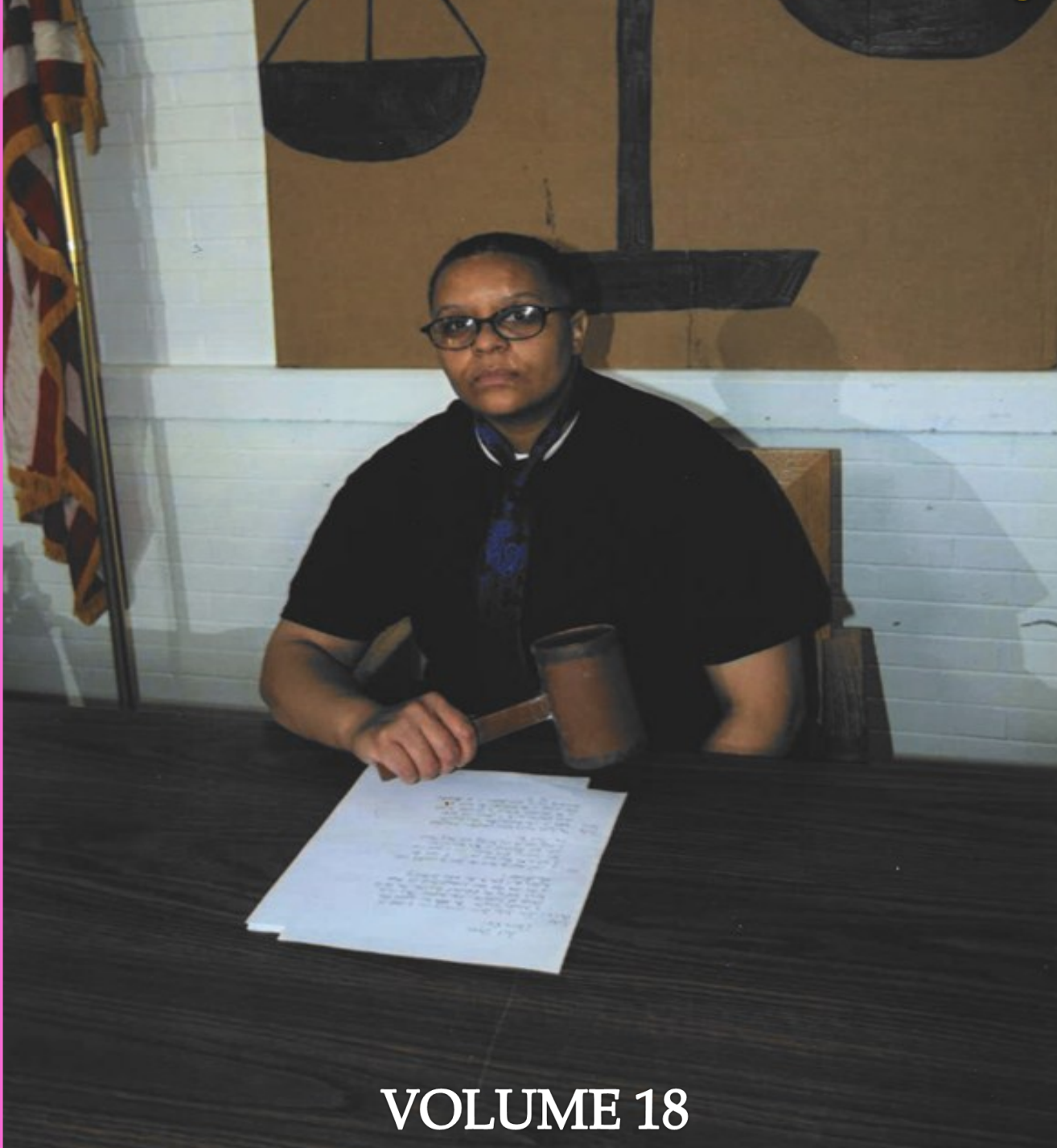


HERstory

Narratives of Womanhood, Character, Resilience & Becoming



VOLUME 18

An honest chronicle of the stories and service of our individuals in custody in the Illinois Department of Corrections



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Women’s H&ERstory Month

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Pink and Green represents articles from **Staff** and **Outside** Contributors



DISCLAIMER

TWO ROADS is built for bringing integrity and honesty about the people who are submitting their stories. There are times where the editors are required to make changes due to spelling errors or grammatical structure. Please know that **we will never take away your voice**, however, understand that we take pride in our work and strive to be the best in our representation of your voice. Thank you.

TWO ROADS

Our Mission Statement

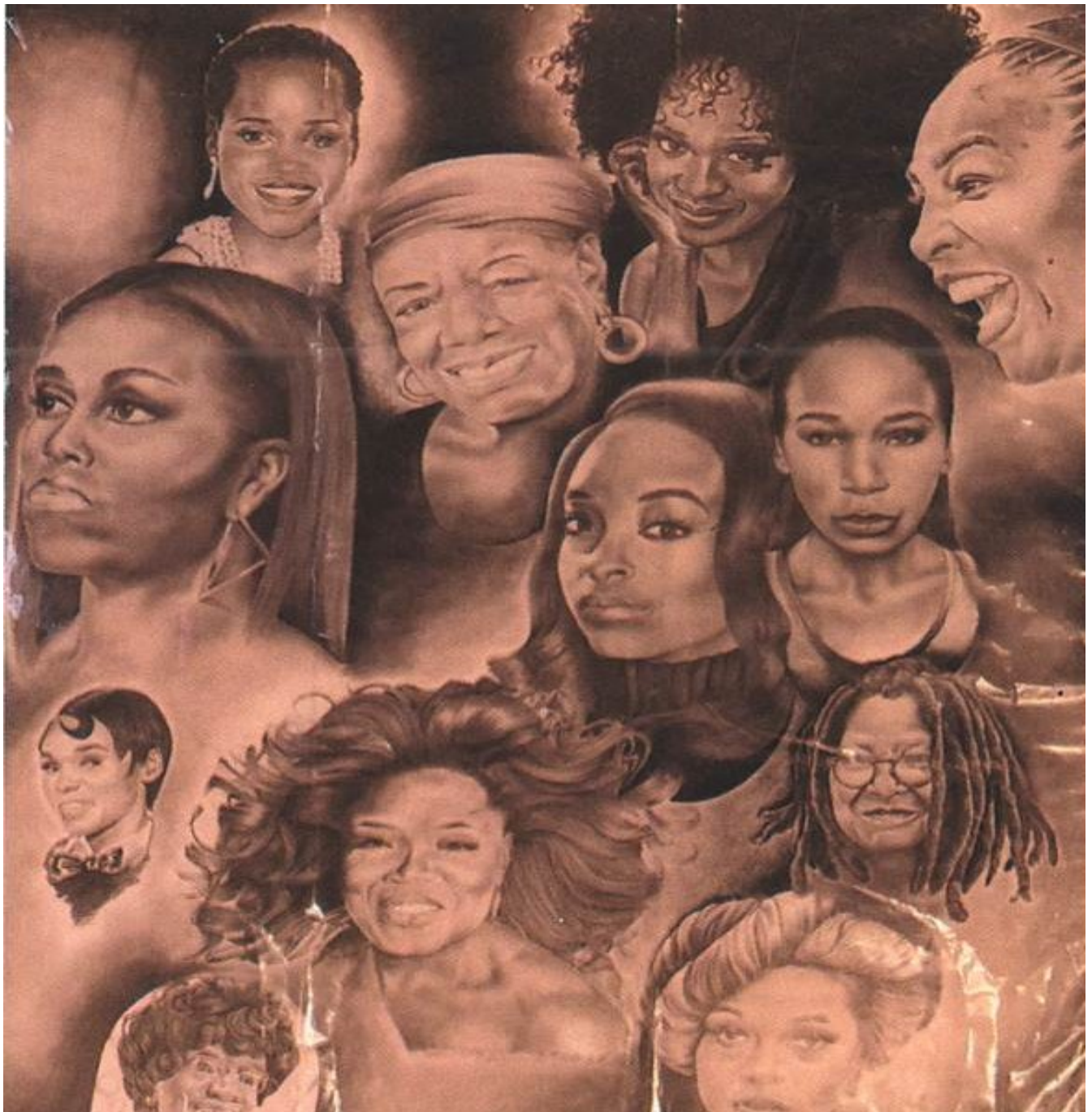
“We are committed to empowering those most impacted by harmful systems to become dynamic leaders and agents of change. Using the connecting, restorative power of these stories, we hope to do our part in bringing us all together to overcome societal ills, such as violence, poverty and mass incarceration.”



