

TRIBUTE AWARDS

Mother's Day

Special Tribute Issue

Volume 20



Part I of II

Honest stories and service of the incarcerated women and men of the Illinois Department of Corrections

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TWO ROADS



To All Readers

Our monthly newsletter focuses on three phases: *rehabilitation*, *restoration and re-entry*. These are the necessary phases of a successful incarceration and transition back to society.

Rehabilitation involves the struggle for change one confronts during incarceration.

Restoration reflects the refined version of one's self that we've become and our restored self seeks service of self-worth to the world.

Finally, **Re-Entry** is the ultimate goal one accomplishes through class study, self-study or modification programs completed during one's incarceration.

We are TWO ROADS, and we want to be a viable resource for our readers. We serve you by sharing the honest chronicle of the stories and service of the incarcerated women and men of the Illinois Department of Corrections. Join our movement.

TWO ROADS Editorial Staff

****Please Note:** All letters, emails and photos will be reviewed by personnel **PRIOR** to being received by the TWO ROADS editorial staff. All information that is not pertaining to TWO ROADS will be discarded. Thank you for respecting our guidelines.



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're 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.”



GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



Latoya Hughes

**Acting Director,
Illinois Department
of Corrections**

As Mother's Day approaches, I can't help but think about all the people who've embodied the mother figure role for me throughout my life. Mother's Day is about truly reflecting on the contributions of maternal nurturing in all its forms. From my mother, to teachers, coaches, friends, and even co-workers, I'm grateful to have had so many women in every chapter of my life willing to offer guidance or just a kind word along the way.

As an extremely shy child, I participated in speech therapy for several years. I required additional encouragement from teachers and coaches to participate in classes or extracurricular activities. I was afraid to try anything new. Despite these obstacles, the presence of these mother figures throughout my life was crucial to pushing me to try new activities; slowly, methodically, but consistently,

I began finding my voice. I learned strategies which allowed me to push beyond my fear, and I began trying new things. Looking back, I now realize everyone needs someone to push them to reach their fullest potential, and I'm forever grateful to the countless women who saw fit to push me.

The encouragement of these mother figures fueled my confidence and ignited my desire to help others as they had helped me. All of these women have contributed to the person I am today. As Mother's Day approaches, I hope sharing a little about my journey helps someone else along the way. But most importantly:

*There is nothing special about me,
Only that I was told that I could be.
There is nothing special about me,
Only that I saw that I could be.
There is nothing special about me,
Only that I was given an opportunity to be.
There is nothing special about me,
That you can't be.*

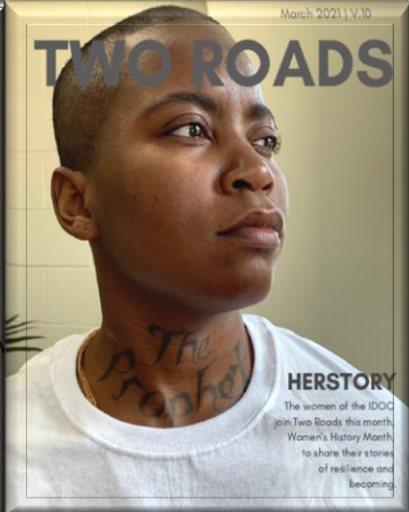
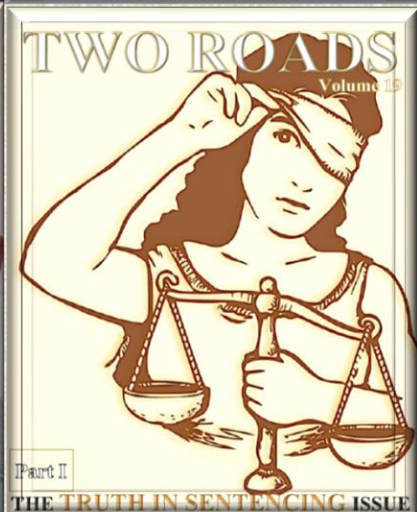
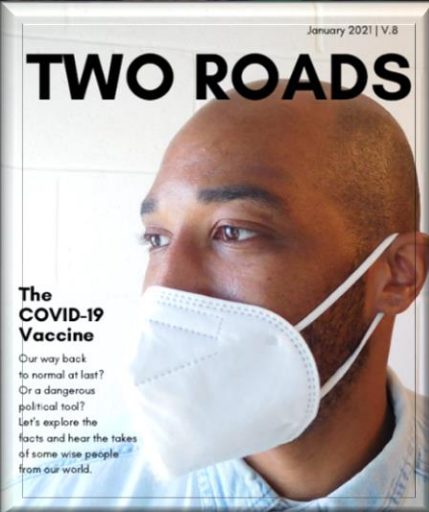
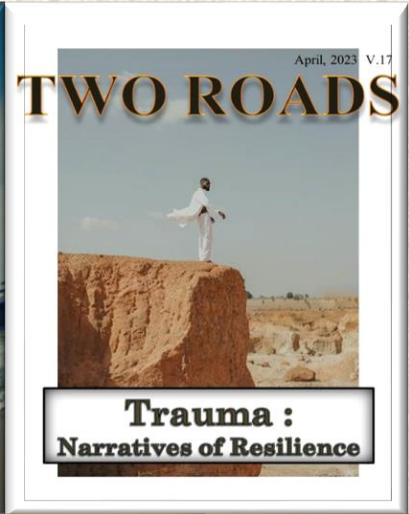
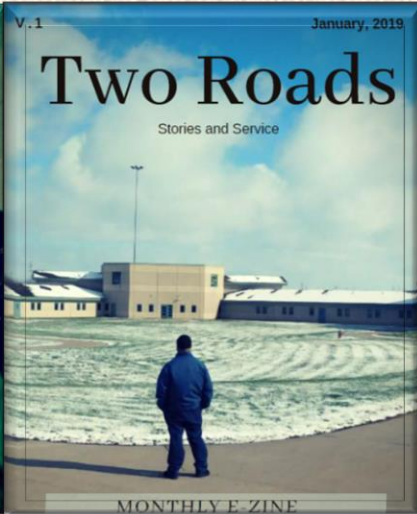
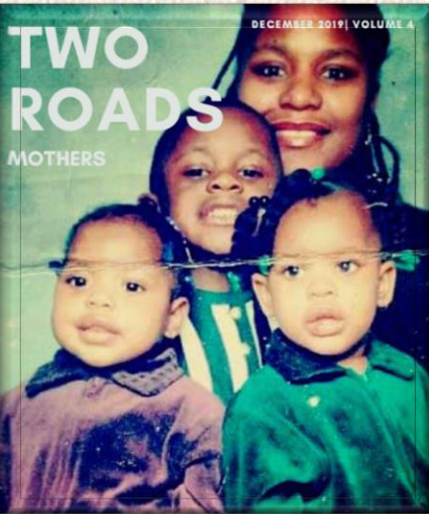
Latoya

