

TWO BROADS

Mother's Day

Special Tribute Issue

Volume 20



Part II of II

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

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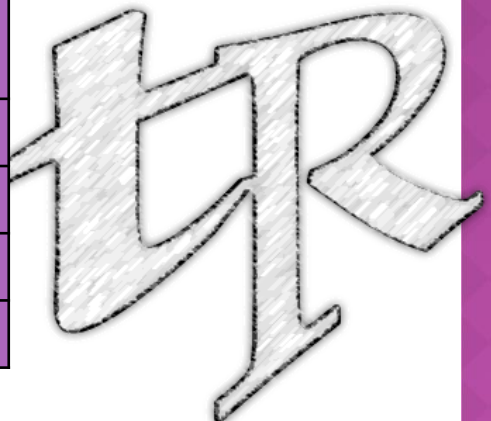
Mother's Day

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Created by Jesse Tokich



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 into 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.

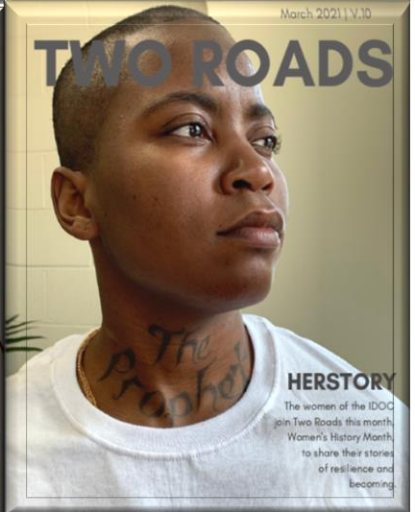
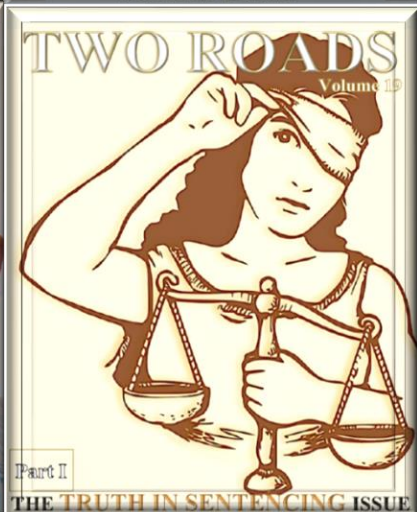
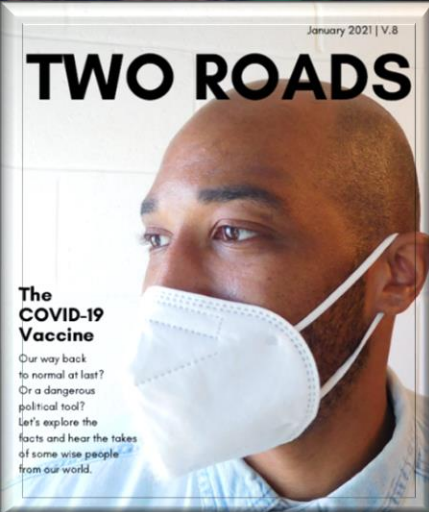
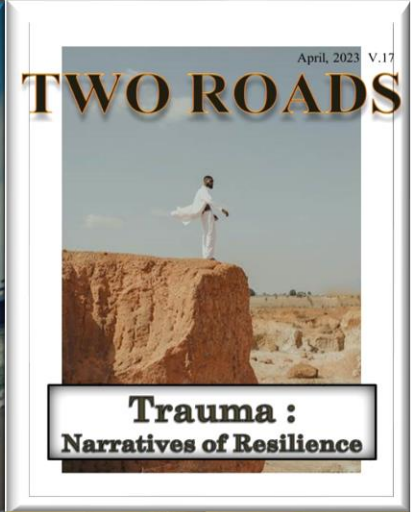
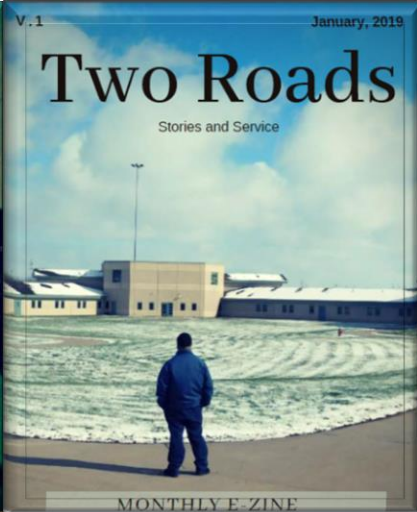
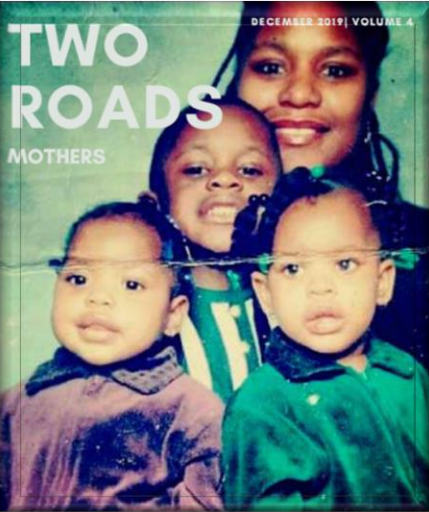
TWO ROADS Editorial Staff

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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

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



Tawana Pope

"A Mother's Love"

One of the most important assets of a child's life is a mother's love. Her existence in her child's life is crucial to them being told and validating who they are and who they become. So when they grow up they can show up as that person in all areas of life. A mother plays multiple (2 children) roles in a child's development, as she is a teacher in every aspect of a child's developmental growth – social emotional, physical, cognitive and independence.