TWO ROADS presents

HERstory #.4

Women of Distinction



Created By: Charles Murray

TWO ROADS presents **HERstory** **no. 5**

Guest Contributor

Kira K. Kyle

Prison Coordinator
DEFY Ventures Illinois

My story of becoming brought me to Kewanee, teaching the Defy Ventures program. Nearly twenty years ago, I found myself in a splintering ten-year marriage, desperately trying to keep it from falling apart. My identity was deeply rooted in being a wife and mother. I couldn't imagine myself as a single parent raising my kids alone, leaving them the same legacy of divorce that I came from.

Although I had a strong faith in God's ability to heal and provide, the beliefs I'd been taught growing up in church communities held me back from seeing that God loved me more than my marriage. Being a divorced woman was my "scarlet let-

ter," so I fought to keep that marriage at all costs.

Keeping the marriage meant keeping secrets of the things I'd discovered my husband was doing, under the agreement that it would all change. Though I had never struggled with depression before that point, I thought daily about driving my car off the road and ending things for me and my children.

Sometimes I considered driving to the hospital and admitting how much I struggled with the suicidal thoughts that emerged from keeping the secrets I held, but that would leave my children alone in all the chaos, so I survived in silence

day by day. I spent the next five years trying to hold out for the changes that were promised, believing that somehow we would ultimately be able to give our kids the home I'd envisioned for them.

Then one day, it became very clear that would never happen. Instead, I was losing myself as well. And finally, I could see that divorce was the no longer the worst option - it was the safest option. Of course, by then, he thought he'd gotten away with it all, so my husband refused to let me leave willingly. I had to fight to get out.

Eventually, I received permission from my attorney to move myself and my kids out as long as I let their father know where we would be so we could set a visitation schedule. I did all she asked, but the day after we moved out, he went to the court and got a judge to believe that he didn't know where his kids were. The judge gave him emer-

gency custody of our kids for a week, and when I went to court a week later with proof that he'd lied, they dismissed it without prejudice. That's when I knew I couldn't trust the courts to protect us.

I didn't give up. I kept fighting, making compromises where I felt I had to, to get myself free and start getting help with the healing my kids and I needed. We've come a long way, but the recovery work continues.

When you start to face who you are, including what you've let others do to you, it's a long process. The first time I met with a counselor, I asked, "How long do you think this will take?" He couldn't give me an answer and I didn't like that, but now I understand: I'm never going to be done discovering me.

I'm never going to be done with

the work of facing stuff – things from the past and things that just happened last week - and doing the work I need to do. And a lot of that work is related to facing truths by confronting the lies I've accepted and the secrets I've kept.

The first time I visited a prison was in 2017. The radio station I worked for took a concert to Logan. Normally, my radio job included graphic design, social media, fundraising, and hosting a week-day radio show. But that day at Logan, my job was to photograph the event. I wasn't sure, we should even be there. I wondered if the women there would want us to come at all.

The concert was held outdoors, and I walked through a sea of ladies holding my camera. It changed me. I looked into their eyes, and I saw myself. The decisions we had made, the battles we had faced in our lives, felt so similar in that moment.

I no longer wondered if we were welcome there. I wondered why we hadn't come sooner. I wondered how soon we could go back. It seemed like there was a lot of important work to be done, and it felt like that work was something we all - people inside and outside - needed to be part of.

My journey in unhealthy - even dangerous - relationships didn't end with my first divorce. I married twice more. Each marriage was shorter and more devastating than the one before. Each time I was able to see the danger sooner, but it didn't keep me from heaping more and more trauma on the pile we already faced as a family. My shame over my mistakes and the damage to my kids just continued to grow.

The reason I saw myself in the women I met at Logan was because prison isn't just a place in the

IDOC. In fact, I often feel safer in prison than in the outside world because it seems to me that so many people on the outside continue to avoid facing their stuff and go on acting like everything is ok. But it's not. Prison isn't just a place; it's a state of mind, a state of being, the absence of freedom from many things, starting with ourselves.

At Kewanee, I teach Defy Venture's "CEO of Your New Life" program. In many ways, it's a program about freedom. Many of my students at Kewanee started their journeys to freedom long before they signed up for this class. They've done lots of work on themselves over the 20-30 years they've been incarcerated.

Each of us has a different story about the moment we started walking towards freedom, resilience and becoming. But I meet more people in

prison with stories like this than I meet anywhere else. And I find a great deal of peace working in this community of people on the inside and outside who know

what real freedom is and the deep personal work it involves.

I am not done with my work. I am always "becoming." But I am grateful to say that the fruit of the work is all around me now. Change is possible. I hope to make fewer mistakes, but I will still make them, and now I know more about the steps to take towards resilience.



I AM a mother, a grandmother, a teacher and so much more. I AM consistently growing and never giving up on anything including my freedom.

*- Jessica Lighthart
page 24*

Editor's Words

Keith "Aquil" Talley

Editor-In-Chief

What a gift to be able to end and transition from my tenure as the Two Roads Editor-in-Chief at this historic, hallmark issue – **HERstory**. The stated Two Roads mission is explicit and intentional in centering the platform on “those most impacted by harmful systems,” all the while encouraging them to, “become servant leaders and change agents,” with the ultimate goal of “overcoming societal ills such as violence, poverty and mass incarceration.”

Prison is a point of intersection for those and a host of other societal ills; however, that story is too often and too many times myopically told through male-centered, patriarchal lenses. Consequently, the critique, analysis, narrative and well-meaning solution proposals that follow are inherently flawed and incomplete because they neglect to account for the harm experienced by everyone – namely women.

According to a new study, *Women’s Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie – 2023*, women experience structural harm in different ways.

- Incarcerated women have been one of the fastest-growing prison populations
- Incarcerated mothers are five times as likely to have their children placed in foster care
- Incarcerated mothers are more likely than fathers to have their parental rights terminated due to confinement

Of course, my aim is not to replicate the study, but the study does highlight the need for an issue, and more issues, that elucidate the invaluable voices of women like *HERstory: Narratives of Womanhood, Character, Resilience and Becoming*.

Kenji Haley
Editor-In-Chief
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

Wow! It's hard to believe it's been two years since our last **HERstory**.

There's a need to celebrate these brave souls during Woman's History Month (as well as all other months thankfully, since this issue is hitting you April), as they've survived their personal endeavors and thrived through the terrains, all while holding their heads high and soldiering on with dignity and grace.

Maya Angelou once said:

“You can build a better future when you join the winning team; if you desire a bright tomorrow, you must build a brighter dream! Let us dream, for today and tomorrow.”

Your future is **NOW** and your tomorrow is **HERE**. Continue to build, continue to dream, continue to inspire. Encourage those who need encouraged and continue to shine through your words and actions!

Women are the salt of the Earth, and for all men, we wouldn't be in existence if it wasn't for God's greatest creation. These articles are about you, by you, for you and about the most loved, most admired, most challenging and the most adored. To all of those who were willing to step their feet in the fire for this issue, we thank you!

W.O.M.E.N.

Janay Hayes

As much as I honor men, I honor women so much more. Some of us had to become a woman when mentally and physically, we were still a child. Some of us actually just became a woman being well of age.

As women, we need more empowerment. We need to stick together and uplift one another. We need to always give credit where is due, and to give recognition to the women that are making it work beyond their means.