For the past two years, Director Hughes had served the Department as Chief Inspector. Prior to joining the Department, Director Hughes spent 15 years at the Cook County States' Attorney Office serving within the Community Justice Center, Felony Trial Division, and Felony Review Units. Dr. Hughes has a Juris Doctor and Bachelor's degrees in Sociology and Political Science.

READ OUR PREVIOUS ISSUES

Mother's Day

Special Tribute Issue



Encourage your family, lawmakers and others to take part in Social Justice!!

www.idoc.illinois.gov/news/tworoadse-zine.html

Editor's Take

Mother's Day is always a time to reflect on all the things the women in your life have done or contributed. May it been your Mother, Grandmother, Aunt, Wife, or someone who wasn't related; these people gave you love, hope and a sense of happiness.

Although my mother is alive and very involved on my life, Mrs. Purdy was a special mother to me. When I was in middle school, every Sunday she'd pull up to my house in a 1988, 2-door burnt orange and maroon Buick cutlass, to pick me up for church. Every weekend at 8:30A.M., like clockwork, she made sure I had a way to get to Sunday school.

Understand, Mrs. Purdy had her own children (four to be specific) who were older, yet, she treated me like I was her fifth child. After service, she would take me to her home, where it was guaranteed a home-cooked meal was already prepared and when I went to my house, my mother knew I was cared for during my brief stay.

I know some of us who've been gone a while may have lost that special someone in your life, and at times have no sense of purpose for Mother's Day. On the other hand, some of us have had a "Mrs. Purdy" experience in during our stay.



Mothers and “Mother-Figures” have always been impactful for us whom are confined, knowing their kind words of encouragement and insights are of the most importance.

As you read these pages of reflection and celebration from not only the men and women in custody, but also from professionals and loved ones from outside the fence, remember we're all striving to re-connect to them as they're trying to connect with us. For those who're awaiting their loved one to return to society, I'm more than confident these upcoming works will remind you, as our mother or mother-figure, you are loved and thought about every single day.

My mother, Gloria, is beyond wonderful. She's not only my mother, but my best friend and always has the right words when I need them to keep me confident and engaged. I love you SO MUCH!!

Finally, I'd like to personally thank Director Hughes for taking time out of her busy schedule to provide her contribution to this article, we here at TWO ROADS appreciate you being a force to our E-Zine. To all the Mothers out there...WE LOVE YOU ALL and THANK YOU!!!

Kenji Haley
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
TWO ROADS



"Dream Larcenist"

Keith "Aquil" Talley

Editor Emeritus , TWO ROADS



When I was a child, my mother taught me that we were both GOD's children, and that she was more than just my mom, but that she was also my sister – a gift given to her by GOD. Beautiful, bright eyed with a radiant smile, my mom was a teenaged mom with a vision for more . . . **a dream**. Somehow, in time, that dream turned into a nightmare!

You see, I'm a thief; I stole my mother's dreams.

After my birth she delightfully entertained dreams of happiness, love, success and family . . . a man. Instead, I devolved into a thing. Yes, it's true, I robbed my sister of her precious dreams.

I became the source of soul-wrenching heartbreak instead of happiness. On that day that I was born, who knew that it wasn't success that awaited us, but instead, a series of saddening sentences. Who knew that she would come to sleep better, like a baby in fact, when her "gift" was captive in the clutches of a Beast than she ever could back when I was free . . . pilfered dreams.

Who knew that the strain of season upon season of struggles and strife would leave us emotionally estranged. Who knew that my Ummi (Arabic for *Mother*) would become so emotionally battered and traumatized that she could no longer celebrate my accomplishments, wins or even my work with this publication, because do so might be too irresistibly enticing for her to hope again, and once more believe in her dreams, only to have those dreams, like so many times before . . . **stolen**.

Mr. Talley is a proud veteran of our military. We would like to take this time to thank all (Mother's especially!!) of those who have served in our military, in any capacity, during their lifetime as we celebrate **Memorial Day** at the end of the month.

WE thank you!



"A Tale Called 'Dear Momma'"

Yusef Kareem Brown

Pinckneyville

Praise be to God Almighty. Dear Momma, love is a fruit in season at all times, within the reach of every hand momma loved. I use my hands now to reach out to you momma, and write you this tale. "He that shuts love out, in turn shall be shut out from love", and on her threshold lie, howling in the outer darkness momma.

