you have to do to succeed.



The Future

When I go home I'm going to fix my attitude and my anger. I'm not going to smoke weed and I'm going to get off probation and make better decisions and stay out of trouble.

-Don

From The Beat: What kinds of steps can you take to work on your anger? Do you think it could be related to smoking weed?

Can't Be Saved

Ever since I started acting up I kept getting deeper in the hole. The "hole" gets deeper. There is no limit! Right now, I am below sea level! It sucks knowing hope keeps draining. I know God has got me and I know I at least have a chance and I won't give up.

-Tessa

From The Beat: It can often feel like you are in hole that you cannot get yourself out of. Don't let this discourage you though. You must stay positive and focus on those things that will better you. Stay focused on the good!

Pain

What you know about pain?

I tried going through all this pain and I will never change
I just keep my head up and I'll make it through the rain
When I lost my friend it made me change
But if it all comes with the game
I told moms don't cry for me get it how you live
Everybody wants to be a gangbanger but you can't
I'd rather be carried by six than judged by twelve.

-Jaquan

From The Beat: You have too much life to be focused on the negative aspects. Use this time period in your life to make the necessary adjustments to focus on the positive and let those things dominate your day.

Los Angeles County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

LOSS

I've lost many people in my life—friends and family. That's why I don't invest myself into certain people.

The worst thing I've lost is myself though. I lost myself in my struggles and I'm still trying to find my way back.

-LostSoul

From The Beat: We've all been lost. So feel comforted in that you are not the only lost one. Don't get yourself down and continue to find yourself.

That Advice

The time I took bad advice was about two months ago. I took this risk because I thought it was the right choice.

The person who gave me this advice made it sound so good. She made it sound like it was okay to do. It sounded like a good decision; it sounded like I was going to do it with no worries and everything was going to be perfectly fine afterwards. But no, it wasn't worth it. It made my whole life fall out of place.

It affected my family tremendously because it hurt both my parents to see me here and it hurts my two little brothers when I'm not home to put them to bed every night.

I learned that working for what you want is better than taking it from someone else. I knew it was a bad choice when my parents found out and I saw the disappointment in their faces.

-Heidy

From The Beat: Working hard for something you want definitely results in a more fulfilling result when you finally get it. We all struggle with something here and there and sometimes we just need something that requires a little less stress than other things. Not everything in life has to be hard. But if you're willing to put in the work, the hardest things in life may prove to be the most long lasting.

An Act of Courage

It takes a bold person to stand up for what is right.

Courage means being a leader.

To make your own trend and hope people follow it.

I had courage when students from school were being bullied.

I had made the bully apologize to those students.

-Thalia

From The Beat: Courage is boldness. We're glad you were able to be bold in life and hope you continue to do so. The world needs boldness. If we were all the same style of font, the world wouldn't be as interesting.

Advice

The advice I was given was, "Money don't come to you." That led me to juvie multiple times. I knew I was doing wrong all along but it never stopped me.

-Christopher

From The Beat: Not all of us are lucky enough to have money just "come" at us—as much as we'd like. You don't always have to do the "right" thing but don't always do the "wrong" thing.

Bad Advice

The worst advice I took was when one of my friends told me that we were going to do a crime. We went to jail. That's when I knew that I couldn't take advice from any of my friends because you'd end up in a place where you wouldn't want to be.

-G

From The Beat: Well, we wouldn't assume so harshly off all your friends. If you knew it was going to be bad you shouldn't have followed through?

An Act of Courage From Me

My act of courage was when I had backed up the homie when he was squabblin' with this other person. He was going to get packed out so I jumped in and started doing johns.

That's not the only time I acted in courage. I talked to my brother during his game and told him not to give up and push your team to do better. The result was they won.

-Emic

From The Beat: Continue to be courageous! But don't let courageousness turn into abrasiveness! You seem to have a knack for raising others with support—a somewhat overlooked quality.

Bad Advice Nelly

A time I was given bad advice was when my friends said, "Nelly, just give them your real name. They not goin' check." She gave her real name to the police. She has been in here for four months and I walked away because I said my name was Jada Pickett.

-Shanell

From The Beat: You're not wrong in looking out for yourself. How did you eventually get caught up?

Sail

I'm in jail.

I hate it.

I can't wait to get out

and live my best life.

This situation is very stressful.

I try my hardest not to think about it.

-D'Montre

From The Beat: Unfortunately, you have to think about it. Just don't think about it too hard or too much. Stressing yourself more than you need to won't help at all. But life won't always be stress free.

One Advice That Got Bad

The worst advice I took was when I listened to my home girl for going to some dumb function. I mean, it cracked but afterwards, when getting dropped off we got caught up with a nose tank and it was bad because I lied about my age and spent a night in county. It just got bad after they found out I lied.

-Jessica

From The Beat: Things turning out the way they shouldn't have or in ways we wouldn't have expected is a recurring life theme. And they come at, seemingly, the worst times. When we are able to flip our mentality into accepting that those things do happen, the easier it is for us to move on from our lives and learn from the experiences.

Running from the Police

I chose to run from the police because I don't trust them. It was a bad decision, because I could've got hurt.

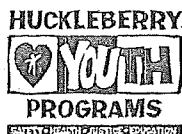
I ended up in jail and my family and friends was sad. I learned not to run from the police again. I realized I made a bad choice when they told me don't run if you didn't do nothing.

-Patrick

From The Beat: You're not alone. The police are our guardians. But not all guardians have the best intentions. It's a sad rule of thumb the world has placed on us. You can't trust everyone but if you trust no one what good will that do?

The Huckleberry Youth Programs and CARC, San Francisco, CA

From The Beat: We welcome back the young voices coming out of the Huckleberry Youth Programs and Community Assessment and Resource Center in San Francisco, CA. The following pieces come out of our most recent Life Skills group. We run this group one time a month. We are grateful for the support of Anastasia Worley who leads the Life Skills group and co-facilitates with us at The Beat Within. This last session was amazing, we believe the writing that follows will support our statement! Enjoy!



Adjusting

I went to a public middle school, then I went to a private high school. It was a lot different. In the private school a lot of people were white and had money. It was super different. I'm still adjusting to the difference. It is what it is, though.

-Sb

From The Beat: That adjusting process is hard! Were there any of your classmates that you were similar to in personality?

My Whole Being Changed

I ain't never knew what the feeling of despair was until a few months back, in August. I was living the life I believed to be the one that was for me. At the moment, I thought that life was all about having fun and I never was around family because of it. After a drug trip, I had my whole being changed. I hit rock bottom, and didn't recognize who I was. Truth is, I'm still trying to put all these pieces together.

Everything makes me feel so weird, I haven't been myself since that night. I chose to use a drug to enhance a euphoria, when I could've found ways to do it soberly. I feel like everyone notices the change and suffering but then again I feel everything all at once. Dealing with anxiety now, and I hate myself a lot sometimes. I lost myself and I'm also scared to say that I don't think I'm strong enough for this.

-Ria

From The Beat: You had a really scary wakeup call. The most growth in us happens when we're most uncomfortable. You may have lost yourself, but you will find a stronger, wiser self again. Don't give up, you're going to make it through this.

Right About Now

I'm in a struggle about right now.
With everything about right now.
Especially pain, I'm in it right now.
School, ready to give up right now.
Life, ready to give up right about now.
I'm only sixteen and I can't give up right about now.
From today and on,
I'm going to strive for whatever.
Right about now!

-Maxout Noah

From The Beat: We love the motivation in this piece! The tie is now. You've got this!

Everybody Knew Who I Was

I used to go to school in Redding and I was the only black kid there, so everybody there knew who I was. It was weird getting said "hi" to every time but kind of cool.

-Tw

From The Beat: Standing out can be hard, but it sounds like you made the best of it. What would you like to be known for now?



The Trust of My Mom

I lost the trust of my mom by making a dumb decision. I'm still working to get it back, just that it ain't easy because, I don't know, I guess it's hard for her to believe me and I won't complain 'cause it's my fault. I've looked back in life, how I could've changed, and not be in the spot I'm in right now.

-K

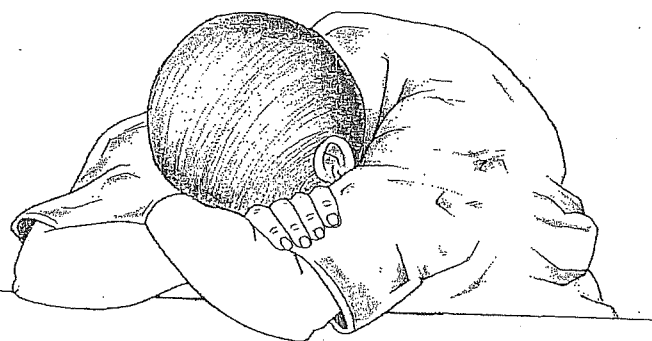
From The Beat: Instead of thinking about how you could've changed, think about how you can change now, with the perspective you have today.

Hate Waiting

I hate waiting,
but at least I don't have to wait five years.
At least I didn't have to wait a year.
At least I didn't have to wait eight.
At least I'm still not waiting, period.
Living my best life.

-Swavy

From The Beat: We see you comparing yourself to others in this piece. What can you do now to focus on being the best "you" you can be?



The Wait

I feel as if I am a very patient person. For example, this class is ending at six o'clock. I will wait patiently for it to end.

-BFail

From The Beat: Patience is a virtue! Learn what you can with it.

Still Alone

I'm alone
There's nothing
I wait
Still alone

-Waiting

From The Beat: You're not alone! We're here for you!

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

United Playaz, San Francisco, CA

From The Beat: Here's the latest writings from our recent Beat workshop in collaboration with United Playaz, a wonderful non-profit based in the South of Market in San Francisco, CA. We are grateful for the UP family and founder, Rudy Corpuz for this partnership. UP's programs provide youth with adult support, academic enrichment, and leadership skills to prevent them from entering and re-entering the justice system. The UP programs reframe kids' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about their future and the positive effect they can have upon their community. Youth gain the knowledge and empowerment needed to tackle daily exposure to social and cultural pressures. A big thank you to Krystal Morales for her kindness, support and guidance during these workshops. You can reach United Playaz at 1038 Howard Street in San Francisco, CA 94103. They can also be reached at (888) 975-2929. Enjoy these latest writings!

UNITED
PLAYAZ

It Takes Courage

Hit the top of the clock. It's already that time again, feels like I just went to sleep. I'm still tired, just five more minutes...with a high sigh (I know there's no extra time). Get up, put up and let's go hard 'cause winners don't get ahead staying home. I'm ready, it takes courage to wake up at five in the morning to make sure I show up no matter the challenges I faced.

I don't understand this assignment, ugh it pisses me off not to understand this equation, but I can't give up. It's got an option - learning is my way out of the mess and many ways into my blessings. It takes courage to ask for help and openly say with confidence, "No I'm not okay, I don't get it. Can you explain it again?"

It's a different day but I still got battles. My house is dysfunctional but I still have hope of making a home of my own day. My family did the best they could, taught me what they could and that wasn't too much. It takes courage to raise yourself the best way you can without any help.

I just need this one day to release my stress. I need an outlet! It takes courage to say no to the norms of medicating your hurts and pains. It takes even more courage to say yes. Yes, to you and your future. Yes, to a better way. Yes, to believe in your wildest dreams. Yes, to a very bright future! It takes courage to start from scratch and say yes, this is my new beginning.

It takes courage to forgive, let go and move past your once dark past. We salute courageous heroes. Shine bright! This is your time! This is how I became a hero and buried my villain. It takes courage!

-Ms. Kay Love

From The Beat: We love the motivation and inspiration in this piece! It does take a lot of courage to say both "no" to the norms and "yes" to investing in ourselves. We know you can do it, and are excited to see the future you make for yourself!

I did twenty-two years to regret fully realizing the faulty and distorted beliefs that I adopted growing up.

Making America Worse

I believe that the United States never kept its promise because when I watch the news, I hear that people are being shot, being deported back to the countries where they're from.

The law doesn't treat us equally because of the new United States President, because he's not really making America great again. He's making America worse. I say no, because I hear and see people being harassed, punished, killed, and more.

-Ian

From The Beat: There's a lot of hard truths in this piece. How should people be held accountable for their actions, besides being "punished" or locked up?

Equal Justice

Is there equal justice?

Some may say there is

But the world I come from

I don't see it

There's so much unjust

An unjust criminal justice system

An out of control homeless epidemic

A public school system that needs a makeover

A government that's corrupt from the local to the president

To medical insurance, most can't afford and go without

The unjust is if you don't have the money

You don't get your needs met

If you don't have money

You're out of work

No home, no loan

No school, no education

No support, no advancement

No job, no money

No citizenship, deported

Where's the justice?

Where's the peace?

Hopefully in our life time

We will live in a world

We can all embrace and feel good about.

-D

From The Beat: You point out such important injustices. We share those questions and those hopes with you. There are always opportunities to find peace within the chaos. Where do you go to find peace?

That Advice

The worse advice I was given growing up was not actual advice as in someone sitting me down and telling me "I'm going to give you advice." The advice came through hearing people speak to each other around me. By hearing the adults and the homies say things like "I'm a even the odds!" Meaning, "I'll use a weapon if I'm scared of you," "If I can't have some, I'm take that shhh." "If they disrespect me I'm eff that fool up!" "I'll knock him out!" "I'll blast that fool! Peel his cap!" etc. etc.

Hearing this kind of language, I started to tell myself when I run into a situation, this is how I'll deal with it. My thoughts became my words, my words became my actions, my actions became my habits and my habits became my character, which contributed to me making the choice to go along to commit murder, ultimately leading me to getting life in prison at the age of fifteen.

I did twenty-two years to regret fully realizing the faulty and distorted beliefs that I adopted growing up. The bad thing about it, it was my choice to allow myself to accept bad advice. I still have that choice today, but do I?

-William

From The Beat: We commend you for recognizing how your thoughts eventually lead you to your actions. How we think of ourselves and the world dramatically impacts how we conduct ourselves. This experience, and this wisdom, gives you the power now to guide others.

TAY Clinic/Transitional Age Youth Services, San Francisco, CA

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

From The Beat: Here's the latest installment of writings from our friends at the TAY Clinic in the Mission District in San Francisco. Our writing and conversation workshops continue to get stronger with each session! We love the conversations we are having and the consistent participation from the TAY clients and staff! We truly appreciate the honesty coming from our writers and the tasty pizza and soda served at each session!

School in Georgia

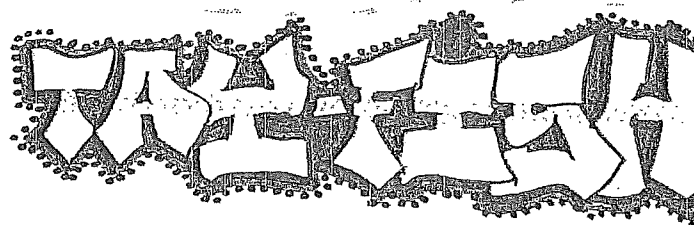
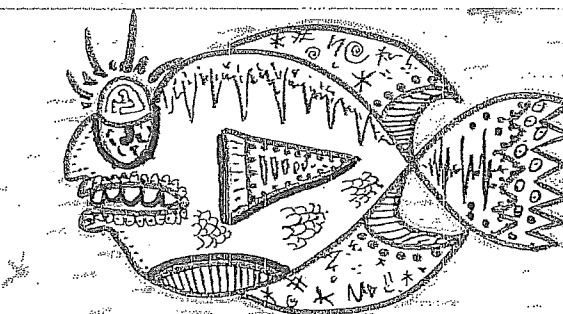
I went to school in Georgia, a very open area with lots of space, trees and stuff. Kids were cool, girls used to like me but I was too shy. Popular kids used to like me but I chose to hang with people that were considered "not cool" so they used to judge me, but the classes were fun. My favorite was computer class. I used to get off-task and play online, skip class, skip school, hang around with the wrong crowd, but all in all it was fun.

-David
From The Beat: You had a very unique experience going to school somewhere so different than San Francisco! What's the biggest cultural difference you see between here and there?

Tick, Tock

When will this be over?
It's taking too long
The teacher is hella boring
I hate this subject
Oh my...
Thirty more minutes to go
Tick tock, tick tock
The teacher will not stop talking
Shhh
Twenty minutes to go
Nineteen minutes to go
Eighteen
What, a pop quiz!
I have to write an essay
Next fifteen minutes
Oh my
I don't know the answers
I wasn't paying attention
This is painful
Everyone is writing
Except me
Minutes tick by
Teacher proclaims. "Times up!
Turn your papers in
See you tomorrow."
My paper only
Has my name on it
I blew it
I didn't listen
I didn't participate
I was waiting for
Nothing but to
Get out of class
I'm out of class
Now
Worrying
Worrying about my grades
I need to talk to this teacher
To explain
Explain what?
Waiting
Thinking
Trippin'
Waiting

-D
From The Beat: We love the creative flow of this piece! You've done an excellent job of painting a picture of just how annoying waiting can be. Has all the waiting you've had to do make you a more patient person?



Had to Keep Pushing

In 2013, when my mom passed away, I was all messed up. I stayed taking drugs, fighting, and being self-destructive for the next couple years. I went between extreme highs and extreme lows. I crashed cars and broke windows.

I felt hopeless, but I had to keep pushing. If it wasn't for those hard times, I never would have made the positive choices that got me to where I am today. I needed the despair to appreciate the good things in life.

-Appreciative J
From The Beat: We appreciate how honest and real with yourself you are in this piece. You experienced something so awful, and coped in the ways you knew how. We're glad you're in a better place now, and that your hardship has given you perspective.



Parents' Corner

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

From The Beat: How awesome is it to have Kim Lawrance back in the pages of The Beat Within. This amazing youth/criminal justice advocate and friend rises to the occasion to give us holiday/yearend inspiration. Kim has shared numerous articles around her journey and her daughters, who as a juvenile was tried as an adult and is currently serving time in the Lowell Correctional Institution, which is a women's prison located in Marion County, Florida. We are moved and impressed by Kim and Taylor's hard work. They are both inspirations to us! Read on! Kim writes us from Winter Haven a city in Polk County, Florida.

It's Your Time

Hello,

As I reflect on this year and the past couple of years of my daughter's incarceration, I've realized how much we've both learned. As hard as this has been for both of us, it has been a growth experience, a turning point in both of our lives. Am I agreeing with incarceration? Absolutely not, especially for youth. Prevention is key and programs to help families and children prior to incarceration is what the goal should be. Events in people's lives affects individuals differently. Incarceration can be a downward spiral that creates a label that is extremely hard to overcome for some, while others will put it behind them and turn their lives around. The difference will depend on your attitude and decisions, how you do your time and the support you have and who you spend your time with on the inside and out. It is easy to feel angry and that's understandable. It's easy to not be accountable, but you must. We all must be accountable, individually, and as a society.

I, as a parent of an incarcerated youth, am being accountable by being a role model for others and advocating for a better criminal justice system. As an advocate, I will not sit around and whine about my problems or display anger. This doesn't mean I'm never angry, but what I do with my anger is what counts. I believe we must get up and do what's right and teach what's right by being role models. We must also be the voice for those that do not have one and turn the ear of legislators towards us and not away from us.

I personally have made advocacy my mission. Aside from a full-time job, I'm on a coalition team called "Keep Kids Learning" with ACLU-FL. Our goal is to end the school-to-prison pipeline. I'm also a lead of a coalition to end direct filing of children in Florida with the SPLC.org. I am also an outreach coordinator for Florida Cares Charity that advocates to help improve the lives of the incarcerated through legislation and programs. I speak with legislators and speak on panels. I also mentor and speak at the local jail and speak at "at-risk" schools

and of course, I enjoy writing for "The Beat Within."

To make sure that I am educated on these topics, I went back to school and I'm finishing up my dual Master's in Criminal Justice specializing in Corrections and Offender Rehabilitation and Criminal Analysis this semester. While I do realize that personal experience is the most important and the most passion-driven piece of it, I wanted to study the research to know what works and what has failed so that when I speak with or write to legislators and corrections, I'm offering experience and factual research so that they will listen.

I do believe that my "supermom" powers have led my daughter to be a role model prisoner and of course she has her own individual self-motivation. She is a "blue hat" which means she is a leader in their youth program in prison. She helps train the new girls, the "orange hats" and helps guide the ones that need a little guidance, the "yellow hats". She is also taking a college course, a culinary class and is on the drill team. I do believe that no matter what bad decisions she made before her incarceration, this turning point mixed with support, her motivation and her decision to find God has led her to do above and beyond what is expected of her and has resulted in her making her time positive, making good decisions and not letting her time do her.

Whether you have family support or not, please know there are tons of advocates out here, individuals and organizations, that are your voices. We hear you and are listening and are hard at work. I'm looking forward to the New Year. We will make change happen, but first you must be accountable. Be strong, stand out and shine your light. Don't let it break you. This is your time!

Lastly, I will be planning a trip to come out and attend a Beat Within workshop.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

-Kim Lawrance, Polk County, Florida

An Early December Email

First off I want to thank each and every one of you who make it possible for my articles to get published and I want to thank all of you readers who read and listen to my words. You honestly don't know how much it means to me to have my voice heard.

OK, I want all of you to listen to me, this bull-shhh between us human beings has got to stop! Why do we find it necessary to hate on one another because we are "different"? I have lived almost 50 years on this planet and I (like you) have seen some gruesome things that we humans have done to one another and I do not understand why?

We are all human beings and we are all trying to survive on this planet we call Earth. So please tell me why we all can't find a way of getting along and working together and making this place better for our future generations!?

2019 is here, so why not make it the best year ever and stop with all this hatred and fear of one another!

It's funny, I have watched vehicles get safer and better. I have seen technology get smarter and better. I've watched medicine advance and get better. I have watched everything around us advance and become better, but the only thing I have not seen get better is how the human race treats each other, and to be truthful, this needs to stop!

Why not make 2019 the best year ever and show our future kids that us humans can and will find a way of treating each other better.

It shouldn't matter what a person's skin color is, or what they believe in, or who they chose to love or where they are from, all that should matter is that we are human beings trying to survive here on

From The Beat: We love that our friend Melissa Lambert out in Michigan loves to reach out to us readers and give us a taste of her life, as well as her concerns for a better world. We are truly grateful to having Melissa in our lives. We all benefit! We hope you readers will take a moment to read her message. She speaks volumes. We could not agree with her more. Thanks for all your work this past year, Melissa, see you in 2019!

earth. At the rate it's going, the only thing we are showing our future generations is how to hate.

I remember growing up and how you could pick up any stranger and give them a lift in a car, or you could stop and help someone stranded on the side of the road. Now many don't dare help anyone, because one fears for their safety, and I'm sorry but none of us should have to live in fear!

I currently live in a college town. Often when I catch the news, all I see are stories of students who are leaving disturbing hate symbols or notes on someone's door! OMG, SERIOUSLY! These kids (young adults) who are attending college are being taught hate and now they are showing it. I'm sorry but it's true, when we are told we are a product of our environment.

I turned into my parents by the way I was raised, so trust me when I tell you that if you show or teach your children the wrong way of life they will follow in your footsteps. I suggest, instead of letting those footsteps go down the road of hate, try going down the road of love and let's all do our part and teach our children that just because someone is different then you, it's ok.

Our world is getting to be a very scary place, hell you can't go

continued on next page

couple months ago. This poem really made me think about myself and the things I have in my life that I take for granted. When I read it, this poem gave me chills. While society tends to portray all those incarcerated as merely violent beings, I have learned that this notion is far from the truth. Those incarcerated do have something to offer society, in fact there is so much talent, passion, and joy that is hidden away. Society needs to stand by it's youth rather than shunning them away.

Understanding The Writers of The Beat Within

It is important to me that I got this chance, and I wish more people could because I now see these people, who have been involved with incarceration, as individuals. Before having narratives to base my image off of, I saw incarcerated people as one group. I didn't know enough about any of them to alter my image of a group into individual people who share this one thing in common: incarceration.

Sometimes it was difficult to read someone's words and just keep typing because I felt like I was minimizing their experience. I didn't want their stories to only be words that I see and then type onto a document. Some stories took me longer to write, not due to their length, but their depth.

I hope to continue involvement with *The Beat Within* beyond the time my school has provided because I want to keep helping these writers' voices be heard and I want to keep adding more individual narratives to the small group I've gathered during my time with *The Beat Within*.

I want to say thank you to Simone and David for coordinating with the students at Urban because not only have they given the people in The Beat Without program a platform for their voice, but they have given Urban students a chance to hear these narratives and learn from the writers.

-Sally, Urban School of San Francisco

We hope you enjoyed these two essays by our young friends as much as we did. We certainly hope this is not the last time we hear from them either. With that said, writers of The Beat Within, please know your words truly go beyond the walls – juvenile halls and prisons, schools and organizations you are writing from. You are being heard, so take advantage to teach and share with the world! See you all soon.

Last year, I took a Constitutional Law class at my high school. Through this experience, I was able to formulate a more nuanced understanding of the US judicial system, as I now understand that this system is broken. We live in a society in which criminalization and incarceration are the goals while rehabilitation is disregarded. Thus, many institutions neglect to improve society as they fail to support those incarcerated along a path of healthy progression.

I left the class with a desire to learn more, to take my interest outside of the classroom, and provide support in any way that I could. I chose to intern for The Beat Within because I believe that rehabilitation programs are a vital step necessary for those incarcerated to become effective members of society. Furthermore, rehabilitation programs such as writing and art classes give those incarcerated an opportunity to learn new skills, expand their passions, and find ways to channel their thoughts and feelings productively. The Beat changes lives by giving a chance to those who felt otherwise lost, hopeless, or already too far gone.

Although I am not forming face to face relationships, and the people writing to The Beat do not know who I am or that I am reading their work, I feel an internal connection to these individuals. Opening a packet and reading the pages in front of me is like holding a portal to someone who I otherwise would never have come into contact with. The moment in which my experience is the most informative and transformational is when I sit in my school's student center, typing the words sent to me from a penitentiary while my ears are filled with the sound of my conversing classmates.

Many of the pieces I read speak to society as their audience, advocating for opportunities for youth to get out of the hood, to get an education, and to make a life for themselves that doesn't involve going to prison.

They aren't saying forget the system, they are saying change the system, fix the system. They are urging us to establish programs that help at-risk youth, to provide increased school funding, and to foster a greater sense of care and respect for people of color from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Here I am, standing between the world within and the world outside. I look up and see privilege and money and power, a stark contrast to the words in front of me.

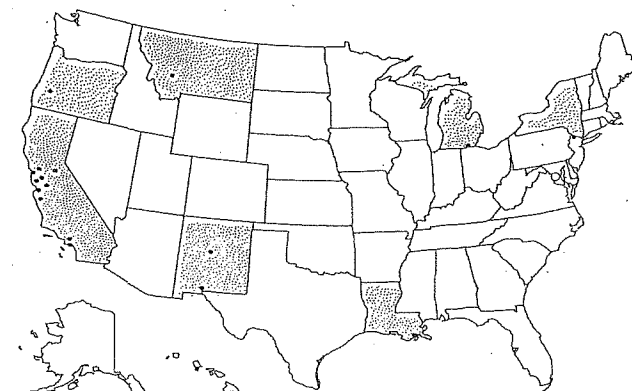
The work I read is not only informative and powerful, but also eloquent and personal. From stories to letters to poems, I am constantly engrossed in whatever it is that has been written.

The most touching piece I received was a poem called "The Lent," by R. Bankston aka Nephew, from San Quentin State Prison. The end is the part that stuck out most to me:

*"What I wish I never lent
got spent, bent and misplaced
It still bug me to this day*

In the mirror asking "Why you give it away"

These last four lines have stuck with me since I read them a



The Beat Within workshop locations



The Beat Within



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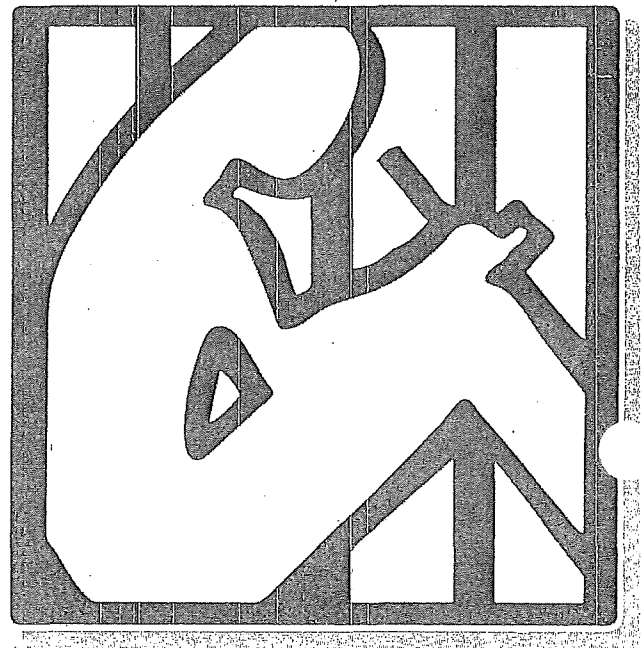
2018 YEAR-END ISSUE!



When my father wrote to me from prison, I felt joyful, because I needed some advice from a father figure. After I read the letter I cried because he told me that I was making him hurt with my life decisions.

The day that my baby brother died, a part of me died too, but his death also brought me to life. His death forced me to see, feel and realize something I never did. It made me take a hard look at myself, to see, feel, realize and understand what I did, and what I made Tammy's family feel and how I destroyed their lives. My baby brother's death showed me the ugliness of myself, placing me in Tammy's family shoes, and how their lives were affected. My baby brother's death gave me the gift of "empathy" which triggered me to never be that uncaring person ever again.

read the rest of Joseph Weathington's BWO piece on page 64



Earl Warner

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

This next mighty writer is coming through with some knowledge for our eyes to behold. Whether you believe in a higher power and no matter what religion and cultural background you come from, we can all come to terms with the fact that there is a greater purpose to life than what meets the eye. There is something spiritual, and we need that spirit to manifest in a positive way while we spend our time here on earth. Earl Warner is a very knowledgeable writer and when he writes he writes from the soul. This week is no different as he blesses us with these soulful words of wisdom. He sends us his work from the RJ Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego, California.

It Was Once Said

I once heard it said, "If God gives you a chore, you better do it well. Or down the street of the years, you may not like yourself at all."

Giving thought to this idea, I have come to realize, that indeed, we have been given the chore, of reconstructing the mind-set, reflected in our Adam. Thereby determining the success of the process of Adam's creation. In that Adam's frame of mind, mentality, had so been implanted as part of the process. As required, to serve as the substance of character, and personality, which amounts to the capacity to reflect a likeness in God's image, and thereby establish ourselves as His, Sons and Daughters. On the various stages of life we come to stand as experience.

Falling to take such a chore seriously enough, certainly must result in our failure to work and strive, towards growth of knowledge, and understanding, which will serve me best in the development of a character, and personality, worthy of Him, as my Father.

And to consider whether, or not, I could like myself much, after having somehow come to see the light, of the truth, that such an opportunity existed in my lifetime, of which I chose to ignore, or was completely unaware of? I must admit, not a feeling of happiness, or contempt, but of deep depression, would naturally be the effect I experienced.

"Yes, you are not perfect, we know, and God will still love you, regardless!" It was said. And I thought: however, might anyone content themselves with walking, and flying, fails to inspire? Or become so content with the state of imperfection, that even when confronted with a realization, of the way, and means, of developing a state of perfection, they are not inspired? And even though a reward, of actually experiencing a state of perfection, as life; an exercise of free will, is promised.

"But think of it, that's just his own part. Then what about you? About you?" it was said.

And it was in this question, that I first began to sense, the magnitude, of life force energy, being held forth to us. To those, who would come to feel, in their hearts, the desire, to devote themselves to a purpose. Of exercising our own wills, towards His will, through us in the creation of life's process. In accordance with His desire, of, and for, us. By His design. Realize our own fulfillment, by being, becoming His fulfillment, of the promise of life.

The life force energy held forth to us, then, is The Spirit, of Love of giving, from within ourselves, that which will cause a condition of life's environment.

If his part, imparted to us, as the inner nature of our beings, is implanted within by virtue of Adam's design, then, what about us? Provides a question of how much we desire to know as much about

ourselves that actually consist of the nature of His being. How strongly we focus our attention upon the ways, and means, of realizing his greatness present within us, as instructions, extended by His word.

Even for a mere chance, of actually discovering within us, a real power, of self-knowledge, and understanding; a power of grace, a power of mercy, a power of character traits, a power of personality, a power which overcomes all our shortcomings, a power of personality. A power which liberates us by elevating our levels of consciousness, above, and beyond the boundaries erected by the mid-sets of which we have either constructed ourselves or have allowed to be constructed for us by others.

"Sometime, when you look into the silence, in front of you there will be a void, the longest void of deeds (you did not do them ever) staring at you steadily, with the piercing eyes of truth." It was said.

And within my own heart, I felt, an absent awareness, of light, of His truth, within us, the light which reveals to us the true nature of life, is obscured.

Therefore, there must come a day for each of us, when by virtue of our own experiences, we have come to understand, that either our actions, or failure to act appropriately, have served as elements, even as aspects of our personalities, and characters, which have contributed to the creation of our experiences. A time of which, all that we have been unaware of, that which we have not gained an insight of, has not become visible to us, is made not only visible, but part of our own true knowledge, and understanding. Seen in the light reflected by our own experiences, first, and then clearly observable in the experiences of other human beings.

Life, as a process of growth and development. Gathering those revelations of our inner truths, which reveal the nature of outer truths, of reality. Even as time, space, and circumstance will naturally alter the face, and/or fabric, of reality, while sustaining its very existence, eternally.

We then must suffer many deaths, and rebirths, in life's process of evolving in states consciousness. The process of natural change; observable in all nature outside of us, is then observable within us. Life struggles, of rebirth, redevelopment at each stage of realizing each step towards His throne within us.

In this way, I am able to understand the idea of truth. Like a light which is too strong, and powerful, to cover-up. Or even obscure. A light which pierces the dull grey matter, of a consciousness yet to be reawakened by our efforts to complete God's chore. "If God gives you a chore, you better do it well..."

Yet, most importantly of all, having heard these things said, is the realization; that life in the universe, God, holds much more promise, then anyone of us may become aware of, in those of our experiences which have so contributed to the state of our consciousness, at any given point of the living process we live.

Any chore, meant, or intended to reawaken us to a state of consciousness, of strength, and power, is a chore worth both, having, and doing, our very utmost, to do well, at the completion of such a chore.

And, I must say, that I somehow feel strongly, as to become a true conviction of my heart, and soul, that what I am, thinking, as having been so compelled by "I've once heard it said..." it right, in accordance, with the will of the universe, God. To be played out on life's grand stage.

I must admit, not a feeling of happiness, or contempt, but of deep depression, would naturally be the effect I experienced.

Beat Within Outro

We would like to take this time to thank all of our writers for all of your contributions, as without you all, there is no Beat Within. The Beat appreciates your honesty, sincerity and all of your efforts in trying to help out by offering words of encouragement, motivation and inspiration. Only by your contributions can we all learn to be better people and role models in our communities. We will continue to educate the world in hopes of bringing change, one word at a time, one message at a time, and one Beat at a time. Thanks again for your participation. The Beat Within and its staff wishes you all a wonderful start to the New Year of 2019, and we expect you all to stay hopeful, positive and motivated to complete your goals. One love to you all!

THE BEAT WITHOUT! Omar Nelson Jr.

A Letter To Me

How will you ever learn if you're never willing to listen
 Making stupid choices
 Is why you're here now in that position
 You don't have all the answers
 No one ever does
 What you need to do is
 Stop holding on to what was
 The past is gone, but never forgotten
 But holding on to what was
 Is why your life is rotten
 What's in the Terrace to go back to
 Smoking weed, hanging in Building Ten
 That's nothing to do
 After a while doing the same thing every day
 Gets depressing
 And now that you've done it
 Hopefully Omar learned a lesson
 The bottom line
 Is whether or not
 You're in jail, you got got
 Joy riding in stolen cars
 Is dumb not fun

And now you made it worse
 Charged with a gun
 Maybe your stay
 Will bring you to your senses
 To learn, and man up, 'cause these are your consequences
 So, this is definitely
 What I needed to think about
 Preparations I need to make
 While in and when I get out
 'Cause if I get out
 And do the same
 I now
 Must own my blame
 So, I am seriously
 Thinking about
 A plan A, B and C
 When I get out
 While I'm here
 I need to know
 To use this time

Omar Nelson Jr. is back with some more poetry for all you poetry readers and writers. This week he gives a taste of two poems as we venture through his mind and thoughts. Writing helps us release stress and at the same time helps us educate readers on why we feel the way we feel. We would like to give props to Omar for being fearless in expressing his feelings so openly. He sends us his thoughts and good poetry from the Bridgeport Correctional Center in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

To help me grow
 It's time I stop
 Being blinded
 To learn
 I am now open minded
 I am now focused
 On real concerns
 I am now
 Willing to learn
 Being here
 I can't fake
 So, I'm now down to
 Learn from my mistakes
 I'm taking responsibility for my situation
 Owning that, if I don't change
 I will be back.

As I search within I'm doing some self-evaluation learning.

Learning

I'm doing some real deep thinking
 As to why I'm here
 Owning that it's my fault
 So, this is how I'm taking
 Control of my thoughts
 Being easily influenced is mainly the reason
 That lead to acts of treason
 Now I see that my actions
 Were for sure wrong
 By following other people
 To fit in, to get along
 Having a gun

Is not the solution
 And that's why I'm now in an institution
 Because had I used the gun
 The rest of my life
 Would have been done
 For something not intended
 My whole life would have ended
 So, I'm glad I'm here
 To see my errors
 Because now I am thinking clearer
 Why did I have a gun that's the question?
 Did I really need it for protection?
 As I search within
 I'm doing some self-evaluation learning.

I'm confident I will do better Beginning with getting myself together

Thoughts

It's really not, that I'm older
 I just turned 18 and haven't yet
 Figured out, which way to go
 I don't know what to do
 Or what I want to be
 As I try to understand
 My journey
 So, I'm glad, that I now wonder
 Because I don't want to be, just
 Another number
 My thoughts I am trying
 To get centered
 What I really need
 Is a life coach or a mentor
 It's sad that I can't just
 Go to my mother and father
 But I get this feeling
 That they don't want to be bothered
 We talk, but never about

Anything significant
 And our tomorrows
 Never seem different
 I really wish they would just listen
 In our relationship, something is missing
 Not all the blame do I put on them
 My grandmother really did
 Most of my parenting
 So, for the most part, they weren't there
 Giving me the feeling that they didn't care
 So, I have to focus
 On a career
 The truth is, I have no idea
 Time to do some soul searching
 Time to figure out
 What needs to end
 And what needs to begin
 Searching writing is a start
 It's time I search my heart
 It's time I believe I can
 It's time I start acting like a man

To thine self be true
 I have a lot of growing to do
 I know I have a purpose
 What I intend to be will surface
 I'm now in the discovering process
 That's a step towards progress
 I'm doing a thorough inspection
 By asking myself all sorts of questions
 What is it that I like doing the most
 And what am I really good at doing
 These are the questions
 I'm now reviewing
 I'm confident I will do better
 Beginning with getting myself together
 The reason why I'm thinking realistic
 I refuse to be another statistic
 My grandmother Eartha got me out of the hood
 I'm proving to myself that I can do good
 I'm looking at my faults
 Replacing them with positive thoughts!

Joseph Weatherington

THE BEAT WITHOUT

continued from previous page

Struggling Youth Project.

During my incarceration of twenty years I have gained my GED, achieved an Associate's Degree in three different majors, made the honor's list in spring 2015, and the dean's list in spring 2017. I'm in the application/registration process of enrolling at CSU-Los Angeles in its Bachelor's Program.

But, what I could do was change me, how I think, how I react, how I behave, and how I live. I didn't have the tools then as I do now. I didn't ask for help then as I can now. I no longer carry the burdens of my past,

but I have learned from my past. I am aware and conscious of myself and my life has purpose.

Although I am serving a sentence of life without the possibility of parole (LWOP), I can be of service to others, help those as I was helped, be the change I want to see in the world, and build community based on honesty, respect, and caring. This is my only way of giving back, and making a living amends to my victim Tammy Sharel Ephrim and to her family, and to honor my baby brother, Edward L. Jones Jr.

A once in a lifetime opportunity is hard to pass up, and by chance they tend to present themselves at the right moment. Jason Samuel has always been a spirited writer and participant in our Sunday writing workshops, sharing with us his wisdom and life's experiences, but this week he is blessing us with an amazing story about getting to meet the person you would least expect, his victim. Jason shares with us the experience of corresponding with the police officer he attempted to kill, and how the police officer and his wife forgave Jason and the peace that came from this experience overall. Let's hear about his breathtaking experience, and Jason Samuel's Blessing, as his blessing could very be your own personal blessing. He sends us his story from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

Jason Samuel

graciously comforted me with his love and understanding. We sat down on the chairs and spoke about self-help groups that I have participated in like; Kid CAT, The Beat Within, and No More Tears.

Also, I mentioned about obtaining my GED in prison. I wanted Tom and Christy to know that I was not the seventeen-year-old kid who committed a senseless act against them. Tom looked directly into my eyes and told me that he was proud of the mature and responsible person I have become.

At the end of the meeting, I was told that Christy wanted to say something to me. I was very surprised about that. When I saw Christy walking towards me, my heart was beating like a drum, because I didn't know what to expect. I stood up straight and placed my hands behind my back. I thought Christy wanted to slap me, but I was pleasantly surprised, she wanted to give me a hug.

During the hug, she said, "I am very proud of you!" We both cried...and cried...and cried. I apologized and thanked her for coming to see me. It was a special moment for me to be able to share this restorative justice experience with Tom and Christy. It was the best day of my life.

Tom, Christy and I will continue our restorative justice practice by sharing our stories to whomever will listen. In my opinion, restorative justice is about telling the truth, humility, respect, care, personal healing, honesty, and being accountable for my actions. If you are able to reach out to the survivors of your crime and make amends, I encourage you to do so, because you're able to give these individuals some healing.

Even if they don't want to hear from you, then find some healing for yourself in the process. Restorative justice brings dignity, community, and humanity to all of us if we allow ourselves to have an open heart and mind to receive it.

Looking back, the restorative justice video shown in 2014 was a sign from God. I recognized that God granted my prayers by me being able to restore hope, inner peace, and freedom with two very special people. Tom and Christy Morgan gave me a once in a lifetime opportunity to truly practice restorative justice in its finest form. They are my angels and I will always appreciate their support, forgiveness, and compassion. Thank you!



My Blessing

Good evening. My name is Jason Samuel, and I am here today wanting to share with you a personal story about the true practice of Restorative Justice and how it plays a part in my life.

In 2014, I participated in the Restorative Justice Roundtable here in San Quentin State Prison and it was one of the first self-improvement programs I was involved in. During the course of the program, a video was shown about a police officer being shot at by an assailant. As a result of the shooting, the police officer lost one of his eyes. I was both shocked and surprised by the video because I also shot at a police officer.

In the video, the police officer wanted to meet the shooter to find answers into what made the assailant want to kill him. The officer and the shooter agreed to meet each other for a year and gradually developed a strong bond and friendship. Shortly, they met for the first time to have a dialogue about the shooting on that day that ultimately changed their lives. I could not believe what I was seeing, but I was glad that they found healing from past pain. It was wishful thinking to think that something like this can happen to me, but I held onto the hope that one day it will.

On July 26th, 2017, I went to my parole board suitability hearing and received a three-year denial. I was disappointed and hurt by my parole board denial, but a miracle happened. After the parole board hearing, Tom Morgan, the police officer I tried to kill on April 13th, 1997 wanted to meet me.

At first, I was nervous and didn't know what to think about Tom's request. Eventually, we both wanted to meet each other, and the process began. A few months after Tom's request, I was contacted by Martina and Sonia who are representatives of the Victim Offender Dialogue. We sat down and discussed about the program and how it works. I was asked to write a letter to Tom and he responded. We continued the letter writing correspondence and we developed a bond between each other.

Before our first in person meeting, I was told the Tom's wife Christy did not want to be a part of this restorative justice dialogue. I recognized the pain and fear that I've caused Christy and the Morgan family. I felt a lot of guilt and shame for my actions in terrorizing the community and the Morgan family and their friends.

I was asked to write a letter to Christy, which I was more than happy to do. We continued to correspond. On May 9th, 2018, I was informed that Christy will attend the scheduled meeting between Tom and me, she wanted to be there to support her husband. Christy was reluctant and skeptical about the meeting.

On May 11th, 2018, I walked into San Quentin visiting room to meet Tom while (news network) CNN was recording the event. I was nervous and in disbelief to see the man who I tried to kill twenty-one years ago standing across from me. I reached over to Tom and gave him a hug and told him how sorry I am for the hurt and pain I've caused him and his family.

With so much guilt and shame, I immediately began to sob. Tom

THE BEAT WITHOUT

Joseph Weatherington

Transformation of A Murderer

Ten years in prison. I was housed at Pelican Bay State Prison (in Crescent City, CA). The institution was on lockdown. I was called to see the Chaplin on Monday, June 9, 2008. The Chaplin told me that my baby brother, Edward was shot and killed. I felt as if a lightning bolt struck my body as I fell after hearing this news. I called my baby sister, Tasha and listened to her describe the circumstances of our brother's death. My eyes watered because I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

I went back to my cell, told my cellie what I just found out and when we come off this lockdown, I'm out of here. I called out to the tower officer and asked if I could call my family. Him knowing the situation, allowed me to use the phone. After talking to my mother and other siblings. I asked the tower officer if I could go on the concrete yard to be alone for a while. He did so.

On the concrete yard. I cried, worked out, shadow boxed, cried, shadow boxed, worked out, shadow boxed, cried, shadow boxed, worked out, shadow boxed, cried, talked to myself, blamed myself, cried, beat myself up, and cried. I was going through it. I was filled with anger, grief, pain, sorrow, resentment, and revenge because my baby brother was shot and killed by his own homies.

I was mentally, emotionally and physically exhausted. I sat down on the toilet, and like a ton of bricks, it hit me. The way I was feeling at that moment, I made Tammy's family feel the exact same way. The hurt, pain, grief, sadness, resentment, anger, and those unanswered questions as to why and how this could happen and the immeasurable loss. I was sitting there feeling that way toward those who shot and killed my baby brother, a feeling what Tammy's family was feeling toward me the night I shot and killed their loved one.

My baby brother's death woke me up from an unrealistic coma. It helped me see that I had been sleepwalking through my life on some whoa it's me. I'm mad at the world because my daddy isn't here, just to end up no different than him because I left my children when they were very young, like my father left me. I was ignorant to the fact that I had a baby brother who needed me, like I needed my father.

The day that my baby brother died, a part of me died too, but his death also brought me to life. His death forced me to see, feel and realize something I never did. It made me take a hard look at myself, to see, feel, realize and understand what I did, and what I made Tammy's family feel and how I destroyed their lives. My baby brother's death showed me the ugliness of myself, placing me in Tammy's family shoes, and how their lives were affected. My baby brother's death gave me the gift of "empathy" which triggered me to never be that uncaring person ever again.

On that day I made the conscious decision to change. I had no idea how I was going to start this change, but I was certain that I no longer accepted the way things were. I prayed, asking God to forgive me and asking God's help.

On July 1st, 2008, I was on the bus being transferred to Calipatria State Prison, twenty days after receiving the news of my baby brother's death. Pelican Bay was still on lockdown and I took that as a sign from God answering my prayers by removing me from a hostile environment.

I arrived at the Calipatria State Prison on July 2nd, 2008. It was a two-day bus ride from Northern to Southern California. We laid over at Corcoran State Prison. It was a long bus ride, but it gave me time to really think about the changes I needed to make in my life and how I will do it while in prison.

There were no self-help classes running at Calipatria, but they had a variety of in-cell study courses on the institutional channels where you can earn a certificate. The first class I signed up for was Stress Management. Then I took Victim Awareness, Anger Management, Parenting From The Inside, Life Skills: Learning a Living, and 5 Secrets to Finding a Job. I was able to start working on myself. I accepted full responsibility for my actions and held myself completely accountable for killing Tammy, an innocent human being. The guilt and shame really started to work on me.

Calipatria ended up discontinuing the in-cell study courses offered on the institutional channels, so I was unable to take other courses. I worked in the kitchen and read a lot. But, those courses that I did take made me take a step back, take a good look at myself, review everything I had done in my life, question why I reacted the way that I

The impact that we cause on the lives around us is hard to determine at times because sometimes we get the misconception that the world revolves around us. Sometimes we get too caught up within our problems, mishaps, mistakes, that we fail to see that this life is all about what we put forth. We can't let excuses get in the way of us trying to become better people, and education is key. Our next writer, Joseph Weatherington wants to share with us his story and how he got his life sentence. He's not bragging nor boasting about what he did, but what he is doing is giving you a glimpse of the man he used to be, and the man he is today. He made a complete 180 degree change for Joseph and we are proud of him for sharing his story. His story could be yours or of someone you know, and it's important that you hear him out. He wouldn't want any of you to go through same obstacles he did. We would like to thank Joseph for sending us his story and valuable lesson from California State Prison, Los Angeles County, in Lancaster, CA.

did, and how it led me to prison?

On June 5th, 2013 I was on the bus being transferred to CSP-Los Angeles County (Lancaster), Progressive Programming Facility (PPF) yard "A". Although some inmates shunned coming to Lancaster's honor yard, solely for fear of what others will say about them. I didn't care. I disregarded their reasons and excuses and did what I felt was best for me.

Coming to the Progressive Programming Facility (PPF) yard "A", was the best decision I made. I was able to take several self-help classes on a variety of subjects. I also had the opportunity to take in-cell study courses and courses through correspondence. Taking these self-help classes helped me understand aspects of my life that I suppressed. I was able to see, feel, and understand the pain I caused others, the ripple effect of my actions, the trauma I experienced and how these things affected me as a child into adulthood, the madness that I created, my alcoholism, and my detachment from reality.

I completed a registration application for Coastline Community College, and I took my very first college course the spring semester, 2014 (Business CIO: The Legal Environment of Business). The education department had a program developed by the inmates called, "book exchange". If you buy a book, then donate it to the program, you will receive books for future classes. I was sharing a book with another inmate taking the same business class. Before the class was complete, he was put up for transfer. He left the book with me to donate to the program because someone left it to him for the same purpose, so that it could continue.

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) arrived on the yard in August 2015. I was a participant in the very first Basic Workshop, Advanced Workshop, and Training for Facilitators (T4F) workshop. I facilitated my first (AVP) workshop in November 2015. My participation and facilitating AVP workshops had helped change many aspects of my life.