A mother is a son's first true love. Especially their first son, who is a mother's last true love. Sons need their mothers to teach them self-control and self-regulation. The bond between a mother and their son makes him feel secure and confident. Studies indicate that boys who do not have a healthy bond with their moms in early childhood could be hostile and aggressive in their later years, or insecure in relationships and establishing goals, among others.

More importantly, when a mother loves a son, she contributes to his future while teaching him how to nurture emotional intelligence, teaching them to recognize and express, their own feelings and to be

more attuned to the feelings of others.

A mother knows what her son needs and attempts to give him unconditional love, spend time together teaching various life skills, and allow him room to make mistakes. But there are other things that they need that mother's often fail to see. An example is a male role model in the household that a mother will step into that role to protect her cub. A woman cannot raise a man but she can guide him to man that is a father to all God.

As a mother, we attempt to expose male children to follow after Christ; to fulfill that empty space their earthly father who is not present has left. A man learns from his mother moral and cultural values. Proverbs 22:6 states *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and or even when he is old he will not depart from it."*

As a mother of two male children, it was hard being the mother and stepping up to play football; make ends meet and work in a dead-end job. For me, I had two children with no support from their dad, a drug addiction and no guidance. I was trying to tell my sons to be better, but, I was not in a position to promote that because my behavior was just the opposite. Mother's hope for the best but sometimes that is just not enough.

I realized that my actions affected my children and everyone around me. I exposed my son to incarceration, drug addiction, selling drugs etc. But all he saw was that Mom was an addict, and dad was locked up for the 5th time.

Mothers become caretakers instead of caring for their sons from a place of brokenness. Sons learn from their primary caregiver which is most of the time their mother and in a son's eyes she can do no wrong. Mothers attempt to create a balance and teach their sons about tenderness, love, affection, and so much more so that they understand that it's okay to show affection, it doesn't make them weak but human.

In my lived experience, with working with formerly incarcerated men that have not been given a brave space to be vulnerable or express themselves to regulate the temporary discomfort. That is a catastrophe waiting to happen.

They will eventually be in prison or locked in a prison mindset of failure. If we ask men, who are repeated offenders, "were you allowed to express emotions?" They would probably say "nowhere." Because mothers would say "*shut up boy stop crying*" and at that moment their emotional needs were shut down. That gave birth to emotional bondage.

When a mother neglects a son emotionally, he may suffer "insecure attachment" issues involving avoidance of close relationships, general fearfulness of being abandoned (again) and reduced ability to experience genuine happiness in relationships. She is his first teacher, emotional nurturer, meeting their emotional needs, physical needs; these are the core roles of a mother's love.

The Emotional Nurturer

When a man is hurt, disappointed, rejected, or discouraged, he runs home to see mom because she gives him the boost of assurance and confidence to face life. A mother's nurturing never stops being needed by her children. I never stop learning from my own mom, never stop needing her and neither will my sons. Society has attempted to portray that it is not manly to cry, express emotions nor show you care.

The Relationship Coach

She teaches quick stress relief in the moment. Raising a man-child as a single mom. Emotional awareness the ability to remain comfortable enough with your emotions to react in constructive ways, even in the midst of a perceived attack.

The Home Caretaker

When my kids were small, my role as the home caretaker includes being the chef, housekeeper, groundskeeper, laundress and more. Over time he grows and she begins to include them in these undertakings so they can learn the life skills they need in a safe, "it's okay to fail" environment.

Brain of the Family

While this may be dad's role in some families in most families I know, mom carries the mental weight of the family. As the brain of the family moms often have to think and remember things for everyone—which is mentally exhausting. Mom can make a meal out of leftovers, pay bills with an empty bank account



groceries, make dentist appointments while planning the next family vacation, and decide what to buy for Christmas presents— the role of the mother as the brain for her family members is an important one.

The Spiritual Guide

My final role as a mother is as a spiritual guide, teaching faith and moral values to my children. This is perhaps the mother's role with the most vital impact. Guiding her children to be a kind human being who loves people and loves God is my life's greatest work.

I have talked about the need for a mother's love, but let us not forget that a lack of a mother's love affects how a man shows up on his own. However, those who survive are plagued by mental health issues and are vulnerable to exploitation and criminal behavior.

Sadly, the vast majority of maternally deprived adults seeking therapeutic treatment evidence signs of relational trauma and present with developmental disasters, addictions, mood disorders and complex trauma.

A mother gives her son unconditional love. To every man that may read this:

"I am a woman and I grew up without my mom but I overcame by rewriting the story, picking up the broken pieces and creating something beautiful."



I am leaving you all with this. I am not your mom but I can say I love you son. LIVE TO SEE IT HAPPEN!! **There is nothing that can compare to a mothers Love it's indescribable.**

Tawana Pope currently serves as a Case Manager at Deborah's Place in Chicago, IL, where she provides resources to women who are in need of affordable housing. She formerly worked with incarcerated men and women at St. Leonard's Adult HS in Chicago.

Tawana's passion for social justice comes from having lived and overcome many of the same barriers and experiences of the people she encounters, who live in poverty. These included some of the following (high school drop out, teen mom, ex-offender, homeless, drug addict, prostitution and suicidal ideation). As a Social Worker, her passion is to utilize her experience and knowledge to enhance opportunities for those that have been impacted by trauma.



Tawana graduated from Harold Washington, and enrolled in Northeastern Illinois University to obtain her BA degree in Social Work in May 2015. In 2016 Tawana received her MSW from Dominican University.

"Momma" Tyrone Jones

You have always been a strong stable tower,

A pillar of hope and stability.

Your light shines like a beacon of love,

To see me through the dark and despairing

Moments of life.

Your words of wisdom are a bright path,

Always leading me to God.