Momma, I know love is strong, love is real and love is courageous momma. Love is the ONLY weapon I need momma. Remember, all is love and nothing for reward. I appreciate you so much momma, may you rest in peace. I love you so much momma.

Dear Momma, no wonder we crave love so deeply and on so many levels momma. Pleasures of appreciation are described by love dear momma. Appreciation for creation leads us to the inevitable experiences of appreciating the creator of life.

My dear momma, thank you for giving me life. I'm allowing your love to flow through me. Momma, love is the master key which opens the gates of true happiness. Momma, you once said "*love is space and time, measured by the heart.*" Dear momma, thank you. Happy Mother's Day, in heaven. Passed December 30, 2017.

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"Time Well Spent"

Marcus Harris

Associate Editor, TWO ROADS

Since birth, my mother's had my back. She's protected and supported me in every situation. I've always had a close relationship with my mom. Not because she bought me the nicest clothes growing up; not because she kept me in the latest Jordans; not because she bought me every video game and system I wanted; it's because she spent quality time with me.

Most parents live by this toxic motto: "I want to **give** my child everything I never had as a child." I call it toxic because parents, especially mothers, stress themselves out by spending their hard-earned cash to give their kids everything they never had, whether they deserved it or not, while living paycheck-to-paycheck. My mother wasn't like that.



She taught me I had to **earn** what I wanted because no one was going to give it to me. To get material things like nice clothes, toys, video games and money, I had to excel in school, attend and participate in church activities, compete in sports and complete house chores. The only things she gave me were life, confidence, and valuable information.

Yes, I was spoiled growing up, but my mother taught me I had to earn my keep and be grateful. When I'd ask for something new, she'd never replied with just a "yes" or a "no." She'd educate me about finances. "Just because we have enough money to buy it, doesn't mean we can afford it." is something she instilled in me, even though I didn't comprehend it until adulthood.

My mother was an educator for 34 years. Therefore, education was fundamental growing up. Do you remember the "Read It, Book It" program from Pizza Hut in the 1990s? The program where Pizza Hut gave your mom or dad a punch card and every book you read, your OG punched out a hole on the card? When you read five books and returned the card to Pizza Hut, you were awarded a small personal-pan pizza. My mom didn't punch those holes for free—I had to read actual books to get that pizza.

Not only was she present when I read those books, she helped me with homework, school projects, church speeches, typing, proper language usage, book reports, cursive handwriting and spelling. Every time I asked her how to spell a word she'd reply, "Get the dictionary." I didn't think her saying that at the time was helpful, but I became a fantastic Scrabble player because of it.

My mother believed sports is a great way to work on one's social skills. Thus, she always had me involved in sports. She wasn't one of those moms who purchased the latest, coolest gear and signed me up hoping the coach developed me into an athlete.

My mom was on the field and court (backyard) with me. She taught me how to throw a strike and shoot a free throw. She not only supported me in the stands, she was the third base coach for my baseball team. She, along with the other two female coaches (one being my cousin), taught the team how to play and we were dominant—winning first place three years in a row. I didn't understand as a child why so many coaches got upset because my team beat theirs. Then I realized we were the only team with an all-female coaching staff. My mom congratulated me when I succeed, encouraged me when I failed, and always held me accountable for my shortcomings.

I want to thank my mom for everything she's done, and is still doing for me. She's been my number one supporter since birth and she's the reason I strive to become better every day. It takes two to make a baby and a village to raise it. Well, my mother was the village chief. Thanks for everything Mom, especially the quality time you spent raising me. You aren't just beautiful on the inside and out, you're beauty itself. I love you.

Sincerely, Your First Born
Marcus



"You Only Got One"

Jeanine Elam

Logan



“Big mama you my mama” I stated a matter-a-factly to the beautiful, brown skinned, black & gray haired older woman seated across from me at the kitchen table. Taking a sip of her P.E.T milk creamed coffee she abruptly returned her cup to the table. Nostrils widened, eyes closely fixated on me she spoke- not angrily, sternly, yet I

sensed notes of sadness. *"I'm not cha mama – I'm ya grandmama!"* You got a mama & even though she might not be doing right by ya'll she's still ya mama.

"The good lord only blesses ya with one, so you better be thankful to even know ya mama. You hear me chile?" "Yeah big mama I hear you, I hear you." As I walk down these halls those very words echo out to my existence, capturing my thoughts & guiding my actions, words towards all who occupy this space with me. I've encountered numerous women of various ages who know

not the definition of mother; the love, the nurturing. In fact, too many mothers equate a grunt and push into the first but not last slap they're misguided minds will stumble upon.

The youngest of six, my mother is the only one amongst her siblings to finish high school and attend college if only for a little while. Rather it be teaching my brother and me every derogatory word she knew equivalent to the "n" word for each ethnicity as a lesson against racism, or making homemade ornaments for the tree, I thought my mom was amazing! But, raising a sick child coupled with drug usage can snuff out the fire of a marriage that once burned with such passion and love.

My father's abandonment only drove my mom down a darker road. A functional addict who worked countless shifts of overtime yet my brother and I found ourselves cloaked around a space heater telling jokes a many of winters due to having no heat. I began to loath my mother throughout my teenage years and during my 18th year on this earth she passed. Not in the literal sense of dying, but moving out of state, out of my life, out of my heart.