The transforming powers and guide to the Mandal has given me new standards, values, and principles to live by. I respect myself. I care for others. I expect the best from others and from myself. I think before reacting. I seek a non-violent path. AVP, with its exercises, helped me tap into my humanity, let go of my baggage and brought out a gift that I always had within me.

My journey toward change wasn't easy and getting to this point in my life was painful. Facing my fears, dealing with my anger toward my father, my alcoholism, living with the regret of shooting and killing Tammy, another human being, not being able to say goodbye to my baby brother, Edward, the pain, grief, sorrow, anger, and suffering I caused Tammy's family, my family, the community at large, and battling the demons within myself was a terrifying experience.

I am a better man, a better person, and a better human being because of those terrifying experiences. For the first time in my life I have peace in my heart. I let go of an anger that held me hostage most of my life. I can live without alcohol as my crutch. And, I no longer blame everyone or the world for everything that went wrong in my life. More important, I forgave myself.

Today, I have been sober 10 years, 2 months. I instruct three self-help classes, which I was once a participant. I am the Team Coordinator/Senior Facilitator for AVP. I am the secretary for Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). I am the building facilitator for Partnership for Re-Entry Program (PREP). And, I write admonition letters to at-risk youth through our

continued on next page

Lisa Strawn

THE BEAT WITHOUT

When it comes to making a difference in the community it's really up to us to go ahead and make that happen. Change is not just going to come knocking on our door, but what will come knocking on our doors are opportunities to make a difference not only in our lives, but in the lives of others. Our next writer, the talented Lisa Strawn, interviews David Inocencio, founder of The Beat Within. Lisa Strawn not only interviews David but also other Beat Within participants as they too let us know exactly what this publication means to them. Let's hear the thoughts from members of our SQ Beat Within Community. This interview was conducted behind the walls of the infamous San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA, from Journalism Guild Member Lisa Strawn.

The Beat Interview

Twice a month on Sunday for almost five years Dave Inocencio comes into San Quentin to do a writing workshop with inmates for "The Beat Within" publication that he started well over twenty-one years ago in San Francisco, CA.

Dave had met Karin Drucker whom at the time volunteered at San Quentin with the KID CAT group. The first time he saw this amazing program Dave said, "He was blown away."

Dave says, "That for all those who are incarcerated, they matter and have a story and a place for them at the table."

Dave got the idea for "The Beat Within" because he had been working inside the juvenile hall of San Francisco as a social worker and youth advocate for juveniles. Dave said, "That the system would label the kids, but once he saw them, he found that they had dreams, loves, and fears."

The meaning of "The Beat Within" is your soul, your wisdom, for those who don't have a voice. He wasn't scared to go into the jails. It was inspiring for him.

In January 1996, Dave had his first workshop. It was the same year Tupac Shakur was killed. The kids began to tell Dave stories about how Tupac Shakur impacted their lives. And his death helped birth "The Beat Within." Tupac was on the first cover of "The Beat Within."

Miguel Quezada, a former SQ inmate, (now free) helped Dave to launch "The Beat Within" workshop in the beginning, and shortly after Michael Webb (who is now free) and now Michael Mackey and Philippe Kelly continue on to facilitate, and keep "The Beat Within" alive and well inside San Quentin

Michael Webb had this to say, "The Beat Within has helped me to communicate better with others and it was Karin Drucker who believed in me. I've always said, "If you buy something you don't need to impress those with something you don't have, then what good is it. I needed The Beat Within to be a better person."

Each month four subjects are passed out to the group. Everyone has time to write about as many subjects, as they wish. The subjects range from racism, how an adult helped you, alone time- how do you spend it, to name a few. The subjects are then read aloud to the group and the wonderfully dedicated volunteers that come with Dave, every other Sunday.

Michael Mackey, a co-facilitator for the SQ group, said "The subjects passed out have a lot of meaning." Michael spoke about not being with his kids, and even though he isn't around them, don't have any rage, because his voice carries to them to get the message. He said, "The Beat Within has given him a voice for other kids to hear as well."

When I asked Dave about the beginning stages of "The Beat Within" and how he got funding, and volunteers. He said, "That many of his friends wanted to help." Which have led to wonderful partnerships, from Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in Oakland, to the California College of Arts to name a couple. And now there are 25 outlets of "The Beat Within" in the USA, including Hawaii, New Mexico and New Orleans, with well over 100 volunteers.

Dave says, "He has pinch me moments," and doesn't take anything for granted, because he wants to learn from everyone and the volunteers. "It's not about me."

At the most recent San Quentin workshop one of the subjects was alone time, "How Do You Spend It." Hieu Nguyen had this to say, "As a child, I spent a lot of time alone because I had no father." As he watched other kids being picked up after school it bothered him because nobody was there to pick him up. Nguyen turned to gangs to look up to older guys. Nguyen says, "That being in The Beat Within has helped him express those feelings that he had as a kid."

When I asked Dave to talk about one time when someone in the workshop that moved him. He said, "There are many, including the story Hieu Nguyen spoke about."

What Dave wishes for the future of "The Beat Within" is, more funding to support our workshops in the community, juveniles, county jails and prisons.

Dave said, he has no plans to retire and as long as sadly people are incarcerated, we will have The Beat Within as a driving vehicle."

The power of positivity is such a powerful tool. Being positive has a way of changing moods, having an impact on those around you, and it can quickly turn a somber mood into one full of joy and relaxation. We welcome Maurice Murray, a talented writer and a good person overall. Despite finding himself behind the trenches in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, he finds himself in good spirits and wants to sprinkle some positivity in our lives with these two poems he has to share. Without further ado, let's give him a read!

Maurice Murray

The Tribute

I cannot name them all, there are far too many
They stand and fight for all of us, and do not charge a penny
They go by many names, with a single purpose in mind
To help us in our struggles, no matter the type or kind
Never do they judge us, for that is not their place
They will help you with your cause, and never see your face
Advocates and Activist, and Non-Profits to name a few
Foundations, Corporations and Community Organizations too
To many they are our eyes, and always are our voice
And often they make changes for us, where we didn't have a choice
They speak for the unspoken, and walk for the disabled
They are the eyes for the blind, and the hearing for the unable
Often, they are the locksmiths, with the keys to free the imprisoned
And the surrogates to our youth, to help the dreams they envision
It is from our hearts, that I write this tribute, to all of you everywhere
We thank you, they thank you, I thank you because you care.

The Case For Freedom

I left enough evidence for the investigating team
I'm talking education, and not a crime scene
I had a very good motive, although the task was hard
I learned more in the classroom, than I could on the yard
When the opportunity came, I capitalized on it quick
And the benefits I got, were better than hitting a lick
The means I used were pens, paper and lots of books
And before I knew it like bad drugs, I was hooked
I knew all along, that I was heading for a case
For learning under the influence at an intoxicating pace
The forensics team has not issued their final report
And not it's time for me to have my day in court
Guilty as charge, as I heard the judge say
For the actions I've committed, that led to this day
I commend you young man, for acts of learning well done
And I sentence you today, to a lifetime of freedom.

It is from our hearts, that I write this
tribute, to all of you everywhere

THE BEAT WITHOUT! Richie Angulo

I'm Not Ready to Accept Domestic Terrorism

I make an effort to watch the nightly news on TV a few times per week. More to keep up with current events and to ensure that my time in prison doesn't disconnect me with the world.

We all know the routine of news reports. The majority is negative, political leaders blaming each other, the weather causing major disasters across America, and innocent lives dying at the hands of an active shooter.

I can easily focus my words on the senseless killings of thousands of human beings that have plagued our schools, places of worship, concert venues, workplaces, and so on. But my concern and reason for this essay isn't to get assault rifles banned or to increase background checks for individuals that purchase weapons.

I'm extremely horrified to know that students today don't know a world where these acts don't exist as regularly. This sickens me. Since the school shooting of Columbine High School, nearly twenty years ago, these types of senseless acts continue to rob and callous the hearts of our children.

Let me assure you, this is not normal! There once was a time where life in America was adventurous. As a kid, I looked forward to going to school. Math and recess were my favorite subjects. I enjoyed learning and making new friends. The only worries I had rested on whether there was going to be enough daylight, after school, to play a couple innings of baseball in the neighborhood before I had to return home.

In middle school, my life was disrupted when my school made it mandatory that we participate in an earthquake drill. Every October, we

Many of us don't realize just how big of a role we play in our communities until it's too late. Nowadays, times have changed and a lot more senseless and random acts of violence have plagued our neighborhoods, but also the world. Why is it so easy to make the decision to reach for a gun and take someone's life, is a good question. Is it the access to all the guns? Or is it maybe the way that we think. Our next thoughtful teacher, Richie Angulo, is coming through with one heck of a piece about Domestic Terrorism and his plight and mission to put a stop to it! He sends us his positive message from Avenal State Prison in Avenal, California.

all rehearsed the standard "duck and cover" followed by checking in at a designated area where we sat until the all-clear bell rang.

Last week the city of Bakersfield started their new school year. The news reporter was posted up in front of an elementary school reporting on tips a student should take in the event an active shooter makes their way on campus.

We should be ashamed of ourselves! This is no way to welcome a new school year. My fellow Americans, I know we can do better. How about promoting communities where we look out for each other? Communities that instill nurturing values in their citizens. Communities that embrace tenderness and love.

I often wonder if these active shooters would be terrorizing our way of life if they themselves were connected? Connected through school, sports, theatre, religious groups or any other extracurricular activity. When we promote a sense of togetherness and community our communities thrive. This is where you and I need to go so we can establish a new normal.

How about promoting communities where we look out for each other? Communities that instill nurturing values in their citizens. Communities that embrace tenderness and love.

Meshach Palacios

What It Takes To Be A Man

Being a man means protect your loved ones at any cost (necessary). Whether they're right or wrong, at any time, any place (protect your family). Did my dad tell me this? The answer is no, it was my mom. A single mother with four kids, she was mom and dad to us. She tried her best though. She taught me how to play sports (I give her that).

I can still hear my mom's voice, "Meshach! You better stop walking like that. Walk with your back straight. Men stand up straight and walk up straight. I used to get mad at my mom's for that, and I would say, "You ain't my dad!" She would reply, "You lucky I ain't your dad."

Deep down inside I wanted a father figure, but I would never try to express that (because I am a man). Then one day my mom met a man named Tony. Tony was cool. Finally, I said, "I got a father figure someone I can look up to." I wanted to be like Tony, walk, talk, and dress like him. Then Tony started doing drives and would beat My mom 'til she was black and blue. I asked myself, "Is this how a man should be?"

I knew the answer, it was clearly no! At that time, all I could hear in my mind was, "Protect your family, but I didn't have the courage to do so. Then a thought came. I'm not man enough! Then more came, you're a coward, a chump, and a sissy so as the years went by, violence became the norm in my household and the anger kept building within me.

I told myself I would never be like Tony. Little did I know I was

What does it take to be a man you ask? Not just any man, but a man with morals, principles, and values. Our next writer, Meshach Palacios, is bringing up a great topic. What does it take to be that great man or woman, that great example to your family and to your community? How do we get there and where do we turn for guidance? Let's hear Meshach out; as he gives us his thoughts, while giving us a snapshot of who he is and where he is today! He sends us his priceless words of advice from Avenal State Prison in Avenal, CA. We hope this is not the last time we hear from this talented and thoughtful man.

becoming like Tony. My words were cruel, my looks were evil, and my silence made people unwanted. I would steal and rob people with or without violence. Even from my own family and friends. As long as I was doing it for my immediate needs. I was doing what a man is supposed to do for his family.

Then when I saw "Scarface," "Paid In Full," "Belly" and "American Gangster," I wanted to be like these guys from the movies. They had money power respect and the girls. (Shoot that).

All these characters were cold blooded. So, I had to be cold blooded too. Apathy ran through my blood. People would tell me that I am a cold piece and I would just laugh.

Trying hard, "to be the man" got me 50 years to life. All because I believed in all these false beliefs of being a man. I got a little over ten years in and if I can tell my seventeen-year-old self-something before I pulled that trigger, it would be like this: a man does not hurt or kill anybody. He educates himself, He's responsible. He does the right thing whether people are watching or not. He always speaks the truth and puts people before him. A real man loves himself, his family, and humanity.

Trying hard, "to be the man" got me 50 years to life. All because I believed in all these false beliefs of being a man.

Michelle Harris

THE BEAT WITHOUT

We are so pleased to introduce Michelle Harris, who plans on contributing to The Beat for the foreseeable future. Michelle is an author, illustrator and mother of four who was just released last month from the Orleans Parish Prison in New Orleans, Louisiana where she spent five long years. While incarcerated, Michelle kept her self going by writing and illustrating children stories and original southern fairy tales to give to her kids upon regaining her freedom. We are so honored that Michelle found us and can't wait to see what she will continue to create. Congratulations Michelle!

My Story

My name is Michelle Denise Harris. I'm 33 years of age. I'm from New Orleans Louisiana. I was born with three heart murmurs because of the medications my mother was taking for her epilepsy while pregnant with me. My mother and I lived with her mom cause of my mother's sickness. I was verbally abused by my mother's mom and I always had to be competitive with my cousins on my mother's side of the family. My father was always apart of my life to a certain extent because of my mother's mom and her ignorance.

During my teenage years I explored putting myself into difficult situations such as being in relationships with my peers trying to define who I was. After hurricane Katrina I located to Georgia having a better outlook on life and becoming a productive citizen. I graduated from Ashworth University studying medical and dental assisting in 2009. I've always been this person to strive and achieve more in life. Though my emotions lead me to wanting to become a mother of my own children because I enjoyed taking care of other individual's children like they were my own, keeping them months at a time to be a supportive friend

to the ones that I thought had my best heart at interest.

God ended up blessing me with four beautiful daughters. My oldest two daughters are for my ex-husband. I went through a crisis with my first daughter who was born premature at 25 weeks of my pregnancy. She was only on earth for one week then she passed away of complications of not being full term. God then blessed me with our second daughter then my ex-husband and I separated when our second daughter was five months old. After the separation from my ex-husband, I had my two younger children with other fathers and my life began to flash before my eyes. On September 24th 2013, I was taking care of my grandmother who was dying of bladder cancer and I trusted the father of my last daughter to be responsible for my other daughter. While I was away there an accident and one my daughters in my father's custody suffered major trauma and internal bleeding. The legal system held me responsible for this—a crime against my own daughter for which I wasn't present for.

I was held in captivity for five years dealing with individuals I don't know, people whose hearts have been shattered from different life situations. I was fed indescribable food just to have a full stomach. Before eating it I use to say "filet mignon" just to change the setting of my mind to describable and edible food. Lockdown in a cell 20 hours a day and only out for 4 hours, dealing with individuals that have power of authority over others that are supposed to be equals in society. There were also individuals that were held with me in captivity with lost minds, still trying to find their purpose in life with no structure. On September 25th 2018, God answered my prayers as I was obedient in his Holy Ward by fasting and getting wisdom and knowledge of reading God's Holy Word. I am now free and prepared me life

For many of us who have been in the system you know how hopeless one can feel by being stuck behind those walls, stripped of your freedom and away from all of your family and loved ones. Many of us would like to redo things over but may be this is what had to happen for you to realize that you were living your life by the wrong morals and principles. Now, that you have some time, it's time to reflect on the things you were doing wrong and think about what you can do to better yourself. This week we warmly welcome Kid CAT Chairman, S. Dang, who is a wonderful friend of ours, as he drops some knowledge for all of us, particularly those with life terms. Let's hear from S. Dang as he sends us his inspiring message from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

S. Dang

shame, rather an added problem into my life. I realized that they have destroyed me for most of my life in which I have harmed many people in the process. I am responsible for my actions and my poor choices.

To address my issues, I made the decision to let go of my pride and began to seek help from other people. It was one of the best decisions I have made, and it has helped me tremendously. I encourage you to find someone who you trust and start the process of healing and positive change by sharing your stories. You owe this to yourself to be free from the imprisonment of your painful past, so that you may move forward with your life as a truly free person.

In regard to the Board of Parole Hearing (BPH), the commissioners and deputy commissioners have a huge responsibility to keep the community safe. The BPH have an important job to do, so whatever their decisions may be as the Parole Board Suitability Hearing, take it as an opportunity to learn and grow from it.

My suggestion to all lifers is to not view the BPH as advisories, but to view the commissioners as advisories who want to help you. As the commissioners of the Parole Hearing, I can only assume that the commissioners will recognize your trustworthiness, change and the rehabilitated person that you are. Hopefully, you will receive a positive outcome.

I hope the following numbers will offer you a new perspective on how much the BPH has changed since 2006. From 2006 to 2008, there were 139 paroles granted. From 2008 to 2017 over 6,200 paroles have been granted according to the BPH Chief Dr. Kusat. The numbers reflect the major change within the PBH, and lifers are going home.

For lifers who have a lengthy life sentence, please have hope even if it appears hopeless. Anything can happen, and new laws are being passed that benefit lifers. So, stay strong and continue on the path of change so that you may someday return to your family, friends, and loved ones. I wish you and your family the best of luck on your journey.

Dear Lifers

I am writing you this letter in hopes that it will inspire you to find the courage and strength to believe that one day you will return home to your family, friends, and loved ones. Before we are able to return back to society it is important that we must free ourselves from the mental imprisonment of our own mind.

I strongly encourage all lifers to take the time to reflect back to your childhood and explore the significant events that have altered our beliefs and our perception about life. This may be a painful process. However, it will give us answers to many of the puzzling questions we have about our lives in addiction. The process will offer us the course of true change, healing, and freedom.

Unfortunately, many of us lifers (if not all lifers) have experienced emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse during our childhood. The traumatic experience has caused us pain, fear, guilt, and shame.

We have suppressed these negative emotions for many years not realizing how it has affected us. As a result, we became insecure, angry, resentful, bitter, defensive, and withdrawn. For some lifers, they used drugs and alcohol to numb their pain and shame. While other lifers, joined gangs and committed crimes to feel accepted and validated.

As I sit inside these prison walls, I came to the conclusion that drugs and gangs are not the solution to deal with my pain and

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

San Francisco County Jail

Properties Of Man

In a world of destruction, an anxious mother fears her son's growth. So she who expresses anger, expresses love, and with these passions will she bring death to her son's life? For a woman may never understand how to teach a man to be man, for she does not bare the instinctual desires of man.

'Til she is one with herself, can she raise her son in true light? But only will he see in his mother how to love. For a boy who learns the personality of his mother, learns the personality of his lover.

A son who is blind to his love dies, but a mother who is blind to her self's desires, kills him. She does not know the beast who has swallowed her child but blames herself forever. For she who understands the beast, understands herself. A boy who finds love, is one who finds himself, and he has become a man and learned how to love for the second time.

He who confuses love with lust has no balance of his nature and knows not himself, nor what he wants. Also, he who grows with no father, searches for him in the wildness and finds him in hell. The child who is driven away to the outside world is driven away by love from his mother. There will he find who he thinks he is, but she will always know her real child.

He who finds himself in the outside world has no inside, for what he believes he is, is only what he is around.

This is the image of a false man who believes in false love. He who does not understand his heart cannot find true love for himself, and he who does not learn true self-love will love nothing of the land. His passion will forever be driven by anger and frustration.

This is the image of a confused man. He who does not understand his mother's anger grows confused. For he who does not learn to understand, learns to blame himself and hate his mother. As so, he who hates his mother is also he who hates women.

As so, he who hates women is he who hates himself. For he, himself, comes from woman and she is the nurturer of man and life. For a man without this acknowledgement is not a man, but a boy with a beard, who cannot foresee his own death.

-Zéjon Washington

Little One

On the stroke of 11:59pm, an exact minute before midnight, I felt the first contraction. The pain was excruciating, but lucky for me, you wanted to meet me as much as I did you. Two hours and twenty-five minutes later, I had you to my breast, holding you gently.

My sweetest baby girl had finally come out into this wild new world. 10/20/2012, what a special day for a special little one. You're one of a kind, my princess. I can't wait to see you again. I love you so much, Bryleigh.

-Loving Mom

You're one of a kind,
my princess.

I can't wait to see you again.

No Competition

Looking Habitually
Over Accelerating
Various Terror
Errors Everywhere

-Lupe Fiasco

Hope I See the Light

I'm in the county fighting life
I'm tryin' to make this shhh right
Got the DA on my ass
Just hope I see the light.

-Beezy Fa

Alex Charles

From The Beat

Dear BWO Writers,

We appreciate all your effort, dedication, and talent. There is no fee to submit your work. If you are published, you will receive a free copy of the publication your work is featured in. We truly apologize if you did not receive the issue we sent out to you. Sometimes the mail is returned to us or may be confiscated at the institution. We accept submissions of the following kind:

- Poems (2-6 per submission)
- Short stories/ Essays (up to three pages)
- Original song lyrics
- Artwork
- Excerpt of your book (select and provide 2-3 pages for a "sneak peak")

Please, refrain from foul language. Consider the content of your work before submitting as a large portion of our readers are minors. We will not publish lewd, sexist, racist, or hateful language, within reason.

Thank you

We welcome Alex Charles, who sends us a strong message full of spirit and positivity. There's nothing like a good motivational pep talk to get our day going. We all have power, the power to make a change, the power to make a difference and the power to live our lives the way we want to and enjoy it. Embrace every struggle, every obstacle and challenge as we must always be thankful for what we have! Alex Charles sends us his writing from the California Correctional Facility in Tehachapi, CA.

Hello To The Beat Within and It's Readers

Lately, I have been dealing with decisions we all make which sometimes can be our biggest mistake. We can choose to go within or go against the tide. We can come out and stride or we can stay in the dark and hide. Our decision can sometimes be a downfall to our religion.

We make our bed how we like. We can sit all day or sleep our life away. Sometimes our decisions can provoke our innocence. Our decisions can victimize the truth and clarity within. We can make amends, or we can continue to commit sins. Whatever decisions we make, we have to make sure they don't trigger the past. Decisions we make can be decisions that can make our life a better state for us all.

We tend to go through hard things while we are in these circumstances we can't control. Put your mind on something you think you're good at and establish your foundation to move forward throughout this time we all face!! Stay positive and don't allow another person to get you down. One love to you all!

Stay positive and don't allow
another person to get you down.

San Francisco County Jail

THE BEAT WITHOUT

Principal Center

I went to hella schools, but I'm a talk about my probation school. Principal Center was mainey, for real! The school was hella small, but all the kids who went there had it lit. Most of us on probation, so we got violated for almost anything. We got pee tested every Monday (shake my head). So, we stopped smoking, or should I say, some of us.

Sometimes it depended on who your PO was, and everybody knew what PO was cool and who wasn't. But shhh, to me I didn't care.

Principal Center had its ups and downs. But all the kids who went there knew it was lit in many ways, even though it was a probation school.

-June

I Can Hear It Now

It won't be long now, and I can't wait another second for change to come! My eyes and ears are open, and I am waiting in the front row for change to come. I won't miss it, and I won't let it get by me, nope. I'm right here, waiting.

I've waited a long time for change to come, but the good thing is that I'm not waiting alone. When change gets here, I will be so happy and proud of myself for waiting for this day to come. No, I didn't give up and no, I don't cut corners. I just waited and waited. Many people didn't get a chance to see change coming, just hope it was worth the wait for them.

It's going to feel so good to exhale when change gets here. I know all will leap for joy! I can hear it now, "Change is here, change is here," we are all equal now.

-Darrell Buckins

Despair

There was only one point in time in my entire life I would say I felt absolute despair. It wasn't when I was broken up with, it wasn't when I lost a friend, broke a phone (as I've done many times), lost or destroyed clothes or shoes, not even when I was a small child and found myself wandering Disneyland alone (I was just happy to see Mickey and have the freedom to decide which rides I would get on for myself). Not when my father left, not when my mother kicked me out.

Not when I was broke and lost on my own, not knowing what my future held. Not knowing where my next meal was coming from, how I was going to shower, etc. Not even jail did it for me.

I always held hope in my heart. I always knew the strength I possessed, and I could ultimately change the outcome for the better if I got off my ass and did something about my situation. It was my mindset, my mannerisms, my values that kept me whole at the worst moments in my life and kept me pushing forward.

But nothing could've helped or saved me when my grandmother passed. Her death brought upon a pain my few earthly years could not have prepared me for. This was the first time I've lost someone so close to me and I didn't know how to cope. The woman raised me. The majority of happy memories I've had in my life were because of her directly, or she was somehow involved.

She was my biggest support system. She was my motivation to progress my life in a positive direction. I wanted her to be proud and be a witness to my life accomplishments. Without her, life itself seemed meaningless. My soul, mind, and body felt engulfed in an inescapable darkness. I was depressed to the definition of the word, unable to eat, my focus could not be directed to what mattered.

To this day, I am affected by the traumatizing event, but I am better. I understand life better and hold on to the lessons and time spent with her. She made me strong enough to endure, and I will make her proud. I will.

-Tyiron

Follow Suit

My little ones

Number one and two

My little girl "daughter"

My little boy "son" follows suit

Nothing is ever wrong

Coming from one of the two

They are mine

Their bodies I'm entitled to

My little ones

Number one and two

Anything for my children

I will do

My love

My joy

My pain

My tears

My heartache

My creation from God

For me to have for years

My little ones

Number one and two

My little girl "daughter"

My little boy "son"

Follows suit

To my little ones:

If someone ever caused you pain

I will be the hurricane to sweep them away

I will glue your heart together

If ever "broken"

I will heal your pain

Keep the scars as a token

I will wipe your tears

And jar them up for God

Put band aids on your wounds

Then sit back, eat ice cream and watch YouTube

I'll be here for that talk

When the pain

From your boy or girlfriend begins

My little ones

Number one and two

My little girl "daughter"

My little boy "son"

Follows suit.

-LaToya P.

The Brightness

My little sister is the brightness of my life, Tatem.

I wish The Beat Within a happy holiday and a bright new year.

-Monique A.D.

Little Sister

Little sister

Who's shown me so much

Taught me so much

I'm sorry if what I've shown you

And taught you may have been wrong

But I hope that what I've shown you

The most important part

Has taught you love, honesty, loyalty

Trust, respect, and laughter

Because that's all I've ever meant for you to have

Perhaps, hustle harder

Love, your sister.

-Melissa

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Chaves Juvenile Detention Facility, Roswell, New Mexico

From The Beat: We welcome the latest installment of writings from our friends inside the Chaves Juvenile Detention Facility in Roswell, New Mexico. A big thank you to the detention center teacher, Danny, for this important partnership and sharing these latest pieces. We are always thrilled to have Roswell in the pages of The Beat! We look forward to reading more contributions from these thoughtful contributors. A big thanks to all involved!

Choices

The most things I miss about being on the outs would be the food. It is way better on the outs.

I miss being able to see my girlfriend every day, not knowing if someone is trying to get with her or if she has cheated?

It sucks not being able to see my family at the most times I need them.

I'm missing out every day, I'd rather be out doing what I'm supposed to do. CCJDC isn't fun at all....

If I can go back to when I took my first hit or hit my first lick I'd change it all. It wasn't worth thirty minutes, if I could go back I'd change my life. But it's too late now, I live with the struggle, the struggle to get out, all I know is I got to make it out.

-Jay

From The Beat: You can make it out and once you are out, the choice is yours on how you want to live your life. It sounds to us like you are ready to make better choices for yourself, so you can enjoy good food, your girlfriend and best yet, your family. All the best in 2019!

What I want do when I get out

What I want to change once I get out is the people I hang around with. Also, I am going to stop smoking weed because it is causing problems with my probation. I am going to stay off the streets because when I am out there I usually be getting into trouble.

I'm also going to be respectful to others so when I go to school I have no problems with any students. I'm going to start doing all my work and turning it in on time so I could have good grades and show the judge that I can do great. I'm also going to start following the school rules so that I do not get in any trouble.

-Jason

From The Beat: How do you plan to change the people you hang with once you leave the hall? It sounds like you have your work cut out for you, but we think this is something that will truly benefit you in the long run. All the best with school and probation!

When Life Changes for Me

I didn't ever think I was going to be living the life I live now in and out of jail. I was just a kid riding my bike, went home when I was told, even before the sun went down. When I was home I would tell my mom where I was going to be at every hour, then I started to hang around with the wrong people.

I seen them (my friends aka wrong people) as family, someone I would call if I needed help or when something came up they were the people I would go to. We would hang out every day we would be together all the time.

I started to skip school without my parent's knowing. We all did it. We would go to my homie's house, since he didn't go to school. His mom was never there so we stayed and would do things we weren't supposed to. We were carrying guns for our protection, even older guys that I didn't even know would chase us.

I wouldn't tell my parent's they didn't know about anything. I wouldn't tell them.

My mom got a call one time that I had missed school for over a month and she had to go to court. She was so mad, she called me and I told her I was in class, but she knew I was lying once I got home. My

dad whooped me and I took off out from my window mad. It was night already and I stayed out till the next day.

I ended up getting dropped from school so I started to go to a school program. One of my homie's went there also, so we hung out all day and night.

It was all four of us together one night when my homie got both of us caught. We had no way out. The cops were right in front of us and we couldn't run. I knew I was going to jail. I found out that my homie was saying I had done everything. We both had the same charges but he was snitching on all of us, so he could get out. I didn't know what to do, he got out and I hated being in here. I ended up getting out.

Out of my four homie's one was still holding it down and now I'm back in jail. I'm going to be here for a while this time I think. I see how my teen years went all to the trash. I wish I would have change my ways when I was able to. Now I'm waiting for time to pass, so I can be back out with my real family that I know would always keep it real and show you the right path in life.

-Lil Santi

From The Beat: We appreciate you breaking down this journey you find yourself on. From the sound of this, you are on track to getting your life together. You now know who you can count on moving forward and that is your "real family." What are your plans now? What are your goals to move beyond the lifestyle that brings you to juvenile? Keep us posted!

San Francisco County Jail

Wait Is Real

Wait is real. Do I know how to wait? I lost thirty-one years waiting to get out (of prison) on freedom. When I wait for something, I learn to be practical. I learn to set goals for my waiting. There was a time in my life I would wait for the rain to stop. Then I would go out in the rain just to get some dope. When it was raining outside I would wait for it to stop raining so I could go to the store.

Yet looking back on myself, I realized that waiting does help me to set particular goals in my life. Waiting is a good thing. Never cut yourself short. My wait took me thirty-one years of my life and I just got out of prison. Now I am back, so this something is no fault but my own. I have to wait and learn to be more honest and responsible for my life and freedom.

-Gary Gray

Every other Friday The Beat Within goes into the San Francisco County Jail to run our conversation and writing workshops. At the end of each session we are always inspired by our participants who courageously step up and share a part of themselves, either in the conversations or better yet, in writing, for the world to read. We truly appreciate these thoughtful participants, our elders, who share their truths with us readers from across the country. We want to not only praise these fabulous writers and thinkers, but want to thank the San Francisco Sheriff's Department and the Five Keys Schools and Programs for our partnership.

I don't see no competition

Because I don't see no pure intentions
Just pray that I'm forgiven
For the shhh I do to get it.

-D

The Kite, Riker's Island, New York City, New York



What I don't have is
the freedom to be the
me I was.

Journey of a Lifetime

I thought it was the end of the world. I wasn't accustomed to being locked down and put on a bus with dog-like cages then locked down again once I got to the island. I sat in intake for 6 hours just to be put into the system; a system where no one cares because it's jail. I sat on hard benches or on the floor until an officer felt inclined to ask me questions. Afterward, I was put into a cell with 9 or so women. Everyone tried to put their head some way to rest, but that wasn't easy. At about 4 am I was called to take pictures then thrown back into the cell with a change of clothes that were the wrong size. They don't care, it's not going on their backs. Too big, too small. Who the hell cares about me? I'm in jail. I'm not their family so they don't mind treating me like a piece of shit.

Next I was called to the doctor. Another wait. Now it's six AM and I'm back in the cell for another hour until breakfast comes—milk and cold Mini Wheats. Another half hour passes and I'm moved to my housing unit.

There are thirty-four units here that house about 17,040 ladies from young to old, ages sixteen through eighty. There's no age limit. You do the crime (or not), you do the time—they don't care how old and frail you might be. There are ladies sitting here for two to three years for what? I feel that if you have something on someone it should not take two to three years to be taken to trial. According to the law the people got six months to take me to trial but for some reason I'm still here after almost two years.

The Lord knew what he was doing though. I know this because I'm reading the Bible all the time. I have read the very same Bible over and over since I came to Rosie's.

When I arrived, I wasn't sick but from the first day, everything started going wrong. My heart acted up, blood pressure accelerated and still hasn't pumped its breaks. I'm not able to have my knees taken care of. I'm in pain most of the time but I just give it to the Lord because he is my healer. There's only one thing they couldn't take from me and that's my ability to pray and talk about my God. I am so thankful for these simple things.

What I don't have is the freedom to be the me I was. I'm not able to use cosmetics, perfume or lipstick. I don't have a real tooth brush with a long handle. I can't comb and untangle my hair with a comb big enough to untangle my hair. I haven't seen my reflection in a real mirror in twenty-two months. The mirrors here are like trying to find your face in the bottom of a coke can. I wish I could wear my proper size of underclothes. The sports bra they gave me makes me look like I have one big breast. Just to have nail polish would make a difference in how I feel. To be able to watch my own TV or have the food I like to eat. To go to my corner store and get fresh air and sunshine. Lord, how I miss the simple things. I don't smoke, thank God, so I don't miss that. But I do miss long phone conversations with my brother down south. I miss kissing my grandchildren and the children in the community who I love so much. I miss my kids most of all.

I'm at the end of a tunnel but I can see the light. I thank God for giving me the time to think about myself. Everything happens for a reason. I was put here to see things and to be able to talk with the ladies about their problems and what's on their mind. Some of their hearts are hurting and they need someone to talk to. God led me to the right place. I thank Him for that. If I didn't come here I would have never seen or known what was going down on this side of town. When I go home I will be able to talk to my community leaders about my new knowledge and what people face here and why they shouldn't go to jail.

-Earnestine Russell, Riker's Island, New York City, New York

Empty Spaces

Is this a mirage
As I contemplate
Whether to wipe this slate
Clean or cling
To your being
Even though you are a constant feeling
So maybe it is a mirage
That won't disappear
Or eradicate my fears
That one day
You won't be near
To hear me say
I love you
Because someone else will appear
Again and again
Each time with a different name
This is insane
Because I can touch you
And I can smell you
And I can taste you
And I can make love to you
But I cannot have you
So what
What do
I do
When this mirage
becomes clear
and someone else
is lying here
with you

-Earnestine Russell, Riker's Island, New York City, New York



COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

The Kite, Riker's Island, New York City, New York

Who Am I

Who am I... I'm so fly
 Even if you shot me directly into my brain
 You still wouldn't be as insane as me
 'Cause I'm just that fly
 I'm lemonade on a summers day
 Hot sand on a beach
 Sweet as a Georgia peach
 Who am I... Damn I'm so fly
 As a bird in the sky
 Not a pigeon or a crow,
 An eagle, yeah that's me
 Rare, flyin' solo an awesome sight to see
 I'm nice as can be, but don't mess with me
 Just like an eagle, I'll pick you off like prey
 Don't worry, you'll live to see another day
 I don't want you to miss a thing
 I want you to have a front row seat
 So you know I can't be beat
 Who am I... I'm so damn fly
 that if you captured my very essence.
 and shot it straight into your vein
 You still wouldn't get as high as you'll
 need to be to understand me
 Don't get me wrong,
 I'm not braggin', boastin' or ego trippin'
 Of course, I have flaws
 They're usually most people's ceilings
 Look up don't you see me?
 Floating like a butterfly
 My wings are a prism of color like no other
 Who am I... I'm so dope
 Yeah a superhero, that's me
 Able to leap on tall buildings
 in a single bound
 Walk through walls, calm a storm at will
 I can even reduce a mountain to a mole hill
 I'm Optimus at my prime, A woman of super status
 That's me
 Fierce feline, that's the led in me
 Cat Woman can't see me
 I taught poison ivy everything she knows
 She's still in awe of the woman of wonder
 I've become to be
 I'm the original Ms. Incredible
 With the brilliant mind of that little
 Woman E.
 Use my life to inspire hope
 It's not braggin' boastin' or ego trippin'
 I use these words to cope
 It took me a lifetime to reach this point
 A lifetime of courage to even split this joint
 One day I woke up to realize
 When I looked into the mirror
 I saw God in my own eyes

From The Beat: We welcome back to our pages writing from The Kite, a storytelling workshop with the women of Riker's Island. Our first author, Earnestine Russell, introduces an excerpt from the last chapter of her upcoming memoir, and a beautiful poem that will make you question who or what you really know to be true. The confidence of our second author, Justify, radiates from her poem, and takes a motivational turn at the end that we can all appreciate. Thank you to The Kite for your partnership!

THE KITE

Wonderful, Knowledge, courageous and fearless
 All of a sudden, I started to fear less
 Knowing I came from greatness, destined for greatness
 I became an army of one, as I became enlightened
 To the fact

I'm as bright as the sun
 Who am I... I'm so dope
 As I spit this spectacular vernacular at ya
 I'm lifting myself out of this place
 I want no one to ever see
 I'm my own cheerleader
 This is my personal pep rally
 To keep me from going insane
 Keep me from feeling the pain
 It's words like these that make my heart
 and mind keep pace
 Who am I... I'm so dope
 Don't be mad at me
 I'm created by a higher being
 The universe's greatest artist
 Sculpted and molded from the finest clay
 He's the one who made me this way
 Pretty as a picture, that broad,
 what's her name?
 Oh yeah, Mona Lisa
 Ain't got nothing on me
 I'm right here, just reach out and touch me
 Smilin' no matter what,
 Laughin' from my gut
 Each time the gate closes or door slams shut
 You see, I'm forever free cause
 My mind, heart and spirit belong to me
 Who am I... I'm so fly
 Not braggin', boastin' or ego trippin'
 Not my own Kool-Aid I'm sippin'
 Everyday I drink from the cup of wisdom
 Growing and expanding my queendom
 One of the most valuable lessons I've learned
 So far,
 Is how high to set my bar
 So when I tell you how fly and dope
 I really am, you don't have to agree
 Just remember this personal pep rally
 Ain't just about me
 I'm you and you are me
 Each other's reflection we should be
 Always believe in yourself...
 You're just as fly and dope as me

-Justify, Riker's Island, New York City, New York

Wonderful, Knowledge, courageous and fearless
 All of a sudden, I started to fear less
 Knowing I came from greatness, destined for greatness

Parents' Corner



Let's work together to make this planet a little better than it is now.

continued from previous page

anywhere without worrying about being shot. These poor kids can't even attend a school anymore without fear.

From what I see of our human race the way we are doing things is NOT working, so why not try something different! Let's stop with all this hate and fear of one another and start showing love and compassion!

We get one chance at this existence and our lives are so short so why not make your one and only life the best ever and show other fellow humans that it's ok to be kind to everyone no matter what they look like, what they believe in, or who they love.

I messed up the last 25 years of my life and because of my actions as a mother, my two boys ended up in prison. Now I might have 25 years left to show my two boys that I am a good mother and human being.

I've said this before and I'll say it again....Every last one of us has a heart and brain and we ALL bleed red, we are human beings trying to survive..

This next year I truly hope you can make a positive change in your life or someone else's life. Let's show people that there is still good out there and that hope does exist.

For almost 50 years now I have been walking this planet and I have seen so much death and destruction that it honestly brings tears

to my eyes. The way we humans treat each other has to end, so why not make a positive difference in this world and show everyone out there that love and compassion does exist.

I want to wish you all a Happy Holiday and an even better New Year! Let us start 2019 with a clean slate! Let's work together to make this planet a little better than it is now.

Lastly, to catch you up on my life, my son Mike is now getting moved to another prison, he will be 2 hours away, and my other son, John is over 5 hours away from me!

Check this out, I haven't touched a pill since I got out of the hospital in August and all I do is work-out and go up and down four flights of stairs several times a day, so needless to say I am up in muscle and up a pant size and shirt size...my body has never felt better and I'm looking and feeling better. It's amazing how much better you feel when you're not on drugs!

LET'S ALL MAKE 2019 THE BEST YEAR EVER! A new year, a new beginning and new chances.

Until next time my beautiful people, I want you to stay positive and please just show kindness.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR. Love your friend from Michigan,

-Melissa Lambert, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

Oakland Public Library, Alameda County

Write for The Beat on the outs!

The Beat Within workshops at the Oakland Public Library!
Saturdays 2PM

Main Library Teen Zone
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SNACKS!
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(510) 761-9363 with questions.



Hamza's Adventure to Space

Hamza has a great appetite. He eats almost every day, and there is not one empty space in his day without eating a snack or something. Here is Hamza's eating habit chart:

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Late at Night	Early morning
Snack	Snack	Snack	Snack	Snack!!!

One day, Hamza was eating two chocolate bars and a bag of chips. He slowly started lifting up. And then, Hamza was flying! Hamza floated up, up, and up. To the trees, to the clouds! To the sky, and then at last, Hamza hovered into space. Finally, Hamza was sick of this sickly floating of his. Hamza realized he was eating too much. He turned just as big as a balloon. No, he became a balloon!

Well, Hamza learned his lesson, alrighty. He cried and cried, until Hamza suddenly sat up with a start. He was dreaming all along in his sleep! Hamza never ever ate more than he handled again. And I'm glad to reassure you that today, Hamza is not a balloon.

Not yet.

- Nour

From The Beat: We love this short story and illustration! Very imaginative and sounds like it would be a good children's book. We also like the foreshadowing at the very end...could there be a sequel adventure for Hamza?

The Best Advice I've Ever Gotten

The best advice I've ever gotten was, "Don't catch feelings, you'll die," and that is extremely true.

I've always been a skeptic about love, always avoiding crush culture knowing that it will lead to toxicity. From hearing about bad relationships from friends and reading a bunch of romance books, I would call myself an expert of love and sworn myself to never fall in love even though I've never dated anyone.

The idea of love was something I never wanted to get involved in. Although I've had many crushes throughout my life, I never pursued it. Whenever I found out my crush or someone else liked me, I would panic and run away. Love was scary, I stood all the way at the end of it. All of my crushes developed to intense hate and fear quickly because of my fears. So I sat back and enjoyed unrequited love and indulged in my singleness.

One time I let things go too far with one person and I totally regret it. It felt good to have someone who cared for you, but it was a lie. I had to snap myself back to reality. This is why I avoid love at all costs. I'll just stick to my romance books.

- Kw

From The Beat: It sounds like you've done a lot of thinking and reading about what love can be. One thing we notice is missing... real-life examples of successful love. Have you talked to anyone in a relationship that you admire? People who have been in love for a long time? Maybe they would have a new perspective to share that you hadn't considered before.

I'll just stick to my romance books.

The Beat Within publishes a bi-weekly magazine of writing and art by incarcerated youth. We are a member of Intersection for the Arts. Intersection provides resources, community and cultural space in order to contribute to the sustainable practices of artists and arts organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. Visit www.theintersection.org.

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. If published, your work becomes the property of The Beat Within, but you authors are free to publish elsewhere.

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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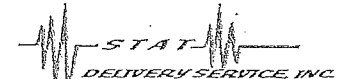
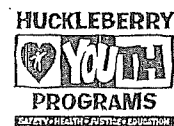
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BEAT TOPICS!

23.51 Topics

1. Equal Justice Under Law — These are the words carved in stone above the entrance to the highest court in the United States, the Supreme Court. The U.S. Constitution also guarantees that “No State... shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (14th Amendment). In other words, every state must apply the laws equally to all its citizens. Do you believe the United States has kept this promise? Do you believe the law treats all of us equally?

2. An Act of Courage — Have you ever had to step into a situation that required an act of courage? Or, have you ever seen someone close to you who acted with courage? What did you (or they) do that qualifies as courageous? What makes an act of courage? Tell our Beat readers a story of your own courage, or one that you've witnessed.

3. That Advice — We all have been given plenty of advice in our young lives, from reliable resources to the not so reliable. This week we want you writers to share with The Beat readers a time you took poor advice. Tell us about the worst advice you ever took and how it affected you. Why did you take such a risk? Did it sound like a bad decision then? Was it worth it?

4. Words From The Wise, Quote of The Week — “It is never wrong to do the right thing.” - Mark Twain (1835-1910) was an American writer, humorist, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer. Among his novels are The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and its sequel, the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. This week we want to know if you agree or disagree with this quote. One way or the other, please share from your experience.

24.01 Topics

1. My Tree Will Look Like... All of us lay the groundwork for our futures by committing to ideas, beliefs, and even materials that eventually give us results, either positive or negative. Imagine that the things we commit to are the seeds we've planted, and what we've experienced thus far are our roots. From these seeds and roots, a tree will grow. What will your tree look like? If you've planted seeds by posting on the block every day, tell us what your tree will look like. Be as creative as you can: From the seeds I've planted, my tree will look like this...

2. I Turned On The TV and I Saw... When we watch TV, we all flip through the programs with our remote control in hand. Some of us only a few channels to choose from while others have hundreds. Television plays a huge role in most of our lives — it's in our homes, it's in the jailhouse, and for some, it's even in our hand-held phones. Our question to you is, when you turn on the television what do you see?

3. Cheating, and getting away with it — All of us have cheated and gotten away with it at some time in our lives. Maybe it was during a test in math; or maybe we cheated on a loved one we promised to be faithful to; or maybe it was towards our own mother by lying to her. Take us on a journey into the past when you got away with cheating and — until now — have never talked about it. But you also never forgot about it. So come clean, and tell all!

4. Words From The Wise, Quote of The Week — “If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello.” -Paulo Coelho (b1947) is a Brazilian lyricist and novelist. He is best known for his novel The Alchemist. Do you agree or disagree? Tell us of a time you bravely said goodbye to something. It could have been to the old you (lifestyle), a friend, a family member. How did it turn out?

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From The Beat: As you know, hundreds of incarcerated youth participate in The Beat Within writing workshops each week and it means so much to them to be able to see their writing in print. We cannot make this happen without the help of our Beat Within family. Please consider a subscription for the new year.

LifeQuest, Albuquerque, New Mexico

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Don't Let...

Don't let what happened define you.
 Don't let what could happen make you.
 Don't let the past make your future.
 Don't let your future break you now.

-RL

From The Beat: This is good advice. Every day is a new opportunity to redefine yourself. We think your future will be bright.

Life

Life is like a house with staircases to different floors.
 You climb and climb to get to the very top.
 Along the way you will get tired.
 Sometimes you fall
 all the way down and have to start again,
 But that doesn't mean give up.

-RL

From The Beat: We like this analogy. We're sure you are going to be successful because you won't give up!

Loneliness

When I sit in these rooms I'm lonely
 thinking about how far I am
 from family and friends.
 I sit and think
 about how long I've been here
 and how much time I've done.
 I'm lonely every morning
 when I wake up in this same place,
 knowing that any day I can lose someone
 I love and not say good-bye.
 I feel lonely every time I close my eyes.

-ES

From The Beat: Loneliness leads to anxiety and depression. Keep yourself busy by joining in activities, being around other people, exercising, and doing things that lead toward achieving your goals. Writing about your feelings can be very helpful and we are here to listen.

LIFEQUEST
 creating a future & a hope

From The Beat: We welcome the latest installment of writings from the young people who participate in The Beat Within through LifeQuest in Albuquerque, New Mexico. We are grateful to John Jones and our dear friend, Linda Gonzalez, from LifeQuest, who leads The Beat Within workshops in New Mexico. LifeQuest is a kid first organization. Their staff and volunteers provide support services to at-risk young people in the juvenile justice system throughout New Mexico. LifeQuest can be reached at www.lifequestusa.org or 505-341-9383.

Mission:

As an extension of the local church, providing life on life relationships to at-risk and incarcerated youth helping them to achieve their goals as productive, fully committed followers of Christ.

Guns

Today I just want to try to get an important message out there to all the kids out there living with "protection" and by "protection," I mean a gun.

I know how it is to want to feel that "power" and "protection" of carrying a gun. I know how it feels to think you have to carry a gun to feel safe where you live. I know how it feels to know you have some "power", but the truth is, "put that gun down!" Stop carrying one.

Eventually something bad will happen and it doesn't have to be because you do or might do something. Or maybe you have curious siblings who don't understand the power of a firearm. Kids watch these shows that corrupt their minds and they don't understand the value of life. Or maybe your own friend doesn't take things seriously. I'm telling you guys (and gals) from my own experience.

My own friend didn't take the power of a firearm seriously, even a "broken" gun that he was thinking wouldn't shoot. He kept playing with it and playing with it until everyone told him to stop. He got upset and told everyone to "Chill, it won't go off." Those were his exact words when he put it to his head and pulled the trigger and it went off killing him. I was there and remember the day clearly. The gun wasn't working. The firing pin was cracked. We tried it multiple times earlier that day. He didn't realize it would eventually go off.

I think we were lucky we weren't the ones to die. He pointed that gun at multiple people before putting it to his own head and killing himself. I think he thought it would never go off. Please take the power of a firearm seriously. Guns do kill people if you don't know proper gun safety.

-AA

From The Beat: We are sorry for the loss of your friend. If you continue to teach this lesson, his death will not be in vain. You don't know how many lives you may save by telling this story. Thank you for sharing and we hope people take this lesson seriously.

Tired of this Lifestyle

I'm tired of this lifestyle. I've been locked up for about nineteen months now and I'm ready to go home. I feel like this place has already done the most that it can for me.

The only thing that I look forward to in here is earning college credits. Other than that, I'm just doing time. I'm tired of seeing kids who got here after me leave before me. I especially don't like the programming and how they run things around here. None of it means anything in the real world. It's all a big joke.

I'm going to just keep doing me and what I have to do to succeed. I know once I get out I'll be set. I'm never coming back to a place like this regardless of what staff thinks.

-AH

From The Beat: We are happy you are resolved to never return to this kind of place. During the time you have left, you have the power to make things better for yourself. Fully participate and make things meaningful to your situation and you may be surprised what you get from it. Much is up to you!



FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Resilience Orange County, Santa Ana, CA



Resilience Orange County

Resilience Orange County (ROC) was created in 2016 from the merging of RAIZ (est. 2011) and Santa Ana Boys and Men of Color (SABMoC, est. 2013). RAIZ since its inception worked to address the criminalization system, which is the intersections of the criminal and immigration systems and the impact that it had on our communities.

RAIZ stopped over 20 deportations with its "Free The People" deportation defense model and changed policy locally around criminalization.

SABMoC led in addressing the school to prison to deportation pipeline in Santa Ana and throughout the county by changing the policies that the Probation Department used to send youth to immigration officials and by creating a culture in the Santa Ana Unified School District that promotes and adopts restorative justice practices.