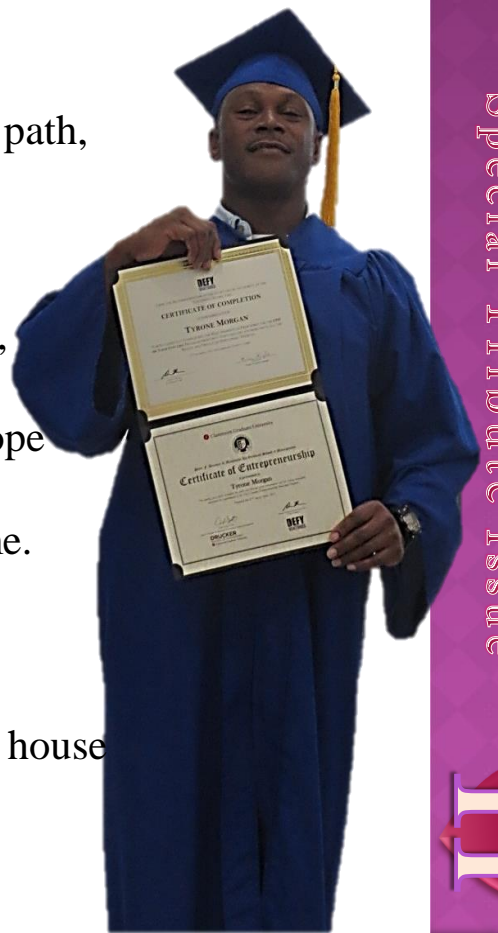
You're the essence of who I am,

My symbol of strength, love & hope

all whipped into one word—home.

You are, and always will be, my light house

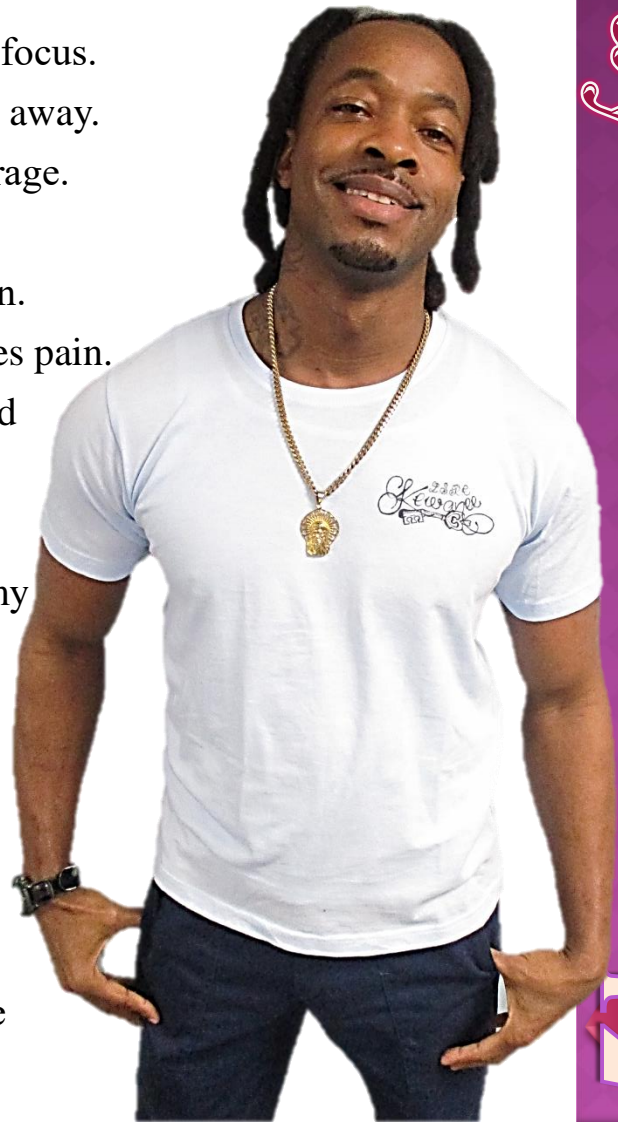
momma.



"Letter to My Momma"

Jarvis Moore

Ma', it's almost a year.... Hurts like seconds ago.
Requested phone list displayed your number....
Deranged my mental. Mother's day approaching... heart relapsed back to
broken. Tears filling the page with words. How I'm doing is the number
one question? That question inflicts pain like a weapon!
I'm good.... I repeat the lie soft spoken.
From the outside looking in.... your boy focus.
Your last breath damn near took my faith away.
Praying five times daily...to sleeping in rage.
Tossing and turning ...mind on think.
Whispers I changed...produced from pain.
Ma, I found peace...when my pen empties pain.
Your departure changed me... I really had
to find me. I lost my first love. All your
wrong justified through my eyes...no
matter the whispers. You're a queen in my
eyes... it's been hard. I wish we could
talk...I love you more...your words.
They really starting to add up... you
love me more by the second, minutes,
hours, days, weeks, and months
and years. Your love grew me... if I had
one wish. I'll wish that you could be here
to see my Growth....



"My Best Friend"

Sarah Gumm

Logan

"All that I am or hope to be I owe to my mother."

-Abraham Lincoln

My mom embodies every beautiful quality that I strive to mirror in myself. Caring; Loving; Humble; Strong; Faithful;...just a few of the many words which describe her.

From my earliest memory, I've always been able to count on mom to support me, dry my tears and make me laugh, build me up and never let me down. She raised me to have an unbreakable faith in God and the ability to love unconditionally. After God, family is the most important thing to her and she sacrificed daily to make sure my brother, sister and I never wanted for anything. She worked hard so she could afford to send us to Christian schools, and would gladly go without if it meant we had what we needed.

During my darkest days, mom has continued to be right by my side. Even though we can't see each other as much as we'd like, we talk and email. And she's always sending sweet cards and notes to make me smile.

The strength mom's shown me during the eleven years I've been incarcerated has helped me remained strong as well. The separation from her and the rest of the family is the most difficult part of this, but the memories we have and closeness we share helps to keep me positive, and I look forward to the day when I can be with them again.