The day after Easter 2003 my big mama calls to inform me that my mother was there. I nonchalantly replied "I don't care", but Big mama's next words stirred up something inside of me I couldn't explain, "Jeanine, ya mama here to stay." I arrived at big mama's house where my mama sat in the kitchen beautiful as ever, pretty skin, all her teeth, weight still maintained. I questioned had she been to rehab and she answered "No."—how long she'd been clean

and that very day was her first. I'm thinking we're up for a trip back down memory lane, but surprisingly, mama proved me wrong.

I got arrested in 2005 and my mom's been influential in how I move in these walls. Lessons such as say excuse me when people are talking or don't walk in between people conversing makes so much sense to me now. Seeing as though the younger generation has yet to grasp these concepts. Cliché saying "birds of a feather flock together" or "1 monkey don't stop the show" I get it mama- I get it!

To this very day my mom is STILL drug free because she made a choice in 2003, she got tired. Tired of giving the dough boys all her money; tired of being away from her family; but most importantly, she was tired of not being in her children's lives. My mother's living proof that you can overcome any obstacle you put your mind, heart, and soul into. So, in honor of MOTHER'S DAY, this piece is for you Ms. Elam- your highs, your lows, your resilience, and your becoming. I love you Mama!



"BOO KITTY" (Everybody's Momma) Curtis Sanders Jr. Kewanee

I have the great honor of having many awesome women in my life, many of them being mothers. My amazing wife, Victoria, my daughters, Cheyanne, Rochelle and To'Daé. Their moms, Missy and Jackie. My son's mother, Mignon. My sisters, Danielle, Robyn, Michelle, Mandy and Shelly. My mother-in-law, Karen and godmother, Vivian; may they both rest in power, as well as many other family members and friends, but my favorite mom is my mommy, Freddie Mae McCraw (a.k.a. "Boo Kitty"). My mom raised my three brothers and me in Roseland, on Chicago's far South Side.

As a single mother, she was our teacher, caretaker, guide, and best friend. We learned a lot from her, but nothing more important than faith and love.

She was our biggest supporter and our stern disciplinarian. Laughter was a very common sound in our home, along with music.



She loves music. She taught us to have a strong work ethic, be respectful, be accountable for your actions and to always help people whenever it's possible.

My mom was my confidant. I always appreciated how I could talk to her about anything and she'd keep it a "buck" with me. We still have this type of relationship today. Like most mothers in the hood, she had more sons than biological ones. At last count, Boo Kitty has about 20 sons! She's quick to say she doesn't like any of us, but we know she loves all of us.

Often, I have to remind her that nothing she did caused me to come to prison; that it's all on me. She once told me, "Out of all my sons, I never really worried about you" (in prison or in the streets) because of my personality and my demeanor, because "people relate well to you". I know she worries a little though. I haven't seen her in a while due to COVID and me transferring to another facility, but we talk weekly.



I'm coming towards the end of my sentence and I cannot wait to see her, give her a big hug and hearing her scream "BOY PUT ME DOWN!"

Happy Mother's Day to all the wonderful moms in my life; to those women in custody and worldwide...

BUT ESPECIALLY to my BOO KITTY!

- Tron



"Mothers of The Earth"

Bobby Crawford

To the beautiful mothers of the earth, gorgeous, yet modest,
Loyal, respectful, honest and filled with so much promise,
The epitome of femininity with endowment, that hints towards
diversity, while pursuing a pursuant proclivity to pursue positive
productivity. To me, you are a goddess.

A mother is defined by her ability to intertwine, a beautiful heart,
spirit, body and mind to create a woman of a very rare kind,
A mother, dignified and compassionate, who not only preach it, but
practice it, the ultimate peace seeking and motivational speaking, the
inspirer of young minds to become intellectually inclined and,
socially refined an exemplary member of human
kind.

The mother, the teacher, the doctor, the lover, the principle woman
above any other, the beautiful mothers of the earth, in essence
you're all goddesses, whose wisdom and knowledge preceded that of
anyone's colleges.

Passed down from generation to generation,
The esoteric information only mentions in secret conversation,
That's why it's so many mothers, sisters and uncelebrated cousins are
continuously separated from their husbands because the power y'all
possess is beyond explanation.

The womb that truly produced the nation,
Without hesitation or deep meditation, it's y'all who deserve the
highest form of admiration.

I know this isn't taught in traditional education,
This knowledge is buried deep, in need of explanation.

So I'll sing your praise for the rest of my days!

In the hopes to enlighten a few to your true motherly ways
To all you beautiful, goddess, my sisters to whom I pay homage,
Who don't get the due that belongs to you cause most men are in
mental bondage, but to the unshackled mind, it ain't hard to find;
y'all are already ahead of the curve and I just wanna
be to one of y'all the kind of man all of y'all
deserve.

Happy Mother's Day

Love, Pastor Bobby Crawford



"A Mother's Struggle"

John Williams

House Poet, TWO ROADS

Oftentimes it slips my mind
Perhaps I could not see,
The sacrifice you've made in my life
With all you've done for me.

Respect is due, lord knows it's true
For you have paid the price,
Denying yourself for someone else
That's how you've lived your life.

It hasn't been easy, this I know
I've seen what you've been through,
The give and take those test of faith
So little that you could do,

So simple these words that I write
They're all I have to give,
A testimony, for my one and only
The reason I'm able to live.

This poem is my way to thank you
I pray that you're able to see,
Oh mother forever and all time
Thank you for living in me.



"Black Queen"

Beautiful Black Queen
Open up your eyes
Take a look inside yourself
I'm sure you'd be surprised,

Take a look inside your soul
What is that you see?
Can't you see the best of you and
All you're meant to be?

Is it clear, just who you are?
Can't you see your worth?
Can't you see that you were blessed,
Long before your birth?