Since merging ROC has been successful in building youth organizing and political power in the county with its programming, organizing and youth voter engagement efforts.

In 2017 ROC was able to advocate along with local partners to create the strongest "Sanctuary City" policy in the country, to successfully remove ICE out of the Santa Ana County Jail, and to create a city fund that provides legal representation to Santa Ana residents in immigration proceedings. This past year in partnership with KRC we created a movement to #DefendSanctuary that has made Orange County and California ground zero in the fight against Trump. Thanks!

To contact ROC, they can be reached at www.resilienceoc.org.

From The Beat: It is an honor to finally have the chance to work with the good people at ROC. A big thanks to Claudia, Dulce and Alba for giving us the time to discuss and build on our new partnership. We hope you enjoy the first installment of writings from our latest Beat writing workshop. Again, enjoy the pieces from our friends at ROC, they are doing the good work, making a difference, and have plenty to say.

That Advice

"Be yourself," everyone said, my mom, my teachers, and my T.V.—everyone I knew—but "myself" isn't liked by my "friends," neighbors, or teachers.

I thought being myself would be fun or fulfilling and I thought my friends would like me for me and not for who I wasn't but for who I was—I was told to be quiet or to stop being myself by my friends or family.

I learned, but deep down I always knew, that being myself, where and when I was, isn't a good idea.

—Matthew

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that. We're often told you can't please everyone. But if you can't even please yourself, what are you left with? If it's hard to find people to like you for who you are and to be the way you want to be, please do it for yourself at least.

A Letter...

Dear You,

You are here in this moment. You made it. You overcame the stereotypes. Say it...

"I graduated high school, I'm a first gen. School won't be easy, work won't be easy, but remember that you are here, present and loved. Let it go. Leave all those traumatic memories behind. It's time to let go."

Everything will be fine,

—A

From The Beat: We love this. Simple words put together with ease. This mantra is kind of de-stressing. It's like a little prayer of thanks to yourself and we'd encourage you to say it as often as you can—weekly, or even monthly—just to remind yourself you've done good.

Thoughts on The Quote of the Week

Maya Angelou says, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude."

I agree with this quote because change is a difficult thing. Even when you have all the reasons or motivation, it's difficult but a bit easier. If you want to change badly, you are willing to do everything because you're not happy with what you want and are willing to change no matter how difficult.

Something I have tried to change about myself is the way I talk and respond to people. Sometimes I can respond to people in a bad way and hurt their feelings. I tried to change this because I was tired of hurting people and talking bad to people. The motivation I had made me want to change, no matter how difficult.

—Angel

From The Beat: We applaud you! That's very admirable. Not many people are willing to change aspects of themselves due to their pride. Not many people even realize the way they behave may even be hurtful. But you know, maybe it's not always you. Maybe others need to change how they're own behavioral reactions?

Do Over

I want to do over my sophomore year of high school. I was a child that was embarrassed about myself. I was embarrassed about my family. I was embarrassed about my parents as they are undocumented. I was embarrassed of my thick accent. I'm a first generation student. My school was white and I was a short, brown girl. I remember ignoring my parents' calls to avoid speaking in Spanish. I would avoid my back to school presentations. I would ignore my dad's deportations. I would ignore my whimpering siblings. I would ignore all the pain and sadness I carried.

I would do over and give my parents the love they gave me. I would love them for their beautiful language. For their hard work and effort to keep a roof over my head. I would love my dad and call him as he was in Tijuana. I would love my mom in her moments of loneliness. I would love my siblings. I would love myself.

—Dulce

From The Beat: Don't shame yourself for being embarrassed. It may have hindered you then but it's not your fault. We'd all love to change the past, and maybe if the world were different you wouldn't have had those feelings at all in high school. It is important what we are doing in the now, and you are doing great things. Keep at it.

Reach Out

In times of hardship, frustration, and despair, it may seem like the only solution to obstacles is giving up.

It's unfortunate that we feel isolated in a world with billions of people.

How can we feel lonely? Why does no one understand? Why am I afraid? These are all questions that arise as our minds, souls, and bodies are overwhelmed with sorrow.

We do our best to calm ourselves by saying, "It's ok." We repeat it once, twice, three times, a bunch of times until our conscious no longer feels lost. But don't worry; it's ok to not feel ok! Repeat it, "I am not ok!"

Acknowledging that one is not ok is the first step to healing and personal transformation. Don't be afraid to ask for help! Put your pride aside and remove the chains that are weighing you down. There are many people out there who may be experiencing the same or a similar situation. You will discover that when we undergo hardships, frustrations, and despair, with someone or many other people, they are powerful bonds that are generated through the love of unity. Remember, Don't be afraid to reach out!

—Jesus

From The Beat: Such dark irony that in a world so populated—at least for the most part—that many feel so lonely as if they are the only ones in their own lives. You're right; we shouldn't put ourselves down for feeling down. That love of unity you speak of is an important one.

Resilience Orange County, Santa Ana, CA

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Why?

Why is it that I have to live with constant fear?
 Why am I expected to be someone I am not?
 Why is the world so judgmental and strict?
 Why can't I be myself sometimes?
 Why are people so cruel to each other?
 Why is there so much pain in the world?
 Why are there systems that limit people from achieving greatness?
 Why is there such inequality in our world?
 Why do my parents have to live in constant fear of being deported?
 Why do I have many questions that can't be answered?

-Oscar

From The Beat: These are all great questions. Asking why is instinctual when faced with trials, adversity, and confusion. You might not come across the answers anytime soon, but there is something in just asking the questions.

Dear Alba

You have changed and cultivated so much. You have been able to process so many traumas and you have been able to look at certain people in the face and know that they no longer do damage to you.

I had a conversation with you the other day and I had forgot how innocent and beautiful you were. But now I carry you around everywhere and I put beautiful things in my jar and feed it to you when you aren't feeling safe.

When you were younger, I carried that feeling around a lot but now I know how to identify when I am safe and when I'm not. So I want to remind you that all the things you've picked up I am putting down. I am dealing and understanding. So thank you for surviving, thank you for being my vessel. I can now let us both out where it is safe and loving.

-Alba

From The Beat: This is so lovely. Your words are so kind and comforting. We love the slightest bit of vulnerability in acknowledging when you do or do not feel safe and that you have your own way of handling that feeling. Surviving is such a simple concept for our world but not as easy for everyone. And that is not an ideal world. We, too, thank you, and will be surviving right along with you.

Some advice is to remain resilient and proud of whom you are.

Dear New Me,

Hopefully, you're doing well. I know you have gone through a lot and you have been resilient thus far.

Hopefully, you are not as insecure as you were in your teens. Don't think about what other people think of you. Those people are toxic and you don't need them. Don't let your insecurities overtake your mind and life. Don't be afraid to express yourself and live your life. Have some fun here and there. Don't be afraid to take risks. Don't overthink everything like you did when you were younger. That was tough and hopefully that changed you.

Some advice is to remain resilient and proud of whom you are. Do not forget about where you came from because that is who you are. Where you came from is the reason you are who you are. The people shaped you into a strong and open-minded person.

Your parents are the most important people in your life. They provided for you when they couldn't provide from themselves. I know it was hella hard with fights and arguments nearly every night.

Remember, you are a hero to your little sister. She looks up to you so don't let her down. You shaped her into a smart and beautiful young woman.

Do not forget about your brother who pushed you hella hard so that you could succeed. He's the reason why you're so passionate for school. He made you stronger.

Don't forget about the pain and suffering that you went through. Although that shhh hurt, you faced it and lived through it. Don't be afraid to let go of things in your life.

Lastly, don't forget who you are because even though you feel like giving up, you are the only person that is going to be there for you. Don't forget to take care of yourself, mentally and physically.

With care, old you.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Mental and physical care is so important. Along with not forgetting where you came from, who you are, how your parents helped shaped you, how your siblings helped round you out, don't forget to take care of yourself mentally and physically. You've expressed yourself greatly here; don't ever shy away from doing that more in life. We're inspired!

Fresno Barrios Unidos, Fresno, CA

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Correcting the Wrong Choices

If I can ever get a do over
 I'd go back to correcting myself from making
 These poor decisions I made not too
 Long ago or when I was younger...
 If it was somehow possible to
 Change my mistakes, like getting
 Into the many fights in elementary
 And middle school, I'd go back
 To stop and tell myself to think
 About how this will not only affect me
 And my life, but the people I
 Fought with (and their) lives, how will this
 Help us in our life? What's the
 Point of this if you might never
 See each other again?
 This is what I'd tell not only me
 But other people like me as well!
 I'm happy that the new me is
 Better than the old me!

-Reyna

From The Beat: Your years have given you a lot of wisdom! We're glad to hear that you're happy about the new you. How will this new you work with others when you feel angry with or threatened by them?

The Mission of Fresno Barrios Unidos

Fresno Barrios Unidos transforms communities by empowering youth and families through advocacy, education, and wellness. We are inclusive, respectful, and appreciative of the youth and families we serve.

FBU is a community benefit organization that has been serving the community for over twenty-three years, with an array of programs and services addressing the needs of the community. Our goal is to provide young people with the skills and opportunities, they need to thrive in their communities and give back. Our approach is holistic, culturally sensitive, and inclusive of all.

To find out more about Fresno Barrios Unidos, you can write us at 4403 E. Tulare Ave., Fresno, CA, 93702, United States



-Fresno Barrios Unidos

From The Beat: Recently we met the young women of Fresno Barrios Unidos. It was such a pleasure to connect, to share and learn from these thoughtful teachers. What follows is our first installment of writings, which we are sure will inspire and give hope. We are certain, this is not the last time you hear from this group and this amazing organization overall!

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Fresno Barrios Unidos, Fresno, CA

Make Your Dreams a Reality

"Go to UC Berkeley!" They said.
 "it is the best public university in the world!"
 "you've got higher than a 4.0
 And could do so much more!"
 But my heart is not in UC Berkeley
 My voice is more valuable than a 4.0
 Instead I'll show how valuable our stories are
 To the whole world.

-Nataly

From The Beat: Sometimes what others might think is "the dream" is not our dream. We're proud of you for recognizing what is and isn't your heart. Your story is valuable - keep sharing it and motivating others to do the same!

Ever-changing

Donde estas y como te encuentro? Eres chingona
 I applaud you for the distance you've gone and for the journey you've traveled
 You are worthy
 Recuerda que tu mama te quiere. Yo, te quiero
 You are not unfinished but rather ever-changing

-Jenny

From The Beat: We also applaud you for the distance you've gone! Keep growing, evolving, and sharing your journey with us.

You and I

During my third year at Yale, I was kicked out of school. Maybe "kicked" is too strong of a word - I'll say "strongly recommended to leave." And so I did.

The university saw this as a way to ensure I would graduate in six years (keep that 99% graduation rate!). My dean saw this as a way to address my increasingly debilitating anxiety and depression (she was right). To the old me: you are confused, you are sad, you are angry, and that's okay. To the new me: you are valid, you recognize mistakes, and ask for help. You understand your emotions.

To the current me: understand that you never have all the answers. To the current me: when you fail, you are not alone. When you fail you now know it is not a full representation of who you are.

You will continue to unpack general trauma and it will be hard. You will hang on to those that support you and learn to support others with compassion. You are growing. I am growing. We are growing.

-Marisa

From The Beat: Thank you, thank you for your wise and humble words. We wish more people knew that it was okay to be angry and sad. By keeping in mind that you don't have all the answers, you remain open to options and new truths.

Screw Colorism

When I think about the opportunity to do over something from my past, I think about having a different relationship with myself. If I could, I would go back and be kind to myself. I would stop, reflect, and heal. All things I never provided to myself. I would tell elementary school me that it's okay to wear that yellow shirt I liked so much regardless of how "dark" it might make me look. It wasn't until 2017 that I said, screw colorism, I love yellow.

I would do over all those lonely hours locked up in the restroom and instead ask for help. As an adult, I continue to struggle with confidence and self-love, but if I could I'd go back and make sure younger me didn't.

-Jenny

From The Beat: Being kind to ourselves is so important, and you've learned some necessary steps on exactly how to do that. We're glad that you know when to ask for help. For the record, we also think yellow is a great color.

Your Sacred Place

Don't you know that you are a queen?
 Don't you know that you are a warrior goddess?
 Don't you know that your womb is a sacred place?
 Don't you know that you are a divine being?
 Don't you know that the power of the universe resides inside of you?
 There is so much magic inside of you
 Not all are worthy to enter your sacred place
 Make sure the person you let in
 Is worthy to rule beside you
 Remember, you are in charge
 It's your world, Queen, you are in charge
 Don't you know, you are worthy?
 Always remember your self-worth

-JB

From The Beat: Yes! We love the feminine empowerment and the challenge in this piece - to recognize our self-worth, to take charge, and to embrace our greatness. Your confidence is inspiring, thank you for sharing it with us!

Being Picture Perfect isn't Doing You Any Good

Marinade, don't ever forget you are dope. This is the new you. Keep moving forward. I know it's been hard but keep it going. I really hope that you don't allow other people's opinions move you back. This has been one of the hardest things you'd had to do. I can say for about over two years now, you tried Mari, you really did. You tried to be happy. You knew love was still there but it was different.

See, even though you tried so hard to make it work and be happy, you were not doing it for you. You constantly did it for everyone else. Never really for yourself. Please don't look back. This is the new you. Keep letting her grow. Also remember your son loves you, he needs a happy, strong mother. Being picture perfect isn't doing you any good.

-MJ

From The Beat: We couldn't agree with you more, that striving to make other people happy will only hurt us in the long run. Your son is very lucky to have a strong, independent, and thoughtful mother like you. We'd love to hear more about what you do to make you truly happy!

It's a Process

I was only sixteen at the time. I know that doesn't excuse my actions, but being only sixteen, I swore the world revolved around me. I know now that everyone grieves in their own way and I was still in the denial phase.

I remember walking into the hospital ICU waiting room. I remember seeing all my cousins sitting on the chairs next to their parents. I remember worrying about class the next day, it was already late and I still had to get ready for class the next day. But nothing would prepare me for the news my mom would give us that night - but who can honestly be prepared to find out their grandfather had forty-eight hours to live before his lungs would give out, even with life support?

If I could go back to that night and take back everything I said, I would. From the "screw this hospital, I knew they wouldn't help him." To the "How could he leave me so soon? He knows I don't graduate until next June!"

They say grief is a process and sometimes you take a couple steps back before finally being able to move to the next phase, but sometimes our grief gets the best of us, and our reactions can be uncalled for.

-Ana

From The Beat: We're so sorry for the loss of your grandpa, especially when you were so young. It's true that grief does get the best of us, and it's unfortunate that there isn't much space in our society to grieve openly and comfortably. Forgive yourself for acting the way you did, and carry your grandpa's spirit with you as you grow.

Youth Justice Coalition/ Free LA High School, Inglewood, CA

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!



YOUTH justice GOALITION

The One Do Over

The one and only things I would start over again is going back to the third grade. That's when I started slacking.

I know it's such a young age. I don't quite know why. I guess it was the family crisis I was going through and the separation of my parents. I started missing school so much to the point where I had to repeat the third grade.

My fourth through sixth grades were good. I was always going to school and I had excellent grades. When seventh grade came, I started slacking again, hanging out with the wrong people. I started drinking, smoking marijuana, and skipped school a lot. I didn't even get to go into the eighth grade. They skipped me right into the ninth grade due to my "age."

My ninth grade year was good, can't complain. Tenth grade came and it didn't start so well. I stopped going to school and started working full time instead.

I'm a very smart girl—school/grade wise—but the decisions I made weren't so smart. I always wished to start over but now I'm on the right path. I came to Chuco's to finish my last two years of high school. I'm now twenty-years old and in my senior year. I'm a full time student and full time employee. Don't let anyone tell you there's no such thing because there is. If I can do it, you can do it.

If you know someone just like me, encourage them, encourage yourself to do better. Follow your goals and dreams.

-Xenna

From The Beat: Many of us have bad habits. The important thing is we shouldn't let them hinder our lives, more so just coast along with us, if possible. We applaud you, not many people can work and go to school full time. Keep us posted on your journey, we are listening!

Dear New Me:

You are doing better.

We're going to make this money.

You're going to be bomb.

All these people are going to be mad that you're doing you.

You're going to find you some true love.

-Breanna

From The Beat: Strong words with such a nice ring to it. Please, we entreat you to follow through on this!

Something Courageous

Something that is really courageous that my dad did was crossing over to the USA at the age of thirteen. He came, all alone. He had to survive for himself.

Later on, my grandmother sent my dad's brother. He had to take care of himself and his brother.

-Domingo

From The Beat: That is courageous. Moving to a new country is frightening; we can only imagine how it must be for someone so young. You're a testament to your father's courage and strength. Prove to your father you can be just as courageous in life!

Youth Justice Coalition

The Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) is working to build a youth, family, and formerly and currently incarcerated people's movement to challenge America's addiction to incarceration and race, gender and class discrimination in Los Angeles County's, California's and the nation's juvenile and criminal injustice systems.

-YJC

From The Beat: Here's the second installment of writing from our workshops at the charter high school, Free LA High School, located at Chuco's in Inglewood, CA. The students have plenty to say about their lives and their community. A big thank you to Kim McGill at the YJC, and lead teacher, Jesus Trigo for hosting our workshops and building on our partnership. We already can't wait for the next installment!! To learn more about the Youth Justice Coalition, please go to www.youth4justice.org, or to inquire further about Free LA High School, head on over to www.youth4justice.org/yjc-high-schools/free-la-high-school!

Immaculate Conception

Out of a frying pan...

And into fire...

Out of which rises...

A phoenix...

Like the transformation of a caterpillar into...

A butterfly...

Like a sand irritation inside of an oyster becomes...

A pearl...

Like coal compressed for thousands of years becomes...

A diamond...

Like we were born to live through our struggle and pain in this life...

Our struggle to learn in this life.

And to stand victorious over it all...

Victorious at peace with it all.

Immaculate.

Free...

Nov...

Together.

And in the moment next...

-Mr. King, Youth Justice Coalition, Inglewood, CA

One Thing

One thing I wish wouldn't happen to me is having my head busted so many times because I lose my memory. I've lost so many memories, even the ones with my sister that passed away. I can't remember her. I've also lost other memories of other loved ones but the main one that hurts is not being able to remember my sister.

-Yermundo

From The Beat: We wish for your wish to come true. Having a good head on your shoulders is very important. There are other ways to remember her by, looking at photos, talking to family and friends, or going through her stuff. They may not bring back the memories themselves but it might help strike up a chord.

Do Over

A day I'd do over is Friday. I would change that day because the events that took place that day were pretty reckless, a long fight happened.

I would change how the fight went down; too many people handled the situation wrong by jumping into a fight that didn't need their input. The people who fought should've arranged it to a different time and place.

-Jacob

From The Beat: Sounds reasonable. Whatever their reasons for jumping in, selfless or selfish, not everyone needs to step into the ring. Is there anything anyone could have done to prevent this?

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Youth Justice Coalition/Free LA High School, Inglewood, CA

Gracias Por Todo

Gracias por superar las cosas que nunca imaginó que podría superar o lograr y por apoyar a tantas personas, incluso aquellas que solo querían que usted no fuera alguien en la vida.

Poco a poco, te diste cuenta de quién quería lo mejor para ti y quién quería que fueras miserable. Pensaste que solo porque te llamaban "AMIGOS" eran tus

amigos, pero no solo eran "HIPOCRITOS" que hablaban tantas cosas de ti a sus espaldas solo para hacerte ver mal sabiendo que ese no era el caso. Pero estoy feliz por ti, sorprendido de que te hayas escapado sin ningún problema.

Mira cómo están las cosas ahora. Se dieron cuenta de que realmente eras un buen amigo para ellos. Ya es tarde porque ya has cambiado. Ya no eres lo mismo que antes. Ya no muestras tus sentimientos a otras personas, incluso si lo saben todo.

No te importa si tienes "AMIGOS." No te importa si las personas dejan de hablarte. Las que no necesitas, van y vienen. Algunas personas vienen que hubieras deseado durante mucho tiempo en tu vida. Pero dicen la gente llega en el momento adecuado.

Te diré algo. Te extraño mucho. Ya que eras cariñoso, juguetón, pero no es mejor que continúes así porque no quiero que me lastimen. Prefiero que me digan que se cree que eres una odiosa y que no pueden soportarlo. Que te digan mi mensaje y que dejas que la gente haga lo que quiere. Me gusta más tu forma de ser ahora mismo. Sigue así "LUPITA". Gracias por apoyar todo.

-Esmeralda

Del Beat: Tienes mucha razón, la gente va y viene en nuestras vidas, y las que se quedan son las únicas que importa. Pero eso no significa que no podemos aprender algo de las personas que se van. Siempre tenemos que estar agradecido por el tiempo que ellos invirtieron en nosotros.

Thank You For Everything

Thank you for overcoming all those things that I thought you would never be able to overcome and also for supporting a lot of people, including those that didn't want you to be anything in life.

Little by little, you found out who was good for you and who just wanted to see you miserable. You thought just because they were so called "FRIENDS" that they were your friends, but there were just hypocrites that talked a bunch of stuff behind your back just to see you doing bad, knowing those things weren't true. But I am happy for you and surprised that you escaped without a single problem.

Look at how things have turned out. They found out that you were really a good friend for them. It's too late now because you have changed. You are not the same person you once were. You don't show your emotions to other people even if they know it or not.

You don't care if you have "FRIENDS." You don't care if people stop talking to you or not. The ones you don't need come and go. Sometimes some show up and you wish they would've showed up a long time ago in your life. But it is said that people come into your life at the appropriate time.

I will tell you something. I miss you a lot. You were always sweet, playful, but it's better you continue your path because I don't want to get hurt. I prefer for people to think that I'm a hater and that nobody can stand that. They will tell you my message and let people do what they want to do. I like the way you are right now. Keep being that way "LUPITA." Thanks for all your support.

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: You're right, people will come and go into our lives and the ones that stay are the ones that matter, but that doesn't mean that we can't learn something from the ones that do leave. It's always good to be grateful for the time anyone invests in you.

I wrote with all my feelings and anger I felt.

Do Over

I would like to have a "do over." Reason I would want a "do over": I regret being around the wrong people doing all types of things. They shouldn't have me around them; I'm playing a part. Just by being with them got me in trouble.

-Cristal

From The Beat: Being around the wrong people is like a practice round for knowing which ones are worth keeping and fighting for. If you are right, then they were wrong. You'll get another round at hanging with the right people.

Costly Advice

The worst advice I ever took was from my homie—told me to hit a homeless person with my car. The homeless man lived on my street and he was always causing trouble. No one liked him. One day he was in the middle of the street and my homie said, "Hit him." So that's what I did. At the time it was fun but I went to jail for eight months.

-Domien

From The Beat: We must agree with you, that sounds like the worst advice. Next time someone tells you to do something, think twice. It can be easy to follow the crowd but it might not get us what we need.

Better

I became a better person because the old me wouldn't care about anything. I would just smoke and gangbang with my homies. All I would do is chill with them and go do bad stuff. I wouldn't care about school. I would go but I do nothing most of the time.

I became a better person because all I do now is stay in school and focus. I don't hang around my homies any more. I try to stay busy so I won't have time to hang out with them. I'm starting college and plan to keep on going. My goal is to become a food inspector. Also, live a good life without worry.

-Melissa

From The Beat: Nice plan you got there. Strive hard for your goal, and stick to your plan, even if it may go awry at certain points.

The Worst Advice

The worst advice I got was when I was fourteen years old. I was with kids my age and we had got some weed from this guy we know. This was my first time smoking so I didn't know what was going to happen but I wanted to do it.

When I saw my friends high, I thought it was funny. So they told me, "When you high you feel ten times better," so that made me want to try it. Since that first time, I never stopped. That was bad advice too 'cause I love smoking. It helps with my problems and keeps me on zero when my anger is on ten.

-Semaj

From The Beat: We challenge you to explore other ways to keep calm. There will be situations where you'll need to rely on just yourself to stay collected. Eventually you won't need any substances to feel better.

A Letter To Yourself

One time I wrote a letter and just wrote all my problems in one paper. I thought I was crazy but I only just needed to let it all out and I don't trust anybody but myself. Each sentence, I wrote with all my feelings and anger I felt.

-Rachel

From The Beat: We're not perfect creatures. Sometimes we need to vent out things that are bothering us. Sometimes those things don't need to be placated by someone else and simply just need to be released.

Youth Justice Coalition / Free LA High School, Inglewood, CA

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

So Far

So far the period in my life, were I'd like to start over is in 2015 when I was in ninth grade, going to Westchester. The main reason is because I failed that year and it set me back. I also started picking up bad habits and getting in trouble. At the time I was just having fun and enjoying high school. My brother was also going there so that had me distracted a lot too.

If I would have that chance to start over it would be me getting straight A's and perfect attendance. I would have joined football that year and probably would have scholarships by now. With those changes, my life would have played out differently and would have made things better.

-RJ

From The Beat: It's never too late to join a football/sports league. It may not get you scholarships but it'll keep you in shape and you'll make new friends. If your bad habits still stick with you just pick up a lot of good habits to balance it out, or possibly, tip you more over into the good habits.

If I Could Go Back

If I could go back to do something over, I would go back to seventh grade. I would go back to that grade because I took some real bad advice. The advice was from a so-called "friend" I had, but I did not know any better. I was young and just wanted money for myself, I never wanted to ask momma for nothing. She had so much on her mind and I put her through too much already.

One day, my friend wanted me to do a favor for him. I was going to make money out of the favor so I took it. The favor I took required me to sell weed. I was making money so I saw nothing wrong with what I was doing. I was a seventh grader, with a pound of weed, going to school with it until I got caught and expelled.

-Domingo

From The Beat: We never really know "any better" at such young ages. In fact, people of varying ages still don't know "any better." Living is constantly learning, even if we had to learn in a harder way than we'd like.

Young Women's Freedom Center, San Francisco, CA

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

R&T Note

In a year or two from now I hope your happy and stronger. Dot it for you and Tito and nobody else. I hope everything you planning and dreaming for gets accomplished. I hope that once you move forward you don't look back.

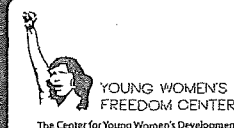
Be happy, feel good about yourself and just know your not alone and that your not walking alone. With Tito and God are always walking with you. Don't let the people that hurt you back into your life you've been doing good so far so whey toss it away over a person who don't give a shhh about you? Look at you, your good where you at. I hope you keep doing you. You and Tito will be fine. Don't trip and keep your head up.

-R

From The Beat: Your hard work and focus on little Tito will bring you both strength and success.

Young Women's Freedom Center

Our mission is to empower and inspire young women who have been involved with the juvenile justice system and/or the underground street economy to create positive change in their lives and communities.



-YWFC, 2017

From The Beat: We are thrilled to bring you readers the latest installment of writings from our most recent writing and conversation workshops with the YWFC in San Francisco, CA. We cannot say it enough, we love the YWFC and these incredibly talented ladies. A big thank you goes out to all involved at the Young Women's Freedom Center.

Resilient Woman

Dear Cero, hope all is well. Look old me, I love you. You made me almost dead but I lived and continue to stay strong. Love yourself, you will find your mother. You will just continue to push and not loose your soul. You came out threw a black hole to the light.

You are a resilient women. From locked up in 3 different jail systems, to being a community organizer. Nothing could break you, not even that man who tried to beat you to death. Hear you are speaking your testimony. You are strong and where you are now. How you made it where you are and how hard it is in your change as well. Triggers, people testing you, but you got this.

-Cero

From The Beat: Your strength and your work will inspire others everyday.

Changes

I would just tell myself to keep doing what I do best. Stay to myself, to the things that are going to help me in life like school and work. My old me would love the new me because I'm really not how I used to be. I just got back on track. Don't focus on the hate and the people who bring negativity to my life.

I love the person I am becoming and I'm going to continue to do it. For example, I got two jobs and I'm doing everything for probation, and I'm going to school. At one point I didn't do anything but steal and do bad things.

-Mystery Girl

From The Beat: Stay on your path to success, it sounds like you are going in the right direction.

Unknown Letter

Life is hard and will get even harder when you are trying to be better But everything will be fine as long as you grind harder You are stronger because of all you went through Just remember you can do all things as long as you follow through God is by your side and won't ever leave you Especially in jail when you feel you are all alone So stay strong and stay true to yourself

-K

From The Beat: Your best advice and the secret to your success, is in your last line, stay strong and true to yourself.

I love the person
I am becoming...

FEATURES OF THE WEEK!

Alumni Corner

From The Beat: We are honored to have our ol' friend, Victor Morales in Big Vic, back in the pages of The Beat Within. Back in October, Vic was a participant in our reading at LitCrawl in the Mission District in San Francisco CA, where he blew the audience away, as he recited the following pieces. We first met Big Vic many years ago, as a powerhouse writer and contributor, when he was fighting for his freedom, while housed inside the max unit in the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center. Today, is it Vic's goal to support The Beat Within anyway he can. We certainly hope to have him back in the workshops as a teacher soon!

Truths

They wonder why our patience has waned so rapidly,
We went from suspects, to hospital patients,
to just another casualty.
Casually the police brutality, which now reeks of normality.
The reality? They say we act so savagely,
But they shoot when our hands are up,
so tell me where's the savagery?
It's just another tragedy, an accidental fatality.
All we ask for is equal opportunity, now we're talking fantasy.
A father, brother, mother, were taken from their family,
All because a man with a badge decided to be god based on a fallacy.
Lethal force is the choice even give all the gadgetry.
Fearing for my life every time I see the lights someone save me from insanity!
Rationally, I can't comprehend all this nonsense,
cops acting so erratically
They act so callously knowing there's an amnesty.
Where's the justice for the murders?
All I see is deception and depravity.
They maneuver through courts, to no avail, it's just formality.
We protest and defend our rights,
they say we're acting so irrationally.
You want to take our guns but cops walk with lethality,
Where are the days where they walked around with morality?
This is no secret, no type of confidentiality
I invite every person, every race, every nationality,
Stand together, be strong, we must do it for humanity!!
RIP to all those fallen to a corrupt system.

-Big Vic, San Mateo, California

He gave me an opportunity, a second chance to persevere and win.

My Juvenile Story

The things we take for granted,
From the flat lands to the hills that are slanted.
The birds in the sky and the snowflakes that have landed.
Enchanted forest brings life to the seeds that are planted.
Fascinated by the blues of the sky, the dark depths of the night.
The stars as my light and the moon as my guide.
Managing through this existence and creating more than just life.
Shackled and handcuffed, my freedom was stripped from me.
Sitting in a cell felt like I was trapped in hell for eternity
It was hurting me, but even more so it was killing my family
No amount of physical pain measures up to seeing my mom cry,
now that really damaged me.
I felt like I was at my lowest, damn near buried six feet under.
Counting down the days, fall winter spring,
wasting away another summer.
Every court date my heart beat uncontrollably
somewhat like a mad drummer.
Sweat, fears and tears,
frustration mounting and becoming overbearing
I will never forget the feeling
of waking up every morning and not having a choice
of what I'll be wearing
I was going insane, my brain felt like it was rotting
I was full of vibrant life, blood flowing through my veins,
now felt like it was clotting.
I was plotting on how to overcome this situation filled with despair
I felt like I was drowning deep in the water,
grasping for the surface just to taste the fresh air.
Then like a miracle,
when I completely gave up and accepted my fate.
The judge decided to release me when I was eighteen,
I'll never forget that date.
He gave me an opportunity, a second chance to persevere and win.
To never take for granted everything around me,
and take my life to places it's never been.
Now my heart is free, and my blood flows through me,
you could hear The Beat within.

-Big Vic, San Mateo, California

★ PIECES OF THE WEEK! ★

Cold Nights

As I walk down the street thinking
if it's time to hit the crib or stay out a little longer.
It crosses my mind that just last week there was a murder
on the same corner I'm standing on.
My whole body feels a cold feeling down my spine,
I don't know if it's the weather
or the thought of death crossed my mind.
At that point in time I realized
death could be a matter of minutes,
sometimes seconds or inches.
I realize nobody's immune, including me.
So, I blew off some steam and walked home.
That same night someone died on that same street.

-Jacob, San Bernardino

From The Beat: You do an amazing job portraying empathy in this piece. You also value taking time to reflect how precious life truly is. We encourage you to keep reflecting.

Lesson Learned

The last time I cheated on my boyfriend I got away with it, well sorta. He never found out about us regardless of the fact that I was cheating with the other guy for three months. I was only with this "side piece" because he had a big bank-it sounds bad but I am being honest.

Later this guy I was cheating on my boyfriend with changed. He became violent and began to stalk me. He even sent subliminal texts to my boyfriend. How he got his Facebook I don't know. The shhh just went from fun to creepy real quick.

So what I learned from this experience is that I cheated and got away with it, but now I have to deal with this creepy dude until he gets tired of messing with me. So technically, I still lost in the end.

-Kima, Los Angeles

From The Beat: We are sorry you have to deal with such a troubling person. Why do you think you missed the warning signs? Will you come clean to your boyfriend? If things get too out of control with this creepy person, seek help!

Good Enough for Me and Good Enough for You

I said goodbye to my innocence and when I did that life rewarded me with rebelliousness and defiance. The reason I said goodbye was because I was so pressured to be the most perfect child since I was the oldest. It was so stressful and tiring trying to be the goodie-two-shoes. Still I was never good enough for my father.

Once I had given up I tried doing something different that I wouldn't normally do. I started ditching school then started smoking weed consistently. I was always running away from home after getting into a big argument with my dad because I just didn't want to hear it. I realized each day it was escalating quickly because I like the feeling of doing my own thing. Not shortly after I took my dad's keys and took his car. That day I went to Denny's to dine and ditch. Then I went along Whittier Blvd to go to the smoke shop then BAM- I crashed into another car. I started to freak out and left the scene. I went to a friend's house and had court dates that I never went to. A month later the police caught me soon after I stole makeup from Ulta.

So you want to know how it turned out? Well I ended up locked up, but it's not the end for me, it's just the beginning. I am in here as a lesson to learn and to get back my innocence.

Also, to never give up, because life has so much to offer. It'll give you a chance to choose the right path. Do things for yourself; make yourself proud instead of worrying about how others or your parents will think of you. Don't forget you're good enough for me and good enough for yourself.

-Angelic, Los Angeles

From The Beat: It sounds like you have learned a lot! We know you can put your words into practice, success is possible. Do your best to stay away from tempting people or places.

Slow to Clutch

I think life is a three point shot because you can dribble anywhere but taking shots can be a risk. If you miss too many your life/sports scholarship is over. When it's there to pull a shot, which is a game winner, don't choke or miss because if you do, I hope you like hood ball.

-Christian, Los Angeles

From The Beat: This is a very interesting way to look at it. What kind of shots do you need to take?

My Courage Awakens

When I was in middle school I remember this fifth grader who had came to me with my little brother and told me that another sixth grader was bullying her, calling her names and making her feel bad about herself.

Since I was in the eighth grade she thought I was more powerful and felt like I could protect her. So I did. I stuck up for her and I went to the other girl and told her to stop and of course she was scared of me so she stopped and it made me feel good about myself because I never knew that people looked up to me as a protector.

Later that year three other students came to me and said the same thing was happening with the same girl.

Once again I went up to her and confronted her and she was hecka scared of me so she never said anything bad to a student again. I never knew that kids look up to me and now seeing where I am in Juvie, makes me feel like I have to get out and set an example. Show them not to follow the bad route. Be someone good.

-Hazel, Marin

From The Beat: Isn't it funny when we discover something positive about ourselves though moments like this? You are aware now of a role you must play, for your benefit and others.

The Beat
Within
Thank
you
LHAMU Santa Clara County

Hiding the Truth

I have lied to my mother about my personal life. She asked me if I was affiliated in any gang activity. I lied out of shock, because I never thought that would be a question to come to her mind.

She asked me why I started dressing with bigger clothes. I just ignored her question and sat there thinking about it.

She found out little by little when I started hanging with my homies and started getting in trouble with the law. I started not caring about what happened and what time I would get home. Sometimes I wouldn't get home.

She found out the truth when I ended up in juvenile hall.

I should have told you the truth mom. Maybe it would have saved my freedom.

-Jassiel, Los Angeles

From The Beat: Do you think you made the right decision by lying? What will you do in the future if faced with answering a difficult question?

I Turned On the TV and I Saw...

When I turn on the TV, I see fillers, opportunity for salesmen and women, and a filtered perspective of the reality of different places and people. By fillers, I mean something like a McDonald's burger: maybe like twenty-five percent of it is real meat. The real stuff. But the rest is just BS, to be frank; it's filling.

To fill in the rest of the meat to make it whole. That's what a lot of TV is nowadays: fillers, lack of educational programs, lack of unfiltered or untinkered-with news/media. Just filler. Keep us occupied, dumbed down and entertained (nothing truly important to help with everyday life). I think, maybe, possibly. Tal vez... todos bien.

-Kb, Marin

From The Beat: This is powerful piece of social commentary. Perhaps you could do some more writing about what you think is "truly important to help with everyday life." If you could make a show you'd like to watch, what would it be about?



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Time Has Come For A Change

I been to juvenile hall ten times. I've always gotten to go home. But other people been here five times

and go to a grouper (group home). People keep saying, "Why you keep going home?" I guess 'cause nobody wants to give up on me. I feel bad for the ones who don't go home. But now I've finally done did it.

After ten times in juvenile hall. I'm going to a grouper somewhere far. I wish I could've listened. But I feel like I need to go. But I don't want to leave my people behind. I'm fifteen years old.

I'm a sophomore, class of 2021, star basketball player.

I'm starting to lose my family's hope. I gotta get my act straight or else I'm a be somewhere outta state. I hope this is my last time.

Peace out, Alameda County. Been good working with y'all. I will never forget y'all.

-Light Bright, Alameda

From The Beat: Time has come for a change for sure and we know you are more than capable of making it happen so you can get back to your loved ones as quickly as possible. You are still a star in our eyes and it's up to you to keep trying to shine! We believe you can do it!

Goodbye!

Unhealthy
Disastrous
Perturbing
Unstable
Toxic
Counter-productive
Self-defeating
Dysfunctional
Anger-inducing
Demoralizing

I had a say "Goodbye" to him
Because he wasn't on my hype.
Yeah, he was not my type, tho.
He just wasn't right for me.
No, he never put his hands on me.
The arguments just got too crucial.

-Opi, San Francisco

From The Beat: It must have been painful for you to leave this guy, but you know you were right to do it. Congratulations for your strength, wisdom. We hope you find someone who's on your hype and who loves you.

Advice From My Incarcerated Father

I got character from my father yesterday. He told me a lot of true things, that I have done wrong in the past and to be honest I got sad, because he called me out on what I did wrong.

When my father wrote to me from prison, I felt joyful, because I needed some advice from a father figure. After I read the letter I cried because he told me that I was making him hurt with my life decisions.

He told me I was lucky to have a support system that wants to help. My father then told me he loves me, never will I question that.

My father called me out for being a troublemaker and causing trouble for my family and making my father and mother look bad.

He told me all he ever wanted was for me to do better than him.

In the end, I feel good about the words my father had told me (in the letter). I now feel the need to change for myself and my family.

-Spookes, San Mateo

From The Beat: We really appreciate the time you took to write this piece. Your heartfelt story is such an important read. We are glad that your dad's words had made an impact on you. Thanks for having the incredible courage to write your truths. We're pulling for you! Keep us posted!

My Big Beautiful Tree

My tree will look beautiful and when people look at it they'll say how proud they are.

The tree grew; it wasn't left in a dark room and not watered or left to die. That tree is positive in the way it grew. The negative didn't affect it.

The knowledge was absorbed through the roots and not cut out.

The seed that was planted was not a waste. It grew to be a tree that has big apples and people want juicy apples from the tree.

My tree will look like it bloomed and stands tall. That is what my tree will look like.

-Oscar, Los Angeles

From The Beat: We like the way your tree sounds! Excellent work! What kinds of decisions do you need to make in order to make this tree grow?

My Future

My future seems impossible because of the place I'm at now. I hope that when I get free, I will find a place or a path that I can stick to. I don't want to end up a screwup.

On many occasions I haven't told the truth about many things. It feels good in the moment, but then later on sometimes, I think about the lies I've told. The things I've told to the people I love, especially my mother. To her. She believes me and trusts me, and I feel bad, because now that I think about it, it's like being stabbed in the back.

Once the truth comes out, it feels really bad, because not only did I deceive my mother, but I also brought guilt to myself. In the future I am going to try to tell the truth and be honest.

-Hazel, Marin

From The Beat: We see things are hard right now, but don't give up. It's great to hear that you have positive intentions about the future. Keep thinking that way and write more about it in future.

A Couple Words to my Son

Son, I just thought I'd let you know

Never trust a soul from your friends to your own cousin.

Family is gonna change and your friends are going to fold on you.

Females are going to switch whether you broke or got chips.

Do not do something bad, because karma will get you.

Never let go and stay up on your fits.

Let them boys hate until you're dead.

Get rich, never chase a girl and always get your bag up.

Stay hungry then add up when they are looking down.

Don't sweat it, just laugh up.

Always stay positive.

Negative's bad luck.

Love life, son, and never let go of yours.

Fresh t-shirt, a couple chains and a comb-over.

Stuck in my cell writing until the code is over.

Stay away from jail so your life doesn't roll over.

Your daddy really loves you. Your momma really needs you.

So, when you're getting money, make sure it's legal.

Because money is a trap; it's the root of all evil,

And always pray to God to remove you from all evil

Loyalty over love

Mind over matter

Chase a bag

-Leo, San Bernardino

From The Beat: We all can benefit from advice from a loved one. We love that you addressed this to your son. What do you hope for his future? We can tell you really love him and care for him. What a great tribute to your son.

Another Chicken Sandwich

Yesterday I was so hungry during lunch. I was sitting at the table, I had just finished my chicken sandwich and Ruffles potato chips. Someone across the room asked for more strawberries. The lead staff complied with this request.

A few short moments later, a different, higher-pitched voice asked, "Can I get another chicken sandwich?" The staff said "NO." He then continued to offer me another chicken sandwich.

It was one of the greatest moments of my life. One man, two chicken sandwiches, one lunch. I was sitting there, happier than Phil watching Spongebob at three in the morning.

But with every happy story, there's conflict. My appetite had lied to me, I was no longer hungry enough to eat the second chicken sandwich. I asked the staff if I could give the rest of my second chicken sandwich to my friend. He said, "No, you're gonna have to throw it away."

That's when I told myself, "Just say goodbye, and life will give you a new hello."

-Butters, Marin

From The Beat: This is funny and you told the tale well. To be able to communicate with such confidence is a real gift. We hope you put that gift to good use in future and maybe help others find their voice, too.

My Unfinished Puzzle

Been through a lot but this is only my start.
Been in and out of the hall since the age of thirteen,
Was taken away from my family.
Always told myself I would turn my ways around.
Never did I listen to my own words though.
Now at the age of fifteen,
I've surely seen a lot.
One of my few best friends had just passed away,
Overdosed on some drugs that were so very laced.
Now his mom has been sent away,
For the things she has done.
My life has been hard nowadays,
But let's save that for a whole other day.
My life is still in the beginning,
Still not sure where I want to go.
But I do know for sure,
This will be my last time surrounded with these brick walls.

-Lil Penny, Sonoma

From The Beat: Excellent work! We are terrible sorry for the challenges in your life as well as the loss. We know you want to be free, so what is your plan for the new year to remain free?

Pieces

Some people say that life is a puzzle
But what do they say about the lives that will
Never be complete?
My life is just a struggle.
One I can't compete.
My best friend went to heaven you know?
So where did all her pieces go?
Everyone askin' how I'm doing
But I'll never let my feelings show.
All of my pieces lead to a dead end,
And God never gets the messages I send.
I turned my life to the streets
That money smelled real damn sweet.
My family askin' why
I can cheat, steal, and lie
But nothing seems to satisfy.
So now I'm asking you for answers
'Cause what I am is a devil dancer.

-Bailey, Sonoma

From The Beat: Excellent heartfelt writing. Tell us more about this self-declared "devil dancer!" Also, what are your plans upon leaving juvenile? How do you want to see your life unfold?

Life When Your Mom isn't Found

I was born and raised in dark nights.

A couple street lights life doesn't seem that bright
walking the wrong path, and I don't even have my mom.

With a city so cruel to take my mom by a bullet down to her grave
That's when my heart crumbled with pain.

My grandparents are the only thing keeping me sane.

-Marissa, San Bernardino

From The Beat: Living in a city of lights doesn't change the fact that the world can be an incredibly dark place. How do you shine your light on the world?

Keep Faith You'll Be Okay

I came from a broken family. My mom and dad put their significant others before their children. So, me and my siblings only had each other. We made the best out of everything.

I left so I could try to do better myself. I now have a boyfriend who supports me through everything whether I'm wrong or right. I no longer feel broken, alone, or lost.

Just know that whatever God throws your way it might seem impossible but God puts us through what He knows we can handle. Just fight a little longer and keep faith.

-Leeannxo, San Bernardino

From The Beat: This is an inspiring mindset to have. It sounds like you had to find your own family. By surrounding ourselves with people who love us is a great way to success. What are some ways you remind yourself to keep the faith?

Life and Changes

Life is like a game of chance. You live and learn from your mistakes. It's about if you learned from those mistakes that make you who you are.

Everyone has a past but we can't judge them off that. But what we can judge if they realized what they did wrong and corrected that issue to better themselves.

Never let anyone tell you who or what you are. Sometimes that change is for the better.

-Carlos, Harvey Louisiana

From The Beat: You could not be more right! It is so important that you keep this attitude moving forward as well. It is all too easy to fall back into those old ways. The path ahead is always filled with obstacles, temptation, and outside pressures. Stay true to self and remember the things you have said.

The Roots of Education

Power; strength; knowledge; and ability

Power begins at birth, it's where we begin to grow and develop. As we grow we are exposed to and retain information as we best see fit. We also grow physically.

The next step in growth is how we react/performance our strengths. Don't be fooled, our power can be tampered with.

For me specifically, emotions play an honorable role with my power. Vulnerability objects to my power, leaving me overwhelmed and confused. It causes stress and pain. This vulnerability has only challenged me to fight for my power. I used to ask myself "is my power limited? If not how can I gain more?" The answer is education, or the ability to learn.

-Jordan, Los Angeles

From The Beat: Through your education anything is possible. Put all your effort into it, and more opportunities will present themselves to you.



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Home

A world without borders
Would mean I would have my papers.
I don't have to worry about
Who in my family would get deported.
Even friends.
I don't have to worry about
Being scolded and reminded every time I go to court.
"Patricia, you know you are eligible for deportation"
I hate hearing those words.
They make me feel so guilty.
Like I did everything in the world so wrong.
A world without borders
Would mean I wouldn't have to leave home.

-Patty, Sonoma

From The Beat: Powerful writing. We hope you do your part to stay "home" and not lose the family and friends that are here for you and want to see you succeed. We're pulling for you.

I'm Sick and Tired

Man I'm sick and tired of all this bad food.
The way they feed us is a little rude.
I'm tired of seeing myself in orange and blue
I'm used to wearing shoes and regular clothes, too.

I hate how everyone sees me as a criminal
In an ocean of crime, I'm a shrimp, very minimal
I hate how they always put us in cages
When they put me in my room, they're building up my rages

I'm tired of being around with these dirty mouth kids
They are like gangsters doing a month's bid
Please let me out to build some humility
I'm done wasting time in this locked down facility

Can't wait until I get out
Just one more day and I'm out.
Forget being locked down
No more being a delinquent
And I'll be eating some snack food.

-Yoshi, Marin

From The Beat: What? No more Yoshi? Great news. You are a good kid and have changed in the months we've known you. Go and have a good productive life. Never come back. Good luck.

His Story

Back in the day, when he was younger,
He was just a kid, growing up, living life.
Caught up in the mix, a little baby living shady,
He was just another young kid, getting into trouble.
But is he guilty,
Or is he innocent?
Is he just a kid, not knowing what he did,
he's only good for nothing?

Well, that is what they assume,
Only if they knew all of the struggles he's been through,
Locked up doing time,
His friend played him like a fool.

Be careful who you trust,
because nowadays it isn't the same.
Snakes are everywhere you lay.
Peep game when you hang with them boys from the streets,
don't trust nobody, everybody out for keeps.

-Trust Carefully, San Bernardino

From The Beat: This is a really well thought out and well written verse. I really appreciate the authenticity and honesty in your lyrics. I hope that one day you can regain an overall trust and optimism for people.

Better to Leave Than Cheat

Cheating. I feel like if you're in a relationship, you should not have to cheat. If you're not happy, then just leave that relationship. It would save the other person from the heartache and the pain.

Me, personally, I have never cheated in a relationship. Yes, I have lied to my mom about petty stuff, but I honestly don't feel like that's "cheating". I just feel that people should not do it, because it hurts people. Obviously, the other person has to love you if they decide to stay in a relationship after you have cheated.
I have been talking to the same person for a long time. He cheated once when we first got together. I was upset, but he earned my trust back, and we're all good now.

The point I'm trying to make is, if you have to cheat, you should not be in that relationship at all. It takes a lot to gain a person's trust back, male or female, and you can avoid all that by not cheating and just leaving the relationship before it gets to that level.

-Heaven, San Francisco

From The Beat: Smart thinking! How do you feel about lying to your mom now? How did your friend earn your trust back? It's great that you won't hurt anyone, that you care about other people.

The Law's Against Me

The justice system is stupid. The law doesn't treat any color equally. White, black, Mexican, purple, nobody is safe. The United States doesn't treat us equally. Even though I am white, they still don't treat me right.

I got set up in my case and they treat me like I'm a big criminal, even though I treat all the police staff and officers with the utmost respect and try to stay out of their way.

Even though Juvenile Hall isn't as bad as I would have thought, it still sucks. I wish I could be home eating actual food and with my dog, Trooper. Hopefully I can put all of this into the past and move on with my life.

I plan on turning my life around when I get put on probation, so I can make my family proud because I feel like I let my dad down and especially my sister.

-Brandon, Solano

From The Beat: We agree. The law doesn't treat people equally, but you are going to turn your life around and make your family proud. Always treat people with respect even if they don't. You might be able to show them something positive.

Open up

All my life, I've taken a lot of advice; some good, some bad, but mainly bad because I have had a lot on my shoulders.

It's hard to maintain a balance with good when bad things always seem to get ahold of you. Maybe I was at the wrong place at the wrong time, but ever since I've seen the lives of the people I love and cared for get taken away, it's never been the same.