My mom taught me what's truly important in life –not things or money or social status, but holding our loved ones close and never taking a single moment for granted. She's my very best friend and I thank god every day that I'm her daughter.



My mother and me after the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
("Can't wait for Mom-Daughter dates again!")

"Rehash"

Carlos McDougal



House Poet, TWO ROADS

I ask that you forgive me for the distance I find it hard to think of you when you seem so far away. The thought of you brings me great pain and I feel it's better to keep thoughts of you locked in the cellar of my broken heart. You've been the source of my strength since I could talk and without you I feel weaker than I've ever felt in my life.

The reason I haven't thought of you is quite simple—the closer I get to the day I'm released from the hell I created for myself, it feels like jumping out of the fryer into the fire, how does life without you even look?

What will I do if I can't come to you for the sound advice you give when I'm in the countless binds I so gracefully find myself in? You're the heart that's beating in my chest as I type this letter to you. The air is getting rather thin in here almost like my lungs are collapsing at this very moment, how could you love someone so much you feel the moment they take their last breath?



I ask that you forgive me for the distance I find it hard to think of you when you seem so far away. The thought of you brings me great pain and I feel it's better to keep thoughts of you locked in the cellar of my broken heart. You have been the source of my strength since I could talk and without you I feel weaker than I've ever felt in my life.

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The air is getting rather thin in here almost like my lungs are collapsing at this very moment, how could you love someone so much you feel the moment they take their last breath? I ask that you forgive me for not being strong enough when you left this earth those pills were just a way to numb the pain of losing you.

I've cried every day since you died and I'm on the verge of tears right now I know people didn't understand the bond we had or the love I had for you. I couldn't even explain to you how much I love you because I don't quite understand it myself.

I envision my life with you by my side but now that you're gone how can I complete the mission I set out to do? You use to say that I had the power to be anything,

the power to do anything and that power was taken when you relinquished you power to god. I can't say that this has been easy but what I do know is that though we've been apart physically I feel your spirit every time I awaken from the dream of a life lived eons ago.

The person that I've become is a completely different person than you remember. I remember you and grams telling me that I was better than what I presented to the world. You have been my inspiration to pursue a life without the constant looking over your shoulder syndrome.

It was your laughter that kept me sane on those days I wanted to lose control; it was your smile that kept me from taking my own life. You are my salvation and to be honest you've been that throughout my entire life. I often wonder if I'll ever be able to love someone as deeply as I love you. I ask that you forgive me for not being there for you in your darkest hour, our last conversation was a complete disaster and if I hurt you I sincerely apologize.

I love you with all my heart and I hope you can hear me when I say this; you were perfection a glorious sight to behold I am honored to be the part of you that gets to shine I love you mommy.

Your favorite boy Carlos.....

"My Favorite Ladies (Angels)"

Evelyn Jackson

Logan

I was blessed from birth to have three women to help raise me into the woman I've become. I watched them gracefully go through struggles and hardships. Yet still stood on their own two feet and moved pass them all with only the grace from ALLAH. They never complained nor gave up fighting. They taught me the importance of our family values. My paternal grandmother, Helen Jackson had ten children.

She gave her all to them and her grandkids; her dedication was to them. She always put all of us before herself, when our mothers

weren't available she mothered us, she was the nurturing grandmother, she taught me how to be the loving mother / woman I am today. Helen Jackson became my angel at 95yrs young.

My maternal grandmother, Joann Edmonson had seven kids; she was stern and a straight to the point grandmother, she spoke her mind and didn't care about hurting anybodies feelings. She knew she had to be stern yet loving at the same time, to prepare us for future situations.



With her teaching us to stand up for ourselves we couldn't be taken advantage of, she taught us to protect ourselves, she taught us to face life with courage. She taught us to never depend in anyone but yourself, this way you know it'll get done and you eliminate disappointment from others. I'm blessed to share the same birthdate with her.

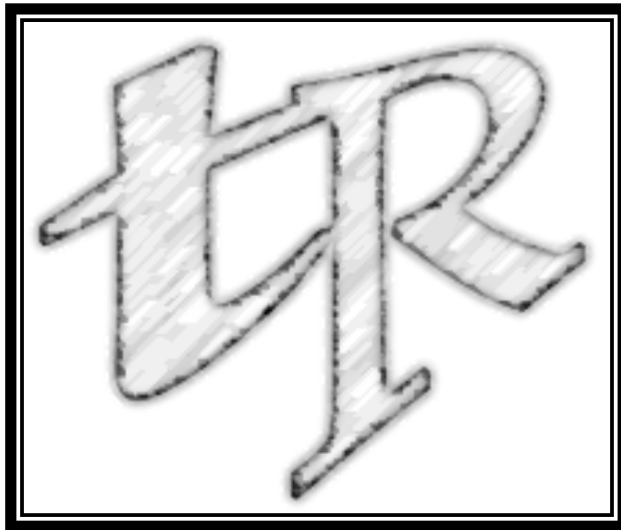
Joann Edmonson became my angel on December 14th 2018 at 75yrs young. My mother Debbie Boyd is the best mother, she's my best friend and I couldn't ask for a better mom, at 4'11 101lbs she carried the weight of the world on her back. She gave birth to five kids (3 boys and 2 girls); she endured losing two kids, my sister and brother, as well as her grandson (my son).

She has experienced every heartache a mother could, yet with every strike against her made her stronger, through it all she remained strong in her faith, steadfast in prayer, she never gave up hope and fought every obstacle and surpassed them. She battled C.O.P.D since 2011. She fought to breathe for many years.

Debbie Boyd became my angel April 5, 2023 at 65yrs young, all three of my favorite ladies/ angels has instilled a piece of them in me. I will honor them for the rest of my life. They are the reason for who I am today. I've been gifted the greatest gift ever, these three beautiful women as my role models and inspiration and motivation to do what they knew I could do in life. This triangle of women has given me love, sternness, and strength to go through this life I'm living.