My mom was a single parent, raising five children on her own, and the things she managed to accomplish, I thought she had super powers!! Before her passing, she instilled (in me) the will of becoming a woman. I'm not ashamed to say that **I AM** a woman of resilience,

I RULE with an iron fist,
I AM an alpha female and
I AM beyond beautiful inside and out!

Unity is what we need more of between gender and race, but so much between us women because

My story maybe your story, and

*Your story maybe **HER**story*

Much love, peace, honor, devotion and blessing to all women...I see you girl!

WORTHY
OBLIGED
MOTHER
EXCELLENCE
NOBLY

TWO ROADS presents

HERstory no. 13

NARRATIVE OF CHARACTER

Mrs. Jennifer Stumphy CFSS II Supervisor

If you had to describe yourself or your profession to someone, how would you do this?

I'm a Food Supervisor at a re-entry facility. I observe and teach when needed. I make sure the food we prepare and serve is safe, palatable and portioned correctly. However, I'm also a counselor, a therapist, a peer, a problem solver, a paper pusher, a schedule maker, and whatever else is needed by the individuals in custody. If it's within my power and within the rules, I'll try helping in any way possible.

What are some things in your profession that you've had to overcome and why was that necessary?

One of the biggest hurdles of being in this profession is just because I'm a woman. I've been accused of many un-

ethical and immoral things in IDOC and IDJJ, because of my attitude with our population, because I'm too nice, or I look too good when I wear a little make-up, or because I smell too good when I wear perfume. . . . I've been investigated in house and by Springfield many times. I'm still here, after 21½ years. Being a woman in any department in IDOC is very challenging. I also have a difficult time having so many bosses. We have a CFSSIII, a Food Service Production Manager, a Warden of Operations, a Shift Commander, the Warden, Deputy Directors, and Directors. We've had so many come and go, it's difficult to keep up.

What are your views when it comes to diversity and inclusion? Women in a male dominated field?

I'm all for Diversity and Inclusion. I try not to judge others. I try not to look down on others. I do my best to include everyone, and I believe in "To Each Their Own." I get along well with all the individuals in custody because I treat them with respect and courtesy, and I talk to them like I talk to anyone else. I believe each and every one of us could've ended up their situation, if we had made one wrong decision.

I don't care if you're black, white, red, yellow, purple, short, tall, thin, heavy set, gay, straight, disabled, bald . . . I treat everyone the same.

Woman in a male dominated field? I don't see it as male dominated anymore, even though there haven't been too many improvements for women over the 21 years I've been here. I do think over time, you get a thicker skin, learn to not sweat the small stuff, and figure out who you can tolerate and who you need to stay away from. Most of the men I've met in DOC are decent and fair and treat women as equals. Those who are not, just aren't worth the time.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I do believe I should've taken life a little more seriously when I was younger. I didn't earn my college degree until I was 30 years old. I didn't get this job until I was 32 year old. I made a few mistakes along the way, but they were all learning experiences. I think I'd tell my younger self to never pick up a cigarette, smile more often, spend more time with family and friends, and try harder to just be kind. As I get older, I've discovered I'm less tolerant and a little meaner to people who irritate me.

Mrs. Stumphy has been a staple to Kewanee since its' inception as a Juvenile Facility. 20 plus years later, she has excelled and created her path. She has always strived to be the best person she could be, and for all of us here at TWO ROADS, we are grateful for her contribution to HERstory. Thank you!

WOMANHOOD UNITY

Tamika Robertson

Womanhood to me is universal strength, conquering resilience, and becoming into you. Maya Angelou says it best “*phenomenal women are we*”.

But somehow race has taken precedence over the unit of oneness, and we have division among our trials and perseverance. It is sad to say that the white race has always thought that they were more dominant than any other race, especially when it came to women, not realizing that we all urinate and bleed the same way. For how else can we explain another woman standing by and allowing someone to violate

(via rape and/or abuse) or be beaten to the bone or allowing tear a child from their arms, only to be sold? Even the Asian population did not honor the birth of a female as the first born. She was immediately eradicated or was hidden from public view, so that she was not succumbed to death.

Even something as small as yoga has been made to think that the perception has been appropriated. See, most individuals didn't know that yoga was not rooted in the white race. Its origins are from Asia and even deeper rooted in Africa. I speak of this so that we, as being united and one, can overlook what has been

WOMANHOOD UNITY

perpetuated for the masses and just know that we belong in all things that we choose to do. See, we beautiful creations of women must know in our heart and minds that we are phenomenal and are equal through our sisterhood, through the blood of Allah. We can only be separated or discredited of our SELF worth through a lack of knowledge and just plain ignorance. Not only do we, as women, have to teach each other, but we must mold the children, uplift and lead by example. Also, let's stop discrediting ourselves by abstaining to using the words "bitch" as well as other degrading names. For if we don't have respect for ourselves, why

should anyone else show us respect?

Also, let's stop discrediting ourselves by abstaining to using the words "bitch" as well as other degrading names. For if we don't have respect for ourselves, why should anyone else show us respect? See, a true Queen will not put themselves down or allow anyone else to down them. Please sis, guide and guard your temples. Be careful with whom you lay with and know that health care is free and clinics (at home) are free as well. Please show that you care about yourself and get tested before lust takes over you and your temple and become your flaw.

WOMANHOOD UNITY

why should anyone else show us respect?

See I, Tamilyn Robertson, who is detained at Logan Correctional Center knows that this is not my destiny and I won't ever get comfortable. Know that wherever you are, whether it is in the penitentiary or the free world, stay true to you and be the next phenomenal woman

you can be within your existence.

Not to be offensive to anyone, but you cannot make yourself a woman. You must be created by God (Allah), Jehovah a woman, as we are the only ones that can populate the world. So come one, come all women and lets rise to the occasion and shine by showing all that see us, that we are true Queens inside and out. For we were born "*phenomenal and resilient*". Peace and Blessings be upon you.



TWO ROADS presents

HERstory no. 18

A NARRATIVE OF WHO I AM BECOMING ...

Jeanette Daniels

Finally, I got it! Finally I understand who I am. I was created by and for God's purposes as well as His pleasure. It has taken me over 20 years of incarceration and 62 years of age to realize this. I spent the first 30 years of my life oblivious as to what the meaning for life was. I always thought you were born, and then you died.

Nothing mattered in between.

Well, in these last 30 years, my opinion has drastically changed. Incarceration has opened my eyes, mind and heart to what should really matter in life.

Making myself available to help others; opening up my mind and ears to understand where there is need; allowing my heart to be open enough to give what is needed unconditionally when I do these actions. I feel the love of God all through the fear of my being, which in turn, proves to me not only that I am worthy of being loved, but I've always been loved because I am truly what God created me to be.

His child



NARRATIVE OF RESILIENCE

Camile Lindsay

First Assistant Deputy Governor for Public Safety,
Infrastructure, Environment and Energy

If you had to describe yourself or your profession to someone, how would you do this?

My job is to do my part to ensure that people in Illinois have the resources they need to thrive. I love helping others, and I have been able to help others in every job that I have held.

I am currently the First Assistant Deputy Governor for Public Safety, Infrastructure, Environment and Energy. In the Governor's office I serve as a liaison between my office and many agencies and boards including but not limited to the State police, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Transportation, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the office of the State Fire Marshal, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, and the Illinois Commerce Commission.

Prior to this role I served as Chief of Staff, Chief Legal Counsel, and Deputy Chief Legal Counsel for the Department of Corrections.

What are some things in your profession that you've had to overcome and why was that necessary?

I have had to overcome self-doubt. I have also had to overcome working in environments where women were not appreciated unless they echoed the thoughts and views of the men who they worked with or for. I have also had to overcome the discrimination that far too often women and more specifically Black women face. However, I have been very fortunate to have a circle of people, oftentimes women, who cheered me on and provided encouragement and support when I needed it most.

I am very fortunate that throughout my career I have found men and women who inspire me and have shown me that *although the path to success is full of adversity*, I can achieve anything I put my mind to. I hope that I am doing the same for other women.