I've always had NBA dreams, but sometimes I feel like it's not safe for me being young and black. Somehow affiliated to a life I chose because I lost certain people that meant something. We may not be blood but they were still my friends...

-Armel, San Bernardino

From The Beat: Sometimes life puts us in situations that forces us to make difficult decisions. Even through the struggle, we dream. Keep your dreams and aspirations alive and real. Circumstances cannot kill your dreams.

Momentary Peace

The pain and pressure of being misunderstood is something that scrambles my brain, leading me towards decisions which could be bad to most but an antidote to me.

Resulting in momentary peace, but then it wears off, leaving me a shell, wondering out my thoughts, leading me to mental exhaustion, twenty-four-seven.

I'm miserable but I hide it because it's better and because I choose to.

Now here is where they think it's little and can be fixed easily, but they're not me and it may be that. But not to me. But I'm okay with that and live with it. Just me and me alone.

-Chris, Sonoma

From The Beat: You say plenty in this piece of writing. We feel every word you share. We would love to hear more from you about this "momentary peace?" Can you also tell us more about the journey you are on, when the peace is not within?

In Time You'll be Fine

I know it's pain in your heart.

I know it's pain in your mind.

Never lose faith, within time you'll be fine.

I'm fighting for my freedom,

feel like I'm running out of time.

It's like I wake up in a dream, I think I'm living a lie.

I am not talking about the halls, I never feared doing time.

I just want to make it out before the streets take my life.

-Fighting for my Freedom, San Bernardino

From The Beat: We want you to make it out too, but we realize circumstances can feel limiting, what are active steps you can take to increase your chances of succeeding in this?

Life Is Amazing

Life is amazing! There's a lot of talent out in the world but people just don't stick to it. Start hanging around the wrong crowd. The same crowd your mom said don't hang around.

Your parents always know what's best for you because nine times out of ten then been through the same (thing).

So what I'm saying, if you have a dream, chase it and your friends should be your mom and dad because they're your number one supporters.

-Diontey, Harvey Louisiana

From The Beat: Your words are very inspirational! You are very wise and we can tell you realize who is important and that you can see your true value. Your parents did a good job raising you to understand everything you wrote about, some people live their whole life and never get it! Follow your talent.

I Messed Up

I swore up and down last time I was locked up that I was going to do different, change my ways.

I knew you hated me for the things I have done,

I said I was sorry and I thought we were okay.

You said everything was okay.

Everything felt right in some way

even though I knew I was messing up everything,

I had you so I was okay. I ran for you.

We messed up everything good we had.

In the end you played me over.

You left me with hurt, anger, regret, anxiety.

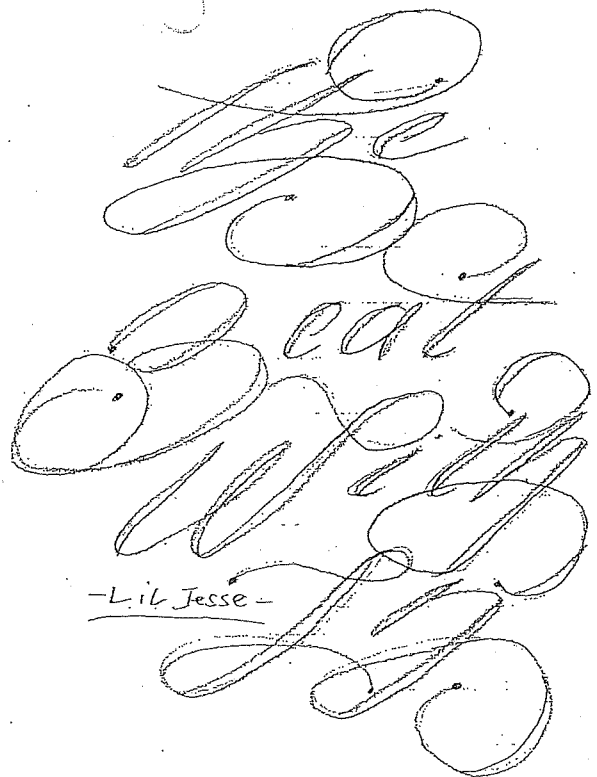
I watched you walk away

with my happiness, courage, bravery.

You left me with nothing.

-Esperanza, Sonoma

From The Beat: This is such a sad piece, but so well written! You pull us readers right into this shaky relationship that obviously doesn't end well. Now that this person has left you alone, what is next? We're listening.



Earliest Memories

Sometimes I like to pretend that shooting hoops in my backyard is my earliest memory. In this memory I shoot hoops for hours, days, then weeks without stopping. I do it without eating, without sleeping, or even using the bathroom.

My real earliest memory is when I was five and on Christmas my mom bought me a basketball goal. When my step-dad used to beat on my mom I used to go out and play basketball until I stopped hearing yelling. When I played basketball it tuned out everything and everyone. It was just me and the ball and goal and all my problems were gone. I felt free and like everything was good in the world. No more drugs, no more gangs, no more hate, just me and the goal.

-Tavaun, Los Angeles

From The Beat: This is a very well written piece. We are glad you had an outlet during these difficult times in your life. How do you deal with difficult situations now?

Never Too Late

At one point in my life, I was doing great. Awards, trophies, accomplishments were me. Growing up and experiencing more in life somewhere I went wrong. I engaged in bad activities, getting into the worst situations. I almost gave up on life. For a couple years I've been in a bad place. Loneliness and depression combined....

Here I am, wishing back then I hadn't been so stubborn, meeting positive people in my life changed me so much. I'm getting my life back on track. I've always thought it was too late, but my new life as an adult will be nothing like my childhood. It's never too late.

-Rhyian, San Bernardino

From The Beat: This is such an excellent mindset. Keep surrounding yourself with positive people. It's never too late to change directions. The next time you're feeling lonely, what are some strategies you can use to cope with these feelings?



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

A Simple Act of Courage

When I was first booked into Juvenile Hall, my mom was as unnerved as I was. However, instead of expressing how I felt, I made sure to comfort her.

My future, unknown. My friends, gone. My potential, squashed. However I stayed strong for her and made sure she was OK before I mad sure I was, myself.

It may not seem like much, but it was the most impactful courageous thing I have ever done.

-Brandon, Marin

From The Beat: It is much. Many consider their own bleak future only. You did the right thing and it wasn't easy. Putting your mom first was courageous and a sign of your maturity.

Life Risk

Every day I wake up hungry
I wonder what I'm going to eat.
I go outside in the field
And I try to look for money.
When I see where the money is
I approach it.
I do what I gotta do
In the field
So I can eat
And my family can eat.
What I do could put me in the hall
But I don't care
Because I can't go starving
Every night.

-Ray, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even if you're the only man in your family bringing home money, food, now you're in juvie, nobody is helping them. Can you get an after-school, weekend job? What are your plans upon returning home?

"We The People"

White cops, to this day,
Are shooting innocent Black people,
Like our ancestors didn't fight for us all to be equal.
But our people are blinded,
Because they are too busy
Each day killing each other
Within their inner city.
Nobody believes this,
But there is still racism.
They just go on, day by day,
Like it just unfazed them.
I think we as "the people"
Should all open our eyes
Notice what's going on around us
And deeply realize
That the police have a plan
A plan to keep people of color in the system
So be aware, watch what you do,
And do not miss them.

-The Unknown, Alameda

From The Beat: How do you think that you and your community could fight against this new form of racism and continue on the proud tradition of your ancestors? Keep writing your truths, we are listening!

Blessed but I'm A Mess

Sometimes I make a mess
But people say I'm blessed
All I do is stress
Because I am a mess
So hopefully one day
I can make it out this chain

-Elvin, San Bernardino

From The Beat: Making a mistake is ok, making a mess is ok because this is how we learn. We can tell you are committed to learning and moving forward which is more than most people. Some people are ok staying in their mess and do nothing to clean it up. We believe you will make it out of the chain.



I'll Never Forget The Day We Met

The way you introduced yourself, I knew
We would be a thing
The way you twirl your hair whenever
You hear me sing
The way you get mad every time I'm not paying
Attention
The way you grab my hand when you want
Me to listen
The way the gold bangle on your right hand
Jiggle
The way you start blushing every time I make
You giggle
The way your curves feels so perfectly made
For my hands
The way your eyes light up when I ask you
For a dance
The way you say my name when I make
You mad
The way you smile when I tell you, you're the best
I ever had
I'll never forget the day we met

-NolimitDre, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is such a sweet poem about a special someone. What does it take to really listen to someone, besides her grabbing your hand? Tell us more about how you support and care for this person.

If I Turned On The TV And Saw...

You know what's crazy? Say there was some white dude who had beef or problems with someone right? And he gets shot and killed in Union Square or the Sunset or wherever white people hang out. He would be on the news and there would be a whole report.

The Chief of police would make a statement to reporters that a "heavy investigation" is taking place. The murderer would most likely be caught and sentenced. Now, if I get my head blown off in the middle of the day on Third Street, I'd be lucky to make it to the news ticker that goes across the bottom of the screen.

And of course, my killer would remain at large and the only justice that would be served would be through the streets.

-Baam, San Francisco

From The Beat: Unfortunately, we've seen the tragic scene that you've described happen too many people of color. We need to all fight for justice and stop this inequality. You can't do it behind bars, but you can start making positive plans.

My Courage

An act of courage.

I always stand up for myself.

I don't care who or what you are.

If you are coming at me sideways,

I'm going to speak up.

If you're trying to prove something

and start punking on someone,

I'm gonna step up.

But, if I know I'm wrong,

I'm gonna change the words and keep pushing!

-Marcela, Marin

From The Beat: Girl, you keep pushing and you keep standing up for yourself or other people who are being abused or hurt. Stand up for honesty and justice. We know you will.

Cheating Death

Sitting here today I can say I have cheated death.

When left to my own devices I am left to slowly killing myself.

It's a different type of suicide.

One I think people rarely think about.

Running around in the streets,

surrounding myself with people that are not good for me.

I am filling my body with smoke

that's killing me from the inside out, mentally and physically.

I hope I don't have to cheat for too long.

I would rather leave it to God's will than my own.

-Reina, Los Angeles

From The Beat: What will it take for you to leave these destructive behaviors behind? We know its difficult in the moment to make decisions that benefit us in the long-term. You deserve it though.

The Court

I don't feel that everyone's judicial experience is fair because of their background, behavior and hardship, which, in my opinion, is how a lot of things occur in America — because of a thing called social injustice too, which is basically like putting a label over someone's head that stays with them no matter where they work, associate or live.

These two issues are very evident in America, which, in my opinion, is going to be the separation of our country. No matter how you argue these points, some part of it is always true. But for some obscure reason, people either try to avoid responsibility or deny these factors, so that there is no social outrage within certain social/minority groups.

-Riley, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You make some interesting points. Maybe someday you can find a way to help decrease the amount of social injustice in the world. What's one small thing you can do?

Pain

I go to drugs for relief.

It numbs the pain

of everything

that's going on.

It comes back twice as hard.

Then you do more and more

until you get caught up or die.

-Bugs Bunny, Sonoma

From The Beat: This is sad. We hope you can find the strength within to address your needs and get the support necessary to beat the addiction, the pain. We need you sober and present! We can tell you have plenty to offer this world!

That Advice

The worst advice I took was when I decided to listen to my negative influences. I jumped off the porch into the streets. They told me to be my own man, make my own money, don't back down and stay solid.

This was the worst advice but without it or the struggle I wouldn't be me. So even though it was poor advice, I wouldn't be me without it.

-Nine, Solano

From The Beat: It is great insight to realize that who we are today is the result of all that has happened to us, including the advice we have taken. What advice would be good advice to give yourself now? Tell us next time.

Advice Within

I do not think that the worst advice comes from other people. I think the worst advice comes from within. Most, if not all bad decisions I have made in my life have come from my own ideas, not other people.

I have convinced myself that I am OK, despite all the bad choices I have made and have always justified all the poor decisions I have made.

Other people have given me some poor advice but all consequences I have experienced have been from my own thoughts and acting on the thoughts without thinking of the negatives.

-Sid, Marin

From The Beat: It is so true what you say. Advice from others can be helpful, but to move ahead, or fall behind, it will be your own ideas. So, think before you act. The results will be positive.

Incarceration

To be honest, I feel like people of color get treated wrong. Take me for example, even from before I got arrested, the first time they pulled me over and thought I fit the description. They said that the person I was resembling was 6 ft., dark skin, and curly black hair. I mean, I see the curly hair, but the other stuff? That wasn't me. I'm only thirteen years old and I was like 5'9.

But that was one of many experiences. I feel like American people of color just let this new methods of slavery: incarceration, segregation, and desperation in the ghettos are just more of a means to control black people in many ways. Incarceration in black neighborhoods are just people getting arrested or murdered for no reasons.

-Jordan, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for speaking so much truth in this piece. Your description of incarceration, segregation, and desperation in the ghettos is particularly powerful and poetic.



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Why Did I Leave

Taking your advice may have been the worst choice I have made in a while. You told me things would be ok in the end and I listened, even though deep down I knew it was wrong. I still listened.

I do not blame you for my poor choice. I do shame you for being a supporter of the thoughts that brought me back here. I did not only lose my self-pride in this process, I lost everyone's respect.

I should hate you for making my poor thoughts turn into actions. But you are the only person who has never left my side. I trusted you. In the end, you were the first to leave.

-Esperanza, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This well-written piece demonstrates your maturity. You see the situation clearly and don't blame another person. There will always be temptations in life. We know that you will start acting in ways that lead you to the life you really want.

High Five

High five! Can I have a high five?

I've been doing very good and no one cares.

I don't talk to anybody about my business, anymore.

People might tell you they care,

but as soon as you mess up, they turn their back.

Come on, everybody makes mistakes!

It's okay, though.

All I wanted was someone to support me.

All I wanted was a high five.

-D, Harvey Louisiana

From The Beat: Having a strong support system is crucial. We all need someone to help us get through hard times. You seem to understand just how important it is to have someone who you can trust. Have you been that person for someone? Have you ever reached out to somebody who needed support, while everyone else turned their backs?

Learning How to Love

What is love? I can't answer that because I've never had it. I thought love was when a person is supposed to have your back and never give up on you even on your hardest days.

I say if a person gives up on you, well it's not love. I say a person who really loves you is going to help you get through your darkest days.

One day I hope I can find someone to love me as hard as I love them. Most people say love takes practice, but in my opinion, love comes from the heart.

-Gia, San Bernardino

From The Beat: Love is so complex! But at the end of the day, it's up to you to define what love means to you. What are some ways that you show love to yourself?

Lost In A Black Hole

The things I've been through are like permanent tattoos.

My heart thrown into a deep hole of depression.

Trying to climb out, but sadness pulling it back in.

So it's swimming in loneliness.

Still not giving up, still fighting its way out.

Darkness forcing it to stay in.

But there's still hope.

Hope to find a bit of light.

This hole is starting to close.

Soon to be no way out.

-The Unknown, Alameda

From The Beat: We know that you will make it out before the hole closes. You are bright, strong, and thoughtful. Keep sharing your truths, we are listening!! Solid writing!

Stand Up

I agree with the quote, "It is never wrong to do the right thing." Because standing up to racists is seen as bad in their eyes but it is never bad to defend yourself.

Another example from my own experience is standing up to someone who was talking about my sister. I did injure the female, but I saw it as the right thing because my love for my blood won't ever change. Period.

-Heidi, Alameda

From The Beat: There are ways to stand up for your sister without injuring other people. Of course you have to defend yourself, but you will feel even stronger by sticking up for her without getting into trouble.

Street Legend

Used to look up to Meech, RIP

Now the youngin's look up to me.

I'm a street legend,

One of the realest ninjas to come out of the streets of Oakland.

I then did some dirt that I know I'm taking to the grave,

But I knew what came with the street shhh when I hopped off the porch.

I was born and raised in the ghetto.

They got me locked in a cage,

But I can handle this situation.

If I did the crime, I can do the time

-B, Alameda

From The Beat: What kind of example do you set for the youngstas that look up to you? Are you steering them in the right direction or are you sucking them into a lifestyle of pain and sadness? We appreciate your truths.

Worst Advice

The worst advice I ever took was driving a stolen car. At first, I thought it was smooth, because I like mobbing around. But then soon as the boys were behind me, I took them on.

One crashed into a cop car. I kept driving and didn't see a strip on the ground. I almost hit a family in their car. I kept driving until the wheels fell off. Then finally the car got surrounded by cops.

I hopped in the back seat, got snatched on, and now I'm in here, locked up, waiting on a group home. I regret hopping in that car. Now I'm gonna miss being with my family for the holidays and my eighteenth birthday and just in general not being free.

-Lexi, Solano

From The Beat: That was indeed terrible advice. But we are pleased that you recognize your mistake and regret it. Next time will be different and you won't make the same mistake.

Equal Justice Under The Law

I feel like a lot of people get judged by their looks and their backgrounds. But the person judging you doesn't ever realize what that other person has been through. They just assume "oh he's just a cold-hearted criminal and he has no feelings." But he does have feelings and he has a family that loves him. But in the judge's eyes he's just nobody.

-Eric, Solano

From The Beat: Thank you for speaking this truth. Every person has feelings and deserves to be treated with respect. You are lucky to have a family that loves you, not everyone has that. Perhaps next time you can tell us what you want the judge to know about you that might make a difference in how you are dealt with by the system.

The New Beginner

My past ain't like my present.
Ready to just get myself together.
Got Moms crying in the court,
got me thinking I gotta do better.
Hurt people in my past,
but God know I ain't cold-blooded.
Asking God to forgive me
for my sins
that I've sinned in my past tense.
I guess I'm tryin' to say this jail shhh ain't for me.
I stay up every night. Can't sleep,
'cause all I do is think
this bullshhh right here for the birds.
They ain't never gone see me again.
Free the real, ya dig?

-Naay Babey, San Francisco

From The Beat: What do you want for yourself? To accomplish? We hope you're still in school and plan to graduate. What about college?

That Poor Advice

The worst advice that I have ever received is from my mom. My mom had told me that if you want something, but can't pay for it, then you have to do whatever you have to do to get it.

That's the reason I'm in jail now. The advice I got from that is don't take the easy way out and work for everything you want in life, because nothing in life is handed to you.

-Dashauna, San Francisco

From The Beat: It can be hard to get wrong advice from people you look up to and should be able to trust, and it's frustrating that you have to pay a big price for that. But we are glad that you have learned from your mistakes.

Switching Schools Is So Hard

"If you're brave enough to say, 'Goodbye, life will reward you with a new 'Hello!'"

I agree with this topic because I had to go through and I've witness this before. One time I had to change schools, and that was really hard for me to say "goodbye", because I got so used to the way my old school was.

It took me some time to adjust to the new school, but when I first knew I had to leave, I had to just take it as a man and leave. But when I got used to the new school and I started knowing more people, it was like I been there for hella long. It wasn't better than the old school, because I had built these relationships with my other friends. It was kind of hard to do it at the new school.

-Marlo, San Francisco

From The Beat: Great description! Are you going back to one of these schools? What are your plans with school upon leaving the hall, as well as to stay free?

Learned from The Best

I've been given plenty of advice but I never take it anymore. This is because I once took advice from a cornball and he had me lookin' dumb and sounding like a crash dummy. But, once they saw what Lil Zell was about, they thought differently. That's when I knew not to take advice from a lummy.

In my life, I've learned from the best. My brother is cut from a different cloth, so I know how to play my cards right, feel me? He taught me at a young age not to ever talk to the police and to always ask for a lawyer before answering any questions. So, I'm growned up. Feel me? I'm doin' this lil bid, but I'll be home soon. Free me.

-Lil Zell, Alameda

From The Beat: We could all use someone to help us make our way in this world. And there are lots of folks in the hall who haven't had the benefit of a wise older brother. Can you share some more of his wisdom with our readers?

Puppies

So soft they are
How innocent they look
It's what makes us love 'em
Just like those pics we took
Hold them, squeeze them
But not too tight
Rock them to sleep
So cute they can be when they sleep
Through the night then they're ready to feed
So energetic so ready to play
I sit and watch 'em all hours of the day
They snuggle, they cuddle
But the clean ups the only trouble
But a puppies' cuteness
Makes up for the struggle.

-Royal Boy, Sacramento

From The Beat: This is a great piece about puppies! Do you have any dogs or puppies you had growing up as a kid? What are some memories? We would love to hear about childhood stories with a special animal!

Didn't Do Me Any Good

I used to have so much hate in me,
people didn't like me.
So I decided to stop liking people.
I would not talk
to that many people and when I did,
I would just tell them to go away.
But it didn't do me any good,
so I decided to change.
It was very hard,
but now I'm better and am ready
to move on.

-G, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're glad that you've let go of some of that hate, and are ready to move on from it. How did you make the change once you decided it wasn't doing you any good?

Warning Sign

This is future you
please listen to this message
Everything you're gonna do
Will give you a one year sentence.
I know what person did you bad, so you mad
And you want to let out your aggression
But you'll be put behind bars
and make yo' situation hard,
So trust me we both don't want Gram stressin'
Temptation is evil
So don't make actions off of certain people
Make yo' next move for the people that need you
Like your brother, grandmother
And the two people that breed you
'Cause when yo' tell your side of the story
they the only ones that believe you
And life don't give no second chances
So don't be expecting a sequel.

-Jerome, San Mateo

From The Beat: Excellent work on the topics. We enjoyed reading this piece with such a valuable lesson for all of us. We hope this is not the last time we hear from you. Keep teaching through your words!



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

How my Life Goes

Okay. So, I'm a teenager and I feel like I grew up too fast. Since I was young, I feel like I've been on my own. Physically just a little, but mentally a whole lot. I've always had to pick myself up, wipe my own tears, and carry my own weight around.

I feel my mom never loved me and just some months ago she confirmed that for me and told me she "hated me."

-Kaprese, San Bernardino

From The Beat: Feeling alone in the world can be incredibly difficult and while there is no instant cure for something of this nature, it can be helpful to think of feeling lonely like feeling hungry. Just as your body uses hunger to tell your body you need food, loneliness is a way of your body telling you that you need more supportive people in your life.

The Future I Want

My future would be a wealthy lifestyle. I would help my family and friends. I would give to charity and give to the homeless.

My future is going to be a giving type of life because others don't have what they need to survive.

In the future I will own my own company and start a new trend that will change the world.

-Mack, Los Angeles

From The Beat: We can tell you are a very generous person. Keep on working towards these goals of yours! We know you can achieve them. Maybe one day you can work with us and give back to the next generation by helping them find their voice!

Message to my Mom

I don't often tell you how much I love you, but I love you mom. I just wanted to let you know.

I am also thankful for having you with me during the hard days and for never giving up on me when I got locked up. You always help me through hard times and I am thankful for it. I thank you and love you mom.

-Jesus, Los Angeles

From The Beat: How can you show your mom you love her? What would she like to see you doing?



Courage

I have stepped in a situation that requires an act of courage. I stepped into some domestic violence between a close friend and her boyfriend. The act that I committed was punching him after he laid his hand on her. I mainly showed him not to beat on her just because he can overpower her easily.

What makes an act of courage is when someone steps up for themselves or someone else. It does not always require putting yourself in harm's way to be courageous. You can use your words and be courageous also.

In my situation with my friend, I could've stepped in the argument before things escalated and said something like, "Aye, dude, calm down." Or, "Bro, you shouldn't talk to her like that. Maybe you should take a walk and calm down."

-Tio, Alameda

From The Beat: We're glad you've been thinking about other ways you could have reacted and shared them with The Beat! It's often hard, in the moment, to know what to do. It helps to think beforehand about ways that we can stay calm.

Cheating

About a year ago, I had a girlfriend. About four months into the relationship, I met some other girl. For about two months during my relationship with the first girl, I dated the other and to this day, my girlfriend never found out. Neither of them. But I have to admit I felt pretty guilty because I played her and she really like me.

-Lance, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this story. It shows what a lot of us experience. You might get away with something, but it continues to live in your mind and your heart. What would you do differently?

A Courageous Act

Yes, I'll never forget the time I stepped up to the situation when my pops was beating on my mother. I hated when that happened every few weeks. So when I got older, like thirteen years old, I couldn't take it no more, so I had picked up an iron and smacked it over his head and he was shaking out of his mind so that was the situation I stepped up to.

-Samie, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so sorry that you were ever put in that situation, and we hope you and your mom are safe. As for your dad, we truly hope he is working on curing his illness- the violence. Again, we are very sorry.

TV (AKA: The Visual Fantasy)

While surfing TV channels

I see distractions.

Distractions from what's going on

Around us, a distraction from

The real world.

Distractions from the racism, from education,

And everything going on around you.

It's kind of like an escape,

Escape from reality.

It makes you feel so into it

That you no longer notice,

Notice that you're stuck into something unreal

Leaving you trapped into a fantasy.

-The Unknown, Alameda

From The Beat: It is very true that TV can be a dangerous distraction, keeping us happy and entertained so we don't address the racism and fix the education going on in the real world.

Into Me

If a chick steadily trippin' then she better get to leavin'
Because I'm a do it big like a touchdown on Thanksgiving
Locked up in place, attorney ain't doing shhh to try to release me
And the DA tryin' to keep me locked up with my demons
Ninja, I pray they let me out
Man this shhh goin' south
Man this shhh ain't right
They messin' over my brother, they talking twenty-five to life
I'm tryin' to beat this case, but that ball ain't in my court
Momma told me since day one not every thang gonna work
I'm supposed to make my momma proud
But I'm making my momma hurt.

-Eclipse, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There is still time to make your momma proud. You are so young, and whatever happens you will have the chance to follow a path that will show your mom you have learned the lessons she tried to teach you.

Missin' My Baby

I really miss my baby momma. Even though she was messing with a lot of guys when we were together, she's still the love of my life and I'll never stop loving her. You were my first kiss, baby girl, I loved it. Your lips were so soft.

I'll do anything for you, my love. Just don't break my heart ever again. You already broke it two times, you made me cry a lot of times. I miss when you would call me your "lil' chocolate monkey" and I'd call you "lil' pepperoni pizza" because your face would always get red when I would say, "I love you."

I miss seeing you every day. Hope I get out soon, so we can be together again, hate talking to you through this phone, it makes me cry sometimes. Love you, my pepperoni pizza.

-Hopkout, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a very sweet and personal piece. We hope you are together soon with time to talk and explore how to keep each other happy.

A Letter to the New Me

Dear Me,

You're smart enough to control your future. Don't let weed and alcohol control your plans and emotions while life gets harder and goes on. Life is shhh at the moment, but keep on having faith in the Lord and let Him have a hand on the steering wheel. You have what it takes to be successful, go for it.

Focus on you, and nobody else. You've proved plenty that you're affectionate towards others, so plan out your future and let nothing get in the way of your dream. The area you live in isn't sunshine and rainbows, but that does not mean you will not be successful.

-Me, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We agree with you that your environment does not determine your outcome. You've given yourself a solid pep-talk here, and now it's time to put it into action! We're excited to see what you bring to the world.

It Is Never Wrong To Do The Right Thing

Is it ever wrong to do the right thing? It really depends on what the person thinks is right, people can have different perspectives on what they think is the right thing to do.

Personally, I feel like this quote can mean two different things, one meaning can be how one's plan for life can change caused by their choices and actions, which looks wrong in society, but the person thinks what they did is right.

The other meaning I had in mind is to have the courage to do what you believe in no matter how everybody is going to look at you.

-Alberto, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think that this is very insightful. It is completely true that what one person perceives as being right does not mean that others will think the same way. That can sometimes make explaining choices and actions difficult!

The Middle of Autumn

My tree is sad.
I've lied and cheated,
so my tree weeps
like a tree in the middle of autumn.
I feel bad
I cheated on my girl.
She doesn't know and probably never will.
It hurts me,
I don't know why I did it.
I guess my tree will never be the same.

-Gelato, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We can tell that this is tearing you apart. What do you need to make the situation right? The choice is yours!

Equal Justice

No they don't have equal justice because it's still the same racism ongoing with people of color not getting the same punishment for the same crime.

The law is far from equal. Blacks and Hispanics get crucial punishment at a really early age.

-Lil D, Alameda

From The Beat: We agree that it is wrong children of color are treated as criminals when they act out like all children do. Young people need support and opportunities to grow, not harsh punishment.

Feelings

I want to see my daughter
I haven't been a father
Ask me how I've been
I've been feeling really bothered
I wish that I can see her
I can't even feed her
It took me three months
Just to get to meet her
I know I haven't hugged you
Just know that daddy loves you
The pictures in my folder are the closest that we come to.

-Lil' Mo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We really appreciate the vulnerability and emotion that comes through in this piece. Your daughter is so precious, and we know you will do your best to be the loving father she deserves.

A Beautiful Arrangement

From the seeds I've planted,
my tree will look like a cherry blossom tree,
absorbing the nutrient-rich soil
of relaxation and meditation,
sprouting up as a stable trunk
with layers of experience
to support its internal structure,
giving way to a beautiful arrangement of leaves
decorated and embellished
with humanities, philosophy, religion.

-Charles, San Diego

From The Beat: We love the rich and vibrant descriptions in this piece! We can tell that you're a writer from the way you talk so beautifully about what you envision for yourself. We're excited to see your tree grow!



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Trust

I thought I knew this lil baby,
Trusted her so I gave her the key,
Said she'll always be there for me,
Straight lies so gotta keep it g,
It's all right, just let it be,
Heartbroken a little, maybe,
Gotta switch lanes, gotta be a p,
Forget all the love shhh, we ain't watching TV.

Spent all my life alone,
Don't be calling ladies on the phone,
Wanna know when I'll come home,
When I get there, you'll be gone,
Been putting up with your tone,
I'm a dog, give me a bone,
Me and you are out to Hong Kong.

This one girl had me from the start,
I actually gave her my heart,
She just tore it apart,
It's my fault, I wasn't being smart.

Sip the bottle 'til there's no more,
Just a regular cholo,
Cops pull up,
Get the money, count the doe,
Her promises were a no show,
So gotta bounce back yo-yo,
Cops took my main bro,
Locked him up for the pole,
I guess that's just how life goes.

I'm by myself 'til the end,
Gonna make it and drive a Benz,
Don't trust these fake friends,
I'm alone 'til the end.

- Alone, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is very special to see you put your time into a longer piece this week. We understand that many people have let you down in your life and you wear your emotional armor as a protection. You have a natural charisma that draws people to you, and once you learn to trust yourself and others, you never need be alone.

No Do Overs

I wouldn't change what happened to me because I've learned from everything I been thru, good and bad. I lost more than I gained.

I know it seems like I'm cool with everyone and have friends, but I know that at the end of the day it's just me. I know them people only with me because of what they see or what they get. I'm not saying I'm a shot-caller up in here, but I know nobody gone disrespect me. I see right thru everyone and I see who they really are. I know they wonder why I'm always serious and don't play around, but it's 'cause I rather be stiff while I'm on earth, than to be stiff buried in dirt. Y'all lazy with yo' loyalty and yo' position. I could never be a follower cause I'm too front-line with it. I promised myself I'll always be the head and never the tail.

I'm getting ready to leave to CYA(youth prison). I'm going to miss this institution (San Mateo Juvenile Justice Center) and all the memories I got here, but now I have a whole new chapter of my life ahead of me that I'm going to live.

-Jack, San Mateo

From The Beat: We appreciate your efforts the last few years you have been contributing during our workshops. We certainly hope the next chapter in your life will be a smooth program and not a program that puts your freedom in further jeopardy. Keep us posted! We are listening.

Pen

DA said I ain't fit for this juvenile system
Judge sending me to county, then to the pen
Doing more than fifteen
I ain't trippin',
Time ain't shhh
Big bro doing thirty-seven in the pen
Hope we link up
I'm tryin' to see him again
I'm on a mission to get my rank and name up
Only fear I got is losing my mom and pops
When I'm locked up in the pen
Shhh so 'trife
Next time I see my lil' brother
He's gonna be all grown up
Told him finish school, keep yo' head up, stay outta trouble
I tell God everyday
Keep my family safe
So much thinking in my cell
It gets me going insane
Hope I see my family again.

-Saucy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We honor you for trying to keep your little brother safe and we hope he listens to your wise words. Keep up your strength in the face of adversity, and we know that the love of your family will help you get through these challenging times.

Me

Locked in the walls of the hall
you have decisions to make,
time to think,
who do you want to be,
where are you going
to spend your time
inside these walls
with your freedom locked up
with your hands behind your back
or living a life of freedom and positivity?
We ask ourselves why?
Why did I end up where I am?
Our decisions!
Why me?
You decided!
Your hands behind your back,
a lack of love and self-care,
doing crime and more time
it's time for a change
it's never too late.

-Tarra, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This poem has so much great sound and rhythm. The back and forth of the voices is very compelling. We agree it's never too late, what actions can you take to make sure you don't come back to these walls?

Push Yourself

Push yourself one day you'll make it
Push yourself other people gonna hate it
Push yourself and prove everybody wrong
Push yourself and show them where you belong
Push yourself and make your family proud
Push yourself and don't ever make a sound
Push yourself you can do it!

-Chains Gee, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Pushing yourself to strive for more and to prove others wrong is a powerful motivator! Push yourself! Tell us your goals for the coming year!

Pained

I can't believe it happened
When I was in the hall
When I found out
I just really started to ball
They said my baby had died
And all I could do was cry
Baby you know Daddy loves you
I said I'd forever stay by your side
But because your mama took you
That turned out to be a lie
If you would of stayed with daddy
You would still be alive
I told the homie what happened
And I'm sure he thought it's trife
But he said "Keep your head up, G"
I guess it's a part of life
But baby don't forget
That I'll always keep you in mind
'Cause no matter what, baby
You will always be mine
RIP Baby G

-Grumpy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're so sorry for the loss of your baby, and that you had to endure such a horrible experience while being locked up. We're here for you, and hope you can carry the love and spirit of your baby into your future.

Lifestyle

Momma I'm sorry for this lifestyle that I chose
Didn't have that many choices 'cause we grew up really broke
If we would've had some money maybe I would've arose
Could've been on honor roll, could've chose a different road
Now it's too late, got a whole lot on my plate
I picked up a brand new case, and I'm sittin' in this cage
Gotta heart that's full of pain, and a brain full of hate
I'm just waitin' for the date

-Young Los, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You made a choice, but it's never too late to choose a new direction. People are always growing, always learning, always developing their discipline. We hope you continue to grow and see new opportunities.

It's Time

My fears become my nightmares,
my nightmares become my reality,
and my reality becomes so much pain
towards me and the people around me.
All I gotta say is that it's time
to grow up and face my demons,
and be there for my family and my baby girl
before it's too late.

-Baby Smiles, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There is a new maturity in you, and we sense that you really are ready to look for a different path. We encourage you to take advantage of any support that is available. You can do this.

Sometimes Lethal

Cheating is like a drug
Once you try it, you can get addicted
Once you're addicted, you can't stop
And when you can't stop
Something will give to your new addiction
Always having to do with your life
Sometimes lethal

-Chance, San Diego

From The Beat: You paint a very real picture here! What is a lethal kind of cheating that someone could get addicted to?

Was It Worth It?

You tell me you love me see now that's a lie.
I feel bad 'cause I'm the true definition of a ride or die.
No need to front baby I'm one of a kind.
So now I wonder...
Was it worth it smoking all that dope?
Was it worth it impressing all your homies
now you're left all alone?
All they did was rat you out.
They're lost in the dust nowhere to be found.
No need to be mad though, we live and we learn.

-Nallely, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Great rhythm and sound in this piece. What did you learn from this experience? What's next?

Had to Let Go

I can relate to "if you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello," because I've had to let go of many loved ones to prevent me from hurting them, but life has given me better people to hang around with, positive people that help me in my life.

-Christopher, San Diego

From The Beat: It's so hard to let go of loved ones. We're glad that you enjoy the people you have around that you hang with. We'd love to know more about how they help you!

Advice All The Time

My stepdad and my mom would always give me advice all the time, telling me, "Don't do this" or "Don't do that." I would sit with my stepdad for hours, and he would be giving me advice on how not to come to the place I'm at now.

The day before I got locked up, he was warning me and my friends and who I hang with and the next day I find myself in the max unit.

No more chances on house arrest. DA doesn't want me at the ranch now, so now I'm looking at DEJ for three to five years. All I can say now is that I wish I would have taken the advice.

-Oso, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You made a mistake, but there will be a chance to take your dad's advice, and by that point, you'll probably be giving that advice to a younger you. Learn what you can from your time at DEJ, and prepare yourself for when you'll be free.

My Staff

You want to know what makes me smile?
My staff does.
They'll never let me down
Attitude or not, they're always by my side
They always know what to say when I'm feeling sad
Always bringing my head up
Cleaning my tears after they drop
They'll always give me advice
Even through the toughest times
I thank them for what they've done
I didn't know what I'd do
If they wasn't by my side.

-Ana, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're sure your staff would love to hear this validation. What things can you do to make sure they feel appreciated as well?



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

Something New

I agree that if you are "brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello."

If you're brave enough to say bye, it was for a reason, not for the worse but for the better. Life always catches up to you, no matter what negative or positive, life does what's best for you.

One day I had to say a goodbye to my house, and got locked up. In a way, life made me say a hello to something new, and kind of rewarded me in a way to not mess up again.

-Jose, San Diego

From The Beat: Sometimes we don't understand why things happen the way they do, but they end up working out if we have the right mentality. When was a time that a negative turned into a positive for you?

My Healthy Tree

I have just planted my seeds.

I didn't like my last tree.

It was full of ugliness and emotions.

I didn't like it,

yet that tree will always be a part of me.

My roots have gotten stronger,

filled with love and a new beginning.

A story I can write with a clean and sober mind.

This time my tree will be healthy

with green leaves and strong roots and branches.

-S, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What do you like about your new tree? What changed and made you want to plant these new seeds? Nice piece!

'Til I Got To The USA

My tree has a lot of ups and downs and has a lot of roots. I went through a lot of struggles 'til I got to USA for a better education and better life.

I was born in Afghanistan, but had to move because of the war in 2002, when I was a baby.

Then I moved to Iran, but in Iran it was worse. We were not allowed to work or go to school or have anything under our name, so I had to help my mom to work. I was seven years old, selling vegetables and fireworks on certain days and helping my mom clean other people's houses. I was the man of the house because I lost my dad to drugs.

There was no future for me in Iran, so I had to move to Turkey to live as a refugee for five years. At least I was going to school learning a new language, but I was working after school at a coffee shop and at a swap meet, illegally.

I've lived twelve years of my life as a refugee 'til I came to the USA and had to learn a new language and a new culture with new people.

I went to get a job in my first year when I came to the USA. I was thirteen years old, but they told me I wasn't allowed to work until I was sixteen and that certain jobs would accept you when you're sixteen. So I took the wrong path and started hanging with the wrong people, and started to get on that fast money life, then got addicted to that lifestyle.

Now I'm sitting here in the hall and when I get released, I'm gonna look at that as a second chance from God and start my life all over again as a new person.

-Omid, San Diego

From The Beat: Wow, what an inspirational life story you have! You and your mom are so strong, and so resilient. Despite so many challenges and dangers, you've come so far and have a bright path ahead. We look forward to seeing what the future holds for you!

Better Place

I pray every day

To put me in a better place

These demons holding me back

But if you keep looking back

You will trip going forward

They tell me if I keep rockin' that lifestyle

My life will be shorter

But I'm a G and I want more

'Til I get these bands up

And get my family to the top

I can't listen to these drop out tactics

So it's in both ears and out

I keep a solid mentality to the hood

That's all I'm about

I can change

I have accepted the consequences of my decisions

I'm gonna block out all this negativity

Now I'm on a mission

So whatever I have to do to get to my destination

I'll make that transition

So sit down and listen to a real G vision

I'm in a messed up situation

Judge tryin' to send me to county

While I got these so-called Gs tryin' to down me

I just keep on movin' and tell them "Get up from 'round me"

They sendin' my boy to YA

He only sixteen

He got caught

Me and him were on the block

So fresh and so clean

Got all these females sayin'

"Junior why you always so mean?"

I tell them "I don't know"

But the real reason is

I was done so dirty

Can never trust a female again

I've learned my lesson

So I'm thankful for this cold heart

It's a blessin'

These females will never get my next move

So I keep them guessin'

I'm from that generation

Seeing my family struggle with no money is a big frustration

I remember being only a young teen, strippin' ninjas on the spot

For whatever they got

Being part of that team was my only dream

RIP to my pops

We were tryin' to do the race

But shhh didn't go as planned

Now it's all in my face

My pops was shot

They were mad that my pop was up and they were not

That's all I got to say

So I pray

To bring me some better days

-Jr G, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, thank you so much for this beautiful, detailed, and heartfelt poem. You painted a picture of where you come from, and why you are who you are. We can feel your hurt, and know that there are better days. Keep writing to us.

Hate is Very Powerful

Hate is very powerful. Hate can cause people to go down a dark path and be mad at the world as well as many people.

Pain can cause mental issues and cause the person to break down and look at life in a whole new perspective and not for the better, but for the worse.

-Marcus, San Mateo

From The Beat: We totally agree with you, and think you make an interesting point connecting hate with pain. Does feeling pain cause hatred?

The Wait Of My Life

The wait of my life was waiting on the court to decide if I was fit for juvie court or if I should go back to adult court. I've been locked up for three years and the court has not done anything but reschedule until two months ago.

I almost gave up on waiting, but I'm glad I didn't because if I did, I would not be in juvie court right now. After I had my 707 hearing, the judge said I should be in adult court but a new law passed where if you were fifteen or younger when you came to jail, you automatically stay in juvie court and I've been here since I was fifteen.

I'm almost nineteen years old and I'm still waiting to go to trial. Even though I'm tired of waiting, waiting is very good.

You have to have patience in life to grow and I'm glad God put me where I am today because I have learned and grown a lot since I've been incarcerated.

-Keymontae, Sacramento

From The Beat: This piece shows tremendous maturity and you should be very proud of how far you've come. It takes a very strong and resilient person to believe they are in the right spot, despite being behind bars. Keep thriving.

Pressure

A lot of pressure man my life is hard
Raise my head to the skies lookin' pass the stars
I've been a sinner don't look down on me
When they ask me why I do it
It's for my family
I remember all them days when I was stuck up in that cage
You said you love me but fake
How can you hang up in my face
All these people bound to change
When you sitting in that box
They say they yo' friend but when you broke
They really not.

-Purge Twin, Sacramento

From The Beat: Unfortunately, this same situation happens to a lot of people locked up. When it comes down to the dark days, people tend to abandon you and switch up. That only gives you motivation to do right for those who did you right. Who are the people what have stuck with you since day one?

My Cousin's Bad Advice

The time I've taken bad advice was when my cousins told me, "Don't ever let no one disrespect you." This advice caused so many conflicts in my life. I got into many fights over this and I felt that I always had to prove something to people when in reality I don't have to prove nothing to anybody.

Those people are just like me, they hurt like I hurt, they bleed like I bleed, they're no better than me and no worse.

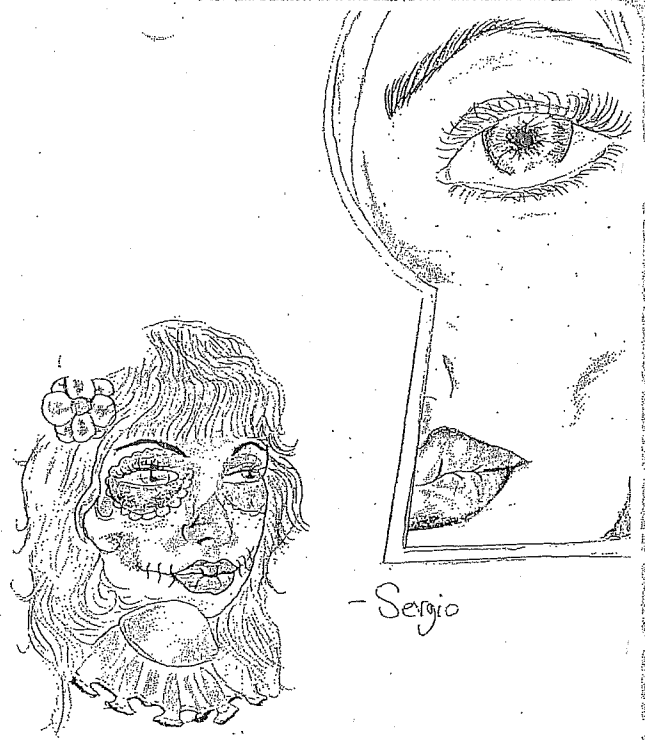
Since incarcerated, if people talk shhhh or try to make me look bad I don't react to it anymore. I don't feel the need to prove something to them anymore. So what if they disrespect me, at the end of the day, they're just words and if the words they're saying to me ain't good ones, I for sure ain't listening. Now I just laugh it off, because like I said words don't mean anything. I'm glad I don't feel the need to fight or prove something to someone that's disrespected me. It has definitely saved me a whole lot of heartache and negative emotions.

I'm glad I don't act on that negative advice my cousins gave me now. I think the reason why I've had this realization is because I'm more mature. I see things for what they really are and I think before I act now rather than reacting on impulse like I used to.

Overall, simple bad advice could have had effects on the person you tell it too, especially if the person you tell it to is seven years old which was the case for me.

-Sebastian, San Mateo

From The Beat: Great work on the topic, bad advice. You lay out a great story and example to how this advice affected your life and now that you are older and mature enough to know better.



My Roots And Seeds

My seeds that I would plant would be about my life and things that would support me in that time. Each of my seeds would have something symbolized on it like encouragement to be humble, to be positive during/throughout my life and to encourage others, I guess.

I be feeling like I need a seed for myself to help me automatically check myself when I'm doing something bad to prevent myself from certain situations.

And, yeah, but I don't know. I be feeling like I need someone to be on my ass about certain stuff, so I know to take shhhh seriously and to guide me also on the right path. But then I hate when people be telling me something about myself I already know, and it just throws me all the way off.

-Benji Cece, Alameda

From The Beat: We love that you want encouragement to be humble and to encourage others. We agree that it's hard to accept advice that you have already heard. It's always good to never turn down wisdom, even if you don't want to hear it, because it will only make you wiser!

Forgive Me

Father God can you forgive me? 'Cause this is my mistake.
I can't blame nobody but me and all of my ways.
Pray to the Lord every night, because I'm tryin' to change.
I know the outcome gone be good, I feel it in my veins.

Wakin' up, middle of the night, 'cause my body hurtin'.
Wishin' I can just wake up to the birdies chirpin.

Ain't no regrets, I'm a man. I take it as a lesson.
And when I'm out, changed man, ain't no hittin' fences.

-Lil Ally, Alameda

From The Beat: You're ability to take responsibility and learn from your mistakes makes us believe that this will be your first and last time in jail.



★PIECES OF THE WEEK!★

I Am

I am intelligent and belligerent
I wonder if I will be able to love again
I hear my demons
I feel defeated and lost
I understand why I became who I am
I'm waiting to touch pavement
I'm waiting to be with my loved ones
I'm waiting to show my lil bra a lot
I hope for the best
Expect for the worst.

-Boss Up, Sacramento

From The Beat: This piece shows that you have done a lot of reflection and maturing. We encourage you to dig deep and try to find it in you to love others, but most importantly, yourself.

Two-Faced Gov

They don't care about no first-time felonies
Have you livin' in Hell
Locked in a cell and never leave
Including myself
I had all the people telling me
This been happenin' regularly
Over a couple centuries
Got some people in it and they really doin' time
Only on suspicion of a so-called crime
They know who really did it but never be droppin' dimes
So now they got life and you can hear they mama's cryin'
Doesn't even matter if they did it or didn't
'Cause the government tryin' to keep you acquitted
In the prison, where they have you livin'
'Cause as of right now I'm on a one-year sentence
I doubt if this blows up on YouTube
Lyrics be a message and a beat to groove to
Police say they'll salute you
But if you look suspicious, "click bang!" they shoot you.

-Jerome, San Mateo

From The Beat: Your style of writing is very poetic and smooth, we think you're a great lyricist! Your lyrics are a message. Keep writing and speaking your truth!

Play Hard, Work Harder

Life is a road
It's got so many side streets
Treatin' life as a track meet
Took the wrong turn once
Now is time to bounce back
Workin' double time
To make up lost distance
Watching these phonies run more
For instance they thinkin' they better than the rest
But I know I'm better
Taking long strides
Cutting down haters like they all cheddar
Runnin' this race going for first
Don't wait for no slackers
Push past whatever hurts
Let them play hard while
I work harder.

-Royal Boy, Sacramento

From The Beat: This is such a creative and thoughtful piece, we love this! Pushing past whatever hurts is such a powerful message and one that everyone needs to hear. So many times, we stop due to fear. Thank you for your inspiration.

My Inspiration, Part 1 and 2

Part One, Dear New Alicia,

Man, where do I start? New you, you have overcome lots of obstacles in this life, seen things you wouldn't want to wish on your worst enemy and yes, you took a wrong path down the road, being the old you, you got into lots of things that wasn't right.

The old me, sheesh, you were a handful, a ton of work. But slowly, a new me started growing inside, became understanding, aware, patient.

Yet the new me is still growing, becoming stronger, brighter, nicer, soon I'll find inner peace and become a neo-natal nurse and reach my goals.

Part Two

My inspiration started off at a real young age in thinking about my future profession in neo-natal. Far on the other side of the border is where it started for me. I was ten years old in Mexico, in a little hospital on a hill. You see, Mexico isn't like here. No big hospitals.

I remember walking in with my momma in the small hospital, remember walking to third floor, to the babies floor, remembered looking at those fat, healthy babies. Walked a little farther down, happy for new mothers, but as I walked further down I saw them get more sick. My heart dropped. I remember looking at a preemie, named Elath. Skin red, small. I spent time singing to him. The next day I found out he passed. So he's my inspiration. RIP Elath, my little angel, thank you!

-Alicia, San Mateo

From The Beat: What an amazing story about how you've found your goals. We can tell that you're a passionate and compassionate person, and you would make a great neo-natal nurse. Keep pushing for this goal!

Thinking Like a Man

I had to be very courageous when I decided to do my own thing. I decided to not follow others and I started not to care what others said or thought of me. I decided to think more of my family than my friends. I started going to school and studying even though my friends were ditching school, doing drugs, and crimes.

Mostly I started to think about a future that was good instead of wanting to go to prison so I could make a name for myself. I decided to think like a man instead of thinking like a child. This was my act of courage and I'm glad I did it. If I hadn't done it, I don't think I'd be getting out anytime soon.

-Sebastian, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're so proud of you for making the decision to be mature, and think outside of yourself and who your decisions impact. You are wise beyond your years. We're excited to see where your future takes you!