All praise due to ALLAH for blessing me with these 3 powerful women, for those who know me now you see why I'm the way I am. I've inherited it from those that came before me; it will pass to those after me. My angels are all around me whispering for me to never give up, hold on your blessing is coming through all the pain Helen, Joann and Debbie, I will see you again in paradise, (inshallah) I love you. "When someone you love becomes a memory that memory becomes a treasure" I will forever cherish my treasures!

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



"The Mother's of all Mothers"

Zacheyius Thigpen

My great grandmother is the strongest woman I know, she's been through so much and had it hard all of her life yet she still managed to overcome every obstacle in her path and still come out on top. I actually felt the safest with grandma; grandma's house became my safe place you could really feel the genuine love through her actions, always ready to go to war for me to fight whatever the case was.

I would like to thank God for blessing me with a great grandmother as powerful as she is I also want to thank my grandmother for taking me and my little brother in when I was only two and my brother had just been born. Now that I'm older, I understand how hard it was on her trying to raise two boy's with limited means in the projects. Thanks for always keeping a roof over my head, and food in our stomach's as well as clothes on our backs. I remember times you would starve just so we could eat and I thank God for creating you so strong being the first of eight kids, and the only one still standing.



I remember what you told me word for word; and I'll tell you just like I told my son, *you want to be in them streets don't call my phone when you go to jail* and when I caught this case, you were there from the jump, **answered every call**, and every Sunday you visited in the county and you made sure I never missed commissary and even paid for my attorney. After all these years you're still here holding me down, stronger than ever and with so much energy that keeps her lit and match my fly. You know what I mean. I love you Momma and I love you G-Ma!



Happy Mother's Day

"Mama Bear and Granny Bear"

Delames Sullivan

Menard

I want to honor the woman that has been by my side since I was born and never gave up on me. My heart; my #1 fan, my mother, Monique Latreece Sullivan. As always I'm going to honor my mama every day, for the rest of my life.

My mother and I have been through so much together. Even when I started acting out and being bad and she would have to punish me, I still heard her calling me "*stinkabutt.*" I'm also honoring my lovely grandmother, my mom's mother, a triple OG, Regina Sullivan, R.I.P.

These two women are the sole motivation and the reason why I work day after day to be a better person and I put so much energy and passion into my music, because of them. My granny would call me, with that beautiful voice, and smile of hers "*D-Man*".

Although granny is in a better place and resting heavenly, she will forever be in my heart. I can hear mama and granny bear in my ear, saying "*be good and stay focused D-Man and we love you*". I love these two strong black women greatly and I promise to make things better, make your proud and dedicate my music to you.

Happy Mother's Day from your son and grandson

"Queens" DeMarcus Hillsman Centralia

Thank you TWO ROADS for giving us this opportunity to pay our respects to the Queens and beautiful women who we have been blessed to have in our lives. This is my 23rd year of incarceration and the only thing that has truly affected me in all of these years was the passing of my queen mother, Sonia C. Hillsman, in 2012.

She was my "She-ro"; this beautiful woman took great care of me, from the day she birthed me, until the day she left this earth. I was also blessed with five other Queens: Marilyn, Eva, Karen, Kathy and Sheree. These beautiful women have had my back, front and both sides before I could pronounce their names.

My aunts have showed me support an unconditional love and support since I could remember and it is the same to this very day. The relationships that I have with these women are amazing and invaluable; their presence alone has been very influential.

I look forward to the day when I can spend some quality time with these Queens and show them how much I appreciate them and love them for simply being them.



Happy Mother's Day to all the Queens!

"A Message to My Beloved Mom" (and the Beautiful Mothers of My Beautiful Children)

Shardon "Khalil" Gay

First and foremost, I'd like to say "ALL PRAISE BE TO THE MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL." For it is He who's bestowed the blessings of having such special women being a part of my life! It's He who blessed me with a mother, who exemplified the highest principle known to man, which is LOVE.

The love helped me understand the spiritual love our creator has for humanity. She nurtured me in my infancy, provided me with wisdom and guidance. She was swift in reward for making the right decisions, but was capable of applying discipline in error with the same love in my youth.

During the years, I considered myself a young man. She allowed me to explore my will and allowed me to choose and experience life to prepare becoming a man. As I matured, she allowed me to be me and warned me of the possible negative consequences for making the wrong decisions as well as the blessings and rewards of Allah for making the right ones.

She has continued to forgive me and clean my slate of all my past errors before her eyes.

This is why I know ALLAH and His amazing love, because this love is reflected through her. It seems impossible someone can love and be as loved as much as you.

I tell you every day that I love you, but I can never say it enough. So I am going to say it again, I LOVE YOU MOM, and Mother's Day is just another day, but you are special to me every second of life.

I have to extend a special thanks to the mothers of my children, for you also have a special place in my heart and the respect is higher than you would ever know! You've raised my children with love and sincerity. You've found ways to navigate them through the obstacles of the world.

Though I haven't always said it or showed it, I love you, respect you and honor you, for having and sustaining my children in my absence. I'm proud of you, though we probably didn't plan for life to go this way; I'm glad to have met you and can say we have something special we can share together through our children as a reminder of the good times.

I pray you can forgive me for any hardship caused by me that entered your life through my poor decisions. I love you and appreciate you.



HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

"My Appreciation"

Jesse Myers

Associate Editor, TWO ROADS

There's always been many women in my life who are mothers. These women are strong, enduring, resilient, wise, caring, and comforting. My Grandmother Mildred, the head and stronghold of our entire family, you've endured so much.

Seven times you carried life for a term and delivered them happy and healthy into this world. From them so much more life has been brought into this world. You endured grandfather throughout all his hard headedness and all his trials and tribulations. You've endured so much stress and anxiety from me and many of your children and grandchildren.