What are your views when it comes to diversity and inclusion? Women in a male dominated field?

Diversity is critical to success. It is so important to hear from different voices when making decisions. I am a Black woman who was raised on the South Side of Chicago. During law school, I visited IDOC facilities with my best friend, because her brother was incarcerated, and later in life, I watched as my oldest nephew cycled in and out of the criminal justice system in California.

My upbringing and my experiences with the “system” shaped me and gave me a unique and valuable perspective on corrections – a perspective that I carried with me throughout my time

working for the department.

It is imperative that different perspectives be reflected when making critical decisions.

I believe my best decisions have been those that have been the result of collaboration with people who have viewpoints that are different from my own. That is one reason why I appreciated hearing from individuals in custody when I worked in the Department, and it is also the reason I have worked to ensure there are formerly incarcerated individuals on the advisory board for the Department.

I also believe it is not enough to listen to people of different backgrounds and walks of life, we must also ensure they feel included and valued. Without a focus on inclusion, we run the risk of losing critical voices. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion must be front and center for organizations to truly be successful.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would tell my younger self that ***I am enough.*** I would advise myself to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself, and that I should not let my fear that I am inadequate or not good enough stop me from achieving the greatness that we are all capable of achieving.

I would tell myself to live with integrity and to always do the right thing even when it's unpopular. I would remind myself that if, and when, I am in leadership, I am obligated to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves even if doing so is not popular.

Any encouraging words?

Life is full of adversity, and we have all made decisions that we are not proud of, however, our pasts do not have to dictate our futures. One of my favorite quotes by Bryan Stevenson remains:

“Each of us is more than the

worst thing we've ever done.”

Each day is a new opportunity to make a difference and help to improve our own lives and just as importantly, the lives of others.

Thank you for your input Ms. Lindsay



“Poverty mindset is a choice. When you remove something negative, you have to replace it with something positive daily, in order to overcome the impact, because the impact is never going to change.”

It's YOU that gotta change!



- Tawana Pope



PHOTO COURTESY OF WTTW 2023
Video available at wttw.com/firsthand

THANKS

Jessica Lighthart

Thanks to those who hurt me, you made me stronger, Thanks to those who loved me, you made my heart better, Thanks to those who showed concern, you let me know you cared. **Thanks to those who left, You showed me that not everything is forever.** Thanks to those who stayed, You showed me the true meaning of friendship. Thanks to those who entered my life, you helped me become the **WOMAN I AM TODAY.**

Today, I AM a strong woman who has evolved into many things she never knew were possible. Hurt had me stuck for so long but not anymore. I AM a mother, a grandmother, a teacher and so much more. I AM consistently growing and never giving up on anything including my freedom. I have been down for 21 years and it's time to go and be a voice for those who are too afraid to speak. I once was silenced, but now I can't be hushed. I AM stronger now more than ever.

TWO ROADS presents **HERstory** no. **24**



“I AM a woman of resilience,
I RULE with an iron fist,
I AM an alpha female and
I AM beyond beautiful inside and out!”

Janay Hayes Page 13

UNTITLED

Amber “Coco” Cannella

I AM WOMAN...

Behind Bars...

Incarcerated, Forgotten, Broken,
Lost, Doubled Crossed.

Railroaded by a system designed to
do exactly what its doing.

Daughter, sister, lover, not yet a
mother. Forgive me for I never hold
my tongue; Not a victim, never
claimed to be one.

Survivor, all I see,

Every name called, punched to the
face, never fazed me.

I stayed like most do, Never knew
how to love, I thought I was loving

you I had to grow as a woman,
Find my strength, whether it be in
the pen(-itentiary) or thru my pen. I
am who I am , 'cause where I been.

POVERTY

BRROKEN HOME

GROWING UP ALONE

My Pops (R.I.P.) was addicted to
crack since the 80's, but that's a
whole 'nother rap for that..

Moms did what she could, but I
didn't know how to leave either.

So all I did was emulate that
abuse and toxicity I saw
growing up, like a mirror.

One bad decision after the next,
pops was around, but always
hitting on my mother and big
brother, till he left back alone;
streets where I felt home
STOMPING...STEPPING...

Underneath, little girl neglected,
starting selling drugs, toting
gunz cheating death, popping
pills, smoking weed and
drinking,

What the hell was I thinking?

UNTITLED

If I could rewind hands of time, get a second chance tell that little girl, who was scared and alone.

You losing time you can never get back. You're going down the **WRONG ROAD...PUMP YA BRAKES!**

When a man hits a woman, that's not love...**THATS HATE!** Run baby girl, 'cause that's your fate!

You are better than what they labeled you:

DROPOUT

FAT

UGLY

USE YOUR EYES !!

**YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL
AND CAN BE WHATEVER
YOU WANT TO BE!!**

No matter where you are or how you feel.

Love your self and always **KEEP IT REAL.** Speak your mind, don't hold shy back;

Love your parents, 'cause when they are gone, you can't bring 'em.

BE YOU

BE PROUD

BE SMART

BE FUNNY

Most importantly, always **STACK YOUR MONEY.** You may struggle, but it's gonna be ok

Have faith and pray...one day, things will change.

NARRATIVE OF RESILIENCE

Warden Melinda Eddy
Taylorville

If you had to describe yourself or your profession to someone, how would you do this?

I would describe myself as a woman that has had many different roles in my personal and professional life. I truly enjoy helping others evolve and grow to become the person they want to be. Watching someone attain their goal and shine with pride is such a wonderful feeling.

What are some things in your profession that you've had to overcome and why was that necessary?

I have learned to overcome the discomfort of being vulnerable. Sometimes, vulnerability has brought me great success and other times, it has brought me great sorrow. Regardless of the outcome, I find myself a bit wiser in the end.

What are your views when it comes to diversity and inclusion? Women

in a male dominated field?

Diversity and Inclusion broadens the talent and creativity of the workforce. It allows for different perspectives and experiences. Having a workplace that embraces diversity also attracts and retains employees.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would tell myself that the challenges you will face ahead help build resiliency. I would also tell myself to remember to control the things you can, and for those you can't, let them go.

Any encouraging words?

Never stop learning, be humble, and anything worth doing is worth doing right.

Thank You Warden.



We can only be separated
or discredited of our
SELF WORTH through a
lack of knowledge and
just plain ignorance.