Got Me Mad

Dang I got played
The system talking all that smack
Won't even be out for the holidays
Why can't I go?
Dang I really messed up
Can't wait for my next court day
Mid-January we'll try again
Meanwhile, gotta take a day at a time
And not rush through time
Yeah, It'll be hard
But I got supporters
by my side

-Ana, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We are sorry you won't be home for the holidays. What do you think you'll do different when you get out?

Past Regrets

I just want a do-over,
to do it right, make-it right.
Switch my mistakes, push away the fakes,
I just want a do-over
For everything I did wrong.
A do-over maybe put my words to a song.
I should of gone to school,
instead of living life practical,
watchin' and smoking after school.
Now I'm locked up in these chains.
Not staying on a straight road.
Got to get my world straight, before it's too late.
I would feed myself instead, off of momma's plate.
I would rewind time, tell myself not to commit my crime.
I did things I regret, things for my set,
I use to gamble and bet, with my life everyday.
If I had a do-over this is what I say,
tell my sisters not to worry that it's gonna be OK,
but instead the streets took hold and I veered away.
I regret that 'till this day.
I should have got in my stepdad's way,
but I was focused on the pay.
What can I say,
that's what happens when you live in EPA (East Palo Alto).
I would have opened my heart, and gave my family the key.
I just wished they can see, the new me, not the old me.
So I can have a do-over, not always be hungover,
the drugs took a hold. I just wish I was more bod.
Say no and be more cold,
but now I'm locked up at seventeen years old.
Would have gave myself advice,
could have been eatin' mamma's beans and rice.
Should have listened and played nice,
instead of rollin' dice, with my life.
Now my situation hard, I already played my card.
I just want a do-over.

-Kol Kut , San Mateo

From The Beat: You do an excellent job with this poem, as you address the topic, do-over. We have faith that upon your return home things will be a lot different for you and your family. You see the errors in your past decisions, and now with the new year upon us, you have a chance to start anew! We are sure you have this!! We also hope you keep on writing. You have a gift!

Kisses

Made the whole world seem so unimportant
Felt tender and full of urgency
Heartbeat quickening, fireworks all over the body
Every kiss with more love and care
Making everything and everyone disappear
Could never get enough of those kisses
Ended so quickly but still remember

-Five/Eleven/Sixteen, San Mateo

From The Beat: You describe love in such a beautiful, poetic way. We love the imagery and sensory detail!

Hate

Hate can and will destroy you
It'll tear you down day by day
Squeeze the life out of you
Like a rung out towel
All the hatred built up inside you
It's gonna ruin you
Vivir la vida amarga no traera felicidad
(Live the bitter life will not bring felicity)

-MaryJane, San Mateo

From The Beat: We love the simile you use here about the rung out towel, and agree that hate tears people down. What builds you up?

Pass it Down

Advice is powerful. If advice were to be handed down from person to person, the world would be different. People are life-blinded due to ignorance. Some people don't know better simply because they weren't told better.

Now there's two types of advice: the right and the wrong. The right will clear your perspective of the world in a positive way, the wrong is the ignorant one, where it might feel right but won't be in the long run.

Advice has to be said for someone to know that they need to grow up with good morals, go to college, make a career for yourself before you decide to have kids and get a good job to be able to support yourself or your family, if you decide to have one. You need to make sure to pass the word down to your kids and make sure to tell them to pass it down as well.

-King, San Mateo

From The Beat: You have a lot of great advice for us, and we can tell its important to you to make sure future generations know right from wrong. What's one piece of advice that you would pass on?

Cheating

I was with this one girl for more than two years and I promised her that I would never cheat on her. Obviously I lied and cheated on her. I actually cheated on her more than once.

I feel bad because she was one of the few girls that I know that would be loyal and faithful to me even if I was locked up. Until now she still has no clue, I feel sad and sorry.

Even though we are not together anymore, I wish I could go back and change what I did. She was a good person and did not deserve that.

- Sam, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We really appreciate the honesty of this piece. Isn't it sad that we often take the best things in our lives for granted?

Search for the Love

There's a lot of hate in this world.
At times, it feels like there is more hate
in the air than air itself.
Hate is very common.

Everyone hates.

People hate more than they love.

It's so easy to hate;

the real challenge is to love.

Hate finds you,

but you need to search for the love.

Love won't find you,

you need to find it.

Hate revolves the world,

as shhhhte as it sounds,

people hate for everything.

They hate you if you're different,

they hate you when you mess up,

they hate when you're down.

We can learn to not hate,

but it will be difficult.

We need to learn to love,

but that's just not how the world revolves.

-Jem, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's true that un-learning hate is very difficult, especially when we're taught to hate from a very young age. What do you think it will take to embrace the world with acceptance and curiosity, rather than hate?



Alameda County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

Unfair Treatment

I think they treat us unfairly because a white kid had a gun charge and mushrooms and got out in three days. If it would've been a person of color, they would've been sittin'. I also think that it's because that kid had money and could afford a really good attorney who's made a name for themselves.

On the other hand, I feel my attorney isn't tryin' his best. He's just been assigned to my case. He's not working for me because I wanted him to. I got him by default.

-PayMcZay

From The Beat: It's hard to know the variables that influence the judge's decision making, but no one who's been exposed to the juvenile justice system can deny the fact that race and money play a significant role in how "justice" is served.

Write for The Beat on the outs!

The Beat Within workshops at the Oakland Public Library!

Saturdays 2 PM

Main Library Teen Zone
125 14th St., Oakland CA 94612

SNACKS!

Community Service Hours possible.
(510) 761-9363 with questions.

An Act of Courage By Me

I remember when I had the act of courage in this situation I was in, when this person lied on my name. I had to go confront the person about it. I was about to fight him, but I thought about it and decided not to do it.

-Davon

From The Beat: That was a mature decision to make. How did you end up resolving things?

My Own Poor Advice

I've been told not to run from my placement, but I did anyway. I took the risk anyways because I didn't want to be there. Yeah, it was a bad decision, because I've been in and out since then.

-Fredo

From The Beat: We all make impulsive decisions, but it sounds like that one had tough consequences. We hope that next time you get the opportunity you will finish your program and leave all of this behind you.

Poor Advice

I remember when somebody told me to do something that I really didn't want to do, or I did do and it got me into a bad situation. Like when somebody told me to steal something and when I did I got chased for so long. I was mad, but at the same time, happy, because I got away.

-Davon

From The Beat: It sounds like in the end it wasn't worth it to take that person's advice.

That Advice

I have taken bad advice growing up and I have reflected on it.

I did the things I did, not because people told me to, but because I wanted to.

My advice for myself is, once I get out, don't look back anymore. Just do better.

Free my folks!

-Ferny

From The Beat: Don't dwell on the past but do learn from it. Experience alone doesn't give us knowledge. We've got to reflect on that experience if we want to gain wisdom.

Bad Advice

There was this one time when I was with some friends and I was on GPS and it was late and I was scared because I knew I was going to back to jail because I violated. So, my friends were just like, "You might as well cut the GPS off."

So, I cut it off and three weeks later I got caught on BART stealing. Then I ended up in juvenile hall.

-Miah

From The Beat: Bad advice will usually take you down the wrong road. The best thing to do is learn from this experience and try to distinguish the bad and the good advice. Usually the bad advice, your inner conscience will tell you that is wrong. You can choose to ignore it or listen.

Unequal Justice

No I do not think the law is equal because if a colored man is stopped by police with a gun, he's more likely to be shot rather than a white man, I'm going to say.

-Keem

From The Beat: There have been so many tragic cases of Black men being shot by police when they don't take it easy, while armed white shooters are peacefully arrested.

Let It All Out

Talk to Pops, he told me, son, man you should've listened, No food in the house, I still looked in the kitchen, Knockin' on my neighbor's door, 'cause my brother was hungry, A little worried, where was Pops? It was never sunny. I ain't never been to jail, so you can't take it easy, Tryin' to be home for my loved ones, 'cause my mama need me Getting orders all day, like can I watch some TV? Now I'm just sittin' in my cell while they screamin' "free me"

-Lil Ally

From The Beat: It sounds like you needed to step up and be a father figure for your little brother when you were just a kid yourself. You're little brother is lucky to have a big brother like you that looks out for him.

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Courageous

What I believe is an act of courage
Is when someone is committing a crime
And someone comes to assist the person
Who the crime is being committed against.

-BreakingNewsBaby

From The Beat: That is a great example of courage and we love your spacing in this poem.

Listen, My Brother

I try to give my brother good advice by telling him not to follow in my footsteps so that he doesn't end up like me, being in jail.

- Keem

From The Beat: Which footsteps should your brother avoid? Was there any one moment when you started walking down a path that led you here?

Cheating Story

A time I got caught cheating was when I took a final for history. I had a female text me the answers and I wrote them on my wrist, so I wouldn't get caught.

It was worth like 60% of our grade and I barely went to school 'cause I was doin' my duty. I got like 92%. I was happy and I ain't get caught.

-Pay Me

From The Beat: Hmm, you did or didn't get caught? Sometimes it gets tempting to cheat because it's the easy way out, but the only person you are cheating is yourself. Remember that your education is so YOU can learn and apply it to your daily life in a positive way.

She Gives Me Courage

Is when the love of my life tells me I'm going to make it through this situation. She keeps me strong and gives me courage.

-BenjiBlaat

From The Beat: We are sure that you also keep her strong and give her the courage she needs to make it through this time apart.

TV and My Thoughts

When I turn on the TV, I see a lot of entertainment, talent, shows, news, sports and movies. I don't see a lot of Black people. I don't see good news about Oakland.

I would like to see a lot more Black People on TV and a lot more good news about Oakland.

When I watch TV I only see a lot of fighting in movies.

-Treshaune

From The Beat: If you could make a TV show with Black people in Oakland what would it be about? What kinds of good news would you include?

You Need Advice

I feel like everybody has offered or gave good and bad advice. I personally took some good and bad and it ended me in weird places. But everybody needs some advice to help them out.

-Darii

From The Beat: When people gave you bad advice, did you trust them again after that, or did they lose your trust for steering you down the wrong path?

Try It

"If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello." -Paulo Coelho

This quote really relates to my life because I had to let my best friend go and it brought me a new beginning because it was time to change. After that, I got some more people in my life that I can relate to.

-Darii

From The Beat: We are glad that you have found a group of friends that you get along with and can trust.

Never Wrong to Do the Right Thing

I agree with this quote (by Mark Twain) partially because if you do the right thing, good things could happen. But the wrong thing could also be the right thing in some people's eyes. But if you do the "right" thing, you'll never be wrong or looked at in the wrong light, or you won't put yourself in a bad position.

-Certi

From The Beat: It is true that many people define the right thing differently, so you just have to stay true to your own gut and definition of what is right.

Equal Justice Under Law

Everybody should not have the same equal rights because, say a 10-year-old goes to jail, he shouldn't suffer like an adult because he's still a kid.

-BenjiBlaat

From The Beat: We absolutely agree that young people shouldn't be treated as though they are adults within our justice system.

Worst Advice

The worst advice I took from someone was myself because I feel sometimes I be putting myself in bad situations. I feel like sometimes the shhh I be doing screws up my whole lil' life.

Other than that, I want to give myself good and positive vibes. I inspire y'all lil' Bay Bay kids to get y'all lil' fast act together.

-Advisor

From The Beat: It's okay to make mistakes and learn from them, but repeating the same mistakes over and over is never going to allow you to progress and be successful.

Stand Up

Hey. My name is Bre. The first time I started smoking was when I was in my living room and my brothers and sister and cousins and others were asking me if I smoked. I said, "No."

One day I was at school and most of my classmates had weed and backwoods and my cousin said, "Hey, cousin, do you want this weed?"

I said, "Yea," because my day was going bad. I asked all my friends did they wanna smoke and they said, "Yea." They had weed and woods, so we matched them.

Then as we were smoking, as the blunt was getting small, the teachers came and seen me smoking and they told my family that I smoked.

They said, "Why didn't you tell me?"

I said, "I don't know, but I'm sorry."

-Bre

From The Beat: Sometimes it feels normal to do the things that everyone is doing because you feel like you need to fit in, but think about yourself first. It's always okay to say no, and don't feel like just because you had a bad day that you need to smoke. Try other things like talking to someone. It will help you feel better.

Alameda County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

It's Never Nothing

"Whatever is meant is meant. I take it on the chin" – Pop

This quote means whatever consequences come with my actions, I'll face it with no fear.

-Pop

From the Beat: If you don't like the consequences of your actions, do you change your actions so you don't have to live with the consequences again?

My Sea Tree

My tree will be called Sea Tree, which is going to be a tree growing at the bottom of the sea. On top of the tree will be a Ferrari boat. Also, it has a tree house and mermaid swimming around the holy tree feeding fishes. Also, it has a pineapple on top of the tree and a coconut. A tropical tree. Basically, amazing imagination.

-Sonnie

From The Beat: You do have an amazing imagination and we love your tree!

On The TV

I turned on the TV and I saw Spongebob Squarepants and the show was hilarious.

Also I found out that Spongebob's voice passed away. RIP SpongeDude.

-Lil Hustle

From The Beat: Good news! The voice of Spongebob is alive and well, but the show's creator did pass away. Still, RIP SpongeDude.

Time Goes Bye

You don't got to be in jail to be doing time.
I'm going crazy with a kapitol K!

-Puffin'

From The Beat: What do you do to help ground and calm yourself when you feel you're going crazy? Is it different when you're in jail or on the outs?

A Hard Test

In 2010, I forgot to study for my math test. In class I sat next to this smart Asian boy and I just was looking at his paper.

He wasn't letting me copy but the ones I didn't know how to do, I copied his answers and didn't get caught. I don't remember my grade, but I know it was a high grade, an A or a B.

-Baby-Jay

From The Beat: Did that help you remember to study in the future? We know you are more than capable of getting high grades on any of your tests without cheating.

Goodbye Negative People

Saying goodbye to negative energy is the saying hello to a fresh start.

What I mean by that is removing negative people and negative habits from your life can cause you to become a better person with more of a positive mindset.

-Naybrazy

From The Beat: We agree! You think positive and positive things will happen in life!

Right or Wrong

For my brothers I'ma slide right or wrong, because they're forever right, even if they're wrong.

-BenjiBlaat

From the Beat: Loyalty is important, but are you loyal to people even if you don't trust their judgement?

Equality?

The court is more lenient during cases with white people. I had a friend who did some serious crime, but I know if it was me, I'd be sent to a lot more worse place than he was.

-Andrew

From The Beat: It is wrong that the criminal justice system is harsher on some people, and we hope that you are given the lenience you deserve.

There is No Equal Justice Under Law

No I don't think the law treats us equally because my friend is sitting in jail because they said he committed a murder when he really didn't.

-Davon

From The Beat: We hope that their name is cleared and they are set free soon.

Never Gonna Get It

I've tried cheating
I thought I got away with it,
but don't matter how you try to hide,
somebody always finds out.

-Caught

From The Beat: You can't hide from the truth or the guilt.

Thinking

I always disliked the way I felt misunderstood
because sometimes I disliked explaining myself to people.

-Chipp

From The Beat: What are things that make it harder to explain yourself to people? Is it that you have trouble expressing yourself, or that others have troubling actually listening to what you are trying to say?

My Puzzle

I feel like all the pieces of my puzzle are half way done.
I feel like it's way more ways to go.

-Zion

From The Beat: What are the pieces that are still missing? How will you find them?

Life

Sometimes in life you have to do what you gotta do
in order to get to where you want to be.
No matter what the situation is.

-Muddy Bolino

From The Beat: We'd love to hear some examples about your personal experiences!

Stay Out Them Streets

Stay out them streets, G
it's easy to get some cheese, G
On the road to sixty bands
Narcs out
Hopping out them vans.
Champ scam real humble

-Tanna

From The Beat: Besides doing anything messed up to get your cheese, how about getting a job, to get the money you need and so you won't have to worry about the narcs? Freedom first! Freedom always!

Cheatin'

A time I got away with cheating and never told anyone is when I was getting money from my dad for one thing, but used it on a completely different thing.

My dad was giving me money for a fundraiser for my school, but I was using it on other things that can't be said on here. Nobody ever found out, so I got away with it.

-Alix

From The Beat: How do you feel about diverting your dad's money to buy whatever for yourself? Was whatever worth it? If anyone gave you money now for a purpose, could you be trusted with it?

The TV Show

On TV, I see "Teen Titans" and some more stuff. The stuff that I seen on TV when I was a kid, like "Ed Edd and Eddy and the Kid Next Door".

-The Kid

From The Beat: Please describe what about "Teen Titans" and "Ed Edd and Eddy" that you learned from and liked. Do you still watch them when you're home?

Cheating Just Cheats Yourself

Cheating and getting away with it. I didn't know it was wrong until I loved someone and felt the pain it gave to that person.

Cheating on a test hurt me, because I'm cheating myself out of learning and getting an education. Cheating hurts yourself more than we can know and lately, if I could get them days back, I would change my past.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Great thinking! Are you still in school on the outs? We hope you go to college and get a great education! What appeals to you in the outside world?

I'd Be a Good Interior Designer

I want to be an interior designer. The steps that I need to do to achieve it is get a Bachelor's Degree.

Know how to spend wisely with less money, you have to know how to decorate to the customer's liking. I have a lot of experience, because I'm always decorating something, like my room or the house. I feel like I would be good at it. I also love watching "Flip or Flop" to get ideas for my next projects.

In my room that I decorated, I have a fish tank with a goldfish, a clown fish and a whole lot of other fish. I have a big queen bed with blue sheets and blue covers. I have a white fluffy rug and a flat-screened TV. I have all my shoes and clothes organized in my walk-in closet. I have my puppy, a miniature Yorkie, and she has a little small dog bed.

It's hard to remember my room, being in here.

-Dd

From The Beat: We hope you get to sleep in your own bedroom soon. Looks like you have the talent and heart to become a terrific interior designer. We wish you success!

My Tree

My tree will be brown-skinned with lips
Big lips, big juicy lips
My tree will belong to me
My tree'll be all for me
My tree will have perfect features
Beautiful dark brown eyes
With a pair of perfect eyebrows
My tree was my tree

-Opi

From The Beat: Are you describing your ideal tree, who will be gorgeous and love you unconditionally? What personality features will your tree have, that will go along with your own?

My Old Lifestyle Has Got to Go

If you're brave enough to say "Goodbye"

Life will reward you with a new "Hello!"

My old lifestyle. I used to stay out late, be around the wrong crowd—people who BIP (steal out of cars), steal, disobey my grandmother's orders, etc.

I didn't learn to stop until I went to jail and now I'm being sent to a group home and taken away from my family. I have to get a job and finish six months at a group home. I will receive a B-12 and try to do my best.

-Tanna

From The Beat: Hello, B-12 and a job, respect for your grandmother, and enjoyment of your freedom! We wish you the strength to succeed.

My Friends Make Me Smile

I think about my friend, J. She make me smile. We get along, watching TV at rec. We was eating popcorn at rec time. My favorite TV show was "White Chicks".

Me and T and D, we talking, talking at rec time. T make me smile. I was insane, eating popcorn at rec time. I like O. She make me happy.

Staff like me, because I'm too nice and kind. Staff like me a lot, because I am safe. O, she teach me how to be big and safe.

-Ajanay

From The Beat: You and your friends seem like you're having fun gobbling popcorn, watching TV at rec time. Good! How are you "safe"?

Driving as a Young Teen

When I was driving at fourteen years old, I gave my mom some gas money at Lake Merritt BART. My mom was happy, because I was drivin' in my hot 2003 Mitsubishi. I started drivin' to the city.

-Ajanay

From The Beat: Why did your mom let you drive when you were so young? Where did you get your Mitsubishi? Since you must miss it and your life on the outs, how will you make sure you keep your freedom?

Missing You

Baby, even though we not together
Soon to come we'll see each other
Again.

All I do is miss my baby.

I ain't gone lie, I love you, Boo.

Write me a letter

Let me know how you feel.

Come home to me, Bae.

Don't lie to me.

Tell me the truth.

It hurt for so many years.

Me and you can chase a loop.

Fell in love with dolla' bills

Baby, it's just me and you.

Don't let the hate interfere.

-Naay Babey

From The Beat: If you and your boyfriend's love for cash money interfered with your love for each other, can you put yourselves first? We hope that helps.

San Francisco County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

I Am Who They Say I Am

Too many problems, yeah
Thinking how I'm gone solve 'em, yeah
So much pain in my body, yeah
They selling lies and I bought it, yeah
Don't tell me that you love me
If you ain't gone ride for me
Told me you would never leave
I think you just lied to me, yeah
Get up from off your knees you ain't
Gotta cry to me
I done did it on my own
Tell me, do you feel it?
Never learned how to trust, sitting in juvie
All for you I take a slug
Baby who the realest?

-Moguttah

From The Beat: We can see that you're a very loyal and devoted person, but we worry about you "taking a slug" for someone else. Be careful not to sacrifice your freedom for others. You are your own biggest investment.

This Better Be In The Beat Within

I am only writing this because the man from Back to the Future made me. I think he is going back in time right now.

Now, a lady is making me write more. I have now reached my max writing capacity.

-Alix

From The Beat: We're glad that you wrote something, but we would like to get to learn more about you! Why is it so difficult? Mature up! Stop complaining! Listen to that man from Back to the Future!

The Right Things

It's not wrong to do the things (the right) things you want to do. Like, it's not wrong to not go to school for a few days.

-Isaac

From The Beat: Life is all about balancing the things you'd like to do and the things that you have to do, like school. It's important to find a way to do both!

Locked Up and My Thoughts

I've been locked up for a year doing time. It ain't nothing but the staff got me stressing. They don't like to see me thuggin'.

I know my mom misses her son and my lil' sister misses her big brother so I'm a make sure I don't get caught so we can take care of each other. I know my lil' sister look up to me but she can never be like me.

-Creepthru

From The Beat: We hope that you set a good example for your younger sister and we know you will make your mom very proud! We believe in you!

Up Next

Free me from this box
Free me from these streets
Free me to my lavish life
That's up next

-Opi

From The Beat: If it's your sustaining your lavish life that brings you to juvie, what's your solution? To get a job? To live a less lavish life? What's up next for you?

Doing The Right Thing

It's never wrong to do the right thing. Like, if you do good, good will happen to you. One time I found money on the ground and I gave it back, and for that I got good.

-James

From The Beat: We like this perspective. Trying to do things that will make others happy can make you feel good!

My Life, My Pain

Being in love never helps me
Solve my problem
I wish I could find a girl
Just like my momma
I don't want to hurt nobody
But still ride around.

-Mo

From The Beat: Love isn't just about finding the right person, it's about being the right person. What is it about your mom that you hope to find in a girl?

Missing Home

I love my mom. She's smart, she makes me happy. I miss her food she cooks because I miss her. Home, in her car, and her music, and my sister because she cares about me and my health and my hair care and face and stuff.

Me and my sister always clean up my mom's house in Sacramento. We watch TV together to have fun.

I have to take care of my nephew, while my sister dying her hair, is why I put my nephew to sleep.

-Ajanay

From The Beat: We are glad that you have strong and meaningful relationships with your family at home, not everyone has that, and it is good to value that. Don't ever take it for granted and enjoy every moment!

Lovers

We started as close friends
Somehow you turned into my boyfriend
We use to tell each other everything
I even went and bought you anything
Matching everything
Lately you've been acting so rude
I don't know what nobody told you
I ain't gone lie I miss the old you
Just wipe your eyes and stop that crying.

-Opi

From The Beat: It can be hard when people change, and relationships change. Sometimes all you need is to talk about it, but other times people grow apart and that's okay. What you had in the past is still just as meaningful and valuable even if it does not exist anymore.

San Francisco

That Advice, That Night

One day a friend told me to meet him. I know I should have stayed home. It's actually what ended me up in juvenile hall.

Him and I said one more hit and instead of going home, we did one more hit. There was a dude in the window and he called the police.

-Young D

From The Beat: So would your advice to someone else in a similar situation be to just stay home? While we can't erase our past actions, we can focus on making better decisions in the future!

Taking Advice is Hard

I don't take advice from anybody unless I respect a person or know he/she what she is talking about. Ninety-percent of the time I zone out when somebody tries to (give me advice) because I'll be thinking in my head, I know more than that person does.

-TreTre

From The Beat: It definitely can be hard to take advice from some people when you think you know better. Trying to keep an open mind and having patience is important.

Aliens Vs. Narato

Narato is a white boy with yellow hair. He fights people to help his village. He tries to become the leader of the village.

Some aliens come (to the village) and after that Narato gets blasted with water. Then he turns into the Hyruto Fox. Then he throws them into the spaceship and flies back with them to destroy their planet.

-Damien

From The Beat: This seems like a really interesting and exciting story, and we are glad you are into it! Does it have any important messages or takeaways that you can apply to your own life?

Future Ideas

I would like to write books and make movies because it's proactive. I think writing a book makes you think more and helps you move forward and not worry about the past, but that's up to you.

I would like to write a book to change my life style. The book I would like to write about takes place in Oakland, California. It's going to be about how I lived in poverty and how I'm trying to make a way out without selling drugs, robbing, stealing, just something positive for once.

-Carl

From The Beat: You already have the idea, now you just have to sit and write the book. The other great thing about writing books is that others can read your work and connect and relate to it. For now, we hope you will continue to share your words with The Beat, we are here to help!

Showing Courage

I remember one time when I was at school for the first day, when my classmates and I had to perform for an assembly and I had to show so much courage to perform in the front of the whole school.

People told me I sounded great and I have a future ahead of me and some said I might qualify to be an attorney because of how persuasive I was.

-Young A

From The Beat: That sounds like quite the accomplishment to be proud of! Not everyone would be comfortable speaking in front of so many people. Now you know a skill that you can use and get even better at in the future.

All By Myself

I could do bad on my own

And good by myself

I never needed no help

I need you, you wasn't right there

You need me I'm still gone be here

My vision was blurry and now I see clear

You wouldn't believe what I made in a year.

-Opi

From The Beat: It can be hard and confusing to not be able to rely on people when you need them most, but it seems like you are on a better track. Just keep moving forward in a positive way!

RIP, Chuy

I ain't know him, like Jenny or Abby did

But he had my back the night he passed.

He was always looking out for me.

When I heard he died

I was sad and shocked.

When I saw his body in the coffin

I broke down and shed some tears.

I wasn't expecting this.

I was only a baby in the streets

Tryin' to make sense

Of everything I saw or heard.

Ninja, can't nobody say shhh to me

About how I feel.

I was a young ninja

That lost a homie.

Even though I wasn't close to him

He looked out for me

Like I was his little sis.

I lost a real homie

To the streets.

Forget being vague

I wish he were still here.

Rest in Peace.

To Chuy.

Love you, man.

-Leen

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss. Now, do you have to look out for yourself in the streets? Please stay safe out there, when you're free!

Criminal Minds

When I turn on the TV, all I used to watch was "Criminal Minds", so I was able to think like cops or FBI agents, so I would know and be smart enough to be able to think like a lot of different agents, even the smartest agent/officer. Can't believe that stuff used to help me function like a cop. Not saying it's good to do illegal things, but it did help.

-Dd

From The Beat: Now that you're in juvenile, how do you feel about being the young man who does "illegal things"? How can you use "Criminal Minds" information you learned, to benefit yourself in legal ways?

Runaway and Stay Away

I hate the way white people look at me.

I always try to help them but they run away from me.

White people are always rich.

-Alessandro

From The Beat: We are sorry that you have had these experiences, but remember there are people with good hearts out there regardless of what race they are.

Santa Clara County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

A New Me, New Face

In a new unit, so they call me "new face"
 Got hit with not one, but two new case
 Police get right behind me so I take that high speed chase
 Woke up from that nightmare, in my cell
 Sweat on my face
 Gotta make momma proud, show her I can do it
 Even though we the same race
 People talking out their neck
 Saying this and that
 I want to finish school to make my mom proud
 I have to spit these facts
 So I control my temper and tell myself "relax"

-Lil Mono

From The Beat: People will always be running their mouths, and the challenge is to ignore what they say and do what feels true to you. You know the path you want - stick with it!

That Advice

I should have listened
 to that piece of advice
 that my mom told me,
 that advice was to never trust anyone.
 But it was too late. I should've just listen,
 but I ain't never paid attention,
 but now I have to take it as a lesson.
 'Till then Beat...

-Lil Danny

From The Beat: Hard to know who we can trust. Trusting no one is harder than it seems. We use our best judgment and sometimes just have to learn the hard way.

Equal Justice?

I don't think the law treats us all equally. There are a lot of examples. Like when that one cop killed a teenager just because his skin color was dark.

-Brandon

From The Beat: Yes, racial profiling or just racism, in general, are great examples of how we are treated unfairly by the systems we live in.

My Tree

My tree will look thin and long.
 It has a slight lean, and in some areas it might even grow coconuts.
 My tree would be a palm tree
 because they are all over my neighborhood.
 I love the way they look in the blue sky
 covering the sun.

- Isaac

From The Beat: Your piece is very descriptive. We understand that the palm is a symbol of more than just your neighborhood, but trees fundamentally represent life, growth, and the ability to bear fruit. Your palm tree is reaching for the sky.

Another Chance

My judge was going to send me to the ranch, but she gave me a chance. Now I'm just gonna do a few weeks and sixty days, but to tell the truth, I know I'll come back. So I'll be going to the ranch any time soon. I'll try to stay out with my family and help my little brother.

-Gg

From The Beat: You'll be out and back home with your family before you know it. Is there anything you can do now to prepare for that time so you can stay out and help your family and little brother and not return to juvenile?

My Streets

The last time I been in my streets was May.
 Got caught lackin', didn't know what to say.
 I made a lot of mistakes and now I got to pay.
 Going back to the ranch for my second time.
 Miss being in my hood.
 My PO thought to tell my attorney that I wanted to fight it,
 but all he worried about is getting paid.
 In my cell thinking, tryin' to get by day by day, life just like a game.
 I'm just tryin' to play. They want me to stop banging
 but that's my second family. They won't understand
 they don't see it my way.

-Temper

From The Beat: It sounds like your first family misses you and just hopes for more time with you. What do you think it'll take for them to see it your way?

Words from the Wise

"If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello."

I wish I could have said goodbye to my Uncle Juan before he took his final breath. It was all bad - family cryin', my grandmother reaching out for her dying son.

I wish life would have rewarded me with another hello from my uncle. I miss you, pops. Much love. Rest in paradise.

- Jesus

From The Beat: We are so sorry for the loss of your beloved uncle. Is there anything positive that could possibly grow from that sorrow? Does your uncle's death make you think about how much you value your own life?

Cruel World

Why these streets so damn cold?
 I was tryin' to get my life right,
 I struggled day and night,
 So I could get my mind right,
 Constantly looking back and forth,
 'Cause it could be my last night,
 They want me dead,
 But I just keep my head up,
 I'm just tryin' to get this bread,
 Well, Beat, hopefully I'm out soon.

- Jesse

From The Beat: Your writing shifts back and forth from a young man needing help and wanting to do the right thing to a young man stuck living life the only way he knows how. We know that the first young man can make it with the determination and support. Don't give up on yourself.

SANTA CLARA
COUNTY

Cheating

I was cheating on a test in eighth grade.
I didn't ever get caught,
but it wasn't the worst thing I've done.
It was in English and it was a vocab test.
To be honest, I'll never cheat again.
I learned my lesson because I didn't ever cheat again.

- Rg

From The Beat: We love the honesty in your piece. You clearly felt bad about cheating and didn't do it again even though you didn't get caught. Hold on to those values!

Listening to My Friends

Some bad advice that I took was listening to my "friends" when they told me to take a car or rob someone for their car. I was dumb because I listened and didn't think about the consequences.

I shouldn't have listened to my friend when they told me to ditch that day of school either.

Next time I am going to make my own decisions.

-Sam

From The Beat: Sometimes our "friends" don't have our best interest at heart when they give us advice. Sometimes the advice is more for fun or entertainment than being the right thing to do.

My Young Life

Living the crazy life
It got me in here
Doing time but I
Don't let it faze me
I get out soon
Free us all.

- Jokey

From The Beat: You have paid the price for that crazy life. Will you choose a different sort of life moving forward? If not, we hate to predict a possible outcome.

My Act Of Courage

One day I was walking home from school with my friends and we go to a 7-11 to get snacks and whatnot. I noticed these two girls walking in and I also noticed this guy trolling them and it looked like he was bothering them, so I stepped up and I told him to leave them alone and to get out of the store.

I feel that was an act of courage because I went up to the stranger and told him off, not knowing what he was capable of.

-Malcome

From The Beat: That was definitely an act of courage. You never know how someone will react to you in public, but you wanting to protect those girls gave you the courage you needed in that moment. We assume nothing bad happened after that?

Hold It Down

Baby let me know if you gonna ride for me
No excuses baby, don't try to lie to me
I would die for you but would you die for me
When I'm on lockdown don't cry for me
I know you want me free, you get feisty
I mess up a lot, you just wanna fight me
I hold it down though, that's why you really vibe
Oh I love it when you calling to skype me

-Elias

From The Beat: It sounds like this person is there for you in important ways. How can you both support each other, even though you're apart?

They Don't Know

They say we are criminals, 'cause of the way we think we dress we act. But they don't know what we walk home to. Some of us never even make it home.

I was born into this life. They said I chose the wrong path but it's what got me home and got me through these times.

-Lil One

From The Beat: You're right, the way we think, dress or act does not make us a criminal or not. Some things they say are easy choices are not so easy, especially when we only know one way.

The Worst Day

The worst day of my life was when I went to a group home because I got taken away from my mom because she couldn't take care of me. Well that's what people said, but to be honest, I was living good and was well dressed, so it was fake. I have anger for that and that's why I don't like the Child Protective Services.

- F

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear about you being removed from your home and from your mom. Hoping time goes quickly and you are able to get time to visit with her as often as you can.

The Most Worst Advice

The most worst advice I took was when I was in sixth grade and my friend came to me with weed and said try it and I did.

Now I smoke weed everyday and every night and I feel like that is the reason I do bad shhh. It's affected my family, but now they got used to it.

-Manny

From The Beat: Trying drugs for the first time is a lot of people's worst decision. Sometimes it leads us to places we never wanted to go.

My Time and This Stress

My time was easy, been here since early October.

The court be laughin' in my face
'cause they're buildin' up a case,
Shhhh be making me go insane.

- lil danny

From The Beat: This is so much stress and pressure for a young person to deal with. Is there anyone in the hall who is supporting you during this time?

Love

Love is a strong word and it's the best feeling someone can ever give, but not everybody can give you real love.

I had people give me fake love so by now I can tell if someone truly loves me.

-Lil Jay

From The Beat: Being able to tell real from fake is a good skill to have, especially when it comes to love and matters of the heart.

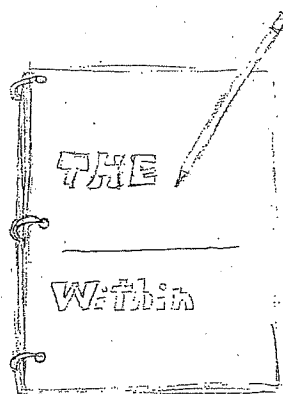
Missing Her

I miss my Lady the most, she's the only reason I smile. She's my first true love and she earned that love, it wasn't just over time. She's the only reason I see a future in my life.

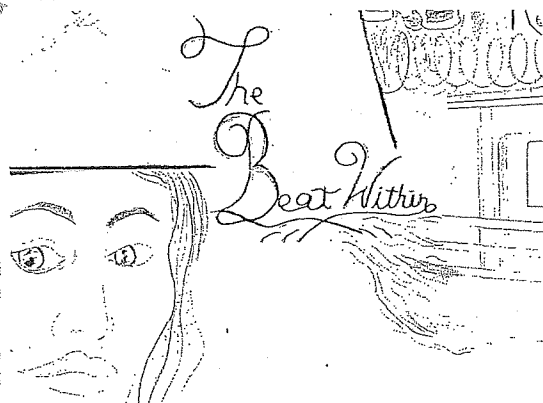
- Smilin'

From The Beat: We are so impressed how you understand that love can be earned, and that kind of love lasts for a long time.

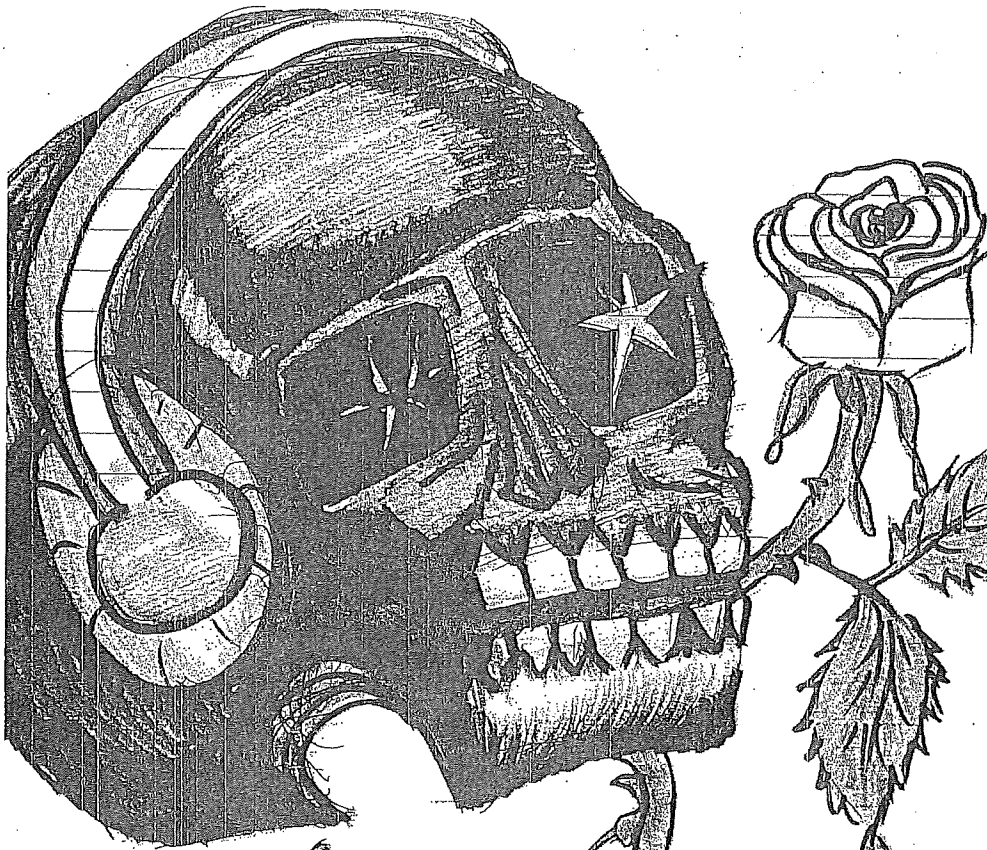
★ ART GALLERY ★



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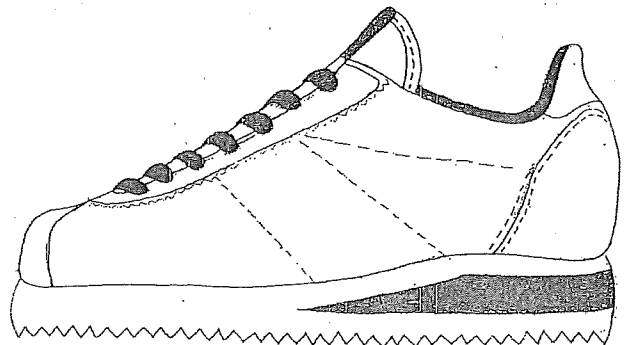
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*The Beat
Within*



IT'S NO ME



★ **ART GALLERY** ★

Santa Clara County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Nothing is Going Right

I had court today and found out that my max sentence time is eight years. Nothing is going right in life right now.

I got my grandma stressin' that I'm in here and people have problems with me and they want to fight. When I tell them to make a move they just sit there.

When I get out of here, I have to go to a group home. I have court soon, wish me luck.

-Nate

From The Beat: Wishing you some good news when you get to court! Stay strong and do a good program!

Getting Released

I'm getting released this Saturday, but I don't really want to get released because I know I'm a fail again on EMP. My probation officer doubled all my programs and I know I might fail. I might tell her to send me to placement.

- Gg

From The Beat: We really appreciate how open and realistic you are about your concerns. Why do you think you are sure to fail on EMP? Can you come up with a strategy ahead of time? You might be stronger than you think.

Thanksgiving Meal

My last Thanksgiving was good. I ate really good, got full really quick.

This Thanksgiving I spent it in the hall. Early morning, I ate some bacon, hash browns, and chocolate chip pancakes and that was just for breakfast, but after all it's just one Thanksgiving. My next will be better and I know for a fact.

- BigB

From The Beat: We love your positive attitude. Don't forget to reach out for the support you need to make sure that your next Thanksgiving is a great one!

Thanksgiving Turkey

Hi my name is N.

What I had for Thanksgiving was turkey, but I wish I would've been out instead of here.

- N

From The Beat: We also wish you had been out. We hope the next Thanksgiving will be spent with people who care for you.

My Turn

I've been through rough times, but it don't mean a thing

I'm not the first, I'm not the last

Sometimes you just got to blast

Mom stressing why her baby chose this life

Well, I grew up in this

I noticed it's 'trife

Task pulls up I disappear through the night

Locked up, you know I will fight

Can't let no one disrespect too many doing life

You know I'm a be solid, free all in county

They can't break me nor take me

Fools claim they real, but they be phony.

-D

From The Beat: Even though it may not be fun, you're being positive and taking responsibility for your actions. That's something real that others cannot take away.

Thoughts

In the hall I think about a lot of things. I think about my family, my girl, and how I want to live when I get out.

When I get sent to my room I think about my family. I want to know how they're doing and wish I can be there (home), instead of talking to them over the phone.

Also, my girl, I want to be there for her, going to school and want to be there for her when she needs me the most.

The thing I also think about is my life.

When I'm here locked up, I regret the things that I did and wish I had a time machine to go back in time.

The thing that sucks the most is me being here for Thanksgiving. This is gonna be my first time not with my family for Thanksgiving. My lesson is to think twice around my actions, because you never know what's gonna happen.

-Jr

From the Beat: Hopefully you will get to be with your family for Thanksgiving next year and hopefully you will be able to go home with them much sooner than that. Work on bettering yourself!

Please, Stay The Same

Lil baby, would you stay or would you turn and walk away?

Sittin' in my cell, prayin' for a better day

Always thinkin' 'bout you

Hope you never try to change

Forgive me for my troubles

Baby, I'm the one to blame

Cold-hearted, in the streets is where I hang

Don't appreciate anyone tryin' to speak on my family's name

Baby, I'm a thug, I ain't never gonna change

When I tell you that I love you

I ain't playing kiddy games

Don't change, lil' baby, never change

You my day one, promise me you'll stay the same.

-Tone

From The Beat: Do you think it's reasonable to expect her to stay the same and yet to refuse to accept the possibility of changing yourself so that you can have a life together? You are such a special person with so much potential. Do you love yourself and your lady enough to try a different lifestyle?

Apology

Momma, I'm sorry for the pain in your heart

But this is my young life

Be posted on the block 'til way after dark

Getting' locked up all the time, shhh broke us apart

Yeah, the streets really took your youngest baby

But I'm just in the field making plays like Brady

Ninjas think it's good, better tell them it ain't gravy

Ever since a youngin' all I wanted was to ball

But now I'm doing time, just staring at the wall

Really been locked down since winter to fall

Tryin' to talk to my folks with these five minute calls

It's trife when you're stuck up in the system

Went down for the case, tell my fam' that I miss 'em

Really rockin' for my homies, you better not diss 'em

Still remember days I was trapping in the corner

Every day my heart beat still getting colder

This is the life of a young soldier

In the field, crunch time

-Gino

From The Beat: This young life doesn't seem to be doing you a whole lot of good. What has to change in order to make the best decisions for yourself? We hope you get the support you need!

Giving Thanks

I want to thank my family and siblings for not giving up on me and to push me to be a better person in life.

Family will always come first, we've all made mistakes and you know who was there when I made those mistakes? My family.

Most people never had a family, so cherish being with your family and love them the most, and they'll show you the same back.

-Tim

From The Beat: We're so happy to hear that your family has supported you and shown up in big ways. How do you return the love and care to your family?

They Took the Gold

All of us got cheated by someone that we liked and we trusted. Let me take you on a journey back in the past.

I had two good friends that I told them everything and we did lots of things in the mud together. One time we was hitting for ten bands of gold and both of them did me dirty and took the gold and didn't give me gold nor cash.

I did all the time for them at the hall, when I came out they was trying to be cool with me, that's why I tell myself "Don't trust no one, just yourself."

-F

From The Beat: When push comes to shove, we find out who's really there for us. How will you choose your friends moving forward?

It Wasn't The Best

Grew up in San Jose, it wasn't the best

Taught to never get punked on

And how to live in these streets

But I was never taught how to take them good routes

-Listo

From The Beat: Sometimes we're not taught the things we need to know, but we figure it out along the way. What's one step towards the right direction of the "good route?"

It Never Gets Better

Some people think the more you come to the hall the easier it gets, the truth is it only gets worse, more time, more problems, and more regret. The more I come here the more I realize the shhh I have done was stupid.

I would like to say this is my last time and I hope it is too, but that's what I thought last time, now look at me, damn.

- baby lil life

From The Beat: You sound like someone who really wants to change, but maybe you need more support and strategies to succeed. Can you use your time in here to actively seek out services that will help you on the outs or to figure out specific ways to deal with the situations you know you are going to encounter? You are a special young man who can do a lot of good.

Turning Back

As these days go by

I start to realize

that we're all gonna die

And our caskets

Are all the same size

But there ain't no turning back

'Till I drop

- Lil One

From The Beat: This piece hits hard. You can't turn back the clock, but you really can save yourself and move forward.

Good and Bad Court

Today I had court and it was good and bad. The good thing is the court dropped one of my charges so instead of sixteen years being my max time, it is now 8 years. The bad thing is I'll have to go to Los Angeles, CA. for about a year maybe more. It's crazy how one mistake can take up several years of your life.

- Mixed Feelings

From The Beat: We hear you. Right now three years must sound like an eternity, but if this one mistake prevents you from making more, then it might end up saving you.

In The Struggle

Everyday I'm in my cell, thinking this the way I'm living, stressing. I'm mad, but I try to not let it get in the way. But forget it, I'm all the way in, there is no way of getting out. Walking in the hood, just another day, same shhh.

-Baby G

From The Beat: Sometimes we can feel hopeless in our situations, but the truth is that we always have options. At your age, free or locked up, there is plenty! Trust us. What are your options right now?

Lock Down

I've been on lockdown behind these bars

Looking out the window, I can't even see stars

Love my momma, she really got my heart

I remember I was riding in these stolen cars

Invading these opps like I'm playing Mario Kart

Kicking doors for a check, moves in the dark

Being broke is a struggle, shopping at Walmart

Playing and thinking I'm Tony Stark

-Elias

From The Beat: We like the flow of this piece. We'd love to hear a rap about your plans for when you're out of here!

Still Here

Still here, still stuck between bricks

Still miss 'em days, hittin' licks

Forget all that fame, I'm just tryin' to get my chips

Been here for a while and still ain't fold a bit

Hope I beat this case that they tryin' to say I did

Just know most of y'all can't live the life that I live

-Lil Chicano

From The Beat: The days you're missing might have felt like good days, but they aren't serving you anymore. How can you make money in a way that won't compromise your freedom?

My Observations

I'm tired of people acting like they know you homie

Like a lawn chair, individuals been folding homie

There's a lot of new add-ons I don't know them brodie

If I ain't with Zay then I'm by my lonely

I'm walking in and out of court playing with my life

Loved ones telling me that I ain't living right

I can't believe you fighting 'till you die

We only live once so I guess I tried.

-Bones

From The Beat: We love the analogy of the lawn chair. You have such a sharp mind, and your strength throughout all this time is unbelievable. We would love to hear more of your thoughts and respect you so much.

Santa Clara County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

My Only Star

I'm stuck in this cell, all I can think about is my girl. She been with me, even after all my mistakes. She want me to do better, but "better" never comes my way. She my only star in my galaxy, if I'm feeling down she lifts me up.

-Lil Jayy

From The Beat: We're glad you have someone who can be there for you in this way. How do you also lift her up when she's feeling down?

The Pain I Caused

Momma, I'm sorry for all the pain I caused you. I know I told you a hundred times I'm a change, but damn, this shhh is hard.

The streets keep callin' me but I ain't trippin'. I'm probably gonna be locked down for a minute, but it's hood I'm a be out one day.

-Po

From The Beat: Change is definitely hard, but we know you can do it if you really set your mind to it!

Play Me

I keep it on me daily in case a ninja try to take me
I told my momma that I love her 'cause that's the lady who made me
My uncle told me watch my back in the field 'cause this street shhh mainey
Shout out to all sitting down in them cages.

-Fetty

From The Beat: This is a nice shout out to your mom and great respect for her because she made you. Out of respect to her, the time is now to show her there is another way of living your life, instead of the lifestyle that brings you here.

Have to Move On

I think the quote, "If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello," is true. I've experienced this a lot of times in my life.

The most recent time was when my uncle died a few months ago. I was really sad, but I realized you have to move on with life and can't hold on to the past.

-Jake

From The Beat: We're sorry for the loss of your uncle. Remember that it's okay to be sad, and that the grieving process is different for everyone. We do hope you can move on too, when you're ready and comfortable to.

No Trust

You can't trust hardly anyone, hardly anyone at all. Even people who're supposed to like you can turn on you faster than you think, even homies the people who say they love you are the worst, the most dangerous, the most untrustworthy of all.

People who say they love you will pounce when they get the chance. You gotta always remember that they're waiting for the opportunity to get you. Love's a trick, a cover, a way to catch you off guard. Never let down your guard.

-Foodah

From The Beat: You clearly feel that you have been betrayed. We are sorry you are feeling so disillusioned. Try not to shut yourself off from love and trust completely. One day you will learn how to choose friends and lovers who truly have your best interests at heart and will always be there in good times and bad.

An Act of Courage

There was a time a few months ago where I got hit on my dirt bike and it slid under a car. It caught fire, and then the car did too. I ended up having to pull the lady out of her car. I ended up with a first-degree burn on my right arm, three broken ribs, and a fractured ankle. At the end of the day I talked to the lady who was not hurt but scared. She thanked me and we called insurance.

I spent two days in the hospital, but she spent a lot of money. I learned even if you are injured to be courageous because you never know what might happen.

I had a run in with her that was real awkward though. I ended up dating her daughter but I'm glad I saw her again. She was real apologetic and nice.