You've stood by us all in every possible way, wanting only the best for each of us. The aroma of your homemade meals and baked goods forever run through my mind; the taste's lie on the tip of my tongue and the thought of them warms my heart. Your wisdom, kind words, endless hugs, and warmth comfort us and will continue to comfort us throughout the test of time.



My mother Debbie, you're my rock. Your strength, endurance, and love will always be my main source of inspiration. You never let circumstances stop you from giving life, and your children, your all. You provided for us clothing, shelter, food, compassion, love, and joy. If ever needed, you would've given up these things for yourself to ensure we had them.

You made sacrifices over and over for us. How many sleepless nights you've given us (especially me)? I know of no other person who's given themselves as completely as you've given yourself to us. You're not only a mother to the children you birthed, you've been mother to many more. You've been a present force for your brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, grandkids, and your friends. You've been a guide and light for all of our friends. Many of them considered you their mother or their rock.

My daughter's mother Heather, I watched you bring life into this world—a life which I love more than anything on this earth. Those were the most amazing moments of my life (you gave that to me). And all I did was continually take from you. Yet, you persevered and pushed through the many difficult situations I put you in. There's nothing I can do to give back to you what I've taken away. No amount of apologies can account for my misgivings. Just know everyone, including myself, see your strength and know you're a good mother. You were there for our beautiful daughter when I wasn't. From whatever effort you've given and struggles you've endured, you became a wonderful young woman. Our daughter is now a strong, loving, and wise woman and mother.

My Dearest friend Pamela, I have so much love for you. The love you have for Sophia radiated through you as you watched her take her first steps towards me, and throughout many other moments we shared as a family. I still hear the same love and compassion in your voice every time you speak of her or your boys. You continue to endure through much and constantly push through pain and hardship. Your resilience is proof true love is unfailing. You want for your children to have the world and will stop at nothing and push through anything to see they have it. You inspire me to be more understanding, patient, enduring, loving and resilient.

My beautiful daughter Kiley, the proudest Mother I know. Watching you come into this world was the peak of my life. I know I'll never again be as elated as the moment you came into this world. I've played that moment over and over in my mind. That moment is my place of peace. I saw the love you had for life very early in the way you'd cling on to puppies, kittens or other animals.

You'd give them your food and giggle about it as if it was the greatest thing in the world. The joy of seeing any of your grandparents, most people and other kids made you happy. And you'd always make anyone smile.

You couldn't sleep without your Mother and me, and would crawl into bed with your "silky" clung tight in one fist you'd lay your head on my chest and cling tight to the hair on my chest with the other fist.

I'd suffer the pain of you ripping out my chest hair until you fell fast to sleep. Because I wasn't around much after you turned 7, and the last time I saw you in person was at 12, so all I can imagine of you is my little girl. Knowing you're a woman now and seeing you as one will never change that. To me, you're always my little girl. Yet, here you are a young woman defying the odds.

A wonderful Mother who cares about her son more than anything in the world; as many of the mothers who came before you. Things may be difficult at times, but know the love of a mother supersedes any other love a son will ever have. Knowing how much you love him, I can tell you every other thing that precedes your motherly love will fall into place.

To any Mother I know, friends, cousins, aunts, sisters, nieces, and to all other mothers or mothers to be who may read this, God has made you the last portal into this life. Life clings to you. You're all the most precious, the most special to all of us.

There're not enough words or deeds I'd do to show my love and appreciation. My love and affection goes out in my prayers to all of you. Oh and to my Momma, your prayers are working because after 40 years, your baby boy is finally thinking like a man.

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.



"Happy Mother's Day"

Milton Jones

What is a mother? Nurturing, strong, resilient, wise, caring, and comforting. A woman carrying the beautiful life of another inside of them. Generation after generation of lives formed in your shelter. A woman who makes sacrifices and gives her all to ensure everyone is unconditionally loved. You do all of this, and so much more, without wanting anything in return except love. 365 days of the year you make others a priority.

Those 365 days of the year, you are special to us. But, this particular day, in its 24 hours, we devote 100% to you. If there were times you didn't feel it during the year, may you feel the love you so willingly give returned to you on this day. May we strive to fill this day and your life with gifts of love, trust and happiness.



"I'll Always Be There"

Manuel Enrique Aceituno

Mt. Sterling



Dear Mom,

At my birth, you placed me close to your heart, and as I laid there in trust, serenaded by your beautiful heartbeat of devotion, that you held me down for nine months. There in that moment as I came into the world, no worries, no troubles, my momma to comfort my tears.

You looked down upon your baby boy and whispered *Manuel, no need to cry, have no fear, I'll always be here.*” My fear was dismissed as I snuggle close to your chest, my mother’s love, it’s a restful bliss.

Your word of affection, its strength of protection, has carried me through the years. A remainder of home, never alone, a promise to guide my way. I know no matter my future, regardless the days, I’ll forever stay close to your heart.

So I honor you now, and shout out your name...Mama!! And promise I’ll always be there. I love you! Happy Mother’s Day!

*Dedicated to my mother **Tamara Pantoja**, as well as all the mothers whom held their children down with the blessing of unconditional love. Thank you all!!*



"What's the Word Nerd?"

Brandon Bell

Motherhood is by far the most fascinatingly complex piece of the primitive biology that is responsible for the birth of humankind. One of my favorite sayings is “What’s the word nerd?” So, nerd out with me right quick. A gamete is a reproductive cell that is *haploid* and can unite with another gamete to form the cell (*zygote*) that develops into a new individual. Therefore, the *ovum* is deposited into the uterus and the embryo and the fetus are developed to new life. Ha! The conundrum that is science is amazing! (takes nerdy glasses off) I mean think about it, from the time of conception to birth is roughly nine months in length right? During that 36 week time frame the baby is carried in amniotic fluid, but immediately after birth humans lose their ability to survive under water for any prolonged period of time without technological assistance. How Sway!?! I’ll bet you a buck to a piece of raw bacon you can’t explain that.