- Tamilyn Robertson

page 16

TWO ROADS presents

HERstory no. 29

DEFYING THE ODDS

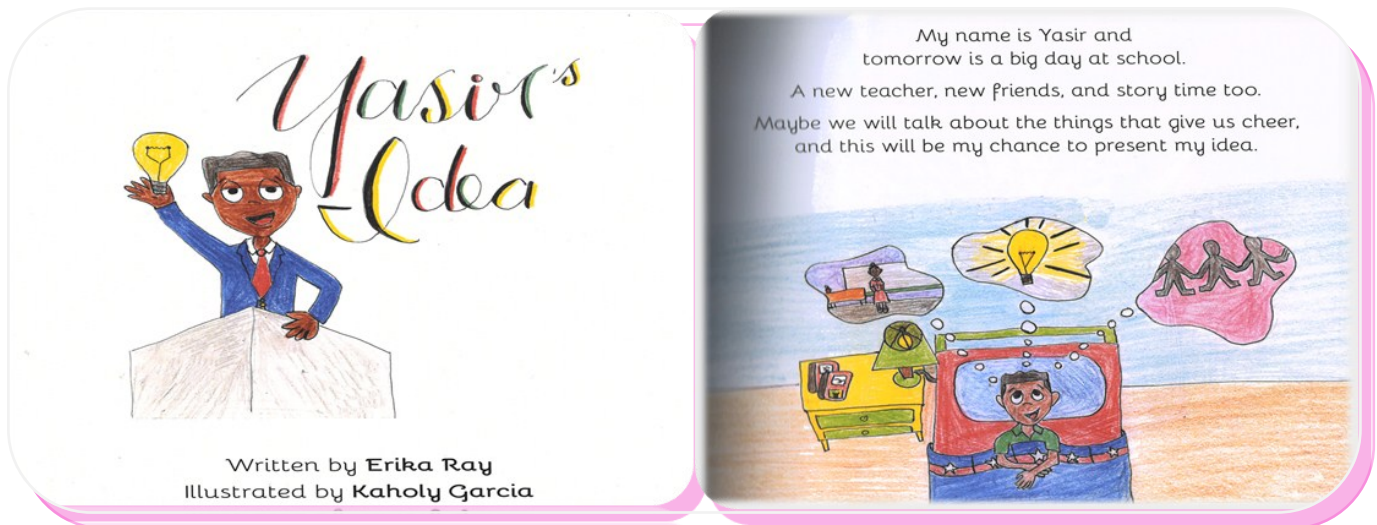
Erika Ray

Author



Erika Ray is a Chicago native, mother and activist for women's rights. She is currently a student in the Northwestern Prison Education Program and an advocate for Pritzker School Restorative justice with the Northwestern/Moran Center's Restorative Justice Team. She is a graduate of Lakeland College's Associate Degree Program and holds a paralegal certificate from Blackstone Institute and is a certified doula with the Chicago Volunteer Doulas. She

is also an author of a book titled "*Yasir's Idea*", a children's publication. She has inspired many of the current women in custody, and we would like to give thanks and show our respect.



TWO ROADS presents

HERstory no. 30

A TIME IN MY PAST

Lakisha Woodard

I'm trying to be at peace, but I've been keeping a daily account of the reasons I don't want to be me. I'm constantly thinking about the things I used to be. Playing the fool, not wanting to use my tools. Do you know how this made my family feel that raised me?

Always blaming themselves for how I turned out to be. Mom, you're not on earth anymore, but the doors you always talked about are opening up more and more. Press on all people who struggle like me. It's difficult to keep playing the fool, when you know the rules. So, now what are you going to do? When you look back into your life and see the person you used to be, use your story to help other brothers and sisters like me.

There's always people out there that look like you and me. My heart is heavy and my mind is wandering. I'm just trying to be better. I can't keep reminiscing on things. I don't want to. It's hard to wait around for something that you know may never happen; a helping hand from others who say they love you.

My advice: just live, make mistakes and most importantly, remember where you've been and where you aim to be.



TWO ROADS presents

HERstory no. 31

NARRATIVE OF BECOMING

Paula Baker

Lieutenant

Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center

If you had to describe yourself or your profession to someone, how would you do this?

I would first say that I am very pleasant about whatever I do. I am firm, fair and consistent, and I give in everything that I do.

What are some things in your profession that you've had to overcome and why was that necessary?

Knowing when to be done or a point to finish for the day. Also I had to overcome when to accept "no" for an answer. It was necessary for me to accept no for an answer and walk away because it's a part of life, and we all will be told "no" at some point.

What are your views when it comes to

diversity and inclusion? Women in male dominated field?

Everyone needs to feel accepted!

Everyone needs to feel valued!

Everyone's Ideas/Thoughts need to be heard!

Everyone needs to have the same opportunities!

In corrections, there's a melting pot of so many different races, religions, groups, beliefs, etc., but, regardless of any of these items in that melting pot, everyone should have a chance to play at every position and for the individuals in custody to get that second chance at life.

As for women in a male-dominant field...WHY NOT? I'm that woman that had to prove to myself and to that

man next to me, that I can do the job just as well as the next man or woman. For so many years, women were not allowed to work outside of the home. The woman was to tend the house and the children. That is perfectly fine, but now, in this day in time, the woman **needs** to work AND take care of the home.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would say to always be true to myself and others in my circle of trust. To always be known as a *person of integrity*. To be honest and have strong moral principles. ALWAYS try to do the right things. When you are honest and do the right things, then later on in your life, you don't have to second guess if you did right or wrong.

Any encouraging words?

My encouraging words to those who are reading this is to be a *trusted leader*. A *trusted leader* is one who will follow through with what the leader she, knowing that you will do what is needed. No matter what, when you build this trust with your peers and in turn, your peers will always know that they can count on you. Trust is something that you cannot buy; it is always earned. Give your all in all each and every day because tomorrow is not promised!

Mrs. Baker is one of the few women of color that is in the rank of Lieutenant statewide. For nearly 20 years, she has cut her teeth in this field and has risen to the top of the charts through hard work and dedication in her field. Thank you for your words of encouragement.

8 POWERFUL WORDS FOR THE DAY

1) BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

BELIEVE YOU CAN AND YOU WILL

2) STAY STRONG

DREAM, BELIEVE, ACHIEVE

3) NEVER GIVE UP

A LITTLE PROGRESS EACH DAY ADDS UP TO BIG RESULTS

4) BE GRATEFUL

A GRATEFUL HEART IS A MAGNET FOR SUCCESS

5) WORK HARD

GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO HUSTLE

6) STAY HUMBLE

WORK HARD IN SILENCE, LET SUCCESS MAKE THE NOISE

7) BE KIND

KINDNESS MAKES YOU THE MOST BEAUTIFUL

8) KEEP SMILING

BECAUSE OF YOUR SMILE, YOU MAKE LIFE MORE BEAUTIFUL

BLENDDED

Katie Manning

You couldn't have babies of your own,

So you were content to share.

Knowing all the possibilities of heartache and despair,

You became adamant, the goal was to share you with

one another, 2 more you share with me,

The goal, nor, the gift will ever be lost on me.

Never would I have imagined sharing the ones that

came before me, but because of us three,

Our families will be forever blended and we will always

be mommy's to three.

So Amazing!!

My name is Kate Bodie, and I am writing this to and for all the women who have encouraged and helped me grow during my incarceration at Logan.

There are too many (people) to name, but, they will know who they are when they read this. I've been blessed to have them in my life. They are spread out over the institution, helping paws and the kitchen (both Supervisors and Individuals in Custody).

I have friends and supporters on every unit and because of them; I have grown and become a better person. My friends and the ones I call family, range anywhere from being here as short as one year to as long as 30 years.

I want to be like them; to have a positive attitude; to do my time and not let

the time do me.

If I can do what they do, I can reach new heights. In my 10 years, I have only received 2 tickets, no seg time and I have held a job for the last 9 years (mostly in the kitchen). I am taking care of my Mental Health, and I owe it to all the women in my life. I thank you all so very much and send my love. You are all amazing women!!



TR

"You can't control how other people receive your energy. Anything you do or say gets filtered through the lens of whatever personal stuff they are going through at the moment."

NARRATIVE OF CHARACTER

Donna V. Werner

Dorcas Destiny International



I was born to a 15-year-old mother in Chicago during the time that pregnant teenaged girls went to a home for unwed mothers and delivered their babies in secret. Being raised in an adopted family, I was surrounded by my adoptive mother's extended family in East St. Louis, Illinois. I only met my paternal (adoptive) grandparents a few times.

I then left Illinois in my early twenties and spent the majority of my life in Tacoma, Washington in the Pacific Northwest. After a long time working in higher education, several years working for the Washington State Supreme Court as the Executive Director of the Minority Justice Commission, I felt a calling to begin work in social services, which led me to New York City, where I began working with people who were transitioning from homelessness. After a series of interesting circumstances, I ended up relocating back to Chicago, where I worked for several more years in homeless services with pregnant and parenting teen moms and children, and with a Lutheran mission's church that provided an array of services to people who were living with or through homelessness.

Through an array of experiences and introductions at the Christian church I was a member of for many years, I was afforded the opportunity to attend a conference in Toronto, Canada, which ended up being a life-changing event for me. It was at this May 2016 conference that I met a gentleman from Kenya who asked if I would assist him with the school he started in the village within which he grew up. I said “yes,” and after making a visit to Kenya in June 2017, I founded *Dorcas Destiny International*, a company that provides tangible support for women and children in Kenya (Africa).