A crown was placed upon your head
For truly you are a Queen,
The mother of the universe
A reflection of your king,

I know this life is hard at times
A struggle with every breath,
Pulling constantly at your soul
Until there's nothing left,

But who you are, says it all,
Don't you realize?
All the power is in your hands
Please open up your eyes,

Strength is there, inside of you
In this there is no doubt,
It is up to you, to know it's true
And let your essence out,

Look inside yourself Black Queen
Embrace the "one" within,
The "one" who's there
Is the "one" who cares,
For she is your closest friend.

"Letter of Gratitude"

(to My Loving Mother, from Your Son)

Rockie Lee Douglas

Dear MOM,

I feel incredibly grateful to have you as my Mom. When I think of you, so many different memories come to mind—memories which will live in my head and heart for a lifetime. One thing I remember the most is you were—and still are—ALWAYS there for me no matter what the circumstances. Even now I'd be spending the rest of my life in prison if it weren't for you. You've shown me complete acceptance, love and understanding. Even though I wasn't the perfect child, you were the perfect mother to me.

My happiness has always been your happiness. If I ever needed you, you always made time for me. You were always rooting for me. You've always had my back. You have no idea how comforting that's been in my life. You taught me how to love unconditionally and have an open heart. You've shown how women can have patience and the ability to run the house and still fulfill their dreams.



You taught me one can rise above their circumstances. I remember, during my childhood, you sitting at the dining room table at home spending sleepless nights studying for medical exams using your flashcards. You worked so hard to earn your degree. Then, once you graduated, I saw you put your very best into each job you've ever had. You worked even harder to be a great Mom.

You taught me to give my very best at everything I do. You taught me how to think for myself. For as long as I can remember, you were always the person I looked up to. So strong. So sensitive and so pretty. 😊

You always provided stability within our family, full of laughter and full of love, especially on the holidays (lots of presents). I know these are things parents are supposed to do for their children, but I don't think anyone else could've done it any better.

Thanks to you, we always had safety, security, food, shelter and most important, lots of love.



I appreciate how you constantly worked so hard to show your love in the most selfless ways. Thank you for the laundry, the housekeeping, taking care of me when I was sick, and the special treats on holidays or for no occasion at all. Thank you for giving me advice and space when I needed them. You loved me with all your heart. Your love for me has never changed. In fact, it doubled when I needed it the most. I was naïve back then to understand all your sacrifices in this ever-changing world.

Your love is one of the only constants. I'm so grateful we have such a strong relationship. I can talk and discuss anything with you. All my life, I've searched for inspiration to deal with the troubles in life, but little did I know and after all these years, my steps would return to you. You are my idol. You endured bone crushing pain by bringing me into this world, and you made sure I was happy even when you were facing hard times.



I remember how proud you were when I graduated high school and attended college. I was able to achieve this success because of your encouragement. It inspired me to work hard and achieve what seemed to be impossible. What have I done to deserve a mother like you? I thank god for making you my mother.

You've shown me how women can have patience and the ability to run the house, raise a child and still fulfill her dreams. I learned to respect women from you. You were—and still are—a loving and caring mother; teaching me many valuable lessons no educational facility could've taught me.

I apologize for all those times I argued with you and told you I knew what's best for me. You were right all along. Mom, I love you so much! Even though I act all grown up and mature, my heart still longs to become that little boy who used to spend most of his time with his mother.



God! How we used to have so much fun outdoors: bike riding, visiting beaches, boating, four wheeling, and taking road trips and family vacations. I miss those days.

I may act like a know-it-all in front of you, but not a day goes by without me asking you for your advice. I've always idolized you. Did you know, whenever my friends would say "Your mom's so beautiful!" I'd feel really proud?

I had an amazing childhood, all thanks to you. Really, what it all boils down to is you were-and still are-the most magnificent mom I could've asked for. I want you to always know that I love you and cherish you more than life itself. Today, through this letter, I wanted to tell you how much I love you, appreciate you and no matter how far apart we are, you'll always remain the most important person in my life. 😊

Love Always and Forever, Rockie

"Appreciated"

Katie Manning

Decatur

I feel Mother's Day isn't just for all mothers out there, but for the aunts, uncles, siblings, grandparents, and all the other people filling in, in our absence. The people who're giving our children a parental figure to look up to deserve to know they're appreciated everyday as well as on days like Mother's Day and Father's Day. Let's not forget the parents who're doubling up on parental duties being both mom and dad! Let these people know they're appreciated this Mother's Day! A simple card and a few words go a long "way."



"Cycles"

I love your little fingers and your little
toes, your slobbery kisses, even the
boogers in your nose.

You're the light of my life, the apple of
my eye, even though I didn't show it
While I was getting high.

Learning to parent you from prison all
I can do is try. I know you're sad
because I'm away and it hurts to hear
you cry

Someday I'll be there to be your mom
again. I hope you can break the cycle
because that's the ultimate plan.

I love you so much you're the apple of
my eye please discontinue this cycle of
getting high.



"The Visible Woman"

Kareem J. Cobbins

Illinois River

I see you shining Ms. Ebony and Ivory wherever you are
You will never be invisible to me.

I see your face highlighted in mighty men,
You've got the blood of a lamb flowing through your skin,
It's contagious!

The Visible Woman,
HERstory in my eyes will always stand for something.
When you fall or lose your balance don't worry,
If you're laying down because you're ill or amputated, stand firm in
spirit.

Your legacy, I will always celebrate it,
And I'll be your voice when you can't speak.
Those titles for you are just too weak.
I'll walk with you to the corners of this world,
Sweet lady, if I have to I'll push you,
I'll never get tired of being your aid.