I know many mothers and what I’ve gathered; motherhood is a complex, yet great thing. It fills you with a great sense of pride. However, with motherhood comes great responsibility. But, if you’re a mom you already know these things so there’s no need for my *mansplaining*. What I can do is be an advocate and highlight how amazing mothers are, how a mother’s job is never done and even though



they work round the clock, how most of their everyday tasks are thankless. So, to all mothers everywhere, I would like to say **THANK YOU** – beyond infinity! Life can be especially hard for single moms. Support single moms! Single parenthood is tough – working, paying bills, school drop-offs, extracurricular activities, meal planning, grocery shopping, doctors' appointments, love, nurturing – it all adds up! Bring a mom in your community a meal, offer to watch her kids for a night off, or run errands for her. Also, if the parents of the children in your life are not around, resist the temptation to speak poorly of them.

By speaking badly of one of the adults who helped create a child, the child often comes to believe there is something inherently wrong with them, too. Give what you can of your time, energy, resources, support and finances to mothers you know and to local and national organizations that support parenthood programs and initiatives. Overall, we all have a role to play in making sure that every child is loved, safe, nurtured and cared for. And although mothers are superwomen, let's help them where we can.

This Mother's Day, whether you are a mother through biology, foster care, adoption, guardianship, mentoring, leadership, influence or love – from the son of the most selfless, loving, amazing mothers of all Happy Mother's Day! We cherish and honor you!

Defenitions:

Haploid – having the full number of chromosomes normally occurring in the mature germ cell, or half the number in the usual somatic cell – n. a haploid cell or gamete.

Zygote – a diploid cell formed by the union of two haploid gametes, esp. by the union of an egg cell and a sperm cell.

Ovum – a mature female germ cell which generally only after fertilization, develops into a new member of the same species; female gamete; egg.

Mansplaining – the unnecessary need of men feeling like they have to explain something to and for women. Bruh! For all women everywhere...tell 'em to STFU!

TWO ROADS

FATHER'S DAY

Submissions are now being accepted for the TWO ROADS Father's Day Special Issue. Your family members will be allowed to send stories about their Fathers or Father figures that are inside and the uplifting stories they have. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO LET THEM SHARE THEIR STORIES.



Feliz
Día
del
Padre



Without staff support:
Mail submission, photo to:
TWO ROADS EDITOR
2021 Kentville Road
Kewanee IL 61443

People on the Outside 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 2, 2023

"My Beloved Mother"

DeMario Bolden

First and foremost, I personally would like to take the opportunity to salute all the Mother's out there that stand behind what they believe in and continue to love and support their creations. The fact that y'all are able to create life and give strength within itself..."Happy Mother's Day!"

To my mother Jennifer, a.k.a. "My Twin." and to my auntie; two strong black gods who are queens in human form, defines what FAITH looks like.



2014 and 2016 were the hardest years that I ever faced. Those were years that damaged me mentally and compelled me to lose faith as well as take away ones' sanity and possibly giving up on life. In 2014 my beloved mother was shot 3 times in the stomach.

I cannot describe the feeling while living inside my head while facing this reality... the reality of my mother possibly dying (smh). The woman that gave me life. The woman that gave my brothers and sisters life.. What would I do without. Worse, why would she leave me while was in here?



My beloved mother survived and beat the odds that most people don't! the fact that she continues to remain strong and fight for *Better Dayz* 9 years later has shown me, at face value, the definition of a "strong black woman."

My auntie Cynthia, a.k.a. "Mom Dukes", has always been a second mother to me...literally! I spent countless days and nights at her house with my little brother (Rock, rest in peace), whom was my auntie's only child. He was killed in 2016, due to the gun violence in Chicago. He was age of 25 when he departed this universe.

The fact that these two women, my beloved mother and "Mom Dukes", took these tragic setbacks and turned them into life lessons helped me understand what life brings to you and how you are suppose to make the best of them. This showed me the value of time and never to take a second for granted!



My bro's death cut me so deep that I will forever have internal bleeding (mentally). I had to take that life lesson from his loss and I believe that it opened up my eyes and realize everything that I want for my life to be. Through all the trials and tribulations, my mother and auntie stood firm in the face of adversity, by the grace of God and they never lost their dignity, loyalty or unconditional love. These two women are my *Super Heroes*. You never know how strong you are until being strong is all you have. HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY MY QUEENS! Yours Truly Demario "Rio" Bolden

"HER-story"

Shondell Walker



For Mother's Day, we celebrate *her* for the vision she had, for the courage she displayed, for the wisdom she has parted, for the beatings she has taken, and for allowing her voice to travel across the distant lands, for others like her might find peace, and be inspired by her willingness to stand for the betterment of the many hers whose voices were silenced.

This is not his-story, because this is not about him but her, in all of her capacities , woven deep onto our society and world she is lady liberty, unshackled but historians account of her mark therefore, we celebrate her, because just like her I too understood her me too, because my kin was her also.

I've had the opportunity to ponder about this and it is the tale of something special. It involves a plethora of insensitivity played out in barbershops, houses and courtrooms. Mothers sparks movements of suffrage and curiosity.

Mothers have allowed us to see their vision through women like Helen, sit by Rosa, hear the voice of Maya; talk like Oprah, fight like Lela, all wonderful mothers. Race could not define her, but it was her pursuit. Happy Mother's Day to all the women in the world!!



"Mother's Day Letter"

Derrick Graham

I would like to start off by saying that there are no words to express how much I truly care about you Mama.

Thank you so much for your strength and support and you deserve a standing ovation from your son because you are a great mother. You are deserving of this and I wish you nothing but the best.