I have a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies & Leadership; a certificate in management; and a Master of Arts in Applied Behavioral Science. For the past 20 years, I’ve been a licensed professional in the financial services industry for life and health, property & casualty, and long-term care certification in 35 states. Having worked in administration, executive management, the Washington State court system, social services, and in the private sector, I have had professional work experiences with diverse populations, including owners of small-to-midsized businesses, entrepreneurs, and business school students.



Women's Prisons in Kenya

In Kenya, woman with children under the age of 4years old must take them to prison with them. After the age of 4 they are sent to a group home.

As Founder/Executive Director of *Dorcas Destiny International*, I've lead this all-volunteer, nonprofit organization providing services to women and children in Kenya. As of this writing, I've made 10 visits to Kenya and will continue making those trips taking a team of missionaries, ministers, volunteers, and educators with me each time. It has been a labor of love with so many wonderful experiences and a tremendous impact.



To learn more about *Dorcas Destiny International* or to donate, please visit www.DorcasDestinyIntl.org or follow Ms. Werner on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

UNTITLED

April Caspel

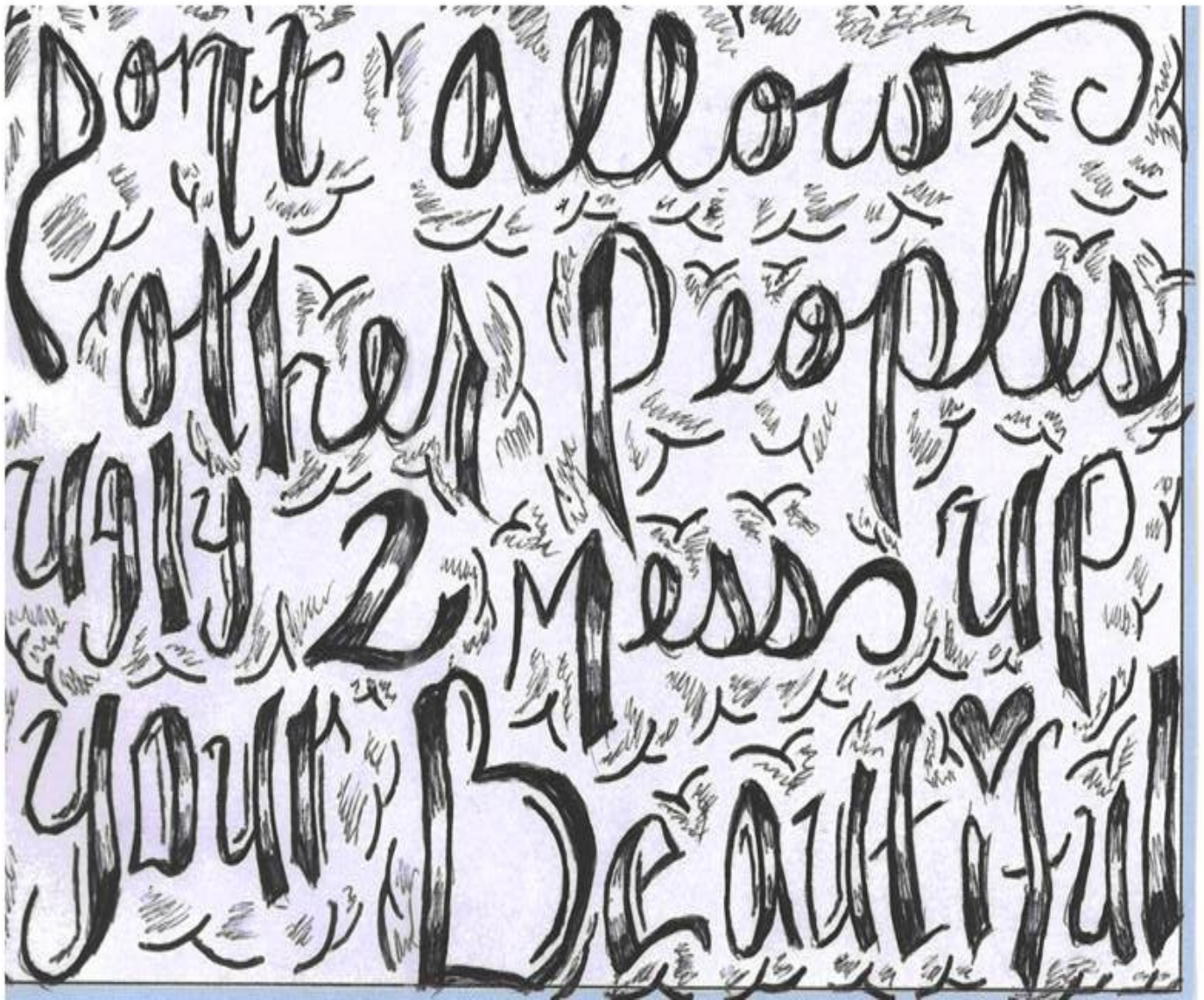
Don't judge me for my struggles if you've never walked in my shoes. I look like I'm okay but I suffer from depression and suicidal thoughts too.

They say I'm strong, I just take it day by day and act like everything is alright,
when in reality I'm just struggling to make my way.

Ive never asked for handouts and when I needed help everyone laughed in my face.

So don't judge me for taking risk to feed my son, everyone has their own fate. Imma single parent doing what I can to survive.

If you judged me by circumstances you would have never been able to walk in my shoes or endured the struggles I've been through.



**“Don’t Allow Other Peoples’ Ugly
2 Mess Up Your Beautiful.”**

- April Gaspel

TWO ROADS presents

HERstory no. 41

EMBRACING ME

Deon “Strawberry” Hampton

I’m honoring myself for Herstory Month because I’m a Black transgender woman who’s learning how to change things about myself. The first thing I’m learning is patience and accepting people for who they are, along with their views and opinions which can be very cruel and hurtful towards people like myself, but I’m learning to accept other peoples’ feelings. In doing so, I’ve become a better person by assisting people with mental health training – helping others express how they feel. I’ve stopped and prevented three thousand people from the outside world by being a voice for them and supporting them when they’re in their darkest places. I talked them into having a reason to live. There have been days when I haven’t slept due to helping others take calls all night on my social media preventing

people from committing suicide.

My purpose in life is to make people happy and smile, and bring peace and safety. This is why I honor myself.

I’m honoring my mother as well. She’s my voice, my rock, my strength, my best friend, my protector, my provider, and my biggest supporter in my darkest moments. When I felt so alone and afraid, she was the voice that kept me pushing – telling me my life is worth living. She supports me and the whole LGBTQ Community. She’s open minded. She feeds and gives shelter to the homeless while showing them unconditional love – making them feel welcomed, not judged. Those are the reasons I honoring me, Deon “Strawberry” Hampton and my mother Barbara Hampton.

NARRATIVE OF RESILIENCE

Ms. A. Trigg

Educator

Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center

If you had to describe yourself or your profession to someone, how would you do this?

I would say that I am an educator for IDOC. I teach two GED prep classes and a community service class (“that wood shop class”) that focuses on giving back to the community and helping the gentlemen in the class learn how to use basic tools at the same time. Our facility takes a different approach to reducing recidivism by helping the guys prepare for life on the outside. We give them the resources and the opportunities that they need to start life on the right foot. They just have to take advantage of the opportunities provided.

What are some things in your profession that you’ve had to overcome and why was that necessary?

One of the biggest struggles working in corrections as a woman is establishing authority in a male dominated environment, especially amongst individuals in

custody. A lot of the guys struggle to respect women in general, particularly women in a position of authority. It can be an uphill battle to earn that respect, but it’s necessary to ensure that they are receptive to the information that they are getting from us. We are here to help the individuals, and if they don’t take women seriously or respect us, it is difficult for us to help them do what they need to do to be successful. Hopefully, the gentlemen who struggle with this can learn a thing or two about respect and take what they learn with them to the outside world.

What are your views when it comes to diversity and inclusion? Women in a male dominated field?