-Adam

From The Beat: We think you are very brave for pulling the lady out of the car. That sounds like a really frightening situation, and you prioritized the lady's safety and she stayed unharmed. What a strange coincidence that you ended up dating her daughter!

Jail

I'm in the cell, I don't even know
If I should let brodie walk or make him run my toes
I'm in the courtyard hoopin' messin' up my soles
Light skin brotha' I got Haitian in my soul
Sittin' in my cell, I'll never fold
I'm wit' those whoever feelin' bold
Dread head, the feds thought I had a pole
Good looks kickin' in my door
You'll never find me on the road
In my cell I can't sleep it's hella cold.

-Zae Money

From The Beat: Your charisma and sense of humor come through clearly in this piece. We are looking forward to reading more of your writing!

Struggle

I've been in the field all on my own
Locked up now I'm here, damn I'm all alone
Call my momma up, tell her I couldn't make it home
Juvenile hall, I'm stuck in this damn dome
Two calls only to my momma on the phone
I love you mom, but I haven't been in my zone
The judge tryin' to send me out of county on the road
It's free me, I'm still struggling in the cold

-Elias

From The Beat: We hear a lot of loneliness and sadness in your writing. We're glad your mom is there for you, and know with continuous effort, you can get in your zone and be your best self.

Planting a Seed

How my tree would be
If I went along with what I said/say
I would be out chilling
I would be with my family
Working construction, going to high school
Enjoying the upcoming holidays
I'm planting a seed to do better by staying
Close to my family and cutting off all
My friends. Hopefully it works out

-D

From The Beat: You've got some good seeds to plant! Even if you made mistakes to get you where you are now, you know how to set yourself up for a better future.

What I See

The name's Poodah.
Got the other side trying to take me out my prime.
Young African American, it's a blessing but I ain't stressing.
In the max unit fighting for my life.
Police putting us in the box, trying not to see us shine.
Some of us are beggars, takers, and providers.
I'm a provider, putting money on my brother's books,
breaking bread with some people that I could've did them shady.

-Poodah

From The Beat: As a provider, you look out for those you love. Who's been a provider for you in your life?

If You Can Get Through the Night

Young and active
When you chill with me we be playin' for keeps
Me and my boy left the block always runnin' the streets
Pray to God I get out soon
I'm just tryin' to see my baby and this white moon
If you can get through the night there's a brighter day

-Tone

From The Beat: There will always be brighter days, in fact, every day there are opportunities to turn it into something bright. What brighter days are you looking forward to?

Sorry Momma

Late nights can't sleep, got too much on my mind
Momma stressing, momma crying 'cause her son doing time
I'm in love with the loafs, sorry momma but I'll be just fine
I was raised for this shhh, so I'm on my grind
DA tryin' to make me tell, I'd rather lose my life
I'm just tryin' to make it out
It's the campaign, we up next.

-Young Too-Teed

From The Beat: We hope the time would go fast and we hope that will create less stress for you and your momma. Living this life is definitely not fair to those who care for you and want the best.

It Changed

All my life I felt the pain
I seen it all before but can't change
It's all part of the game
So much syrup in my cup you see the stain
They locked me down for nine months with no space
The choices I had to make
Comin' home, brodie acting like a snake
He ain't look when I was down
But now he smile up in my face
True shhh promethazine I abuse it
If it ain't got no codeine
Then I ain't even gone use it
Nowadays youngin's tellin' they youngin's to do shhh
'Cause they don't want to be the ones locked up in the bull pen
You stupid
You fell in love like you're cupid
But once you lose your money
Your honey she gon' be choosin'
I don't chase honeys, I chase money
That's why I'm boomin'.

-Jay

From The Beat: There is a lot of tough talk in your piece, but also a lot of pain and disillusionment. Drugs and hustling may help to escape, but we all have to face the hollowness inside at some point and learn to appreciate our own worth.

Struggle

I been in the struggle now, I'm tryin' to make it out
Shout out to my momma, she always there for us
Getting money now, ya' I'm really tryin' to stunt
Where was everyone at when a ninja had none.

-J-Lo

From The Beat: Sometimes people aren't there when we most need them and they show up out of nowhere when things are going well. It's part of the struggle, but it gives us information on what they're all about.

Concentration

I can't concentrate on my own things in here. I'm steady thinking 'bout my baby mama and my unborn kid. I can't concentrate because I'm not out there making sure they are physically and mentally safe. I know she's hurting right now because I'm not there and she's doing it on her own. I got court on Monday, hopefully I'm coming home baby girl.

-Eclipse

From The Beat: You've got a lot on your plate, we don't blame you for not being able to concentrate. Focus on maintaining yourself so that you can get out to them as soon as possible.

Need You

Cheated on my baby more than twice
She forgave me all those times
I regret doing her dirty all those times
'Cause now she don't know if stayin' with me is right
She says I'm her king, and the love of her life
Baby, you're my queen, and I need you in my life

-Bad Boii

From The Beat: Your girl really loves you! She's put up with a lot of your bad behavior. How do you return the love and support she's given you?

This Life

I've been through a lot.
Why do they have to label me as a criminal?
All I was trying to do is stack my bread.
Where were my people when I needed them?
Oh I forgot they were some snakes.
But I know who the real are.
I'm a street smart human.
But I don't play no games.
I'm straight up with my words.
Why this system tryin' to keep me locked up?
It's family first

-Lil Jesse

From The Beat: Labels are unfair because they can be inaccurate and stick with you for a long time. We think it's cool that you can explore your own identity and labels. For example, you're letting us know, you're a "street smart human" and someone who values family.

That's All I Gotta Say

What's up Beat? Still locked up in my cell waiting for mail. Damn, it's crazy what's going on down south and up north with the fires.
It's sad, but it's a sign of life. We only got so much time. So, to anyone in here, make the people you love happy, that's all I gotta say.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: Making those we love happy during the time we have is an important part of life. It goes faster than we think.

Santa Clara County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

Sorry Pops

I wonder how my dad looked when he turned on the TV and seen me on it? Seeing his only daughter on the news for a carjacking. I feel bad. Sorry pops, don't mean to make you look bad.

-Easty

From The Beat: Have you talked to you dad about this? Do you think you can find a way to repair your relationship? That probably starts with communicating to him how you feel.

Learned Some New

It's crazy how my momma was right
Hate how I never could get through to my mind
Your friend ain't your friend if he don't help you on your grind
I'm not with that beef
But play with my money, we can meet
Forget all this stuff, I learned some new
Education first, just in case hustling ain't work

-Luis

From The Beat: We often know who our true friends are when we're in a hard place. What are your plans with education once you get out of the hall?

Stupid Choices

To be honest, me cutting off my EMP was the stupidest things I've done. Now I'm probably gonna spend Thanksgiving in juvenile hall. When I got out last time, my momma gave me a big hug and she started to cry and she said, "please don't do no more bad stuff I don't like seeing you locked up."

I told her, "okay mom, I won't."

Then on October twenty-fifth I was texting my friends and they asked me if I wanted to get picked up and with no hesitation I said yes and then I cut it (EMP bracelet) off without thinking twice.

When I get out this time I'm going to try to stay out, because my PO said if I come back in here one more time she's going to send me to the ranch, because I already had two chances on EMP. I know she don't want me coming in and out and playing games with her. She also told me if I miss one day of school I'm coming right back (to juvenile hall).

My birthday is in three more months and I'm nervous as hell because they're going to start taking me more seriously.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We have faith that you can make the right decisions this time. How can you be sure to get rid of the temptation of breaking the law this time around?

One Day at a Time

Had court today
Didn't go very well
Am I facing the ranch?
Probably
Life isn't so easy right now
Should I give up?
Or stay strong?
Will it be hard?
Hell yeah
Will I drop tears
Yes, I will
But the day will come that I step out the door.

-Ana

From The Beat: We love the final image of you walking through the door. This can be literal or figurative. We're curious if looking forward toward that leaving will help you in the present moment? How can you prepare for that day?

The Things We Do for the People We Love

One act of courage I have witnessed was when someone had shot at my cousin's garage, aiming to kill one of his homies. They almost ended up shooting my cousin's fiancé, so my cousin jumped in front of her to take the bullet and it went in the front of his neck and came out the back of his neck. He ended up surviving, but he's paralyzed from the neck down.

-Robert

From The Beat: Your cousin was brave to save his fiancé. Also, we think to witness your cousin's courageous act may have also been a scary experience. We are glad you are writing about this moment because often writing helps us process what we saw, or even heal.

To The Rescue

One act of courage that I have witnessed was when I was at a gathering and someone had a stroke. One of the people gave them CPR while I flagged down the cops and she ended up surviving. I was very happy because I felt like I did something.

-Brave One

From The Beat: We're glad you were able to think fast and get the police to help. That's really smart, and we're also happy the person survived. You should be proud of yourself!

My Truths

I became a young g at the age of a young teen
Seen many lose, I've seen many succeed
I also know some that just became friends
I started posting up, kicking it,
Just chasing the green, hoping my momma won't notice
Well, she never did, but one day I got caught by the cops
Came to juvenile hall, listed me gang-related
I wasn't trippin', I came in hella faded
It's like Disneyland, can't wait for the pen.

-D

From The Beat: The pen is definitely no Disneyland. We hope you can use this time to work on what you need to become the best version of yourself.

Miss Those Days

These days just keeping ticking by. I just want to be free, so I can live life and not be locked up. I'm tired of all the shhh.

I wish I could be with my family right now doing something that's going to make me happy.

I also wish they could free my girl from the ranch because I miss her on some real shhh.

-Miss you

From The Beat: We hear that it is frustrating not be with your loved ones right now. Holding on to happy memories can sometimes help you get through times of separation. We hope you stay positive, so you can be reunited with your family soon.

Share What You Have

My father always told me, "You should share what you already have to those in need, rather than give them your leftovers."

It's not good to be selfish, so share what you already have to those in need. It shows where your heart is really at, and better things will come your way.

-Shadow

From The Beat: What your dad says makes a lot of sense! No one wants someone else's leftovers. What do you share with others?

My Love

I fell in love with a G,
But he really hurtin' for me,
Crazy I'll miss his eighteenth,
Type of shhh you can't get back,
But he still holdin' it down,
'Cause he always got my back,
That's my ride or die,
I'm sorry baby that I caught this time
Ain't nothin' we can do
But I'm call you and write you
'Cause I love you baby boy and I know you love me too

-Whistles

From The Beat: Gorgeous poem. What things do you envision doing together once you're out?

Cheating

I think cheating is the worst
way to break someone's heart.
No one deserves to go to sleep at night
wondering why they weren't good enough.
Screw that feeling
you feel that stuff in your chest.
I used to be like dang,
why wasn't I good enough for you.
Now I'm like dang,
more like, you weren't good enough for me.

-Nallely

From The Beat: That does sound horrible. We are glad you were able to get past it and find some confidence in yourself. Even though it sounds like a hard experience, you learned something good out of it!

Mi Amor

I don't really know where to start
I just want you to know that I love you with all my heart
Nothing's ever really been the same
Ever since you came into my life
'Cause on some real stuff
You are the only one that has ever treated me right
You really are my baby and I'm really hoping I'm your lady
To be one hundred and true, there ain't no home without you
Yeah I know I sound kind of corny
But it's cool 'cause I know you adore me
The way you look at me gives me the chills
Dang baby, something 'bout you just gives me a thrill
I don't know if it's the way you grab my thighs
Or the way you wipe my eyes
But listen here baby boy 'cause I'm telling you this ain't no lie
You really light up my life
just your presence takes away my fright
and every time I'm with you, everything seems to be true
'Cause you really make me happy
And that's something that ain't happened in a while
But I'm telling you papa I'm going to really have your child
Arabella Rose sounds pretty cute
Don't think so, yeah I think so
I'm sorry I can't be with you right now
I'm just waiting until I beat this case and get out
I'm going to be all about you and our money
Damn I miss your smile and your laugh
I really hate being separated from my other half
Te amo mi amor
And when I get out, we are going to make every day like it's our last

-Lil' H

From The Beat: How will you live everyday like it's your last? It sounds like you both are really supportive of each other, you are lucky to have found that!

Lock Down

I'm locked down,
They ain't tryin' to free me
They think I'm a menace
I got this female sayin' she's ridin' for me
But she ain't even write me
I stick to myself
I only mess with a couple
All these ninjas sayin' they know me
But when I had no bread
They didn't even know me
Sounds messed up
But it's cool
Ninjas are snakes
They tryin' to stay close
To find out my next move
Lock down in my cell
Sayin' free us
We all locked down
Makin' money moves
Is the only way to improve
Mom wonderin' where the money comin' from
She say, "what do you do?"
I always got to lie and say
"Mom I try"
She say, "son, you ain't livin' right"
She say "Live, love, laugh"
And I say "fight"
She nods her head sadly
And walks away
So I pray
To take my soul away
I live for today
And not for tomorrow
'Cause tomorrow's not promised
So I plan to stack up
And get far from all this
And I'm bringin' all my people with me
So if you're not with me
You're against me
Everything I do is gift free
Got everything on my own
I ain't never a hater
'Cause that how it be in
San Jose
We ain't no haters
We all players
With the same goal
Tryin' to get this paper
Right now I'm in my mode
So I can't talk now
I'll talk to ya later
I don't take handouts
And I don't take favors
I ain't tryin' to be rude
I'm a "get it on my own"
Type of dude

-Jr G

From The Beat: We can tell that you look out for yourself, and are very independent. We're also concerned about your safety, and the choices you're making. Are the people you surround yourself with helping you grow into your best self?

Another Me

You'll never find another me,
now what we had was memories.
Make sure you tell her all about me.

-Ghost

From The Beat: This is really sad, we want to hear more. Have you tried telling this person how you feel? Why did things end so badly?

Santa Clara County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

Bad Advice

Bad advice taken by me probably would have been to follow my heart when I was in a relationship that I wasn't actually benefitting from because it made me stop going to school and start leaving home. It affected school, friends, and family. It affected my family too.

-M

From The Beat: Sounds like you have learned a lot from that relationship. How would you have handled it differently knowing what you know now?

Court's Eyes

Older bruh told me do good
Ma told me do good
In her eyes her son's an angel
Once popo caught lil' bruh court told her
Her son's the devil
But in ma's eyes, her son still an angel.

-R

From The Beat: This is so true. Mothers will always see the good at the heart of their sons because it is always there, even when they make mistakes. The court doesn't know you the way your mother does.

Bad Advice

Bad advice taken by me probably would have been to follow my heart when I was in a relationship that I wasn't actually benefitting from because it made me stop going to school and start leaving home. It affected school, friends, and family. It affected my family too.

-M

From The Beat: Sounds like you have learned a lot from that relationship. How would you have handled it differently knowing what you know now?

Los Jóvenes

Cuando salga de este lugar, voy a tratar de tener un buen trabajo que gane buen dinero para ayudar a mis padres y para seguir adelante con mi familia y no mirar atrás.

Las personas a que extraño ahora son mi mamá, mi papá, mis dos hermanos, mis abuelas, primas, primos, y tíos porque ellos me daban buenos consejos. Pero cuando uno es tonto no pone atención a las cosas que las personas mayores le dicen a nosotros.

-Julien

Del Beat: Esta es una escritura madura y reflexiva. Tienes razón que muchas veces los jóvenes no escuchan a sus mayores, pero el proceso de hacer errores y aprender de ellos es una parte esencial del crecimiento. Eres un hombre joven y especial que está experimentando algunas verdades importantes sobre la vida y la familia.

The Youth

When I leave this place, I'm going to try to have a good job that earns good money to help my parents and to help my family get ahead and not look back.

The people who I miss now are my mother, my father, my two brothers, my grandmothers, my cousins, and uncles because they would give me good advice. But when someone is stupid they don't pay attention to what the older people tell us.

-Julien

From The Beat: This is such a mature and thoughtful piece. You are right that young people often don't listen to their elders but making mistakes and learning from them is an essential part of growing up. You are a special young man who is experiencing some important truths about life and family.

Courageous Mom

When I got locked up my mom tried her best to stay strong, and still take care of my brother on the outs. It was noticeably clear that she was sad/depressed every time she came to visit.

It's hard to have two kids, fifteen-year-old locked up, and sixteen-year-old trying to go in the right path. So she is courageous for trying and doing a good job dealing with this situation.

-Valerie

From The Beat: Your mother sounds very strong, and we're sure you've learned that from her as well. How can you be courageous and fix the situation?

Destined

In this life, it was destined like this.

Had to go and get a check
because I ain't stressing off shhh.

All this money and fame.

I can buy my own stuff.

I'm just praying until we all get rich.

-BayBaby

From The Beat: Do you think you need to pray to get rich, or you can create your own destiny for yourself? We'd love to hear more of your thoughts around this.

To My Heart

You're my world, my everything. I might not tell you every day, but "I love you." Not everyone gets the same attention I give you, you are my happiness, and my strength.

When I'm with you, there really isn't any place I'd rather be. When I get to see you smile, it brightens up my day. And for now that's all I have to say, besides I love you, and I hope you feel the same way.

-Lil Tiny

From The Beat: Sounds like you're lucky to have someone who cares about you as much as you care about them. What things do you look forward to doing together once you get out?

Redoing My Mistake

That term of advice always messed me up. I don't know what in my mind made me do it, but I did. I knew sometimes it would risk my future, but I always took chances, and now it led me where I am now.

Waiting for my release date to come. Hopefully, I'm mentally able to redo my mistake, but "life's a risk," and you only live once while we're young.

-C

From The Beat: You can't redo things, but you can do new things that can try to reconcile our past mistakes. Instead of trying to redo the past, how can you change or influence the future.

Not Gonna Lie

I'm not gonna lie, me and my girl not that perfect. We got our ups and downs and we both played that cheating game once on each other. But we always bounce back. We have a weird type of relationship, but we always going to have that love for each other. She's my first love. I don't give a what, what others say. We both know what's up.

-Easty

From The Beat: Do you make each other happy though? Hopefully you do! Sounds like you've been through a lot together. What makes your relationship work?

Cheating and Getting Away with It

A day before I got arrested, I had hooked up with this girl named Hannah. She made me happy and kept my faith going when I wasn't strong, and I remember the next day I went live on Instagram, just laughing with her. And then she asked me, Sunday night, three hours before I went to jail, "Do you wanna hang Tuesday?"

I said, "Yeah, yeah, for sure," and at the moment I was all in my feelings, focused on her. Everything was set. Then things turned, and I'm in cuffs for something everyone does.

But anyway, like I said above, she keeps my faith going when I'm not in my right self. She's my inspirer, and I feel like I let her down by not coming to see her that Tuesday. By now she's probably found someone else and I'm forgotten. But I will always be there for her, and hopefully she understands.

-Dylan

From The Beat: It's great to see that you appreciate her. Perhaps if you share this with her, she'll see how much she means to you. Writing can be a powerful way to express feelings for someone. Keep writing.

I just hope that one day I can have as much courage as my mom.

Cheating

I've always cheated. Always remember doing the wrong things in school as a kid. Then I grew up and started the cheating way of life. Trying to do things faster, trying to do things smarter, I did some stupid moves.

I remember trying to cheat the cameras by stealing snacks or other kinds of goods.

I remember being a player, cheating different kinds of girls, never stayed faithful, but that might change.

I remember going places with my ninjas in the middle of the night, stealing my mom's car, then remember her asking, "Where did the gas go?" I remember getting red when my mom talked about getting away.

-Herberth

From The Beat: Thank you for your honesty. It's good to see you acknowledge that you can change. Keep thinking positively about that. We all have the power to change.

Good Advice

The best advice I ever took was from my mom. She would always tell me to go to school and be thankful and not take school for granted, because she was unable to get an education like I did.

One other thing she would tell me is to never trust my friends, only trust family, because in the end, family is all I have.

-Stephanie

From The Beat: Your mother will always be there for you and try to offer good advice. Some friends have good advice, but you must look at their character and behavior before you trust them.

My Mom Spells Courage

One person I've seen act with courage is my mom. She crossed the border at the age of seventeen and didn't tell her mother. Her mother was an alcoholic and always putting my mom into difficult situations.

Mom fought for a better life all her life. Now she lives in a five bedroom house in the hills with a beautiful view in San Rafael, CA.

I just hope that one day I can have as much courage as my mom.

-Maria

From The Beat: We have no doubt that you will have the same courage and if you are willing to reward your mother for her risks and work, then you will and can do the same.

Listening to Advice is Good

My probation officer told me not to smoke anymore. Because I took his advice I've been sober, I'm healthy and I feel cleaner.

At the time I was thinking that this is just another cop telling me what to do, but then I realized it will affect me positively, not negatively.

By not smoking I feel like I am missing out from what everyone else is doing in high school, but at the same time I realize that everyone else is getting themselves in more harm, getting themselves in a deeper hole that they may not be able to climb out of later in life.

I always hear other kids my age say they want to prove everyone wrong when they grow up, but I wonder what they will do as I watch them in the streets, day after day.

-Herberth

From The Beat: It sounds like you have learned and matured as you've grown up. And, though it is especially hard to not follow the crowd, that is courage, that is making adult decisions. Very smart!

Lying

I once lied to my mom about where I was and who I was with. She never found out the truth, but I feel bad for lying to her like that. Even though I know she trusted me and believed what I was telling her, it just hurt a little.

-Jade

From The Beat: Thank you for your honesty. It can be helpful to write about the past in this way. Did you find it helpful to write this down? We hope you'll keep being honest and keep writing.

That Long Strange Trip I Regret

Somebody once told me it would be a good idea to take acid before a concert. I would see the colors better and the music would sound much better. I did.

An hour later I regretted it. I felt very uncomfortable and thought that everyone was looking at me and judging me. I couldn't feel more out of place. It wasn't that it was too intense, but it just wasn't fun and a waste of a good concert, I will never take someone's advice about taking acid before a concert ever again.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Maybe never taking acid again anywhere is a good idea as well. That's our advice. You lose control of your actions and emotions and have to deal with the consequences.

A New Hello

"If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello."

This means to me that sometimes you need to leave some stuff in the past to have a better future and be successful. Life has better stuff for you, especially when you make the decision to fix issues and actually change your life for the long run.

-Jae

From The Beat: Yes! What a positive piece you've written. Taking responsibility to make things right and move toward a better place is a great frame of mind to be in. We hope you'll maintain such a strong outlook.

An Act of Courage

I have seen someone in my life that acted with courage. This person or young lady was my girlfriend ever since we met. In my freshman year she never left my side. She still talks and always cares about me to this day.

She is not weak and even when we went through issues or discussions she always stayed strong and ended up fixing stuff up. Even her having to deal with her mom getting mad at her because she is still by my side even if I'm in some trouble or locked up. She never gives up on me and once I am out of here I'm going to change and reach the goals I have for myself because of my girlfriend.

-Jae

From The Beat: Nice work! She sounds like a girlfriend worth keeping and you describe her love for you well. We hope that you will finally live up to her hopes and expectations once you leave here.

Santa Cruz County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

Thoughts on The Quote

I disagree with the quote "It is never wrong to do the right thing." Even if you try doing the right thing, no one ever appreciates it or ever notices and thinks you're still doing things wrong. I've been in similar situations like that.

-Trying
From The Beat: It is very hard to feel unappreciated when you are trying. We understand that it feels this way sometimes. But we encourage you to keep doing the right thing because the person who matters the most appreciates it — and that's yourself.

Juvenile Hall Reality Show

There are four characters. Inmate #20,000 is locked down and has only an hour of LMA (large muscle activity).

Inmate #30,000 got kicked out of the kitchen and has his meals in his room for two weeks for just being him.

Inmate #40,000 thinks he's super cool but gets shut down because he's unconventional.

Inmate #50,000 is in isolation and on suicide watch and has to wear the suicide vest. He has no blanket and no clothing, gets only tuna for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Let's see how these characters do living the life we do. The winner is the one who gets LOP (loss of program) the least.

-Jason and Edward
From The Beat: We'd definitely watch this TV show. Thanks for being so creative in your writing.

What I'm Feeling

Right now, I'm not feeling anything.

I never feel sad.

I never feel happy.

I never feel scared.

I never feel nervous.

I never feel bored.

I never feel angry.

Sometimes I feel mad

I don't know what makes me feel mad

But when I'm mad, I smoke, I break things

The last thing I broke was an egg on my brother's head.

I never feel sorry about anything.

-Todd
From The Beat: We wonder if this is really true and if all this things you say you don't feel — sadness, happiness, etc. — is just hidden behind your wall of anger. Maybe you can write some about that.

Do The Right Thing

"It is never wrong to do the right thing." I agree with this quote. The reason is because there is no wrong when you do a good thing. It makes you feel good about yourself and your actions.

-Jesus
From The Beat: We are glad you have experienced this good feeling. Keep up with the positive thinking and actions.

Friday Courage

It was a Friday and The Beat Within lady came and we sat in a circle and I volunteered to read from the paper she gave us even though I didn't want to.

-BraveOne
From The Beat: Bravo for this act of courage and a big thank-you from The Beat for your participation.

Courage to Take a Stand

An act of courage is when I stuck up for my friend when he was getting bullied at school just because of what he wore. To this day, he is still one of my good friends.

-Tim
From The Beat: Awesome story. You showed this person right away the kind of strong person you are. No wonder you have remained friends.

Remembering a Courageous Act

I had to act courageous when I was in sixth grade when some big kids was bullying some small kid and I said, "Pick on someone your own size." Then I punched him in the face once and the security saw me and I got suspended.

-Jazper
From The Beat: This story is very instructive. We comment you for sticking up for someone being bullied, but is there another way you could have supported your friend without an act of violence that wound up getting you in trouble? Give this some thought.

Ah Poor Advice

I was at home and I went outside was I was told not to go. And we smoked a blunt and cops pulled up and we had too much negative stuff on us so we took the advice of going on an high speed chase. That was poor advice.

-Carios
From The Beat: It sounds like you hopefully learned from your mistake. We suggest you rehearse for the next time you might find yourself in a similar situation. We know you can find a way to say "No" when asked to do something that you know in your gut isn't going to turn out well.

Pensamientos

Pienso que astas ahorita tendrían en crecimiento el árbol, pero positivo. Casi no veo la televisión no es mi entretenimiento.

Solo le ha hecho trampa a mi mama cuando le decía que iba ir a trabajar y iba a visitar a las chicas. Solo de esa manera podía salir de la casa.

-S
Del Beat: No es bueno hacerle trampa a las personas que te aman. Trata de ser honesto y preguntale por su permiso. ¡Tal vez te deja salir!

Thoughts

I think by now that my tree can grow in a positive way. I really don't want TV. It's not my form of entertainment.

The only time I've lied to my mom is when I lie to her and tell her that I'm going to work, when instead I'm going to visit girls. That's the only way she would let me leave the house.

-S
From The Beat: It's not good to lie to your loved ones. Maybe you can be honest with her and ask for permission. She might let you go out!

My Tree

My tree will look like brown branches and the leaves will be green and \$20 bills will be each leaf and after I take the \$20 leaf, \$100 leaf bills will come out after that.

After the tree dies, it will break and quarters will come out. I start growing this tree with a penny that is the seed.

-Writer
From the Beat: We want that tree, too. It is a good metaphor, meaning that the tree of money can stand for your life. If you put effort into something worthwhile, it will eventually pay off — in money, good work and meaningful relationships.

Brave Enough

"If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello."

I agree with this quote because if you can move on, you can find someone else that will actually love you and appreciate you!

-Jesus

From The Beat: What are some of things you must say good-bye to to get this love and appreciation? It starts with you.

Temas

Todos nosotros sentamos las bases para nuestros futuros por pensar en ideas. Cuando miramos la televisión examinamos los programas con nuestro control remoto en la mano.

También si tienes bastante coraje para a Dios la vida te premia con un nuevo saludo.

-S

Del Beat: ¡A Nosotros nos gusta tu esfuerzo que haces en tus escrituras! ¡Queremos leer mas!

Topics

We all put forth the foundation for our futures with our thoughts and ideas. When we watch television we usually flip through the channels with the remote in hand.

-S

From The Beat: We love the effort you are putting into your writing! We want to read more!

The TV

The TV turns my boredom into not being bored. It passes time and it shows everything you desire — sports to cartoons to drama shows. TV makes my mind get off my thoughts and worries because it can be that funny.

-Angel

From The Beat: It is good to have some distractions from boredom. We'd like to suggest some other ways that young people in your situation have found to be helpful — reading, writing, thinking about their future, drawing.

New Jokes

1. There's a wife and a husband. The husband plays guitar. One day, they were arguing and the wife grabs the guitar and beats her husband to death with his guitar. Next day, she goes to court and the judge asks, "First offender?" And the lady replies, "No, first a Gibson and then a Fender."

2. Q: What did the grape do when the elephant stepped on it? A: It let out a little whine. (wine).

3. Q: Where do cows go to have fun? A: To the Moo-vies.

4. Q: Why was the cop in bed? A: Because he was undercover.

-Mac Attack

From The Beat: We love jokes and riddles, too. Keep them coming!

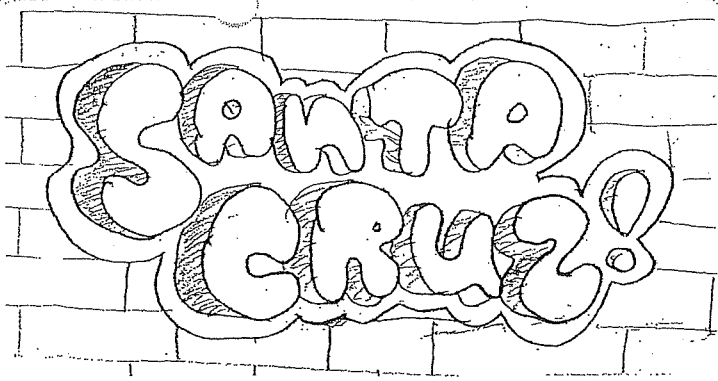
For a Friend

An act of courage I did
was when I stuck up
for my friend.

I was there
when people told him shhh.

-Chris

From The Beat: Good for you! How did you stick up your friend? What specifically did you do and how did the people bullying react?



My Cheating Story

One time that I cheated on a test and got away with it was when I was younger and I was struggling in science and the smartest kid in our class sat in front of me so I copied him and got an A on my test. I never got caught and I don't regret it because that test helped me pass my class.

-Briana

From The Beat: Moving forward, did you continue to cheat on tests and papers, or did you find the time to study and gain the tools necessary to do things free of cheating?

My Mom

I love my mom. She is everything to me. She doesn't deserve to be going through this b-s that I'm putting her through. She did such a good job of raising me, for me to had ended up locked up in this place. But it is what it is. All I can do is say sorry and keep striving to better myself. Being here ain't nothing. I chose this life so I gotta deal with the consequences.

-Isaac

From The Beat: We often hear this expression, "It is what it is." But we know you understand that things just don't happen. You had a role what got you here. You say you value your mom. What can you do to show you value her?

TV Time

On Sunday afternoon, I turned the TV on and I saw the Dallas Cowboys beat the Philadelphia Eagles 27-20 and everyone was telling me the Cowboys were going to lose. I like the Cowboys because it's my family team.

-Jazper

From The Beat: Feels good when your team wins. Maybe sometime you'll want to write about a specific game you watched with your family.

Planting Seeds

If I planted seeds by posting on my block every day,
I'd be a tree growing taller and taller every day.

But now that I am where I am, it's like my tree is not growing at the moment, like it's not getting watered.

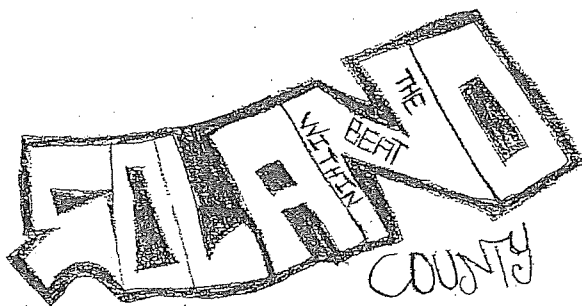
It will be healthy and growing once again when I get my freedom back.

-Jesus

From The Beat: We agree that freedom is a wonderful thing. But make sure you make wise choices or that freedom might harm your tree. And many people in your situation have found ways even while incarcerated to start working to be the kind of person they want to be. What would it be like if right now you planted the seed of education or the seed of being mindful? Give it a try and tell us what you discover.

Solano County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!



Facts

Feds got us on their billboard (yea)
But you know that I ain't going for it (yea)
I stay hidden from the radar
Hundred tints in those foreign cars (yea)
They don't believe that I did it
Was running and jumping the fences
Tell that ninja he could get it
I remember that advice that got me
Locked in these chains.

-Lil' Mula

From The Beat: We hope you will remember and never again listen to the bad advice that got you "locked in these chains." Then maybe you'll never have to run and jump fences again.

Love Or Lust

Sometimes I think if a person really loves you, why do they treat you so bad? Maybe they just don't know how to love. I try but sometimes it's like, damn, I should try harder.

Do they really-really want me around or is it just a temporary thing? I'll never truly know. Sometimes I don't want to give up, but I might have to let go.

-LaLa

From The Beat: You are doing a brilliant job of expressing the difficulties and pain of love. No one is an expert when it comes to love, but it takes patience and understanding to make it work.

Home

Money heals my pain, yeah, it's crazy
Police put me in here, but I won't let it phase me
All these months going by, damn system doing me shady
Staring at this brick wall, I think about being home on a daily.

-J-Money

From The Beat: Money may be able to buy you luxury things but it doesn't buy happiness. Real happiness comes from spending time with those you love.

Quote Of The Week By Mark Twain

"It is never wrong to do the right thing." I think this means that in any situation you want to do the right thing. No matter what the circumstances are you want to do right. There is good karma that can come from doing right.

- Unknown

From The Beat: There is a lot of wisdom in knowing that your words and actions have an effect. You also reflect the idea that people basically want to do the right thing all the time. Do you think people are born that way? What makes people do the wrong thing even though they want to do the right thing?

Future President

Equal rights toward women and men of all races. If I ever become President, this is what I'd run for.

-Donald

From The Beat: That's a big goal that we know you are capable of accomplishing!

Thinking

Did a lotta shhh that I wish I hadn't. If you get hit with what I got hit with, you probably couldn't handle that. The people you love, they hurt you the most.

It's hard to control your feelings, so sometimes you explode. These holidays coming. So, I'm all in my feelings. It's all good I'll be home sooner or later.

-LaLa

From The Beat: We are impressed with how much you are in touch with your feelings. Even though you sometimes explode with too much feeling, that's better than keeping the feelings closed up inside.

Equal Justice

The USA has not kept its promise within the Fourteenth Amendment. People are treated different because of their race, money, sexuality and many more.

I have personally been treated different because of my race by the police and even other citizens. This is what I think and have to say about this topic.

- Nine

From The Beat: Thank you for speaking your truth. What do you think can be done about the fact that people are treated differently by the police and each other despite what the law says?

How It Be

I'm trapping, trying to touch a mill
Stacked up to the top like a hill
They ain't really in the field
Twin locks call 'em Jack and Jill
Creeping through their section for the thrill
You loafing, it's just another drill
Been the same since day one
I always kept it real
Never ever will I squeal
I'm just trying to make it to the top for my family.

-Lil' Don

From The Beat: You're rapping and trapping and sometimes leaving us guessing. But the final message is clear: you've always kept it real and you're going to make it to the top, for your family. What is the plan to remaining free and being present for family?

No Comment

Because people are lazy and don't learn to protect themselves they make life a game of thrones and use a team of police and people of justice to put people who are a "potential threat" to "mankind" in captivity to "learn a lesson." When in reality, they suffer a period carved out of their lives and are lost in time to those of a "higher power" in our society.

- Nafe

From The Beat: How do you see yourself in this scenario? Is your life what it is because you were lazy and did not learn to protect yourself?

Equal Justice

I believe the law treats the people of the United States equally, it's just the people that enforce the laws who don't treat all of us equally.

- My Take

From The Beat: What can be done to make the people who enforce the laws enforce them fairly? Is this about upbringing or job training?

The Right Thing Isn't Always Right

I feel like it can be wrong to do that right thing. If you do the right thing and get somebody in trouble and they go to jail or something, that can be wrong. If doing the right thing means getting somebody else in trouble that no longer makes it the right thing to do.

- Guis

From The Beat: This is deep thinking. It suggests that right and wrong are not black and white, and life involves a lot of gray choices. How has your own experience led you to the conclusion you have come to?

My Courageous Act

An act of courage I did when I got arrested. I said I was by myself. I kept it stitched lip so my little brother doesn't go down too. Loose lips sink ships.

-Lil' Don

From The Beat: Your act of courage forced you to tell a lie and take the punishment alone. We are moved by your love for your brother.

Through The Rain

Going through some shhh will turn a boy to a man
I'll take life before I get on the stand
These streets turn a youngsta into a beast
Don't slip, you might sink like you're on quicksand.

-Lil' Don

From The Beat: You express so much fear of slipping and sinking, of turning into a beast. But we believe you can and will come out of all this as a man. What are your goals moving forward?

Underground

Forget the whole court system. All they want to do is see us underground and not see us achieve.

So, one day I would put the court system underground and shut them down. But every time I hit the corner they'll be there. But I would just avoid them until I shut them down.

-Los

From The Beat: We are amused by your clever use of "underground." Your gift of playing with words is one way to move beyond the anger you express here.

Kevin Durant

Easy lay-up like I'm KD
When I go, I know they're going to remember me
Cross 'em up, it's going through their "T's"
Mouth sparkling when I cheese
Free all out of these cells
I pray they beat the case.

-Lil' Don

From The Beat: Keep that mouth sparkling when you cheese. We love your imaginative images and your upbeat spirit.

An Act Of Courage

One situation of me displaying courage is when I was locked up and one of the guards found contraband in my cell. At that time I had a roommate and we both were going to get in trouble. So I admitted to it being mine, so my celly wouldn't get in trouble. I chose to take the blame because my celly only had a few days left and I had a year, so I owned up to what I did.

- It's Mine

From The Beat: That is quite an act of courage and generosity. How do you feel about what you did today? Would you make the same decision again? Would your celly do something like that for you?

Stuff Happens

A lot of shhh happens to me
I know they wish death on me
When I lost my cousin, Chano, I couldn't live happily
Then I lost Domo, why this stuff happens to me?
It's all good though, I'm going to thug it out
Five months left, I'm going to be out soon
Don't hold your breath, Lil' Don's coming home.

-Lil' Don

From The Beat: After all the pain and loss you have suffered, we rejoice that you will be going home. Treat life good so you can get some positive results. Life is too short to be focused on the negative things.

Almost Home

For Thanksgiving I am lucky because I got furlough, so I don't have to eat this nasty food. When I'm in here I'm saying how much I'm about to eat.

Then I go out there and get sidetracked about how much that is going on. I ain't going to lie though. I'm about to eat.

-Lil' Mula

From The Beat: You were lucky to go home for Thanksgiving. We hope you don't take for granted the time you spend with your loved ones. It is priceless.

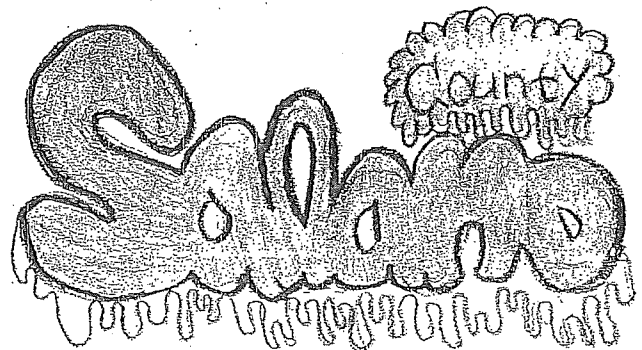
Black and White Laws

The law looks at certain people and turns them into criminals with a black and white outlook. With my situation, a police officer looked at the kid's side and not mine.

They both lied on me, and the DA knew that the officer and the kid lied, but they still locked me down for a crime I didn't do.

-Anon

From The Beat: Your frustration and anger are justified, but however much you were wronged, you will get out. You will then have the chance to show the world your true worth. Don't let this bad experience keep you down!



San Mateo County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

Drags Me Down

When someone does not understand me, the way I deal with it is I try to go out to keep myself from thinking about the world never understanding me. I also do things I'm not supposed to do, but it drags me down every time. I also punch walls when I overthink about it.

When I feel like I can't talk to anyone or nobody cares enough, I go to God for relief because I know He will help me. With my medical issue sometimes I ask God, why me? Why did I need to be the one to waste my time three times a week for three hours? But is it actually wasting, when I need it to survive?

It's hard to move on and be in a good mood when the hospital has been my second home. Dialysis will always be part of my life, no matter how much I wish I could erase it from my life.

-Lindsey

From The Beat: Your medical condition is a very challenging part of life, and we're proud of you for sticking with it and pushing forward. What are some activities, or who are some people, that keep your spirits up?

The Beat of My Own Drum

People can't understand
Me 'cause I ain't like
Nobody around here I don't
Try to be like everybody
I march to the beat of my
Own drum no lie they wonder
Why I'm serious and don't
Laugh at the jokes it's
'Cause I'm all about it, I show
Don't tell

-Jack

From The Beat: Marching to the beat of your own drum keeps you true to yourself. Tell us more about what you're about.

Being Brave but Scared

Well, I'm going to talk about the word "courage." That word comes with fear in the mind when you think of doing something that can help the situation, but think of the problem that it's going to charge toward you, and what can come to you. When I'm stepping up, I reflect on how the problem's going to benefit the other person. There's only been one time where I had to be brave, maybe more than the guy I was defending. The situation goes on, mind racing, and thinking about the butterflies and my stomach that the person I was defending was thanking me for standing up for him in the fight and so that they wouldn't bully him.

-The Unknown in Struggle

From The Beat: You did a brave thing by stepping in to defend another. Be careful though, that this doesn't endanger you or risk your freedom.

The Way I Move and Talk

When I was young, a lot of people told me that eighteen years old was goin' to come quick and that if I did not change my ways, I would not accomplish my goals and would not graduate high school.

I'm closer to graduating because I've changed my ways, changed the way I move and talk.

-Charlie

From The Beat: That's great to hear! What else in your life is positively affected by your decision to change your ways?

New Me

Go to college
Don't stress nobody
Do you
Forget my old ways
I'm gonna pursue a career
Prove all these people wrong
You won't even recognize me!

-MaryJane

From The Beat: Yes, keep doing you and prove the haters and naysayers wrong!

Not Just Saying It

I would actually write a couple of letters to the old me. Since I have been incarcerated I felt that I have really changed, to be honest.

I don't want to have to return to my old ways once I am free, because being locked up ain't the business.

I'm looking forward to just working once I'm out and maybe even starting some college classes. I'm a be on a good roll once I get out 'cause I really am not tryin' to be in the system again. I'm tired of it.

Only God will see that I am for real and not just saying it to say it.

-Unknown

From The Beat: Saying something's one thing, but acting on it is another thing. It's time to show up for yourself in some serious and positive ways. You can do it!

Equal Justice Rap

The government plays everyone by the laws
They pick on people because of the flaws
For the color of their skin
Where do I begin?
I think it's time for me to go in
Like all the stuff you see on the news
How only the rich get the views
The government playin' a lot of people
That are locked up
Some for no reason
I'm callin' it treason
They doing a lot of people wrong
So I'm tryin' to express it in a song
The rich people in some state
Tryin' to eat off the poor person's plate
While people locked up just want a clean slate
With so many felonies
And probation penalties

-Truth Seeker

From The Beat: You make some strong and articulate points! We love the flow and content of this piece and want to see more!

SAN MATEO
COUNTY - PHILLY

That Advice

The advice I would give someone is to let the haters be your motivation. What I mean by this is the haters also got some gas and got your head up, and have some girls to motivate you to do better. Don't hate, appreciate.

-Mid

From The Beat: We can use our haters as a challenge to do better. Thanks for this reminder!

Been Done

I been thru the struggle, been thru pain,
been thru the trauma man I've seen it freaking rain.
Man I seen it, Man I done it.
A lot of the things I've seen have been done,
just like the thing I did have been seen.

-Spookes

From The Beat: We hope you now have the strength to move on and leave your old ways, since you have been there and done that. What are your plans for 2019?

One Group, One Race

In order for everyone to get along, we need to put all the races and groups aside. To be peaceful as a whole, we first need to be whole. One group, one race. We should all see each other as just humanity. Only then will there be peace and will all the hate disappear.

People judge each other too fast and too much. If only everyone would stop judging and just help others, all would be good. People should give and not take.

-Keep the Peace

From The Beat: You make an interesting point that in order to for hate to end, we must feel united. How have you built unity with the people you're close to?

Not Knowing Myself

I got bad advice recently and that got me a year of jail time. I got peer pressured in here (juvenile), and that was maybe the most dangerous thing that I let get to me.

Afterwards, I felt weak minded. I know what I was capable of beating up the dude, but thought I might just bang on him or something. I now realized that I was so weak minded and that people don't want the best for me they want me to stay in the square, then to jump around the squared floored room witch is the bigger picture, but I now know that if they were real buddies they wouldn't want my time to be extended.

-TownBoy

From The Beat: Excellent work on this week's topic. We're glad you recognize the foolishness in your actions, which costed you your freedom. It is better to recognize now, than to not see the truth. Now you know who is in your corner and who is not! Onward and upward!

No Advice!

I don't take advice from people. I tend to learn things on my own. I'm that type of person that has to see it to believe it. It sounds like a bad thing but in a way it's positive, sort of.

I personally feel like it's better to go through it then to avoid it temporarily. And those that go through things build character. I rather have character than not understand certain struggles for avoiding them.

-How I Feel

From The Beat: We appreciate your take. We wish you could have given us some examples of the things you have gone through, good or bad.

Advice I Regret

I'm going to write about a time when someone gave me advice that I regret. I remember one time when my cousin gave me advice, when we got in trouble with the police. I asked him for advice and we got the story mixed up with the cops.

When we mixed up the story with the cops, we all got charged with the same thing and we went to juvenile hall and stayed there until we went to court.

When we got out we still had to go to court and we went once a month for a year until they gave us a deal. They put me on probation for a year and it was very hard to get off.

I regret taking the advice because it made me take charges I wasn't supposed to take and it was a day before Thanksgiving in 2015.

-Lesson Learned

From The Beat: We can tell that you regret this advice, but that you're also learning from your mistake and can better plan for the future. Next time, make sure the advice you take won't jeopardize your freedom.

My Life

I'm left without words

My mind, my emotions, my body

It's all to numbness now

I'm left without words

-Shy One

From The Beat: Is there someone you can talk to about this numbness? We're here for you!

Right and Wrong Advice

I wish that the advice I got from my parents would have never left my conscious. I have gotten really good advice and I have gotten really bad advice or what I at least thought was advice.

I look at everything my eyes see, as resources for my life, whether good or bad, but I think I should have stayed on the right lane and not just try and walk on both lanes.

I've gotten wisdom from the wisest and I believe whatever you go though is to benefit and help your future. I know from good and wrong and I know everything wrong you can make right. I have taken bad advice as "You can do anything you want in life if you carry a steal." I think that person feels invincible, but no one but GOD is invincible.

-King

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you are moving in the right direction. Plenty of maturity in your piece. We are hopeful moving forward you will make decisions around the betterment of you and your freedom.

Spice Advice, Bad Advice

The worst advice I took was when I was in San Francisco. I was with a group of friends and one of the guys bought spice. He had told me to smoke a little bit of it. I didn't want to because I didn't know what it was until he was telling me to just try it this one time. So when I did, I just took two hits, that made me feel really bad. I started seeing shhh! Don't ever-ever try spice in your life.

Another bad advice I took was when I first ditch class because after that day I just kept doing it and just got used to it. That was something I would do all the time. I feel like that hanging with the wrong people changes you because you hang out with people who do bad things, you start to do things they do, you start acting like them.

-Lindsey

From The Beat: We bet moving forward what you share her on paper will not happen again to you. Sounds like you learned your lesson around "spice" and cutting class. Yes, to staying sober and getting your learn on in 2019! Embrace your freedom and don't return to juvenile!

San Mateo County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

My Do Over

If I could do something over... it would be my past because I have done bad thing to people. I've felt really bad ever since.

-Spookes

From The Beat: The time is now to make amends! Allow your actions to speak your truths!

Being Nice

I was leaving work, I had leftover lunch too. When I was on my way home I saw a homeless guy sitting down. I told him that I got full and didn't finish my meal, that if he wanted the rest. He said yes, so I gave it to him and also got him something to drink.

-Kiddo

From The Beat: A super nice gesture on your part. How did this make you feel? Was the man thankful too? Would you do it again?

That One Friend

I have had to step in many acts of courage through my life. I always have to put people in their place or remind them of what's important. I'm always takin care of drunk friends.

-MaryJane

From The Beat: Looking back, how do you feel about being this person and doing what you did to help your "drunk friends"? We suppose, this is what friends are for, but it also can be dangerous too.

That Bad Advice

Some bad advice I was given was when someone said that I should drink a gallon of water before a drug test and my pee would come out clean. It never did. But it do be like that sometimes.

-G

From The Beat: What are your plans moving forward? Hopefully no drugs, clean tests and off probation!

In My Business

I hate that people feel the need to get up into my business. I don't like when people think that they know what I'm going through. I go through a lot and when I do, people think they could relate. They don't know the half of what I been through. People love when the story is extravagant but they go overboard.

-Private Person

From The Beat: We feel you on people over-relating. If someone wanted to support you in what you were going through, how could they do that?

It's Me

"Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete proving nature's laws wrong it learned to walk without having feet, funny it seems but by keeping it's dreams it learned to breathe fresh air,

long live the rose that grow from concrete When no one else even cared!"-2Pac

I like this quote because it shows even if you grew up different you'll still show people wrong. They would be looking at your different because you grew up different.

-Darwen

From The Beat: Do you feel this is a reflection of you and your journey?

A "Do Over" to Prevent Incarceration

If I could do a "do over" again in my life it will probably be the reason that brought me to Juvenile hall, because I've spent a year of my freedom here and what kept me going forward is that I knew I was going to hit the streets one day, not like some of my friends, doin' life who ain't ever gone see the streets again.

Anyways, yeah my "do over" is probably the reason why I'm here. I would of done it a lot smarter, ha-ha, but I'm just going to take this as a life lesson and learn form it.

I'm not going to lie, when I first got booked in on December 22, 2017. I thought they were gone send me to CYA (youth prison), because my offense was serious, but since this was my first offense I got lucky and I got the county camp, Camp Glenwood. I was there for over eight months, but before I went to camp I was here (in juvenile) for three months, and now I'm back (in the hall) and I'm going to finish the rest of my camp time here, with the goal of spending 2019 with my family, when I get out.