After all you pushed out life into the world,
It was the ultimate longing for every boy and girl,
Inside of you is where dreams are made.

The Visible Woman

Yeah I'm not blinded; I'm in awe of your presence.

I thank god for that rib!

It's defined your beauty, shape and elegance, coupled with
trailblazing limbs; it was the beginning of your sentence.

You've provided me with a story to tell oh! How he molded you
so well,

You've transcended the standards of essence.

The Visible Woman

The Epitome of an immortal custom,

Who in my eyes will always stand for something.

On this day, I declare you the model for independence.



"A Mother's Love"

Franklin Heindricks



Thank you for your love
and all you've done
for not giving up
when you probably should have
for always being there.

Even when I didn't care
See, I blamed the world for the
hand I was dealt,
When all along, I was the one
who shuffled the deck,

And pulled every card I had
And when I saw my hand, I
went all in.
I should have just walked away,
Like so many have,
They turned their backs
And ran away,
But no, not you,
You stayed,
You loved me EVERYDAY
Another chance I'd blow
Another chance you would give.
I may not deserve the love I had,
But I thank God for the love I
have.

So thank you mother,
for all the love you've done.

All the love
And I want to say that
I love you more than words
can describe.



"Honor Thy Mother"

Khaaliq Smith

Honor thy mother

Can you please forgive me for all the stuff I used to do? I am still my mother's son. The son you once knew can no longer be found, as I've grown mentally, spiritually, and physically, I understand now the honor of a mother's love.

Honor thy mother

I never understood much until I lived life in a prison cell and off the pedestal you put me on. I feel you picked me up and made me feel it wasn't a bad thing the strength of a mother's love.

When everyone else has left, you still remain. I wouldn't know who I'd be without the love of my mother's hands. Like the day without tomorrow's sun.

I truly know now what it means to honor thy mother; the sacrifices made for me, my sisters and brothers there ain't nothing like a mother's love...



"When a Mother Cries"

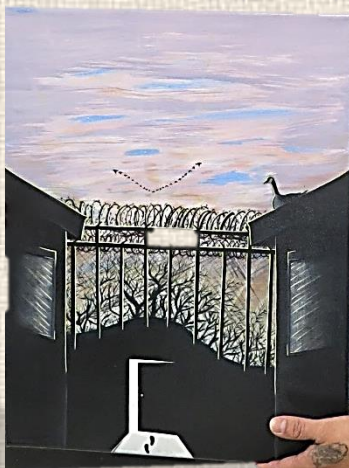
Evigan Marcos

English

Mother's Day is a big deal to me. In respect to all opinions, Mother's Day is every day! But since we have a special day for our mothers, let's go all out on this day; A day of celebration.

There's not enough paper or words to express how I feel about my mother, but I'll share a few with you all. My mother has a saying which I learned long ago, *Úna madre es para cien hijos, pero cien hijos no son para una madre*” It means “one mother is for 100 children, but 100 children are not for one mother.”

That's so true. A mother cries when she finds out she's with child and mothers also cry when the child kicks while they are in the womb. A mother cries when she gives birth to the child and a mother cries when she watches over them. She holds her baby in her arms as she feeds him. A mother cries when she has to let go so she can rest and a mother cries when she watches him sleep



. A mother cries when the baby takes his first steps and says his first words and a mother cries when he hurts himself or becomes sick.

A mother cries and rejoices when her child is well and healthy again and when playtime starts for him. A mother cries when the child is all grown up and when he gets in trouble and a mother cries when she could only pray in hopes that all turns out well.

A mother feels the pain of her child because they're connected from day one, and she cries because we're "*flesh of their flesh and blood of their blood.*" A mother will lay down her life and protect her child, like a lion protecting their cub. The cries of a "one and only" mother are tears which move like the waves of the ocean, and her love is so immense, like the depths of the sea; like the vastness of the stars in the cosmos. Who knows how many there are?

Her love is unconditional like no other. What I do know is this: the love and cries of a mother...MY MOTHER, are treasures which aren't compared to anything in the world! My mother is my heart, whom I cherish; she's my friend, my teacher, my blood. My mother always reminds me to *live this morning as if it is my very last.*

In closing, let's ALL "appreciate them", like 2pac said...Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers, "*we all appreciate it!*"

"Cuando Una Madre Llora"

Evigan Marcos

Español

El día de la madre es un gran problema para mí. Con respecto a todas las opiniones, ¡El Día de la Madre es todos los días! Pero como tenemos un día especial para nuestras madres, vamos a darlo todo en este día; Un día de celebración.

No hay suficiente papel ni palabras para expresarlo que siento por mi madre, pero compartiré algunas con todos ustedes. Mi madre tiene un dicho que aprendí hace mucho tiempo, “Una madre es para cien hijos, pero cien hijos no son para una madre” Significa “una madre es para 100 hijos, pero 100 hijos no son para una madre”.

Eso es tan cierto. Una madre llora cuando se entera de que está embarazada y las madres también lloran cuando el niño patea mientras están en el útero. Una madre llora cuando da a luz al niño y una madre llora cuando los cuida.

Ella sostiene a su bebé en sus brazos mientras lo alimenta. Una madre llora cuando tiene que dejarlo ir para poder descansar y una madre llora cuando lo ve dormir. Una madre llora cuando el bebé da sus primeros pasos y dice sus primeras palabras y una madre llora cuando se lastima o se enferma.

Una madre llora y se regocija cuando su hijo está bien y saludable de nuevo y cuando comienza la hora de jugar para él. Una madre llora cuando el niño ya es adulto y cuando se mete en problemas y una madre llora cuando solo podía rezar con la esperanza de que todo saliera bien.