There’s room for everyone at the table as long as you have the same goal. If there is a common goal, you can work out the differences amongst everyone involved to keep moving forward. I don’t think it really

matters if you're a man or a woman.
Everyone can contribute in some way.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Live your life for yourself. Make decisions that are best for you, not other people. Your friends shouldn't be a driving force in your decisions. Most of them won't be a constant in your life in five years anyway. If you're trying to go a different route than your parents, don't worry about their opinions either. As long as you're making healthy decisions, everything will work out, and they'll understand your choices later.

Surround yourself with people moving in the same direction as you. You might have to distance yourself from some people that you care about, but that's okay. You can find them later, if you want, when you are secure in the path that you chose.

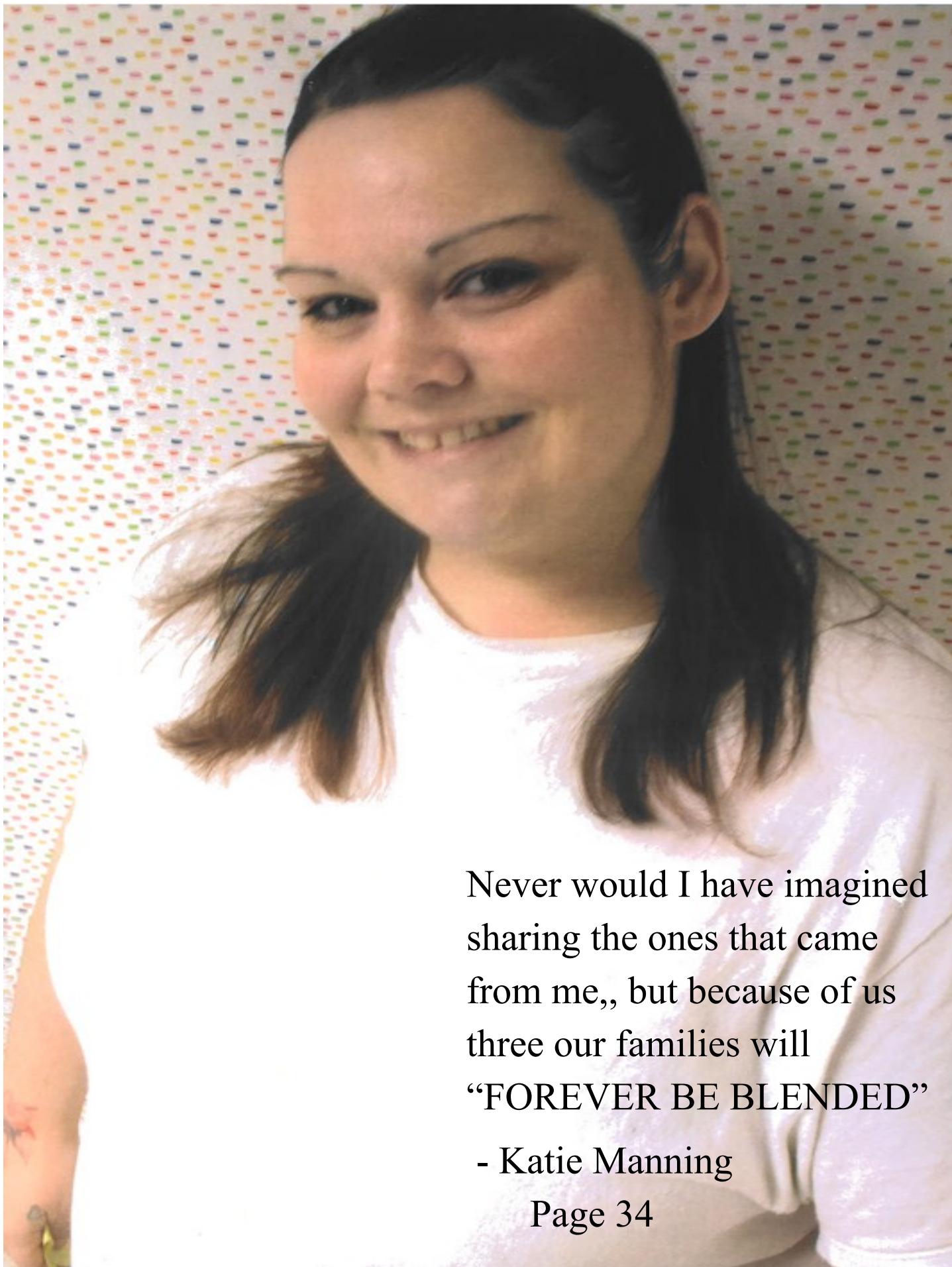
Any encouraging words?

No matter what you are trying to do in life, you will have bumps in the road. It's normal. Everyone struggles even if they don't show it. Learn from the challenges that you go through and the mistakes that you make. Just keep moving forward in whatever you are trying to do.

To the ladies out there- I saw this online, and I really liked it:

To the women who are labeled aggressive-keep being assertive.

To the women who are labeled bossy-keep on leading.



Never would I have imagined
sharing the ones that came
from me,, but because of us
three our families will
“FOREVER BE BLENDED”

- Katie Manning

Page 34

TWO ROADS is now ONLINE

We strongly encourage that your family and friends share the link below of this issue (and other informative issues) with lawmakers, advocacy groups and other power-wielding stakeholders in four easy step:

- 1) Go to "**IDOC HOME PAGE**"
- 2) Click "**ABOUT**"
- 3) Click "**NEWS**"
- 4) Select "**TWO ROADS E-ZINE**"

Not only will you see our current issues, but this will allow you to see past issues and submissions from the many souls who have spoken.

Although your insightful analysis, strong feelings and creative policy suggestions are real and deserve to be considered, this humble opportunity is limited to just relating your story to other human beings, so that they may make courageous decisions with our humanity in mind.

Mother's Day

A Special Tribute Issue

With staff support:

Have staff member electronically send submission and photo (if possible) to:

penny.rowan@illinois.gov

Without staff support:

Mail submission, photo with name and title to:

TWO ROADS EDITOR

Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center

2021 Kentville Road

Kewanee IL 61443

Please attempt to have a staff member email in your submission.