When I get out I'm going to do the things I wasn't doing before I got locked up, such as spending more time with my family and having more meals with them. Also, I'm going to stick to school and be smarter about my actions.

-Johnny

From The Beat: We like this! We believe in you! How bad do you want your freedom? What will you do to keep it and not lose it again? Giving up one year is a lot of time. We certainly hope you took this past year as a valuable lesson.

No Bad Advice

I've never really taken bad advice. I don't let others influence me at all. I make my own decisions. If I would have given into bad advice, I would of been here way longer. I'm leaving before Christmas. I ain't complaining!

-MaryJane

From The Beat: Good for you. Where did you get the strength and courage to not take poor advice? What are your plans upon returning home?

That Poor Advice

I should of never took the advice of going up to confront a girl. If never did that I wouldn't be here locked up. I should of never listened to my friend. I should of never threw the first punch, or even talk to her. Next time I should just go to an adult for advice on what to do, instead of taking action.

-Samantha

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you are on the right page! We are happy to read you will control your anger and work through it with those you trust and want the best for you.

My Vato

My love, my best friend, my go to.
I love your smile, hugs, besos, and personality.
Through thick and thin you have
Always stuck by my side.
I never have to question your loyalty
Because I know you have me just
Like I have you.
You turn my darkness into light.
You make me see the better side to everything.
You bring me to climax without sex and you do it all with regal
grace.
I am your chulada forever.

-Gata

From The Beat: You express your love and loyalty quite well. We hope you will share this with your love! Next time keep the love poem between you and yours, and give us something we can all embrace!

That Monster

Hate is a strong feeling.
It takes a lot to get there.
When I see someone I hate
it feels different then just normal anger.
It's a feeling that boils from deep inside
and is almost uncontrollable.
It's the monster deep inside us all.

-Alex

From The Beat: We can get a sense of that hate from your words. What happens when it boils over? What are you doing to keep it simmering, to not boil over?

We Are Meaningless

I think Gandhi is an inspiration, but also stubborn and very depressed. I think just how Gandhi thinks, I look at everyone as one. No one is right or wrong. We are simply meaningless.

-Nick

From The Beat: A great opening, now if you have it in you, tell us more about being "meaningless!"

Mr. Misunderstood

Principal misunderstanding me. Thinking I'm bad influence. Saying I'm only good to smoke tree, but actually in reality, I be getting good grades and showing up to school every day.

-H

From The Beat: Then why is the principal saying this about you? Maybe you need to work on the things that get you in trouble at school and stick to getting your learn on!

Hate From The Environment

What a disgrace, we fight our own kind.
But I gotta say that ain't my race.
I know I'm gonna die, ain't nothing gonna change.
This life is a lie that's why we gang bang.
The system likes to play.
All they do is manipulate
People with a badge, are still a damn gang.
Homie with a ray, gets sent to the cage.
Damn there's so much hate.

-Lil Te

From The Beat: We can tell you have plenty to say and only wish you could have taken this piece further. What can we do to improve our communities, as well as this system you speak of?

Don't Tell Me

I hate people telling me what to do.
I hate people telling me not to talk.
I don't wait for anybody.

-A

From The Beat: Who are these people you are writing about? What do you need to do to stop this from continuing?

My Mother's Eyes

The last time I felt very good.
Ha. The last time I got out.
But what do you know,
I'm back here again
Being cradled by these lonely dirty cells.
I saw my mother's eyes twinkle
With excitement that I'm out
And her half smile told me
She knew I'll be back
Once again.

-Patty

From The Beat: Tell us more about your relationship with your mom. We are listening. We also are interested in hearing from you on how you see your life going and what you want going into the new year.

See Me

Everybody thinks that 'cause I look young and I'm white that I'm not really about it and that I got a good life. I just think they should see who I am and what I've been through. I don't care what they think I am. I'm going to be better and let them be wrong.

They should see that I've been beatin' and molested and I've lived in foster and in the 'hood. I may be white but I don't feel like it.

-Someone Not Seen

From The Beat: It is easier said than done, but don't let what others may think affect you. When the time is right, you will share your story, or you'll keep it moving. In truth we hope to hear more from you. We sense a thoughtful writer!

I think just how Gandhi thinks,
I look at everyone as one.

Do Good, Feel Good

I feel like when people misunderstand me when I do good or get money. They always thinking I'm selling drugs or stealing. I hate that cause if I do anything, my motivation for good, I can't feel good.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: How can you shake this stereotype or judgement? Keep doing you and in time, you must believe, people will see the truth and no longer assume the worst.

Diploma

This path for me is the path of least resistance because as a teen I did not go to school. Now that I'm thirty-seven credits from graduating, high school is a big accomplishment for me. I'm very proud of myself on how far I've come out of my comfort zone to accomplish anything I set my mind to do.

-Lizbet

From The Beat: Congratulations! What are your plans upon graduating? Dream big! The world is yours!

Sacramento, County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS!

I Had To Wait

I had to wait, ungrateful was my name.
When I rapped golden goose my lyrics had change.
It was strange so I adapted to these games
then I focus on the truth and it erased all my pain.
Money to fame, like it's gas on a train.
Organized who I am, make it drip with the rain.

-Jezekiah

From The Beat: Nice piece! You have great flow and content. We love hearing your life story behind your rhymes. Keep them coming.

This Wait

The wait leads up
to a number
on your wrist
that shows you're another
number
to the judge.

-Mw

From The Beat: We would love for you to dive deeper on the wait and what it means to you.

Dying over Recognition

I feel like I'm misunderstood every day.
I'm misunderstood even by my own mama.
I only let people see what I want them to see.
No one really knows me
except the God that never listens.
One of the reasons is because I'm a firm believer
in never letting my left know what my right is doing.
I feel like one of the reasons I'm still alive
and a lot of people I know that are my age are gone.
no longer alive,
is because they always want people to know what they're doing.
Too many people die over wanting to be recognized
and social media plays a big role.
Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat got more bodies than anyone
on earth.
If more people could be misunderstood like me.

- Demon

From The Beat: Wow! That's some critical social commentary on the big global media companies right there. What would you say to the bosses if they read your piece and said to you, "Hey, hold up! We're not responsible for how people use our social media sites?" Write it back for the next issue - we're interested.

The Day Everything Changed

I went to Grant (School). It was an okay experience, but it was hard when my brother JJ died - RIP JJ. It was the day everything changed.

I felt like why go to school if my brother was not going to be there. It was something that changed me.

-Xavier

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about this tragedy. It's never easy losing someone, especially at a young age. What do you do to keep his memory alive?

It was something that
changed me.

The Blame

We will never be the same 'cause you ain't ever felt my pain
The system tried to spit me down the drain
Like I'm the one to blame
But the streets made me this way.

-Boss Up

From The Beat: You are in the same boat as many others who grew up in the streets. We are all looking for ways to just survive, yet it doesn't always work in our favor. Keep on pushing despite your circumstances.

The Wait and Me

I hate to wait. I'm hella impatient but when you are incarcerated you have no choice but to wait.

You have to wait for food. You have to wait for open rec. You have to wait for your next court date. You have to wait for a visit you might not get. You see, I hate to wait.

-Josh

From The Beat: It's crazy how being incarcerated brings a whole new definition of waiting! It really puts things into perspective. Patience is key, keep going.

Chess No Checkers

I swear I've been waiting my whole life. If it's not one thing, it's the other. I have learned how to be patient and not go crazy because the life I live is (the game of) chess, not checkers.

It's a waiting game. I'm waiting to figure out what the system is trying to do with me for the next few years, but when it's crunch time, I'm waiting but I ain't ever hesitating. If it's the right move to make, straight up.

-Demon

From The Beat: Keep your head up while you wait for your fate. Remember that no matter what happens, you are always in control of your own mind. No one or nothing can determine your spirit.

Beat Within

I haven't felt despair although I know what it's like and understand. I haven't lost much but some clothes and some beats.

I'm happy that's all I loss and hopefully that's all. When I do look back, despair is like sitting in a well with a bucket tied to a rope for you to escape but you choose not to escape with your feelings swelling up.

-Lil Tone

From The Beat: This is a very interesting analogy, we like it! It seems to have a deeper meaning and we would love to hear you go more in depth about it. What would make you not choose escape when it's right in front of you?

Broken

They want to see me broken
But I will show them no emotion
They left me in the storm
That made me so frozen
I refuse to go to my coffin
so I'm rockin' like DeRozan.

-Boss Up

From The Beat: How do you handle your emotions whey they get the best of you? We know you don't show it to those who are trying to bring you down, but how do you deal with them in your own time?

School and Me

My goals in education is to go to college for eight years.
I want to work in the hospital field.
I'm a high school graduate.

-Jg

From The Beat: Very good so far! You are on the right track. Do you have a specific job in mind?

What People Think About Me!

I attended school at Grant and got into some fights because I don't like when people think they can punk me because of my skin color. So, I got into fights a lot. That is the school I attended.

-Talma

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that skin color is even an issue in today's day! We are sorry you experience that. Hold your ground and continue showing others respect, but most importantly, yourself.

This is the life of waiting
in a cell.

Waiting in a Cell

It's like you are in school waiting for the bell to ring but can't leave the school without the judge and the DA telling you when you can leave.

You have to spend days and nights in here, shower on somebody else's time. This is the life of waiting in a cell.

-Muhammad

From The Beat: It seems like eternity when you describe it like that. You must have to think of ways to make the time go by. What do you do to stay active and healthy minded?

Lost Warmth

S. takes me back
To a place that felt warm
After the wreck.
This place is now
Cold.
I want to see your face
And know you're okay.
It hurts
To have to wonder
If I'll see you again.
Please be safe.

-Gc

From The Beat: Wow. We love how honest your words are. The way you juxtapose warmth and coldness communicates the emotions behind your words so clearly.

Free
VERSE

Going Insane

Praying to the Lord
To be me and be free.
Counting down the days
Until I get out.
So I can get drunk
Maybe smoke a blunt.
Get lit
And maybe get paid.
I like that crank
It always lets me take a break
From going insane
In my membrane.
I'm drained
And afraid
Of my brain.
I have to take those perks
So I can go to work.
I hate this pain
It gets to my brain
And drives me insane.
But that's okay.

-Sw

From The Beat: We love the opening lines to this piece! They set the stage for your exploration of thoughts and emotions. Fantastic ending, too!

The Maze

I miss the days when I didn't feel the pain.
When I didn't have to sing away the days
And complain
About the bag.
I'm chained down in a maze.
About to set my soul ablaze
To take away the pain
In my brain.
It drives me insane
To see your face.
I break down
And shoot up that crank.
It makes the pain fade away.
To come down I have to pop those perks
So I can go to work
Looking kind of normal.
But my heart is in pain
And my brain is insane.
I have these thoughts in my brain
To take away the pain.
Some people call me insane,
But that's okay.
I'll just sing away the day
And stay up
To feed my pain.

-Sw

From The Beat: Your rhyme-scheme in this piece is on point! We like the way you repeat words or phrases, but always in a new way. Nice work!

I hate this pain
It gets to my brain

San Bernardino County

★ **WEEKLY WRITINGS!****My Boyfriend**

One day me and him stopped talking and that made me cry. Me and him been through it all, the good and the bad. Now we are going to have a family. It makes me cry that I'm in the halls. This is going to be my last time in here for sure. I miss my boyfriend. He is my everything. I can't live without him.

Let me ask you this: What does "love" mean to you? I know what love means to me. It means trust, love, fun, and laughs. You don't think about the bad times, you stay with the good times.

We will be together again. He does not want his girl to be in the halls with his baby. He is very protective of me. I love you. He is going to be my all.

-Kiki

From The Beat: Love is unconditional. The love you feel jumps off the page. Having a family is a big responsibility, what are ways you will support yours after leaving the hall?

Selfish

I think that taking bad advice is a good one because I did the wrong thing and took the wrong advice, did the wrong and that's why I'm in here locked up.

That person that gave me the bad advice only cared about themselves and what they wanted.

-Michael

From The Beat: Bad advice comes in many ways, and it often can be from those who are selfish! Great way to reflect and connect the two.

Courageous Moment

The most courageous thing I've ever done was saving some of my friends from getting killed by another group of people. I just helped them out. What doing that meant to me, was doing the right thing at the right moment. That's what courage means to me.

-Tristian

From The Beat: You did do a very courageous yet difficult thing. That is also a great definition of what courage is.

Life

People hate when you got it
So, I'm cutting off my friends
People smile in your face
In reality they're fake
I don't care about what you think we had
I'll show you something
She was my first love and she
Changed so I'll never trust 'em

-Dj

From The Beat: It sounds like you have discovered what boundaries are. People who we do not trust are often people we have to distance ourselves from.

Never Wrong to do Right

I totally agree with this quote because I feel that some people do bad things just to look "cool", but if you do the right thing you're never wrong. I believe that because in my experiences I would do the right thing and it wasn't wrong at all, it just made me feel better and like a better person.

-Brando

From The Beat: I think the difference of right and wrong depends on each individual person. If you feel like you are a better person by doing things that feel right to you, we encourage you to keep trying to be a better person.

Was I Your Priority?

Sometimes I wonder if I ever meant anything to the person who made me. I feel lost and confused when I think about if you really loved me.

It doesn't seem like I was your priority, but that drug is taking you away from me, the only father that was given to me.

-Marissa

From The Beat: One of the first things we do when we get lost while driving is we stop to ask for directions. It's the same in our personal life. We ask for directions or help from those we trust and can count on for sound advice.

How We See

The law does not treat us all equally. It just pleases the men who have a say or a high role in society.

If the law would treat us equally, we would have to sacrifice our thoughts, theories, allegations, curiosity, and ultimately how we see each other.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Being able to see ourselves in a different light can actually be beneficial. Do you think that we'd have to remove all the things we suggested or maybe restructure those ways of thinking?

Bad Move

The bad advice I got was when I was in the Juvenile Hall. Someone told me "If you hurt this dude out he'll go out the unit". So, I did it and they gave me more time and moved me out the unit.

-Daniel

From The Beat: We learn from our mistakes. You can't always trust the advice that people give to you because, as you may know, not everyone is in your best interest.

Advice

At one point of time I had given someone bad advice.
I get mad because I gave them bad advice and that's not good.
And at one point someone gave me good advice.

-Tyler

From The Beat: It sounds like you regret giving that person bad advice. What made the advice you gave so bad? Did you ever apologize to the person for giving bad advice?

Who Are You?

The words, "It's never wrong to do the right thing" what would they mean to you? If you were poor or rich would the opinion still be the same? Probably not, because to me it depends on the person. You can have close to nothing but still help your fellow friend because that is who you are and that is your character.

On the other hand, you can have a rich man do dark things for their money and not do the right thing or help anyone in general, and that person can forget who helped him get to where they are. That is their heart and feelings, but a rich man can still help give back to their people even the ones who weren't there for them as much, because it's never wrong to do the right thing.

-Jacob

From The Beat: It is not difficult to lend a hand to those who are in need of help. You might not have every resource in the world; however, the thought or smallest action of help carries tremendous weight. Your character is built by the actions you take to provide support to others, and it is on you to either be known as someone who did the right thing or looked the other way.

MLK

It was Martin Luther King Jr. who fought for us. He fought for us to go to school with white people. We can now walk down the street without being judged.

- Martin

From The Beat: Yes! Martin Luther King risked so much to fight for equity. Do you think he'd like what he sees today in society?

Pressure Off My Shoulders

The prompt I will be talking about is the advice.

Why I say that is because one time in my life I was homeless. Somebody told me during that situation that it happened and the only thing you could do is move from it and keep on going forward.

Let the pressure off your shoulders and just pray that it won't happen again. So, I took that in mind and I started rapping about what I was going through and that took the pressure off my shoulders.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: We all have different tools that help us get through hard times and we're so happy you found something to help you during those difficult times. Language is so powerful and we encourage you to continue exploring and creating your own work. Don't be afraid to share it with others, you never know who you can help and impact through your art.

Only Mom

At one point of time I had given someone bad advice. I get mad and that's bad.

But at one point someone have gave me bad advice too, so that's why I don't trust no one but my mom.

-Jaylin

From The Beat: We constantly get advice from others and it can be difficult to decide if we should take it or not. The most important thing is to consider the consequences of our actions and how they affect those we love. Sometimes what we want, isn't always what we need. Always go to your mom, they know and love us more than anyone else.

Minority

So, this state is messed up. You get treated like a minority in some places because of what other people do. So, technically we are treated the same way. You either act how they want you to or do the complete opposite.

I basically said forget it, you all are about to treat me messed up. Let the minority stereotype be true. So, I started doing dumb things and I let what they said about me be true.

-J

From The Beat: Fighting what people stereotype you as can be very difficult. You resisted for a while, but eventually you gave in. Do you ever think you could have resisted the box that everyone placed you in longer or did society make it inevitable for you?

Trust No Female

Nothing lasts forever. Girls are going to switch up on you when you aren't around. You have to learn to keep your guard up because no one is going to be with you forever no matter how much you love them.

You always have to think they aren't the only ones in this world. And if they really love you they'll come back.

-Priscilla

From The Beat: People tend to come and go throughout your life. It sounds like you regret being vulnerable with people no longer in your life. Trusting another person is scary and vulnerable. But sometimes having that trust can be healing for us. Opening up to others is how we grow.

Nana Was Right

I do agree with this quote ("It is never wrong to do the right thing." - Mark Twain), because it is not a bad thing to do the right thing, because you'll end up right here where I am if you do the wrong thing.

As an example, it would have not been the wrong thing to do by listening to my Nana when she told me not to leave in a stolen car with my friend. We did not know it was stolen, but she had a feeling. I was gonna leave and I did and that led me into getting in a car wreck. That's why I believe it's never the wrong thing to do the right thing.

-Johnathan

From The Beat: We're happy to see you reflecting and understanding how your decisions affect you. Just remember that mistakes are okay, but we must learn from them. Trusted adults, like your Nana, tend to see things that we might not expect. Go to those figures in your life, they truly want the best for you. They also want you to do the right thing and somethings we just need a little support to do it.

Both at the Same Time

I think the law is equal and not equal. I think it's equal because if I had a bad history and went into jail the judge would look at me like I'm dumb but if my record was good I will be straight and she won't look at me like I'm dumb.

And not equal because some people are racist.

-Malachi

From The Beat: Interesting statement! Past history can make a difference on how you are treated, and racism also plays a part, way to point that out.

Live and Learn

I remember back then my friends and I were playing outside of the apartment duplex. My friends and I were playing with each other, then a few hours later the cops came and we all ran.

The bad advice was let's hide outside of the apartment that caught us all up, then there was more than a few cop cars and we smashed outside, but I never got caught, but I learned.

-Adam

From The Beat: Bad advice leading to a sticky situation! We are glad you are now able to look back and learn from the experience.

Wrongdoing

Sometimes it is wrong to do the right thing. And sometimes the right thing is something wrong and sometimes doing nothing is the right thing.

-Sergio

From The Beat: The right thing and the wrong thing is different for everyone. It all depends on your morals and how you see yourself and the people around you in the universe.

What's Right is Wrong

I think sometimes it can be wrong to do the right thing because there could be a certain situation where you wouldn't want to turn a friend into serious time, but you don't because it is the wrong thing to do.

In my opinion I would never put someone in jail because this is nowhere I would want to be and it is no place for a man or a female, straight up.

-Darryl

From The Beat: For the people we love and care, we will do anything to protect them from any harm. Our loved ones hold us back from making the right decisions; it is not because we don't know what is right from wrong, but it's because we can't bare to see them in a position we wouldn't want to be in.

Los Angeles County

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

The Tree I am Growing

My tree will look like peace, joy, and hope. I am trying to grow from the seeds I was born.

My seeds would look good with my moms help. She makes me feel good, with her around me I can make my future look good.

At the roots I made some mistakes but my family helped. Now I have people telling me forgiveness is the best way, now I am sorry for the things I have done. I am trying to change my ways and the Lord has my back. I pray all night.

I hope I get out from these brick walls and from the chains I have on. Life is about choices and that's what I have. Thank You Mom.

-M

From The Beat: It is possible to regain your freedom, but how will you make sure you don't lose it again? What things do you need to avoid when you return home?

Saying Goodbye

Saying goodbye, to me, is hard. I am not sure what I am afraid of more-leaving things behind or what comes after that. I have always pushed things to the side I guess, being too scared to fully let go.

-Reina

From The Beat: Saying goodbye can be really hard! Regardless of the reason, sometimes it is necessary.

My Goals

I have many goals in life but today I will share a few with you. I for one want to get close to God.

I want to finish high school and college then get my BA in nursing. I want to become an RN for OBGYN. I want to buy a house for myself and my mother. I want to be happy. Last but not least I will turn all of these wants to wills.

-G

From The Beat: These are all very honorable goals! Whenever faced with a choice ask yourself what will get you to these goals more quickly.

A Letter

Dear Noel,

I'm sorry I never called you back when I told you I would. The reason I didn't call you was because I got arrested that day.

I am really happy because the social worker told me that you and your mom tried to go get my baby. That tells me that you care about me and my baby. I really miss you. Hopefully I see you again.

-P

From The Beat: We hope your loved one gets your message. It sounds like they care about you a lot! We're pulling for you all!

Turning on the Television

I turned on the TV and I saw how Donald Trump became the president. When I saw it I felt like the life of slavery was coming back to the world. I think slavery is coming back because he is ignorant. Its funny how he wants to deport people but his wife is an immigrant herself.

When I turn on the TV I expect to see the world in peace.

-Jesus

From The Beat: We hope to see the world in peace too! What can you do to make it a more peaceful place?

Trying to Say Goodbye

When I said goodbye to meat, I said I was going to be a vegetarian. I couldn't do it. I only lasted for three days. Then I gave up. I couldn't do it. I needed real food not healthy foods, like salad (aka leaves). I needed fried chicken and meat.

-Shanell

From The Beat: What made you want to give it up in the first place? Would you try again?

Cheating Woes

I cheated on my ex when he kept accusing me of cheating and trying to always be in my business. I decided to when he kept acting all funny and annoying. He never found out but I felt bad and broke it off.

-Jessica

From The Beat: Why do you think you wanted to prove him right? Was it worth it in the end?

My Two Brothers

My two brothers are my whole world

My two brothers mean everything to me

My two brothers put a smile on my face

My two brothers, the only people who show me unconditional love

My two brothers, they always make me proud

My two brothers, who cry for me every night

My two brothers, who never leave my side

My two brothers, the ones I'll always love

-Heidy

From The Beat: It sounds like they miss you very much. What can you do to make sure you aren't separated from them again?

Cheating and Getting Away With It

Once I was at my house and I had just gotten into it with my boyfriend/baby-daddy because I caught him cheating. So me being me, I cheated back with his best friend. I almost got caught but I didn't.

My boyfriend/baby-daddy had knocked on my house door and I was in the room with his "best friend". I had him jump out of the window and go through the back and I didn't get caught up. I was saved!

-Iman

From The Beat: Are you two still together? Do you feel like you are 'even' now? Is the relationship better? Tell us more.

Lying to My Loved Ones

Yes I have lied, I have lied about not gangbangng to my sisters when they asked me if I was a gang member. I denied it to the fullest and lied about places I was going. Sometimes I would say I had after-school but in reality I was going to smoke or kick it wit the homies.

I have lied about the time I would be home. I would say I would be home around 1pm but in reality I would come home around 3am. All these times I got away with it, but eventually I slipped up and would get caught.

-Andy

From The Beat: Why do you think they asked you so many questions? We are sure it was from a place of love. Will you return to the same habits when you go home? We hope you find that the truth will truly set you free.

Present

The way you react to pain does not mean it doesn't exist
Your past doesn't make your future
But it might have you wrapped up in a present
And it might not look pleasant
It's what you do with the situation
That helps you go far away from it later.

-Mohammed

From The Beat: We appreciate these wise words! How we respond to the situations we're presented with is everything. Remembering this will get you far in life.

Still Down?

Since I was in jail, I've learned patience,
twenty-five hours/eight days a week,
constantly waiting, not caring
if I'm in jail for five or for life.
Seeing people's lives still going
while yours is on pause.
And still you ask yourself,
"Are you still down?"

-Allan

From The Beat: This is an important question to ask yourself. What must you sacrifice to be down for the lifestyle you speak about?

A Second Chance in the Community

I turned on the TV and I saw Donald Trump on the news, saying that juveniles that are doing time for a serious crime will be given a second chance. Especially when it's their first time being busted, they will be sent to rehab instead of wasting years of their life in juvenile hall. They would be given a second chance in the community and have another chance at having a good record.

-Cameron

From The Beat: Second chances and alternative to incarcerations need to be given to our citizens. The USA locks up more people than any other country in the world! What can the community do to help keep young people from being locked up?

A Paradox

Asian conformists everywhere, you can call me the exception.
Funny how everyone wants to conform and be accepted, but wants to be rich and famous.

Rich and famous people are not conformists, they are unique.
It's a paradox.

-Chance

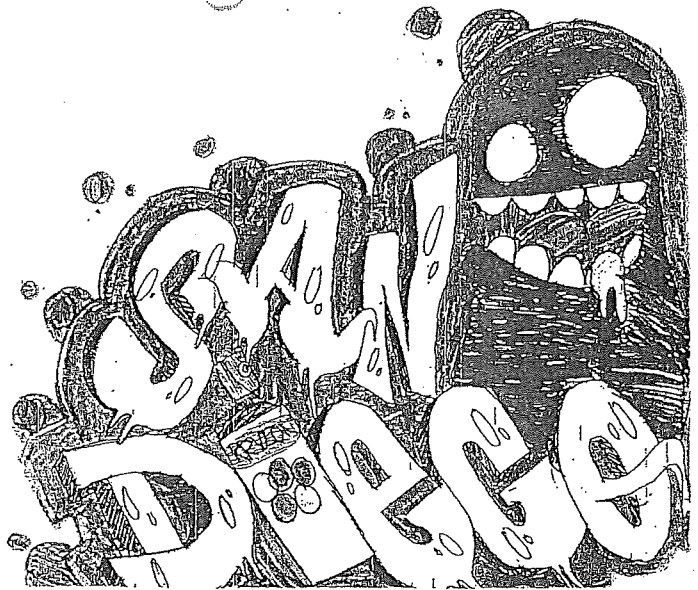
From The Beat: Is it possible for individuals to be unique, but still belong to a group where people share some common traits?

If It Bleeds

When I turn on the TV all I see is war, crime, and bloodshed
If it bleeds, it leads
Our society is full of violence
No wonder so many juveniles are detained
Kids see so much violence on the daily
That they become immune to it
Immune to emotions

-Guillermo

From The Beat: Media influences a lot of what we do, and we influence a lot of what media makes. What do you think it will take to break this cycle, and promote a culture of health and positivity?



Cops Need to Pay for Their Crimes

I'm tired of seeing black people being gunned down by cops on TV. Watching white cops get away with murdering black people makes me mad, but it also makes me sad.

One of my friends was killed by a cop, so it's hard for me to trust a cop. I think cops need to pay for their crimes and go to prison for life without parole.

My own experience, the cop that arrested me, had his hand on his gun. I thought I was going to be shot.

If cops begin to pay for their crimes, then maybe people will trust cops more.

-Dwight

From The Beat: You ask for accountability in order for peace and trust to be able to happen, and we admire you for being able to recognize this! Is there a future where people can help keep each other safe, rather than relying on cops to do so?

Since I was in jail,
I've learned patience,
twenty-five hours/
eight days a week

Guilt On Me

Constantly cheating on tests
Never studying, always a mess
Always going through stress
Because I just got a late night text
It's the girl from the other side
When with her, I love this ride
Constant guilt on me like pests
Constantly cheating on tests

-Allan

From The Beat: We love the flow of this piece, and your simile "constant guilt on me like pests." It's very poetic! Tell us more about how you cope with stress.

Harvey, Louisiana

★ WEEKLY WRITINGS! ★

Help!

I mean damn, that's all I can say. Facing seven years is not the best, but it's not the worst. It gives me time to grow as a person. I'm only nineteen. Remember my name in the name of G.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Seven years is a heavy term, and we think every person should be able to grow up free. But we like that you are trying to see light in it - there is something to learn from every experience. If you make the time to improve yourself, it will happen.

I know I at least have a chance and I won't give up.

A letter to the new me

I think I should think before I do stuff. When I say to myself, "I'm going to go jack somebody," I'll just do it. I want to change that about myself.

I also want to tell myself that the pain is only temporary and that when I get older I am going to be rich.

-Youngsta

From The Beat: It is important to identify your thoughts before you act upon them. This is a powerful step towards maturity. The pain you are experiencing is only temporary. Remind yourself of this constantly. Being rich is not just about money, it is also measured in the amount you invest into those you choose to surround yourself with.

Can't Be Saved

Ever since I started acting up I kept getting deeper in the hole. The "hole" gets deeper. There is no limit! Right now I am below sea level! It sucks knowing hope keeps draining. I know God has got me. I know I at least have a chance and I won't give up.

-Tessa

From The Beat: It can often times feel like you are in hole that you can not get yourself out of. Don't let this discourage you though. You have to stay positive and focus on those things that will better you. Stay focused on the good that could come of it and chase that and only that.

This Pain

What you know about pain?

I tried going through all this pain and I will never change.

I just keep my head up and I'll make it through the rain.

When I lost my friend it made me change, but it all comes with the game.

I told moms don't cry for me, get it how you live, everybody want to be in a gang but you can't.

I'd rather be carried by six than judged by twelve.

-Jaquan

From The Beat: You have too much life to be focused on the negative aspects. Use this time in your life to make the necessary adjustments to focus on the positive and let those things dominate your day. Set your goals and chase them. As fast as you can.

My Mindset

I always cheat and get away with it.

I always think about everything I can

because in the hardest situation

I'm always going to find the way

to get away with it without getting caught.

When I get away with it I laugh

about it because I was in a hard situation,

thought about it and got away with it,

so I just laugh because I didn't get caught.

-Elgin

From The Beat: Even if you don't get caught, cheating is still not the right thing to do. It is better to live with integrity, being honest and having good morals and strong principles. If you always cheat, you won't learn what you need to learn.

How I Feel About Music

That's how people vent - through their music. Some people can relate to some people's music like I can relate to NBA Youngboy, Yungeen Ace.

Yungeen Ace said, "It wasn't too many people who was there for me." I could feel that for real, because people are going to want to come around when they see you are coming up as a rapper. They are going to be like, "don't forget about me," like no one was there for me.

-Youngboy John

From The Beat: We agree one of the beautiful things about music is discovering people across time and space that feel the same way. Remember that these struggles aren't new or unique to you, or any of these rappers, which is why we need to come together to address them.

What's Going to Happen Next?

I was on probation. I had on an ankle monitor. I decided to cut it off. I was in Shreveport. I was on the run. Police found me, and I got arrested. I went to court. They put time in my hands, then they shipped me from Shreveport to New Orleans.

They put me in a group home to do time. I ran from the group home. Police found me and this kid I ran with. They took that kid back to the group home and took me to jail, so I don't know what's going happen.

-Kylan

From The Beat: It's scary not knowing what the future holds. We can't always know or control what will happen in the future, but we can try to stay strong and keep a positive outlook on things. What, or who, is the biggest source of positivity in your life? What gives you the strength to keep going?

YA DES Program, Santa Clara, CA

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

From The Beat: We welcome back the thoughtful young men from the YA DES program* inside the Santa Clara Juvenile Hall. We truly cherish their wisdoms and stories that they share with The Beat Within community, as they share their journey with us, as they contemplate past hurdles, future opportunities and the ever present challenges of social inequity. Look out for more pieces in the coming weeks!

YA DES program redirects transitional age youth who have committed non-violent crimes and face felony charges to a year-long rehabilitation program. Upon successful completion of the program, their record is wiped clean.

Advice

I've given good advice, as well as bad,
but I also have taken bad advice as well as good.
I've been told only you can control your actions, good advice.
I've also been told fast money taste the best, bad advice.
In the end I took the bad advice, and now look where I'm at.

-Checho

From The Beat: Some mistakes we can't change. What advice would you listen to now? How has your past changed the way you will take advice in the future?

Quote of the Week

"If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello."

I got a good solid woman by my side,
That I know I got to let go,
She's too good for me and she don't recognize,
So I got to let her know,
It's never been so hard to let them fly,
But this one got me on a hold,
She tells me I love you and I give her a lie,
I don't know when I'm a man up,
And tell her it's the final goodbye,
She cries on me and I feel messed up,
So I continue to reply...

- Chechu

From The Beat: Instead of wondering how to break up with someone you think is too good for you, wouldn't it be better to believe in yourself and your ability to be worthy of her love? You are so intelligent and have so many skills. We have seen you grow in maturity and self-control throughout this program. Please don't underestimate yourself.

Blank mind, blank thoughts

I can't think of anything to write about, or can I? There's obviously writing on this paper if you're reading it, but all you're reading is blank thoughts from a blank mind, or is it? When someone says blank mind, I think of nothing, but little do I know that nothing is still something. If you're still reading this and think I'm wrong about nothing being something, then you're wrong and here's why.

The word nothing actually means a lot. When someone says the word nothing, they're applying it to a non-existent amount of something. In numbers it is known as zero, and zero is also something if it is the word or number we use to say something is non-existent. When I have three pieces of gum and I eat all of them, I have nothing or zero pieces left. See what I mean? Zero is still something and nothing means a lot.

- Richard

From The Beat: Wow! You went from not being able to think of something to write to a metaphysical discussion of the meaning of zero! Some people struggle with the concept of numbers being merely symbols to represent actual quantities. You have nailed that concept, and cleverly convinced your reader that nothing is something, and having nothing to write about ends up being about a lot! It's an interesting metaphor to apply to life as well.

The Beat Within

The Beat Within programs helps me and many others express our feelings and our great imagination. I would like to use this story to say thank you to the workers and people that take their time to make this possible. I am proud to be able to say The Beat Within helped me and a lot of others through some tough times in life.

-Richard

From The Beat: We are so happy to help, appreciate the love! Thank you for the feelings you've shared. How can you help others through tough times the same way people have helped you?

The Love of TV

TV to me is nice,
Sit down and enjoy with a pizza slice,
Going through the channels is like rolling dice,
When I watch NBA, NFL, and those guys look very bright,
Feel really sad when I see those stars at night,
Love watching sports,
Love watching Steph Curry on the basketball court,
Hopefully one day I can be an athletic man,
Just a matter of time before I start catching and throwing with these hands!

- The Man

From The Beat: We love how you are experimenting with including some rhymes in your writing. You always have something interesting to say, and you say it clearly and honestly. We appreciate your willingness to share with us.

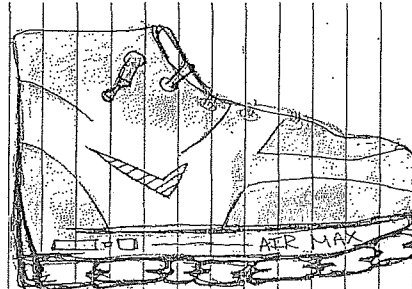
Given Advice

I had advice plenty of times but there's one specific one, it was very poor advice given to me. I should participate in illegal activities was the advice given to me. I should do this and don't think of the consequences. It was the poorest advice I heard, and my instinct listened and look at me now.

It was my family listening to that advice and my fault for taking action, but again I learn from my mistakes. I'm only human, I know right from wrong. I got to listen to my inner self and always do what's right. What I feel is right. Most importantly, don't listen to stupid advice.

-Shimmy

From The Beat: Glad to see you are remaining positive. Learning from the mistakes we make is how we grow into the person we want to be. How can you be more aware of what is good advice versus bad advice?

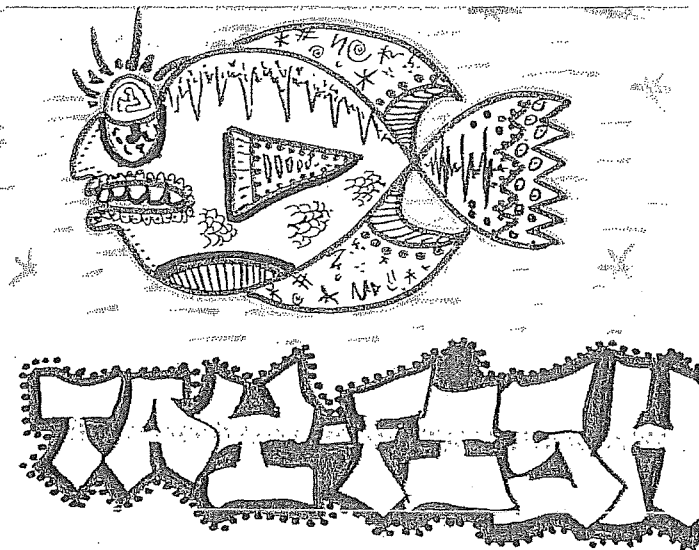


Shimmy

TAY Clinic/ Transitional Age Youth Services, San Francisco, CA

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

From The Beat: Here's the latest installment of writings from our friends at the TAY Clinic in the Mission District in San Francisco. Our writing and conversation workshops continue to get stronger with each session! We love the conversations we are having and the consistent participation from the TAY clients and staff! We truly appreciate the honesty coming from our writers and the tasty pizza and soda served at each session!



Words From The Wise

It is never wrong to do the right thing.

It's true, if a friend wants you to steal something to be cool, you don't have to do it, even be his friend. It's never wrong to do the right thing. You have a choice. Better safe than sorry

-David T.

From The Beat: What do you think would help us see the point of this advice before we do something wrong? Thank you for sharing it with us.

Equal Justice Under Law Being A Citizen

Am I treated equally when it comes to the laws?

The color of my skin could contradict if it really is true.

People who are different say we don't belong here, therefore we should go back to where we came from.

The people who say these things don't know that we are simply all the same.

-Alejandra

From The Beat: Do all people who are different say you don't belong here? Are you certain that the loudest people represent the majority? Have you considered becoming an attorney or a political representative to help legally push back the loud ones?

Unequal Justice

In 1865 this country passed the 13th Amendment banning slavery and involuntary servitude.

In 2018, poor people and people of color are targeted by police for nonviolent drug offenses and put behind bars to work for 10 cents an hour. This country was built on slavery and the U.S. economy still relies on it to this day - only now it's called prison labor.

-J

From The Beat: How can you help right this wrong? We hope to see the result of your work in the future.

This country was built on slavery and the U.S. economy still relies on it to this day - only now it's called prison labor.

The Worst Advice I've Ever Taken Was My Own

"I wasn't good enough."

"They'd never like me."

"I shouldn't apply to school, I'd never qualify for that."

The only living I know is how to crash my dreams.

-Al

From The Beat: It seems that you know more now. Understanding where your decision-making went wrong is a good place to start.

Poor Advice

"Just hit it once! It's no big deal. It won't hurt you. It really won't do anything to you. Inhale it," my older friends said to me. "Hold it in and let it out," another snickered.

So I did, I hit it. Seconds later, cough-cough-cough, burning throat, watery eyes, smoke pouring out of my nose and mouth.

The joint came back around. I did it again and again and again until the cigarettes were gone.

Minutes later my body felt different. I felt light, and kind of liked the feeling. I began laughing hysterically. The music sounded good too. I was high - real high. This continued throughout the night.

My first time getting high was during middle school, and continued through high school - the start of being high daily. It cost me my grades motivation, even the money I earned scooping ice cream. Looking back, I wish I hadn't taken that advice. It slowed things down.

-D

From The Beat: Were you mature enough to understand the consequences at the time? Is there anything you can do now to change your direction? We wish you the best.

Wise Words

It is never wrong to do the right thing. It's true if a friend wants you to steal something to be cool. You don't have to do it. You don't have to be friends with him. It's never wrong to do the right thing.

-Better Than That

From The Beat: You have given this idea great thought. We wish you success.

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Oakland, CA



From The Beat: We welcome back our partners over at the Ella Baker Center in Oakland, CA. This week, we welcome back Senior Campaigner, Emily Harris, as she introduces to us readers the following new legislation that will eliminate copayments for people inside California prisons. We certainly hope you Californians will give a read, share and reach out to the EBC, since a lot of this is beneficial information. We always appreciate the latest news, updates and action alerts from the ground, as we ALL learn more about the reform going on in California through the eyes and hard work coming out of the Ella Baker Center and their various partners. As always, a big thank you goes out to this incredible organization for making this such a successful and important partnership.

Legislation Introduced to Eliminate Medical Co-Pays

We are excited to report that on Monday, December 3rd, new legislation was introduced (AB 45) by Assembly member Mark Stone (D-Monterey Bay) that will eliminate copayments for people inside California prisons. The Ella Baker Center is excited to support this bill that is being sponsored by our friends at the ACLU of California, California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), and Initiate Justice (IJ).

These organizations have been tireless advocates for people inside California prisons and that work includes responding to the inadequate and often harmful health care policies and practices within state prisons. Since 1995, California prisons require a \$5 medical copay from incarcerated people seeking medical, mental health or dental care. This practice undoubtedly undermines public health and individual well-being by forcing incarcerated people to choose between seeking needed health care, buying necessary hygiene items, or maintaining communication with their families.

"I made less than 8 cents an hour at my kitchen job but was still required to pay a fee to see the doctor," says Taylor Lytle, a formerly incarcerated organizer with CCWP. "When I was sick, I had to choose between seeing a doctor and buying hygiene I needed like soap."

Due to labor exploitation, incarcerated people currently earn only pennies per hour, with a majority earning less than \$25 a month. Meanwhile, the nature of prison conditions, such as overcrowding and living in close quarters, puts incarcerated people at an increased risk of contracting communicable diseases. For example, in 2003, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified copays as one of the factors contributing to an outbreak of MRSA among incarcerated people in Georgia, California and Texas.

"While a \$5.00 copayment may seem small to those of us outside the prison system, a person in prison working for 8 cents per hour would need to work for over 60 hours just to afford one medical appointment," says Assembly member Stone. "Limiting access to care in this way leads to unnecessary suffering, the development of more chronic conditions, and the spread of infectious diseases."

Additionally, because of the overrepresentation of Black and brown people in California's criminal justice system, a lack of access to needed health care exacerbates existing health disparities in these communities. "The overwhelming majority of our state's prison populations, nearly two-thirds, is Black or Latino. Compared to the segments of our population who are most susceptible to chronic health illnesses like diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, preventing access to healthcare is even more critical than we can imagine," said Taina Vargas-Edmond of IJ.

In September 2018, Governor Brown signed AB 2533, authored by Assembly member Stone, which raised the poverty threshold for incarcerated people from \$1 to \$25 per month, allowing people to receive a monthly issue of necessary personal hygiene items and the means to communicate with the courts (writing materials, notary service, etc.). The bill originally sought to exempt people under the poverty line from medical copayments, but this provision was removed before the State Senate passed the bill. This year, Assembly member Stone introduced AB 45 which eliminates the burden of medical copayments for people seeking care in California prisons.

"For incarcerated people, a copay is a major barrier to accessing needed health care," said Phyllida Burlingame, of the ACLU of California. "By removing this barrier, AB 45 will be a step toward creating more just health care for people behind bars."

If you have any questions about this legislation you can write to Initiate Justice at PO Box 402, Los Angeles, CA 90078 or CCWP at PO Box 291585, Los Angeles, CA 90029.

December 3rd is the beginning of the next legislative cycle, we will continue to keep you all posted on other proposed legislation that impacts criminal and juvenile justice.

**-Emily Harris, Senior Campaigner,
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights**

Billings Shelter Care, Billings Montana

**Free
VERSE**

Free Verse

Free Verse is a nonprofit organization founded by four MFA students who believed in the transformative power of creative expression and believed in art as a catalyst for social justice. Today, Free

Verse holds workshops in juvenile detention centers and transitional shelters across Montana, in places both rural and urban, with the aim of helping students discover and share their incredible voices.

We welcome all readers of The Beat Within to submit to Free Verse on their website www.freeverseproject.org or by mail:

Free Verse
PO Box 8746
Missoula, MT 59807

LGBTQ

I think people should be more accepting
Of the LGBTQ community. I feel like if
Someone loves someone for who they
Are on the inside, who are you
To tell them they are not allowed
To be together? I also don't understand
Why only you have to "come out" if
You are gay or bisexual. Do your
Parents just automatically think

you
Are straight or whatever their sexuality
Is? I feel like it's your decision
And even if you are straight or not
You should still have to tell your
Parents, just like you would if
You were gay or bi. I think people
Should be accepting and if it's
Not hurting you or anyone you
Love then why is it any of
Your business what people do?

-The Activist
From The Beat: We like your questioning tone in this piece. Your reflections on sexuality are important, and we think you've made some really good points.

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

San Francisco County Jail

Common Sense

An act of courage, I remember this elderly woman in SF who used to complain of drug dealers selling drugs in front of her house. She started calling the SF police, so after a long period of this happening her home burned up and sadly she was killed in the fire.

Now, although she had the courage to stand up for herself, it cost her her life. In this age of time, the cost of living in SF is way too high, so some people hustle selling drugs. Some people will work two jobs and many young dealers never worked.

In some environments, common sense has to be utilized over courage. Urban ghettos have different rules. Ask any gang member about different areas they don't go to. They're not scared, they use common sense. An act of courage is good but be careful. You only have one life!

-LeVender Williams

Poison Like That

My veins contract
My mind goes black
I can't think back
To a time when I didn't need
The poison like that
Ooh, I hit the jackpot
Yes, X marks the spot
I'm like the pirate in the seas
Looking for that "X" box
They say pressure makes diamonds
Hidden deep in the dirt
To find the truth lasts
Oh, now time hurts
Tic toc, tic toc
My clock goes deep
I'd rather have death before dishonor
Pow!
One shot to the head
My veins contract
My minds goes black
How I can go exactly to the spot
To when I did not need
Poison like that.

-Voice of Bayview, LaToya

A Valuable Thing

Time is a valuable thing to have
The only part about time is
Spending it on the inside
That's the worst thing about it
It is not being able to get to
Who you need to, or see also who you

Want to and not being able to go
When you want to, or say what
You want to say Jail is hell and
This letter is meant to tell you just
What hell begins from

The end of your freedom is the
Worst thing that can happen
To you, letting your freedom be
Taken away for once that happens
You really know what time is and what

It means to be, and how time passes
Without you knowing it.

-Reno Waters

Every other Friday The Beat Within goes into the San Francisco County Jail to run our conversation and writing workshops inside A, B and E Pod. At the end of each session we are always inspired by our participants who courageously step up and share a part of themselves, either in the conversations or better yet, in writing, for the world to read. We truly appreciate these thoughtful participants, our elders, who share their truths with us readers from across the country. We want to not only praise these fabulous writers and thinkers, but want to thank the San Francisco Sheriff's Department and the Five Keys Schools and Programs for our partnership.

A Sanctuary State

"Before I can live with other folks, I've got to live with myself." This statement is a confession that ends in awareness, not a conviction. What landed me here and got me arrested was my anger about California being a sanctuary state. I became enraged about the state policy towards immigration and had started behaving badly towards others I felt were illegal immigrants. Though my behavior was an arrestable offense, I had outstanding warrants, so away to jail I went.

Now, looking back, I can say it's not good to live in your emotions. Especially being angry. Anger has one letter missing, that's "D" and it leads you to being in danger! Anger leads to impulsive actions that later one can regret. I decide that at fifty-one (years of age), I have no more time to live in regrets, dangerous situations, or being angry about change.

Now I still don't agree with the sanctuary policy, but I can say, "I've got to live with myself before I can live with others."

-JB

Like Fish In Clear Water

You thirst for violence in music to feed the reminder of who you think you are. For we see the rest of you like fish in clear water.

You speak with a split tongue who whispers evil and bite the lobes of his mother's ears. For even she has cursed her womb and damned her community.

-Zéjon

Journey

We met under emotional circumstances
Yes, we did
All I know is I can't promise you
Forever.
If I am not breathing inside this world
But
I promise you my love, as long as I breathe
Through these rough times
We became close and bonded
What we share is our souls, our
Pain
Until we heal our wounds we will
Mourn each other
If anything happens I go away for good
Just know
I've always loved you and wanted to spend
My life as one with you
If you hurt from my absence, please
Do not grieve
Because if I am resting in peace or
Burning in hell
I never thought to leave your side and
I never will
As long as I am alive.

-Shyria B.

San Francisco County Jail

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

Perception Is Everything

That advice can be wrong or right, depending on who it came from, and how you take it because perception is everything in this journey called life.

So, reality is defined when that advice helps you move forward, regardless of the sacrifice because on this journey, you're forced to make decisions and those choices will determine if you reach the finish line. So move accordingly, and always remember to keep them squares out ya' circle!

-Real Chill

Real Act of Courage

The real act of courage is to help those that you don't know with whatever it may take and let them know to thank God.

If I had taken advice, where would I be? I would no have ended up in jail if a two letter word that could have saved not only myself but others as well.

Don't touch means you won't take. So keep your hands to yourself and your own property! It may save your life!

If you don't pick up dope, you won't get a habit. You won't get a drug habit. Stay away from drugs that make you high. Take this advice and you and your family will be happy.

-Reno Waters

Ten Faces

Sent into a land so far from home

Orders to kill, no traces to go on

Coordinates sent, positions said to be exact

A green light is given, so we advance to attack

Then all of a sudden, the feeling of something is wrong

Too late to call back, the coordinates are wrong

All is heard are cries of agony and pain

As those ten faces' lives end with no reason or gain

Was it all a mistake, or were we bail all along?

One thing for sure is those ten faces are forever gone

Twenty years later, as I sit here and write

Still most of the time I don't sleep at night

Whose to blame, for I made the call

Still can't seem to let it go, those faces still call

No sorry, just nightmares stay with you bet

'Cause those ten faces will follow me to my death.

-T

Unequal Justice Under The Law

Poor people do not get equal justice under the law. It's a shame how the system of justice everywhere in America dishes out punishment to people who do not have the money to hire honest representation. Poor people are subject to making deals that send them to prison for crimes committed that are so minor, in order to fill empty beds that prisons need to fill. Jails cost money, they are an investment, and investments are made to make profits.

So prisons need to get people into them for the purpose of unfair wages. For hard labor, working for private businesses and companies that invest. So, the court system has begun to target people that cannot get lawyers who will make enough noise to expose the actions of sending poor people to prison in order to do time far beyond that which fits their crimes of the past, no matter how far back these crimes were committed. A person can serve three years for a present crime and be added fifteen to twenty more years for a past crime. "Double jeopardy."

-Dwight Jackson

Fight For What You Love

Words of courage builds you up to be a strong man or woman. Strong courage, success, keep yourself around people that are encouraging you to do the right thing. To help others better themselves to not fall or go to jail.