Una madre siente el dolor de su hijo porque estuvieron conectados desde el primer día, y llora porque somos carne de su carne y sangre de su sangre". Una madre dará su vida y protegerá a su hijo, como un león que protege a su cachorro. Los gritos de una madre "única" son lágrimas que se mueven como las olas del mar, y su amor es tan inmenso, como las profundidades del mar; como la inmensidad de las estrellas en el cosmos. ¿Quién sabe cuántos hay?

Su amor es incondicional como ningún otro. Lo que sí sé es esto: el amor y el llanto de una madre... ¡MI MADRE, son tesoros que no se comparan con nada en el mundo! Mi madre es mi corazón, a quien aprecio; ella es mi amiga, mi maestra, mi sangre. Mi madre siempre me recuerda que viva esta mañana como si fuera la última.

Para terminar, TODOS "apreciémoslas", como dijo 2pac... Feliz Día de la Madre a todas las madres, "¡todos lo apreciamos!"

We would like to thank Mr. Ricardo Vega & Mr. Sergio Castro for helping us translate this article.

"Life of a C/O Momma"

C/O Jackson

Kewanee

For me, I was a single mom looking for job security, financial stability and to gain self-fulfillment. My ultimate goal was to obtain a degree in law or to become a state trooper. However, after giving birth to my daughter, plans definitely changed.

One night while studying to become a beautician (why? I don't know), my dad says "*Hey Linda, did you see this?*" It was an article in the local newspaper about a potential job working in the prison. My reply to my dad was "*Okay, what does that have to do with me??*" He explained, "It would lessen the burden on raising your daughter, and it wouldn't hurt to at least see if they'd hire you."

I was only a few months from finishing beauty school when what my father's words replayed in my mind and I said, "*It wouldn't hurt to check it out.*" So, when I went to the personnel we talked about the job and its benefits and how I could use this opportunity to take care of my daughter. I got hired and there was a lot to learn. I was a new mother; I left my daughter with my parents and I was full of emotions. I thought "*What if my mom doesn't put her to bed like I do?*" or "*What if she wakes up and I'm not there, and she cries all night?*"

Although I knew she was in good hands, I still sit here 22 years later and that still plays in my mind. That baby girl I left way back when is now 25 years old. She's survived being a daughter of a correctional officer. Yes, things were different for her growing up, as I made decisions to provide the best that I knew for her back in 2001. But, don't get it confused, because we had rough times.

I had to work second shift for over 9 years! Funny how the daughters (and sons) of c/o's quickly learn the lingo of the work schedule. Whenever she had an event on the holidays, like Thanksgiving or Christmas, I can still hear that little voice say "*Take a personal day mommy.*"

Her days were very hard, as she'd never go to sleep until she saw my face when I arrived at home at 10 P.M. I'd always assure her by saying "*Now go to bed before mommy gets off so you're not tired in the morning.*" But she NEVER did!

Even as a child, I knew she was worried about my safety and only wanted to make sure I made it home safely. The other side of those rough times for my daughter was mommy's lack of patience after dealing with juveniles for 8 hours daily.

The hard exterior that was being built made me a mess and I had to remind myself many times that *my daughter was not my work*. When I look back at the things I endured, mainly the vocabulary, which became the norm as a Juvenile Justice Specialist, it makes me cringe.

At this time, my daughter was self-sufficient and independent as most nights after work; mommy was finding ways to deal with the pressure of the previous work day and wasn't in the right mindset for my daughter.

My lovely daughter would say, "*Mommy, that's okay. I know you're tired from working all night with the Bad Boys.*" At this point, I must mention, that as a single mommy, working in corrections, there's no way I would've made it without a good support system.

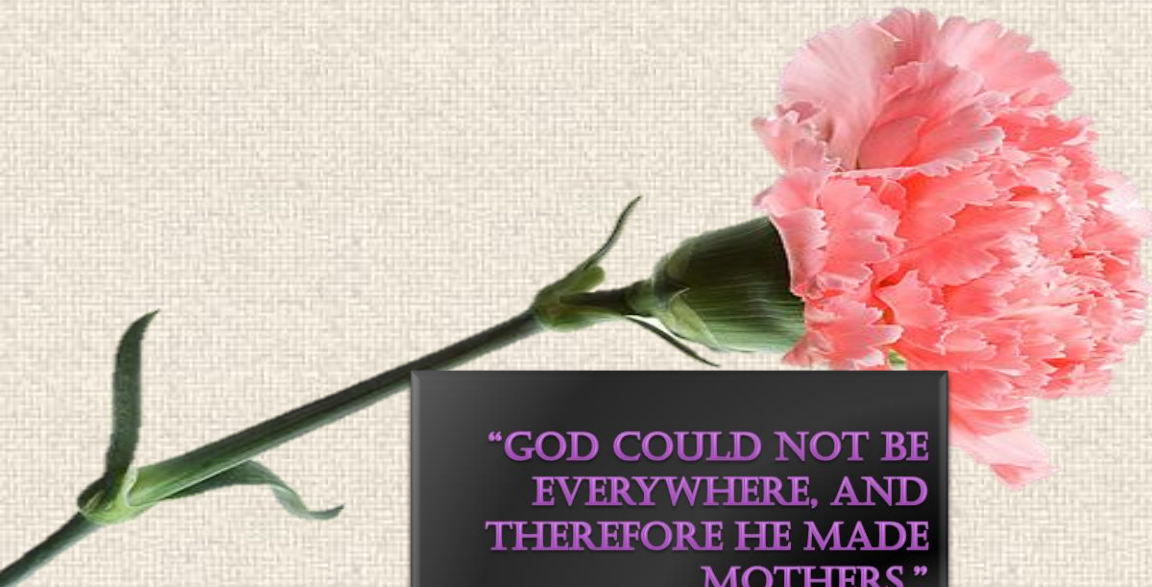
God truly blessed me with the most amazing parents, family and friends a C/O mom could ever ask for. The numerous holidays, ball games, and weekends I missed, they were always there stepping up and helping.