I love you for being a strong black woman that did your best for me. I am so lucky to have you as my mother.

Happy Mother's Day to you, my wife, my sisters, grandmothers, aunts, cousins, sister-in-law, and all the mothers on Earth. I love you Mama.



Love,

Your Son and grandbabies



Mother's Day

Special Tribute Issue

40

"Final Words"

Kenji Haley

Editor-In-Chief, TWO ROADS

When you are gone so long, you never realize how time flies. I know I can't, but the one thing that I am aware of is the growth of my mother, sister and niece. All mothers in their own right are strong women and all leaders.

Monday, October 24, 2016. This was two days after my sisters 43rd birthday and one of the worst days of my life. It was 8:30 AM and I called home to check on my parents as I always do. When my dad answered the phone, I instantly knew that something was wrong...because **HE NEVER ANSWERS** (that's his wife's job)! He calmly explained to me that my mother had a myocardial infarction, a medical term for a heart attack. I understood his words and that my response was that all would be okay, but after I got off of the phone, I went to my room and lost my everlasting mind.

I cried my heart out because I did not know if I would ever see my mother alive again. I listened to her favorite gospel song (Beverly Crawford) and it felt different. I couldn't focus or concentrate. I had lost my grandmother almost 3 years to that date, and she was my heart. But my mother was so much more. She is my best friend, although she always told me *"boy, I ain't your friend!"*

She is my homie, the one I could talk about anything and everything. The one that I can kick the dozens with. Now, I was stuck with the possibility of my future being in past tense with her. To my luck, God wasn't through with her. Her road to recovery was not an easy one. She had another heart attack during her recovery and had to get things back in order.

It is so disheartening that men and women lose their mothers (and other love ones) while incarcerated. This is something that should never happen. I have called her at least one time a day since that day. I talk about almost anything and everything, from my relationship, to the news, to my dad getting on her last nerves. (Hang in there, Catfish!!) But, I am very happy that I have been given this additional time to kick it with my mother.



Many of us don't really get a chance to express how we feel about our mothers and hopefully one day you will. Mothers are so valuable to our being and there is nothing that can replace them. Although some of you may be frustrated by your mother not being what you want...just remember that you only get one, and although you can't see it, she is one in a million, so don't squander the opportunity.

Glory, I have missed many of Mother's days, but I pray that my calls and my cards have sufficed and that they carry you over until I can get home. I love you so much and I thank you for being my very own mother. I thank God for allowing you to have two healthy, smart, strong and loving children.



Momma, Kiona and Indy

(and to all my wife, aunts, great aunts, cousins and my BIG MOMMA)

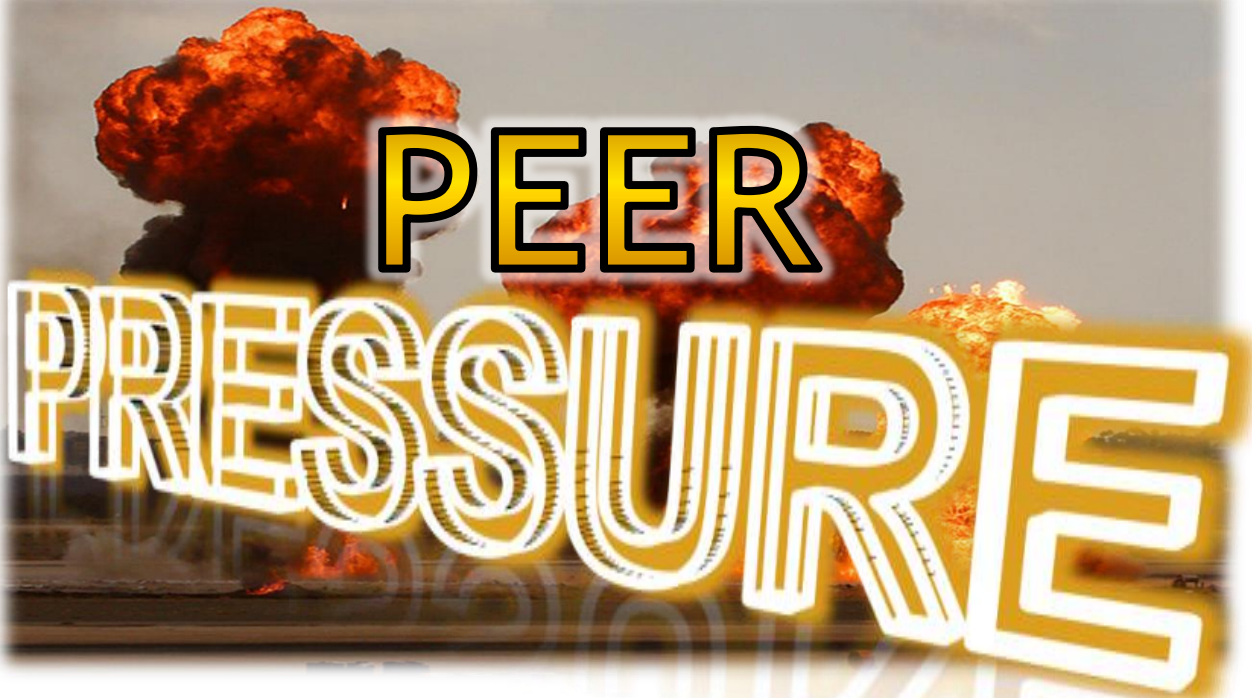
HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!!!

...and someone's b-day!

This is also dedicated to all the men and women whom have lost their mother while inside, or have been blessed to have them recover from sickness or injury of any kind. Please love of them as much as you can. Well, I gotta go and call my momma. Peace!



TWO ROADS *presents*



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

IDOC's Social Justice Program

Volume 20

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MOTHER'S DAY
SPECIAL TRIBUTE ISSUE

Part II of II

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TWO ROADS

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