What gives me all my courage is my one-year-old baby, Lilliona. She fills me with joy, love, hope, life, and a real big purpose on turning my life around for the better so I can be with her every day of her life to support her in all, in everything this is, mine and not nobody else's. My word to everybody is to keep your eyes and ears open at all times. Fight for what you love.

-Jeremiah Humphrey

The Garden of My Mind

Separation, shatters my heart into a thousand pieces

Devastation, praying the pain someday ceases

Communication, I cry out with deafening wheezes

Meditation, attempting to dust off dirty knees

Resignation, to God to one day hear my pleas

Adaptation, the garden of my mind planting seeds

Gratification, to seek flowers amidst the weeds

Desperation, without you I couldn't have grown my tree.

-Kelly "Myka" W.

As People of Color

If it's not with the peoples of the world, what good will it do? It takes the highest court, court of the United States, we all have been denied off!

Meaning race is the issue that's mentioned in these lives. Only the weak would try others of color, to stand for it. There's only one situation to cut it out of the American peoples' mind, that is to experience as we have in America.

As people of color, it is an act of courage for some to be human beings like the rest of us are, that are faced with this same old situation, living around peoples without the courage to act like human beings. Live and know what courage really is. They don't know what it is. Courage really is, or what it's meant to be, to mankind.

Advice: some take it, some don't. One day you might wish you had taken it, meaning advice. If it's not too late for you to think about it, find it. My name is Reno. I wish I had taken it before. Love you, myself.

-Reno Waters

Per-cep-tion

Your per-cep-tion

Is the mis-con-cep-tion

Of me

Mis-con-cep-tion

Of my life

Mis-con-cep-tion

Of my world

Mis-con-cep-tion

Of my mind

Mis-con-cep-tion

Of my soul

Your per-sep-tion is a

Mis-con-cep-tion

You don't know nothing

Until you know me.

-Miz Wolfe

THE BEAT WITHOUT! San Francisco County Jail

lowhere Near Worth It

Over the past few years, I have suffered a significant amount of temptations to take things without paying for them. At first I used to get nervous, but after years of experience I no longer had to worry about that feeling. It became addicting and it began to feel somewhat rewarding having nice, expensive things.

Although those things may seem like they're all it's cracked up to be, the consequences are nowhere near worth it. Missing cherishable memories with friends and family can never be justified. Family means everything to me, so I am going to change my life and make them proud before it's too late.

-Goola

I Had It In My Hands

I was acting on a favor. I thought taking a life was OK. Then I had to make a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree turnaround and know I wasted thirty-one years in prison because I thought it took courage to do so.

Looking back on my wrong thing, it was not worth it at all. I lost my whole family. They all passed away while I was in prison. Now it is only me. I have to change my life around. I had it in my hands and I lost it all because it was stupidly my fault. Can't blame no one but me. I pray no one ever follows my footsteps. Please don't try.

-Gary Gray

Pressure Makes Beauty

Pressure makes beauty

Diamonds and gold

Hidden deep in lands and mountains unknown

Pressure makes treats

Chocolate to sink my teeth

How I wish now I had something sweet

Can you hear the beat?

My footsteps on the concrete

Additional pressure from my body

You can hear the echo from my shadow's sweet

Pressure makes beauty

Diamonds and gold

Hidden deep within

Your skin color unknown.

-Voice of Bayview, LaToya

The Race Problem

Easy written but there's no truth to it. We now have a race problem in these United States that's been overlooked from the beginning of time. When are we going to correct it?

They have erased that problem in the White House. Some of you have erased that same problem in your own house. As long as it's not corrected, nothing is going to change. Fire to the sky and mind, and it's going to keep on burning. It likes right and wrong. Those words have a meaning. What's the race meaning? As people in the United States of America, we all got to find a way to live together to prevent a war within the United States. Something has to be done, quick! Time is running out for both races.

There is no if, ands, or buts about it. Something must be done. The race problem has to be corrected. If not, I can foresee a war against races within the United States, city to city. Then we all can and will get equal justice for all.

-Reno Waters

I Bare Light

My house comforts knowledge, wisdom, and understanding

I bare light with the strength of my staff

Waters lurk to swallow me

My enemies arise from the pits of ashes to burn my name

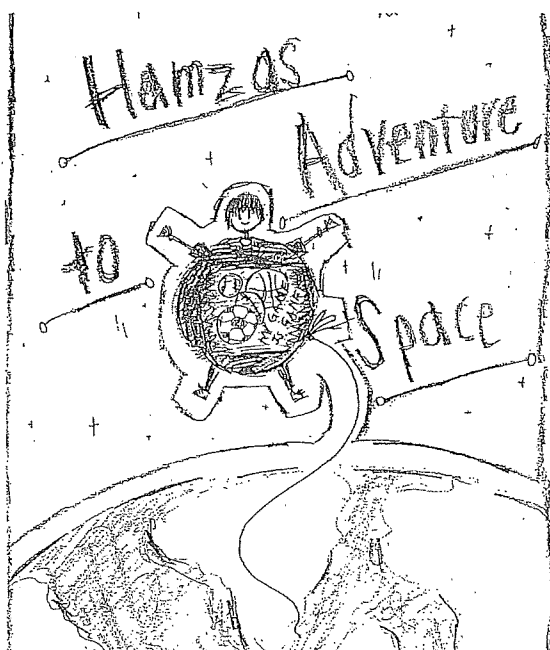
Silence shall I not keep, for my words shall shake the earth.

-Zéjon

In Order To Learn

It is very true that "it is never wrong to do the right thing" but in life you learn a lot about wrong choices because in order to learn to do the right things, sometimes it takes some of us to do wrong things to learn how to do the things right.

-Roberto Thoece



A Matter of Perception

It is never wrong to do the right thing. I'm sure as several of my peers would also straddle the fence with this statement. Myself, as I'm sure many others grew up in environments where good and bad varies upon circumstance. It would be bad to lie, unless it prevented trouble for you or a loved one.

It would be even better to tell a lie if the outcome was beneficial to yourself or someone dear, but considered bad if the outcome was to hurt, harm, or hinder. A regular person may say those rules should apply for everyone you come in contact with, but sadly it doesn't.

If you are a stranger to me, anything I do wrong to you if the outcome is right, I'm right and good and just. A drug dealer may know the wrongs, the "bad" or selling drugs, but that outcome is income and it provides financial support to the family of said person. So is the person evil for being a means of survival due to his inability to find work because of life's circumstances?

Bad and good are a matter of perception, interpretation, morals, and values in combination with your upbringing. I would agree with Mr. Twain. It is never wrong to do right. Never. But what each person considers wrong or right is what differs. If it is right to you if you feel lit on the inside, go with it. If it helps you grow, learn, or build for the better, good. If it hurts, brings pain, or destroys...bad.

-Tyi-Tyi

San Francisco County Jail

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

The Definition Of Being A Real Man

Growing up, I was always told how to be a man, but never had anyone to show me the real meaning. As a young man raising yourself, your definition of being a real man changes as you grow older through your accomplishments and mistakes.

Through my journey behind these walls, I'm glad to say that I'm my own man now and strive to be the best I can be.

-Nino

Twenty-Seven Months Too Long

For twenty-seven months I've been told what to do
Sometimes it's nice, sometimes it's rude
When I can sleep, and when I can move
A life full of hate with everything to prove

I live in a place that's made for no man
Still I stay sane and know that I can
I live in my thoughts, always making a plan
All to ensure I'm dealt a way better hand

Sometimes I get lost in my own head
Longing to lay in my own bed
I wish I had listened to what mom said
It's a miracle I'm alive and not mentally dead

For twenty-seven months I've been longing to say
I will get my tenth next Saturday
I bow my head starting to pray
My life will become much better than OK.

-Chris Norman

Life Everyday

Challenge yourself
I am in control of this
Expect things to get better
Challenge yourself everyday
There's always a way out, where
There's a will, there's a way
Work on yourself.

-Terry Smith

Aaron Shawn Ross Priddy

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

Our next wonderful writer that is stepping up to the plate is a comedian but trust us when we tell you that the piece of writing he shares with us today is far from your normal comic story. Sometimes we think life is all fun and games never realizing just how precious it really is. We are all in search of that good life. Whatever that means to you it still equates to being in search of love, positivity and happiness in life. We welcome Aaron Shawn Ross Priddy, who shares with us his story and how he lost his taste for the love of life. He has regained it after spending some time behind these prison walls and realizing that life is only what you decide to make of it, regardless of the circumstances. Let's hear out what he has to say. He sends us his powerful words from Avenal State Prison in Avenal, CA.

From The Beat

Dear BWO Writers,

We appreciate all your effort, dedication, and talent. There is no fee to submit your work. If you are published, you will receive a free copy of the publication your work is featured in. We truly apologize if you did not receive the issue we sent out to you. Sometimes the mail is returned to us or may be confiscated at the institution. We accept submissions of the following kind:

- Poems (2-6 per submission)
- Short stories/ Essays (up to three pages)
- Original song lyrics
- Artwork
- Excerpt of your book (select and provide 2-3 pages for a "sneak peak")

Please, refrain from foul language. Consider the content of your work before submitting as a large portion of our readers are minors. We will not publish lewd, sexist, racist, or hateful language, within reason.

Thank you

Hopefully, I can translate my journey into a joke I wrote:

A man walks into a bar and asks, "What do you got for a guy who just lost his wife his job and is about to go to prison?"

The bartender hands the man a beer and says, "Beer! Just like everyone else!"

Seven years later the same man walks into the same bar and asks, "What do you got for a guy who found Love, laughter and life and just got released from prison?"

The bartender hands the man a beer and says, "Beer! Just like everyone else, only I imagine this beer will be the best beer you've ever had!"

So, when someone asks me, "What do you take for granted?" After I give them a little chuckle I'll say, "Love, laughter and life is what I would've said many years ago."

Today, I actively pursue those things in which I missed the most. Among those things; Love for all. Laughter whenever it's appropriate (and sometimes when it's not), and life, the most precious thing in the universe.

I will not hurt myself or others ever again so help me God! Thank you, The Beat Within for this wonderful opportunity to share my story.

"In Pursuit of Love, Laughter and Life"

My name is Aaron and if someone asks me "What do you take for granted?" I would respond with a willful chuckle. Before I became an inmate of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation I was involved in stand-up comedy. Now as I do my time for Attempted Murder I wonder, "Can I still find humor in anything?"

The answer is yes. It did take some time to come to this conclusion but at least the conclusion came. Let me rewind to 2014 when I got arrested. The person in handcuffs that day was bitter, lost, distraught and angry. I was worried that I would never see daylight again let alone laugh. My family was shocked and my friends standoffish.

I was a different person no matter how positive/negative my actions were. Unrecognizable from the "Comedian" they remembered. I had recently broken off an engagement after my ex-fiancé lost our child in utero, and the relationship never recovered. I sought out drugs and redemption (misguided to say the least). Now here

I am four years and some change into my sentence and I am grateful every day for my ability to laugh.

Now let me get something straight life is not a joke nor is the crime I committed. I have hurt people including myself, and these realizations needed to come first, before I began to smile again! Working on one's self is necessary before you can find humor in anything after a traumatic event and believe me the California Prison System is TRAUMA! I've had to forgive those who have hurt me in my past to accept responsibility for the pain I have caused in the present to move forward in my future.

THE BEAT WITHOUT! Thanh Tran

The Cycle

My name is Thanh Tran and I want to thank you all for coming today and allowing me to share my story about street violence and how it affected me, the people I love, and the community.

To begin, I was placed into foster care at two years old because my mother was addicted to crack cocaine and no matter how many times she tried to quit she couldn't. So, she was in and out of my life sometimes for a few months, sometimes for a year or two.

I remember when she finally gave up on us when I was around thirteen. She came to my foster home after she was fresh out of jail and once again she stoked the flames of hope in us kids. Maybe this is the time she changes I told my little sister.

A week later she stole the money I had saved up under my bed to buy drugs. I remember how hurt I felt. I remember how badly I just wanted her to be in my life, and I remember feeling like I wasn't good enough to make my mom want to quit crack.

Along with this low self-esteem from not having a family and feeling abandoned by my mother, I was bullied in elementary school for a bunch of different reasons. Sometimes for being Asian, sometimes for being a chubby kid, or sometimes just because I was poor. I remember how weak I felt when the other kids would humiliate me.

The days when I was simply teased or put into headlock was fair to middling day for me. I'd be like alright this wasn't so bad. I tried to tell my foster parents about it but they told me to just suck it up. I was a boy. A boy doesn't cry. A boy doesn't complain and I didn't know it at the time but this experience told me that it was not safe to open up. It told me that it was not safe to be vulnerable with my heart's emotions. I felt that my voice wasn't heard. My feeling of wanting to be loved and understood didn't matter.

By the time I finished elementary school I was sick of feeling weak. I was sick of feeling alone like I didn't belong anywhere. That's when I joined a gang at the age of twelve. I made the worst decision of my life to this day. Sometimes I lay in my bunk and wonder what my life would be like if I had the strength to say no, but I didn't have that strength at twelve. It led me down this road that I'm on today.

Not a day goes by when I think about that period of my life. I think about Lefty. Lefty was an elder gang member who took me under his wing when I first joined the gang. I was taught that if I didn't want to get picked on anymore, then I had to be tougher than the other kids.

I had to be quicker to resort to violence and even if I lost the fight, the other kids will still respect me because I was willing to fight. Reflecting upon it now, I think the most damaging thing that I picked up from Lefty were his beliefs.

Along with being quick to use violence I adopted his belief that money was the greatest measure of a person's worth. That making money came before family, it came before women, and even came before the gang. So being one of my only role models at the time I tried my best to be like Lefty. That's why half of my teenage years were spent in and out of Juvenile Hall and not with the people I love.

So, the biggest change that occurred in my life after joining a gang was the level of violence. From the very beginning I had to be "jumped in", meaning I had to be beaten down by the older members of the gang to officially be a part of it. At the age of twelve that was worst beating I ever received.

I remember being discombobulated during the beating that I would snap in and out of consciousness. Every time I came to a stop, I was lying on the floor, and when I realized I was lying on the floor, I would try to stand up just to be beaten down again. I was a little guy, so they literally picked me up, flipped me upside down and dropped me on my head, bashing into the concrete again and again.

Later that night the older members of the gang named me Lunatic because I was crazy for standing back up and coming back for more. I never told them that I wasn't standing up because I wanted more. I was standing up because I just didn't know what was going on after the second time I was knocked out.

After that beating I wasn't afraid of getting into fights anymore, because I felt like it couldn't get much worse than that, but I was wrong and the beatings I received by other gangs were worse, the beating I received from my friends were worse, and my loved ones that were killed, that hurt more than all of those put together.

Now, violence became an everyday part of my life. It was fist fights, jumpings, and shootings. By the age of fifteen, I was shot at so many times, that as long as no one was hit, I could self-medicate and go about my day like nothing happened. It still boggles me to this day that I even reached the level of numbness after only three years of gang banging.

However, at fifteen something happened that tore me out of my fog. My younger cousin Jimmy was killed in a drive-by shooting. He was only thirteen years old. The part that hurt me the most was that he was the good kid in the family. He was the one that stayed in school, he was the

This week we are truly honored in having our next writer and friend Thanh Tran open up to us about his life. He gets really personal and up close about his life and how he came to join a gang at a very young age. He calls his story "The Cycle" because even though it's his own story, this is a story all too common that affects many in our communities. Brace yourself, make yourself a coffee as Thanh tells us all about his life's struggles. We are thrilled to present Thanh Tran's story, especially after hearing him recite this recently at the Kid CAT banquet inside the walls of San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. We knew after hearing this, it was a must to have him share with us readers.

one that joined the student body, he was the one that told me to stop gang banging. The night he was killed my cousins were having a barbeque at my auntie's house. There were kids everywhere and my cousin Jimmy was playing in the driveway with some of the babies. That's when a car drove up to the front of the house and fired shots.

I remember when I stepped into the hospital room and I saw Jimmy laying there. I couldn't even recognize him because his head was swollen like a watermelon because there were bullets in there that the doctors couldn't take out. I had been praying and hoping but, in that moment, seeing him, I felt all the hope disappear. I knew Jimmy wasn't going to make it.

I can't begin to tell you how the death affected my family and the community. Gang bangers were shot all the time, but Jimmy wasn't a gang banger. Jimmy was truly a good kid.

When Jimmy passed I learned what it meant to be hollow. Up to that point I had tried all I could to feel numb. Now I couldn't stop this new feeling. This feeling of a reverberating emptiness.

After Jimmy passed I went to his funeral and I had a chance to speak with his dad for a brief moment. I could see it in his eyes, the disbelief, the anger, that hurt. When I asked him how he was holding up he looked at me and asked me, "why my son?" My son went to school. My son got good grades. You and your other cousins were the gang bangers. You were the ones that should've died!" I should've been the one dead.

My uncle never spoke to me again after that day. My relationship with Jimmy's brothers and sisters diminished too. To this day I carry the guilt because I know whoever was in that car was out to kill me and my cousins that were involved with the gang life. There were many nights where I wished I could trade places with Jimmy because Jimmy deserves to be alive today and he isn't.

One of my mentors asked me, "If Jimmy was alive today, what would you say to him?"

I would tell him, "Jimmy I love you cousin. I'm sorry it took me so long, but I left the gang like you always wanted me to. I'm going to college now too cousin. Me of all people. I want you to know that I'm honoring your life and your memory now, with my character, my conduct and my actions. I'm trying my best to stop this cycle now cousin and I want you to know that you're going to live forever through me."

Right before my eighteenth birthday I was robbed by members of my own gang. I was already disillusioned with the gang life after my younger cousin was killed and I was tired of this cycle of being in and out of jail, but I was afraid to leave, because I didn't know any other life besides this one.

So, when my former gang robbed me, it was the tipping point. I left the gang and to be honest, I cried. I cried so hard because I devoted my entire life at that point to this gang. I sacrificed everything for this "family." So how could my "family" betray me like this? I cried because I felt that I lost my identity.

Today I'm blessed. Moving forward, I'm blessed with the opportunity to facilitate the Kid CAT YOP (Youthful Offenders Program) program here at San Quentin and also work with at-risk youth through S.Q.U.I.R.E.S. and I never hesitate to share with the young men who are thinking about crime or joining a gang about my story, about the emptiness, the betrayals, the deaths. I could easily tell them that it's not worth it, but nothing equates to two human beings sharing pain and empathizing with each other.

Working with these young men and working on myself I have learned that much of the youth feel like they have lost their voice. If they could speak directly to the adult in their lives they would tell you that they need more than just food, clothing, and shelter. They want your acceptance. They want you to validate them and that they're worth it, in spite of their mistakes. That those are the moments they need you to love them the most and guide them without judgment.

In conclusion, I recognize the harm that street violence caused to my family, my community, and myself. I take full accountability for continuing this cycle of violence when I joined a gang. However, today I am no longer that hurt child that acted out with violence and crime. I'm blessed that I can show the man that I am today through my work and through my actions.

My goal is to continue my work with at-risk youth upon release and continue to give a voice to the voiceless. My name is Thanh Tran and I want to thank you all for listening.

A. Raheem Ballard

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

It is always an honor when our old friend, A. Raheem Ballard, shows up for one of our Sunday writing workshops inside San Quentin offering his insights to the group. Now, it's even better when he puts his wisdom to paper, so we can share with all you readers. We first met Raheem back in the early 2000s, when he was housed in the Santa Clara County Jail in San Jose, CA, fighting for his life. Since *The Beat* has been working in San Quentin State Prison, we have been blessed to have this chance to reconnect with Raheem again. This week, Raheem proves by the following piece, we only get one life to live, as he shares his story about finding education. Let us hope his words motivate you to not do the same thing he did! Let's learn from this powerful teacher! He sends us his story from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

The Demise That Opened My Eyes

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," said Nelson Mandela (1918-2013). The word 'Education' is derived from the Latin word 'Educere,' which means: "to rear, to lead forth."

In other words, it is something used to move and propel one forward. With this in mind, one might ask his or her self the question: What is it that leads me forward today? What drives me to think, act, and respond the way I do?

As a young kid growing up on the streets of East San Jose, I never really asked myself this question, nor did I take education seriously. Honestly, as long as I was good at being a criminal, who needed education? I could make hundreds of dollars a week living a life of crime, and I didn't need a degree for that. So, looking back, being a thug is what motivated me. That's what propelled me.

"You got to get yourself a trade or something boy. You got to get in school or you're gonna get left behind," my father would say. But, being the knuckle head that I was, it fell on deaf ears. I was whole heartedly convinced that my criminal behavior would fulfill all my dreams, just like it did for the mobsters in the movies. I was wrong!

In November of 2002, these dreams and my criminal lifestyle came to a screeching halt. I was arrested and hauled off to Santa Clara County Jail for a warrant. After hours of sitting on a hard bench in a stinky holding tank, I played back all the events of my life. I thought about my father's advice, the offers I had to play football at a local junior college, my girlfriend, and a "life sentence" that was inevitable. At this point, there was absolutely no way out, or was there?

After a few weeks went by on the fourth floor of the new county jail, I found out that I could order books. I was miserable and stuck in

a cell for twenty-three hours a day. What else did I have to do besides push-ups, write letters, and sleep? A few months went by. The more I began to read and learn, the more I found out how much I didn't know about myself or the rest of the world. As challenging as it was, I relearned English grammar, studied science, history, philosophy, and Islam.

Before I knew it, a year had rolled by, and the man I previously knew in the mirror was slowly disappearing. I reinvented myself through hours of reading and thousands of pages.

The way I previously thought was now replaced with the ideas from some of the greatest thinkers and authors of our time: People like Caesar Chavez, Huey P. Newton, Malcolm-X, Carter G. Woodson, and William Cooper.

Years later, this interest in books and various subjects led me to college. I started with one class, then two, and sometimes three. Throughout the lockdowns and time in between work I would read and continue to learn even tutoring others when I could. After years of cultivating this new-found joy, I can happily say that I'm now a few classes away from graduating college.

I'm still incarcerated, but who would have ever thought that a 1.9 GPA in high school would lead to this? Certainly not the 28-year-old thug who showed up in a San Jose County Jail nearly sixteen years ago. Nor my peers, who figured I had all but given up.

Remember, I started this piece off by defining education and that something that propels one and moves him or her forward. I've since come to realize that it was learning and education that catapulted me forward, pushing me out into an intellectual world without boundaries or walls. As a result, life looks a lot different for me now.

So, whether you're free, or sitting on top of a hard steel bunk like I am, I ask you the following: what will you chose to propel you forward in life? Will it be the image that others have created for you, or the image you want to create for yourself? Will it be a life of crime that only leads to more pain and hard time? Will it be the hidden potential that we all have but fail to realize till it's too late?

Wherever you draw the strength from to move forward, think about the place that it's coming from, and those who will be affected the most by it. Don't let it take a 'Life' sentence for you to figure it out.

When people tell you that education is a game changer, they're telling you that because they're in the game, and you're on the bench. If you can invest in new shoes, cars, phones, and jewelry, you can certainly invest in a future for yourself. Education is the best investment I have ever made, and I'm positive that it will pay off for you too.

We welcome back our friend, Ronell "Rauch" Draper, who gives us a full dose of medicinal words that can heal your soul. The beauty of having such a diverse community of writing is that we get to read hear and learn about different kinds of situations, topics and share experiences with one another. With that said, Rauch is truly an asset to our Sunday writing group inside San Quentin. We always welcome his ideas and wisdom and feel equally thrilled when he puts words to paper for us readers. He sends us his short and vivid memory from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

Ronell "Rauch" Draper

That night stands out in my memory as so clean.

I Remember It So Clearly

In 1996, I arrived in Venice, California! It was about 8:45-9:00 pm. It just recently got dark. Me and two of my traveling companions went off down to the beach walk. Now mind you Wren, looked to be twelve or thirteen and Ian maybe sixteen. I didn't look very old either because I'd been carded for smokes until I was twenty-three (years of age).

That night stands out in my memory as so clean. I used the word clean because we did not find a way to get drunk for several days, while we thumbed it from New Orleans LA. I originally began in Florida with a brand-new friend. This lady and their two-month-old baby they'd made.

Now let me draw this picture. A dark skinned brotha with natural dreadlocks, jump boots, backpack and chains that gleamed with countless other shinnies attached to his clothes.

He claimed to be a gutter punk. His lady friend wore a straw in the dividing flesh of her nostrils and casual clothing with sandals. Me instead, toe boards, black jeans and a green army jacket with an afro that ate combs, picks and brushes with enough courage to get too close to my hair. I also carried my stuff on my back.

But now, I see night after night was as I see a warm summer night. This couple I spoke of was black and white, so the baby was mixed. I found him very impressive going by thumb and not even three months (old). He's twenty-two by now or older and I wonder if on warm summer nights he can feel the memories of me holding him, on past warm nights imparting my wisdoms in hopes to save him those struggles I was allowed to learn from. He need not!

OOPS! It appears I have gone off topic of warm summer nights, but it's also something I had. Not given thoughts to either, but my path as a Spiritual Mystic has me to meet with that little travel mate, with smelly diapers. That's one time-line seems to remain without a haze. See you soon Salomon! Be well! Be love!!

THE BEAT WITHOUT

Phillipe Kelly

Quote Of The Week

"You can't master time, but you have to work your hardest to manage it."

I agree but disagree at the same time and that's only because time is what one makes of it. I agree with this quote because I feel that spontaneity is great and being able to do things on the fly, which means how to handle any situation that comes about from out of nowhere.

I disagree with this quote because you can master your time but in that you become complacent and fixated in your daily activities which becomes your role in society. Get up, take a shower, go to work, come home, eat, go to sleep. Nothing outside of that program you stay within your lane never venture out in trying new things which takes time and your life is unfulfilling.

Time can be our best friend or our worst enemy. Growing up as kids, we hated time in the morning because we yearned for those extra 20 minutes of sleep before school. When we were at recess, we didn't want that bell to ring. Now as adults we look at time differently, especially those of us who find ourselves in the system. Time is something that we all must appreciate. Our next writer, Philippe Kelly, has been rock solid in participating and leading our writing workshops that we host inside of San Quentin State Prison, twice a month, and this week he blesses us with a little bit of knowledge about how to manage time. Let's give it up to Kels, who sends his latest from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

I choose to be all over the place so that I experience many different things and truly appreciate people, things and places.

Andrew Gazzeny

More Than A Doctor, An Angel, A Saint, A Protector, A Friend And A Doctor

I once lived in a cell with a man who had HIV. He was a very capable and intelligent man, but toward me he was very angry violent and arrogant. One evening, at 9pm the bar closed. We were locked in alone and on the fifth tier. On opposite side of the guards' station you could yell loud and nobody would hear you.

The man for no good reason stuck me in my face with his fist. He hit me several times. I automatically reacted by fighting back. We fought off and on over the course of three hours. I bled from my mouth and nose. He bled from his nose and cut under his eye. We were both covered in each other's blood. I was unable to keep from getting his blood into my mouth. Despite my efforts, I desperately wanted to get to the sink and wash. But he kept fighting.

At midnight we were discovered by the passing guard. We had the bright light on somehow the whole time. I spent thirty days in the hole accused of having been the initiator and aggressor. I was set up.

The point is that I was really scared because my initial board hearing was thirty days away. More still I was very much exposed to HIV. I could have received poor treatment, but I did not I received treatment from a Caucasian woman in her fifties, which was extremely professional.

She told that officer to leave us alone every time we met. We spent more than an hour alone. I shared all my concerns, the board, life in

People will always come in and out of our lives and some will stay and others will go. But with each person that passes sometimes they can provide a spark of positivity, maybe help you changing a flat tire, give you some useful knowledge about life, and some will make such big impact on our lives that we will forever be grateful and indebted for what they did for us. Our next writer, Andrew Gazzeny, is a friend, a teacher and spirited writer that writes to share his life's experiences. This week he touches on a special person that he really leaned on at a time when he was going head to head with adversity. We are proud to present his story, his angel, his protector and Saint. He sends us his work through our writing workshops inside San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

prison, my crime and every fear I possessed. She told me that in two weeks we would know for sure whether I contracted the HIV from the exposure. My fear for all that time would have been unimaginable but I been kept alone in the hole without being able to see the special lady, this compassionate physician.

Long story short I'm not sick. His level was low at the time of contact. My thirty days regiment of pills and testing saved me from a very close call with one of life's greatest dangers, a violent man with HIV. Truly this lady was an angel for me.

Six months later crossing the court yard I had an opportunity to express my feelings to her. I told her that she saved me from a terrible experience that was hard to explain. I'm sure she understood how grateful I must have felt.

I took time to tell her just how kind and caring she was and that I believed that kind of compassion was very rare and special. She was an honorable member of her profession and to me the lowliest one in society.

I took time to tell her just how kind and caring she was and that I believed that kind of compassion was very rare and special.

Edward L. Young Jr.

Simplest Things

What would life be without the simplest things?

The heart shaped I love you made of shoestring

No matter the price it's more of a spiritual thing

The thought of admiration from one's wife to her king

Tattooed initials down one's wedding finger in place of a ring

Some would say blood bonds are formed stronger than a diamond ring

What would life be without the simplest things?

As children on the playground much before wedding rings

Do you like me check yes or no?

It's often the simple things in life that gives us the most profound pleasure, whether that be eating a nice holiday meal, your favorite piece of fruit, enjoying your favorite song, or even just enjoying some peace and quiet. The world is too complex for it to be made so simple, but often times it's us who complicate it. Our next writer, Edward Young, delivers a poem from High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA, about the simple things in life. Let's give him a read!

But sometimes got a third option drawn in the maybe

What would life be without the simplest things?

He whispers in her ear will you have my child

before she screams in reply

I love you and yes, my king!

What would life be without the simplest things?

RO Feeney

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

We welcome to our pages, RO Feeney, who is back with some great insight on what it takes to be a real man. We say, that being a man is a work in progress, and that progress doesn't ever end. Just be yourself, be considerate, and treat others with respect and you will get that back. From where RO Feeney sits, he gives us some great insight on this topic, so check him out! He sends us his words of wisdom from Avenal State Prison in Avenal, CA.

What's A Real Man?

The idea of what's a real man is hard to explain. For me the concepts and ideas have changed for me dramatically over the years. I never knew how important it was for a man to be a positive influence in a life.

I was raised by a single mother who struggled to provide for me when I was younger. She's a great woman and a positive influence. But she isn't a man.

My uncle Jim was the first real man that influenced my life. He had a real job, a house, a pretty wife, three daughters, two dogs and a '64 Mustang.

To me, he wasn't just a man but "The Man." The one thing that he had for me that meant the most was time. He listened to me, paid attention to what I was doing, showed me things and truly cared about what I was going through.

When my mom got a better job, we moved, and I no longer had that influence to help direct my life. I began to have a lot of free time and very little supervision. I went to the street to find approval and self-worth.

Drugs and crime became major influences in my life. The older guys in my neighborhood approved. These men weren't working nine to five's, they were hustling. They had pretty women and nice cars too. But nothing besides their self and money mattered.

These men didn't have any concern about my wellbeing. And you all know men just like that. If you flip a pack for them, come up on something

they want to buy from you, or you do some dirt for them, that they really might not be willing to do for their self, yeah you're good. If you don't fit that equation you're not important, of no value, in the way and expendable.

I started to believe a man was what he possessed. If I had things, that made me a man. Money, cars, drugs, women, power and control is what made a man. If I displayed violence and caused fear into others that made me a man. Those are false concepts of masculinity. Those ideas have been repeated so often that they're believed to be the truth. Those are the same ideas that keep communities in the foul situations they're in. To break the cycle of these masculinity traps we have to examine ourselves and change our thoughts and actions.

We can't continue to be selfish, there has to be a point in our lives to be of service to others, if it's like my Uncle Jim did for me and just listened to help someone with less, that's a start.

Our society doesn't have the same type of examples as the past. We don't have any Malcolm's or Martin's. We got rappers and ball players. We won't notice any of the real messages they have as long as we stay distracted by the money, cars, drugs and women.

To be a man is to be responsible and respectable. I don't know a better way to say it. Being responsible, handling your business, taking care of your family, owning your actions and making no excuses. Being respectable, holding yourself with respect, treating others with respect. Doing unto others how you want done to you. Being honest and caring, not faking it to fit in, but being your own true you.

Being locked up I understand respect. You can't be treated by anyone as anything other than a man. That's where our idea of what a man is comes into full focus. What do we want? Respect me as a man or fear me as a man?

Just like you I was told to fear no man, so what do we want? If you know what it means to be a man, show and prove. I'm working at it on the daily. I wish you all the best at figuring it out because there isn't always a good example to learn from. Much respect to all.

Our next writer, Kacee Monroe has been locked up for the past seventeen plus years for a crime he committed at a very young age. It took some help from others in the same position he was in to eventually learn how to read and eventually learn how to confront and appreciate life. All hope is never lost! We will give the floor to our new friend Kacee Monroe, a man who has maintain that positive courage even through the harshest of times, as he sends us his wise words from Avenal State Prison, CA.

Kacee Monroe

Dear Beat Within Readers, Youngsters, Homies, and All Behind These Walls

My name is Kacee and I am a lifer. I've been locked up for the last seventeen years. When I was sixteen, I made a number of terrible choices and murdered another kid. I was arrested and sent to juvenile hall.

The kids who commit violent crimes, those waiting to go to CYA, prison, or looking at a long stretch of time, are placed in the high-power wing. I'm not sure how things are done now, but in 2001, we were allowed out of our single man cell for four hours a day and only if we behaved. I rarely did, so I spent a lot of my time in that cell.

One of the things that made those long hours by myself doable was the one book, one magazine I was allowed. Initially books offered little comfort or escape from my inner turmoil over murdering another person, the constant thoughts about what it meant to be spending the rest of my life locked up, being sober and having to face my feelings and thoughts.

You know, the fear, guilt, shame and pain from traumas (for me the physical and sexual abuse done to me while I was in the foster system, the rejection from my parents, etc.), all the crap I'd been burying deep down and keeping there with drugs, alcohol and violence. That crap was all my mind would allow me to think about, as if we got great pleasure making me relive it over and over.

I felt like my mind and soul were being ripped apart and shattered at the same time. Within six months I was extremely depressed and suicidal. I felt hollow and dead inside. I was lost and hopeless and

because I'd lost my hope. I didn't care and was ready to give up. I was ready for prison and looking for any reason to be violent, to take my mind and pain away, even for just a few moments.

One day another kid (a lifer) shot me a magazine called The Beat Within. He said it helps him to stay sane. That it was cool, had pictures, drawing and writings from kids like us and guys doing time.

Normally I would just look at the pictures because reading was really hard for me. But the part about writing from guys doing time caught my attention. I knew I was going to prison and wanted to pick up some game.

So, I spent many hours trying to read the writings. I found the more I tried the better I got at reading. The long hours weren't just filled with pain. Trying to read kept my mind on something else. The anger, hopelessness and deep sadness made it a little more bearable. I also felt less alone somehow, knowing/reading that other kids/people had gone through similar experiences and were okay. They'd found purpose in small things, and overcame the feelings of powerlessness, by learning, talking, exercise, writing and self-discipline/control. I soon understood what that kid who gave me my first Beat Within magazine meant by, "it helped keep him sane," for it had helped me also.

Almost sixteen years later, by chance I was invited to join a writing group for kids. At first, I didn't even remember The Beat Within. It was so long ago. Then one day I was reading my first published article when it hit me like a ton of bricks.

That fate, God, whatever had brought me back to the very magazine that had helped me so much. So, my hope is my writing will impact one of you as so many other writings helped me. Just know you aren't alone. Hope and YOUR future is only lost if you give it up.

You are stronger than you know. Life and our messed-up past has made us into true survivors. We need only believe it and reach out our hand for help. Each of us has a voice and a story to tell. So, tell yours. My name is Kacee, a soon to be former lifer.

THE BEAT WITHOUT! Floyd D. Collins

To The Beat And Its Readers!

I am humbled that your organization wrote me back and would like to know about intimate partner violence and healthy relationships. When it may seem obvious and can be overlooked by a man who "thinks" he's in love. I've heard "love will make you do crazy things!"

Love is an action and most confuse it with an emotion (feeling). If more people acted out love, then how could one hurt another person? If I love you then how can I bring physical harm to my intimate partner? Being under a delusion of what love is a seeks to control his intimate partner. Whether it be telling her what she can/can't wear, to telling her who she can/can't be around.

This can be just a minimum form of control, but for a man this control equates to power. The foundation of domestic violence is power and control! A man a lot of times is just a boy who was never loved or shown affection. When boys are growing up, most are taught not to cry, ultimately never being taught how to show emotions.

These feelings remain dormant and being repressed they have no outlet. Having no knowledge of how to release feelings that are pent up, this tension has only one option and that's to explode. Explosions in a relationship take on many forms. There's verbal abuse, psychological abuse, and ultimately physical abuse. All of these stems from a man's

Our publication is like having an all access passport into the lives of numerous individuals from all over the world. When you really think about it, we have different races, cultures, backgrounds all combined in one conglomerate. This gives our one of a kind magazine its flavor! With each story told there is a life lesson to be learn and taught. Our next writer, who is new to our pages, is sharing with us his thoughts about domestic violence, as he gives us a taste of his insights. We are pleased to welcome Floyd D. Collins, who gives us a dose of some of the great knowledge he has to offer. He is sending us his positive thoughts from the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad, CA.

childhood lacking being taught emotional intelligence.

This action that takes place in a relationship can only be classified as what it is as unhealthy!! Again, I am humbled and have much more to share, we can call it part two where I'll breakdown this topic more and speak on healthy relationships.

I am very interested connecting with the young Beat readers, and sharing my story, as well as enlightening them to how our childhood molds our manhood (belief system). Again, I have to say it is with great pleasure that I write you all, and I will seek to find more men inside my organization to unite.

Jesus Cortez

What It Means To Be A Real Man

Throughout my upbringing and for a large part of the adult life I have lived thus far, I went about life having a warped belief about what it meant to be a real man. Being one meant: never allowing anyone to disrespect me, never back down from a fight, never shy away from violence, never show emotion and never ask for help.

These beliefs weren't of my creation, but rather the ones I chose to adopt from my uncles who were gang members. I chose to live how they were living, and in the process created countless victims. Whenever I came across a situation where I could have made the right choice and not resort to violence, I chose wrong.

You see, all those years of thinking I was tough and a real man pushing a nickname while being down for a neighborhood, I was completely wrong and what I really was, was a coward. I was not a real man because I needed negative influences to validate who I thought I was. That is not tough at all.

Life is hard as we know it, and it's harder when we make it harder on ourselves. Growing up many of us looked for guidance on the wrong corners of the streets. Some of us were fortunate to get proper guidance, but still, didn't have the right influence. What does it take to be the best person that you can be? Our next writer, Jesus Cortez, has been consistently sharing his thoughts and positive advice from Avenal State Prison in Avenal, CA. Let's read his wisdom and what it takes to be a real man!

Today, I have the correct definition of what a real man is, he is responsible and accountable, he never uses violence, he learns from his mistakes, he isn't selfish, he cares for others, he isn't afraid to ask for help, he encourages and promotes peace and he is mindful.

Young'uns reading this here, I pray you all take this into account, for it's coming from someone who at one point didn't care about anyone. I hurt a lot of innocent people, and it wasn't anything they did. It was my past hurt that became their future. I am ashamed that it took so long for me to get it. It doesn't have to take you all this long and a life sentence to understand the true meaning of a real man.

It doesn't have to take you all this long and a life sentence to understand the true meaning of a real man.

Hieu Nguyen

Forgiveness

I come to the United States at the age of fourteen. I dropped out of high school during my junior year. I had committed second-degree murder and started my life sentence when I was nineteen. I created so much pain and I harmed so many people, including my loved ones.

Talking about forgiveness is the hardest thing to do. The most important thing is forgiving myself. For me, it is very difficult to forgive the pain and suffering I caused to so many people. However, being able to do that has helped me bring healing into my life.

Though I forgave myself, it does not mean that I will forgive the wrongs that I did. I will always remember and carry it everywhere I go. Now I do recognize that the life I lived before was not a good life. It motivates me every day to become a better human being.

We truly respect our next contributor and friend, Hieu Nguyen, who delivers a valuable lesson of life that we all should strongly consider. Hieu, teaches Forgiveness, as we all know is not an easy task for anyone. In truth, you have to learn how to forgive yourself first, so you can learn to forgive others. Let's hear it from the one and only, Hieu Nguyen, who happens to be a wonderful participant in our writing workshops, as he shares with us his thoughts about forgiveness. He sends us his heart-felt writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

It also helps me to see that I am not a bad person. It was the poor choices that I made. I was not born as a bad kid and deep down in my soul there are many good qualities.

I am forever remorseful for taking the life of Mr. Jeffrey Rogers. I will always keep him in my heart everywhere I go. Everything I do today is to honor him and his family. I will not allow my past to define the person I am today.

That is the beauty of forgiveness.

Omar Nelson Jr.

THE BEAT WITHOUT!

Poetry is a creative way of self-expression and it's a positive way to get that pain, stress and happiness off our chest. It's like a "Ticking Time Bomb" waiting to explode at any given second. We warmly welcome our next writer, Omar Nelson Jr., who has some emotions and feelings that he would like to get off of his chest in a positive way. He shares with us two strong and powerful poems that we all could relate too. Let's indulge in some thoughtful poetry and wisdom, as Omar sends us his explosive words from the Bridgeport Correctional Center, Connecticut.

Ticking Time Bomb!

I'm gonna have to learn, to act my age
In which I need to learn, to cage my rage
I have an anger problem, I overheat
And that's what causes, my self-defeat
First, my face goes to looking mean
Hugging and puffing, blowing off steam
A behavior I've been doing since I was about zero
So, caging my rage, I have to learn to do
I need to learn, problem-solving techniques
'Cause this lack of control sucks and stings
My anger gets me furious
For me to now know I get over serious
I be turning small problems into something bigger
So now I need to learn my triggers
Triggers are the thoughts before
That let's my anger out the door
It's because of the lack of closeness
From my dad and mom
That I became
A ticking time bomb
Things I've learned in solving
I had to get to the root of my problem
So, to stop blaming them
I'm now teaching myself problem-solving
For me to stop reacting so quick
I'm learning what makes me tick.

What does life really mean
What's to follow
When you have no dreams

Life

What is life really about
That's what I need to find out
What does life really mean
What's to follow
When you have no dreams
When all my hopes
Are really false
The way to feel
Is basically lost
Not knowing what I want in life
Has caused a tremendous
Amount of strife
These facts I didn't look at
And that's why I'm now
Where I'm at
Growing up is not as easy
As I thought it to be
Because now I have responsibilities
Now I have to decide
And figure out how I will provide
A roof over my head
How to buy a couch and bed
How to
Get ahead
Because I'm now eighteen
with no choice to see
I am my own
Responsibility.

We warmly welcome back, Donald Thompson, who has been such a wonderful addition to our writing workshops and publication this past year, as he consistently uses his personal experiences to teach us to appreciate our lives and those who love and care for us. This week he shares with us a time when a random stranger pulled out a gun on him and was about to shoot him. He wouldn't be alive and here today telling his story if it wasn't for the guardian angels that were by his side. He sends us his powerful story from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

Donald Thompson

She saw the cold fear in my
face and that I was young.

Rescue Me

When I was fourteen years old, one night I was driving down the street in a stolen van when I accidentally cut in front of another car. As the car pulled up next to me out of the stop-light I wasn't aware that I cut them off. But the driver, an angry black man, got out of the car, pissed off, cussing me out, telling me I cut him off that I could've killed his mother.

I got lost out there listening to him thinking he was blowing it out of proportion, waiting for the light to change. Suddenly, he lifted his right hand into the air and, leveled a handgun in my direction. It was tilted to the side, but it was aimed right at me and now my senses were heightened my eyes wide open, my heart was really pounding in my chest and I was afraid that I was going to die.

I put both hands in the air and apologized but he went on and on and even though the light turned green. I was frozen from the front and couldn't hit the gas. I was rescued by his mom getting out of the car and talking her son down. She saw the cold fear in my face and that I

was young.

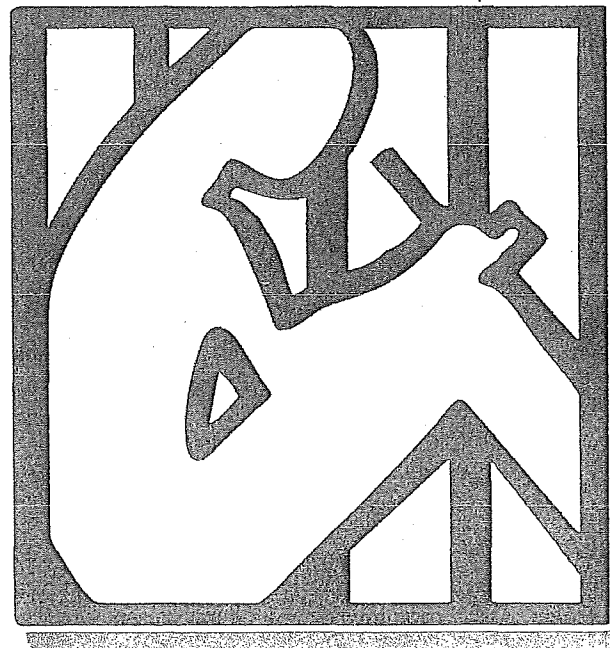
She said, "come on baby he didn't mean it, get in the car" and she waved me on and I was out of there in a hurry and I was careful from then on because I realized that my life could've ended right there while I was out trying to have fun. Thank God for his mom.

Beat Within Outro

We would like to take this time to thank all of our writers for all of your contributions, as without you all, there is no Beat Within. The Beat appreciates your honesty, sincerity and all of your efforts in trying to help out by offering words of encouragement, motivation, and inspiration. Only by your contributions can we all learn to be better people and role models in our communities. We will continue to educate the world in hopes of bringing change, one word at a time, one message at a time, and one Beat at a time. Thanks again for your participation. Much love to you all.

So, whether you're free, or sitting on top of a hard steel bunk like I am, I ask you the following: what will you chose to propel you forward in life? Will it be the image that others have created for you, or the image you want to create for yourself? Will it be a life of crime that only leads to more pain and hard time? Will it be the hidden potential that we all have but fail to realize till it's too late?

read the rest of A. Raheem Ballard's BWO piece on page 71



Young, Victor (BOS)

From: Board of Supervisors, (BOS)
Sent: Friday, April 12, 2019 2:22 PM
To: BOS-Supervisors; Young, Victor (BOS)
Subject: FW: Praise for efforts to close Juvenile Hall
Attachments: Book Cover

From: Lisa Hill <afrocentric315@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2019 6:01 PM
To: Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>; Haney, Matt (BOS) <matt.haney@sfgov.org>; Ronen, Hillary <hillary.ronen@sfgov.org>; Walton, Shamann (BOS) <shamann.walton@sfgov.org>
Subject: Praise for efforts to close Juvenile Hall

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Greetings,

I recently read the article regarding the Supervisors who are drafting legislation to close Juvenile Hall. I want to commend their efforts. I worked for Alameda County Probation Department for three decades. I retired as Superintendent of the Camp program after tiredness efforts to introduce reforms. I am currently a professor at California State University, Eastbay teaching in the Criminal Justice Department. My goal is to educate and train compassionate and ethical Criminal Justice professionals. I recently published a book entitled "Keeping Kids in the Home and out of the System."

I applaud the Supervisors efforts to reform a costly and failing intervention to address juvenile delinquency.

Please consider offering my book to families as you make the transition.

Lisa Hill, Ph.D., LMFT

President, District 7
BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Tel. No. 554-6516
Fax No. 554-7674
TDD/TTY No. 544-6546

Norman Yee

PRESIDENTIAL ACTION

Date: 4/15/2019

To: Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Madam Clerk,
Pursuant to Board Rules, I am hereby:

☐ Waiving 30-Day Rule (Board Rule No. 3.23)

File No. _____

(Primary Sponsor)

Title. _____

☒ Transferring (Board Rule No 3.3)

File No. 190392

Walton

(Primary Sponsor)

Title. Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Closure

From: Rules _____ Committee

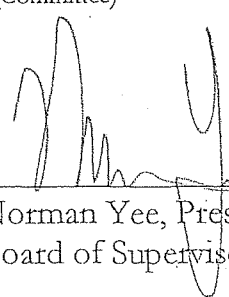
To: Government Audit & Oversight _____ Committee

☐ Assigning Temporary Committee Appointment (Board Rule No. 3.1)

Supervisor _____

Replacing Supervisor _____

For: _____ Meeting
(Date) (Committee)



Norman Yee, President
Board of Supervisors

JB, MC
RULES, GAO
CLERK

RECEIVED
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SAN FRANCISCO
2019 APR 15 PM 4:41
BY _____

Introduction Form

By a Member of the Board of Supervisors or Mayor

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SAN FRANCISCO

Time stamp
or meeting date

hereby submit the following item for introduction (select only one):

2019 APR -9 PM 4:29

- ☒ 1. For reference to Committee. (An Ordinance, Resolution, Motion or Charter Amendment).
- ☐ 2. Request for next printed agenda Without Reference to Committee.
- ☐ 3. Request for hearing on a subject matter at Committee.
- ☐ 4. Request for letter beginning : "Supervisor inquiries"
- ☐ 5. City Attorney Request.
- ☐ 6. Call File No. from Committee.
- ☐ 7. Budget Analyst request (attached written motion).
- ☐ 8. Substitute Legislation File No.
- ☐ 9. Reactivate File No.
- ☐ 10. Topic submitted for Mayoral Appearance before the BOS on

Please check the appropriate boxes. The proposed legislation should be forwarded to the following:

- ☐ Small Business Commission ☐ Youth Commission ☐ Ethics Commission
- ☐ Planning Commission ☐ Building Inspection Commission

Note: For the Imperative Agenda (a resolution not on the printed agenda), use the Imperative Form.

Sponsor(s):

Walton, Ronen, Haney, Mar, Peskin, Fewer, *Brown, Safai*

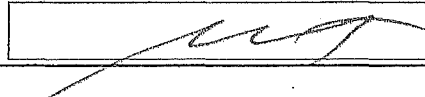
Subject:

Administrative Code - Juvenile Hall Clousure

The text is listed:

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require that the City close Juvenile Hall by 2021, expand community-based alternatives to detention, and provide a rehabilitative, non-institutional place of detention, in a location approved by the Court, to establish a working group for the development of Juvenile Hall closure plan, and to establish the Youth Justice Reinvestment Fund; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan and the eight priority polices of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

Signature of Sponsoring Supervisor:



or Clerk's Use Only