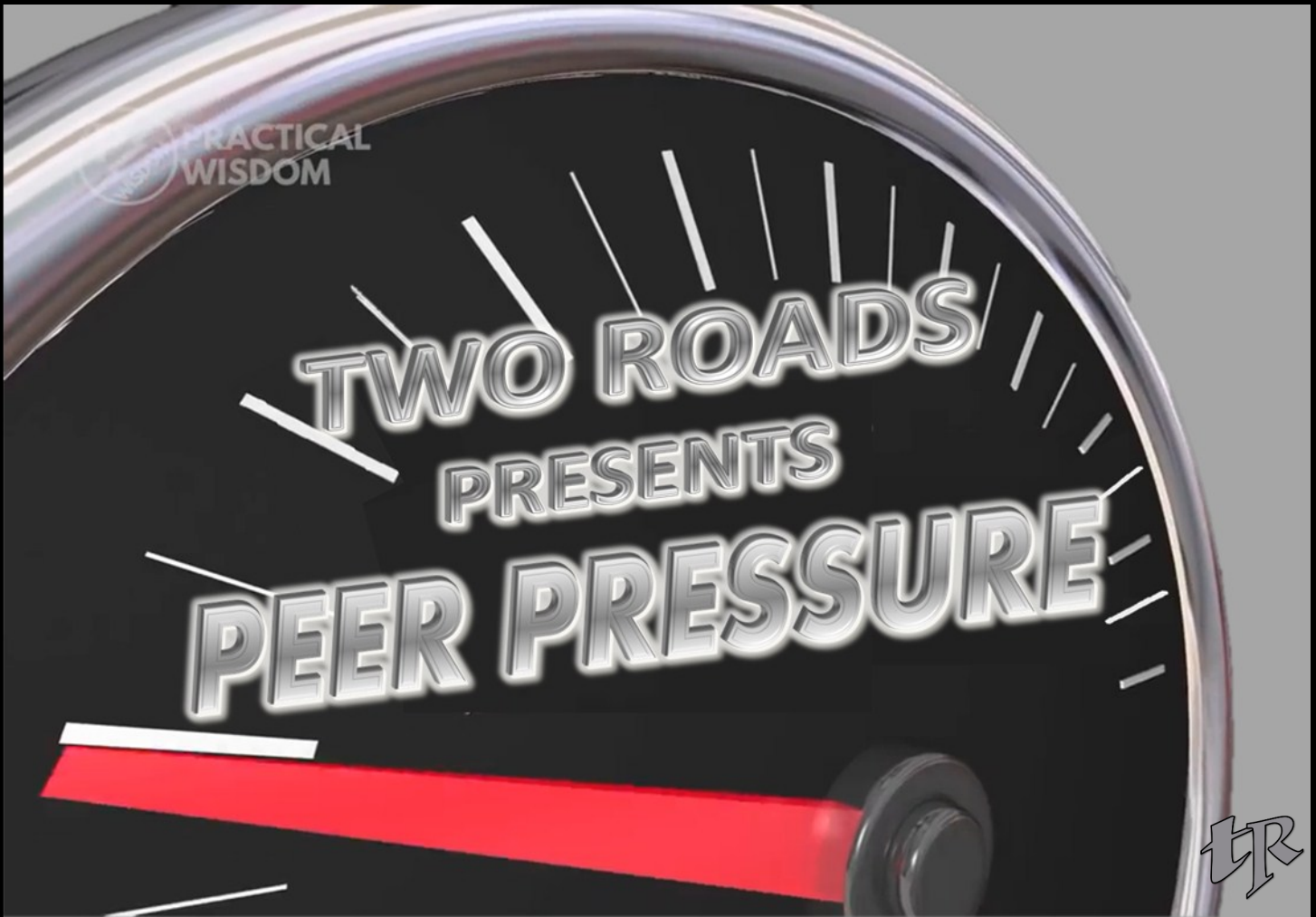
IF YOU HAVE A LOVED ONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK ABOUT THEIR FAMILY MEMBER WHO IS INCARCERATED, PLEASE HAVE THEM SEND THE LETTER AND PHOTO TO THE EMAIL ADDRESS ABOVE.

Mail Submissions by:

April 28th, 2023

TR

TWO ROADS



We would like to share your unique story to our confined and non-confined readers concerning how has **PEER PRESSURE** had on the lives of you, your family and community. If this has impacted you, we would like to hear your story. In addition, your family and friends can then share their stories as they are impacted by these situations as well. Feel free to have them share their experiences from your incarceration.

Please encourage them to send a submission.

With staff support:

Have staff member electronically send submission and photo (if possible) to:

penny.rowan@illinois.gov

Without staff support:

Mail submission, photo with name to:

TWO ROADS EDITOR

Attn: Ms. Penny Rowan
Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center
2021 Kentville Road
Kewanee IL 61443

Deadline for submission is May 19th

TWO ROADS

CALLING ALL DADS

It's that time of the year for you to show your love to your father or the father figure in your life. Submissions are now accepted for the TWO ROADS Father's Day Special Issue. In addition, your family members can send stories about their Fathers that are inside and the uplifting stories they have. We encourage you to let them share their stories.

Mail submission, photo to:

Attn: TWO ROADS EDITOR
Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center
2021 Kentville Road
Kewanee IL 61443

Outsiders and Individuals-In-Custody
(WITH Staff Support)

Please send your submission and scanned photo to penny.rowan@illinois.gov
"ATTN: TWO ROADS Fathers Day"

Deadline is Friday, June 2nd

TWO ROADS

IDOC's Social Justice Program
Volume 18

Founders

Jim Estes

Ricky Hamilton

Jennifer Parrack

Editor Emeritus

Keith "Aquil" Talley

Editor-In-Chief

Kenji Haley

Content Editors

Penny Rowan

T. Wilson

Contributing Editors

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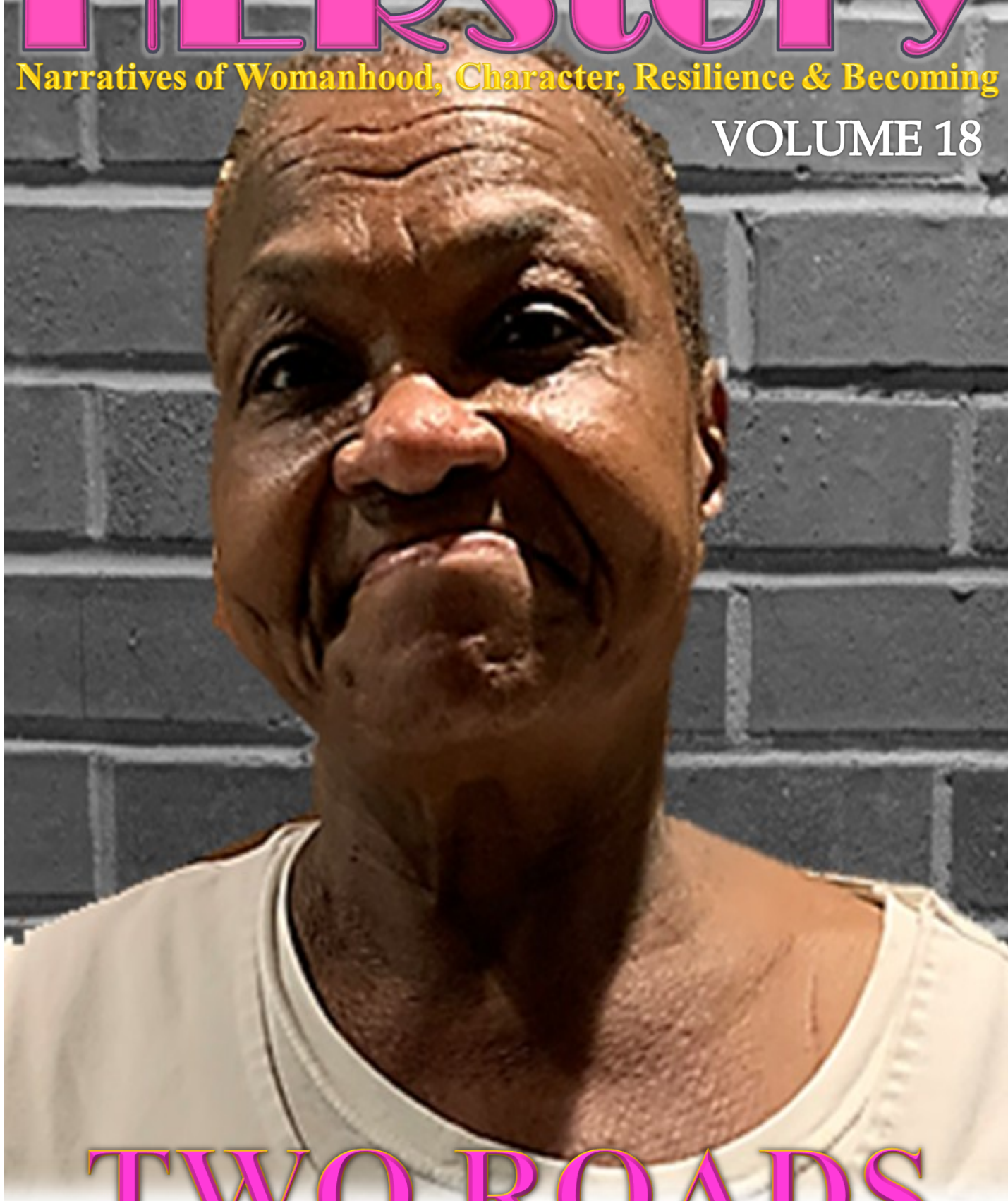
Leondus Carter

HERstory

HERstory

Narratives of Womanhood, Character, Resilience & Becoming

VOLUME 18



TWO ROADS