Yes, that 25 year old girl has grown into the most amazing woman! She's mentioned (jokingly) that she might apply to work with me, because she got a little bit of that rough exterior, but I said "*I don't think so, honey.*" I honestly feel she hesitates to show emotion as she endured one of the most difficult and trying times in my life.

The main thing which saved us both is our *faith* in God. I'm a firm believer that God places us in certain situations, and he truly knows our story long before we do! I'm now the proud mommy of three beautiful girls. Yes, I had two more during my career.

The atmosphere alone was such a difference because I was able to work my 8+ hours and go home to my girls and have a positive attitude. Yes, I was older and when I say older, that's an understatement. I'll tell you I would've never been able to endure the situations I've had throughout my life; not only as a mother, but as a woman.

I salute all the C/O momma's on this Mother's Day, and all of the working moms (single or not), you're truly amazing individuals...but these mommas behind the gate (or wall) are a different breed!

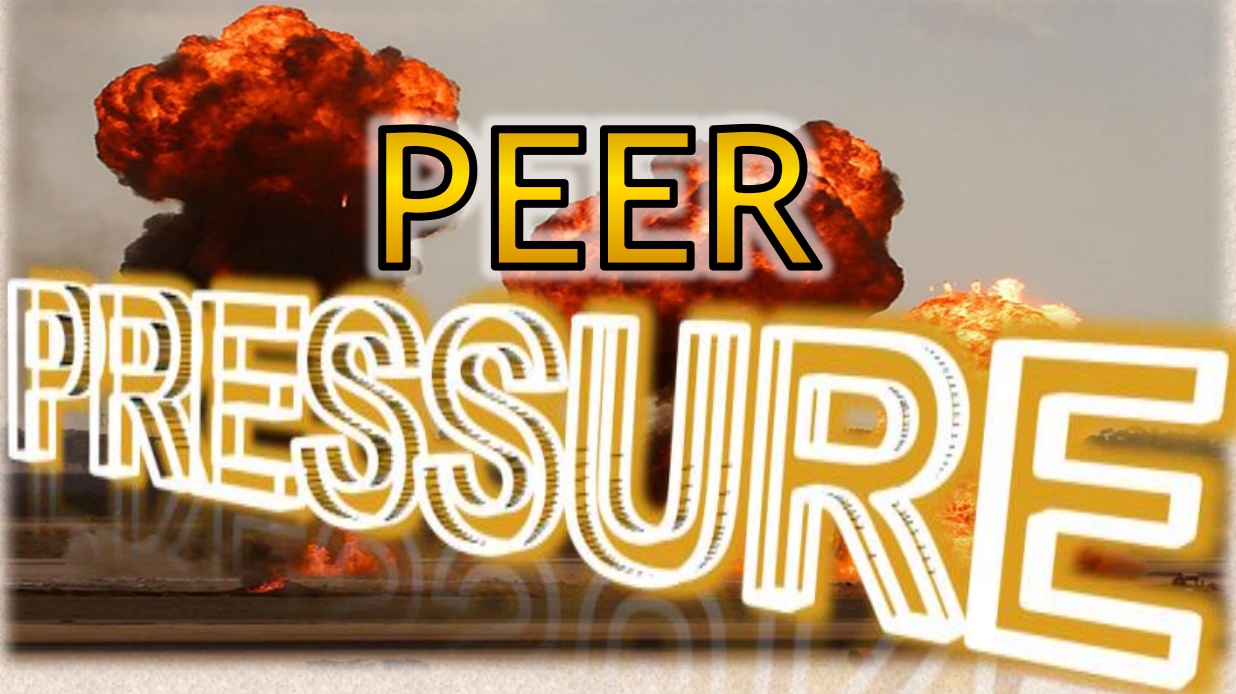


**"GOD COULD NOT BE
EVERYWHERE, AND
THEREFORE HE MADE
MOTHERS."**

- Rudyard Kipling

***TWO ROADS** is an ever-involving community for social justice. We would like to recognize Ms. Jackson and all of the Mother's who are Correctional Officers, as they take on the tasks of working with the men and women in custody, while also raising their own children. This article is to shine light on the people whom we encounter on a daily basis.*

TWO ROADS *presents*



PEER PRESSURE

We'd like sharing your unique story to our confined and non-confined readers concerning how **PEER PRESSURE** has had an impact on the lives of you, your family and the community. If this has impacted you, we'd like to hear your story. In addition, your family and friends can then share their stories as they're impacted by these situations as well. Feel free having them share their experiences from your incarceration. **Please encourage them to send a submission.**

SUBMIT NO LATER THAN JULY 1ST

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

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

Mail submission, photo to:

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

TWO ROADS is now ONLINE

Share it with your loved ones!

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

- 1) Go to "**IDOC HOME PAGE**" (idoc.illinois.gov)
- 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 previous issues and submissions from the many souls who've 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.

TWO ROADS

FATHER'S DAY

It's that time of the year for you to show your love to your father or the father figure(s) in your life. Or, you may want to reflect on the struggles of being a father while incarcerated. 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.

Without staff support:
Mail submission, photo to:

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 June 2nd



TWO ROADS

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Part I of II