

March, 2022 V.11

TWO ROADS

Meaning Makers

The moment
that
changed
everything

An honest chronicle of the stories and service of the incarcerated men and women of the Illinois Department of Corrections

Two Roads Mission Statement

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



-Pencil sketch by Charles Murray

“We must all try and live beyond the false prisons of our own making.”

- Ricky Hamilton

“I grow more
and more into the person God
pre-destined me to be.
I am becoming
strategic enough,
strong enough
and wise enough
to move mountains...”
-Janet Richmond



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Meaning Makers

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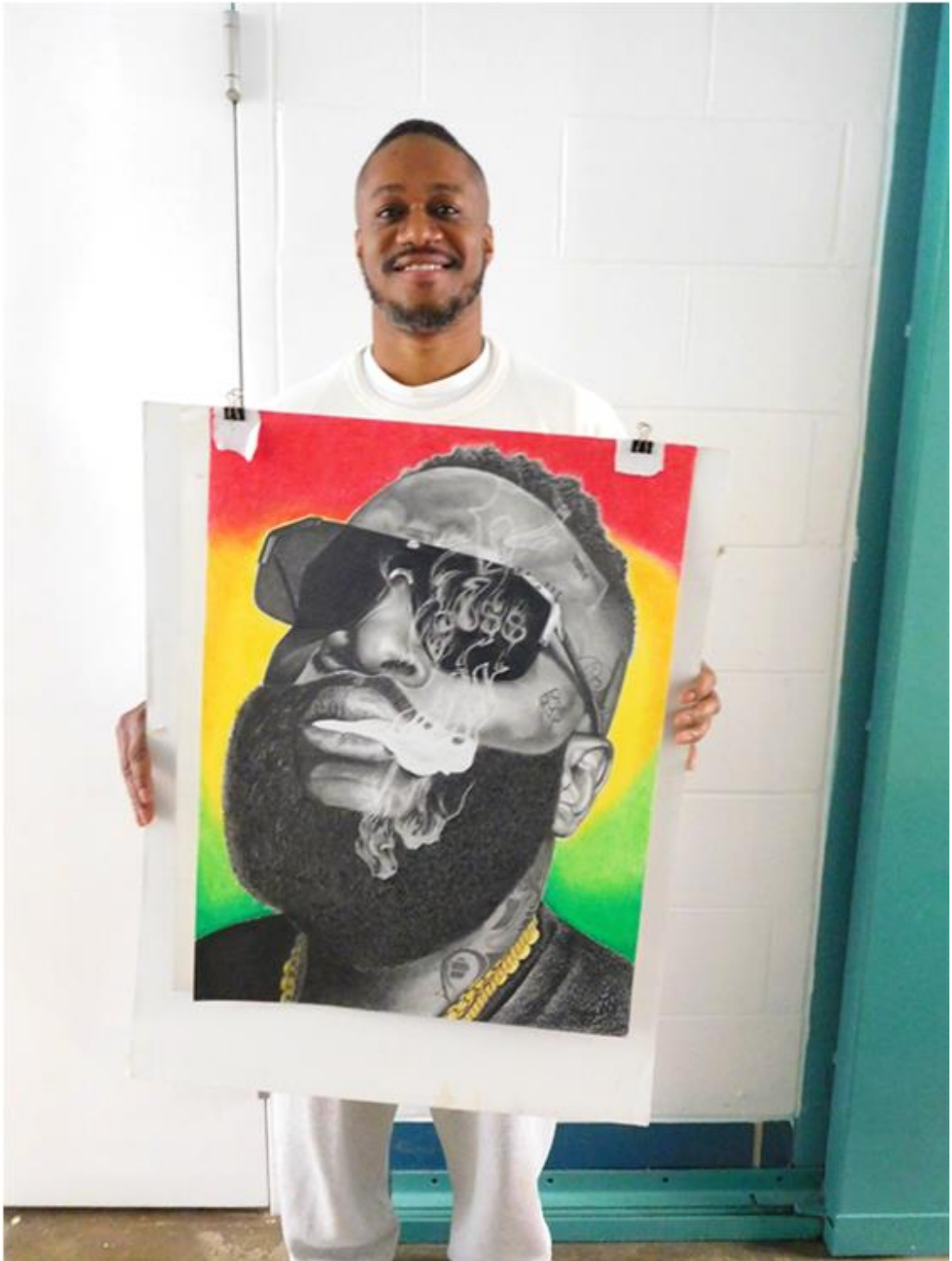
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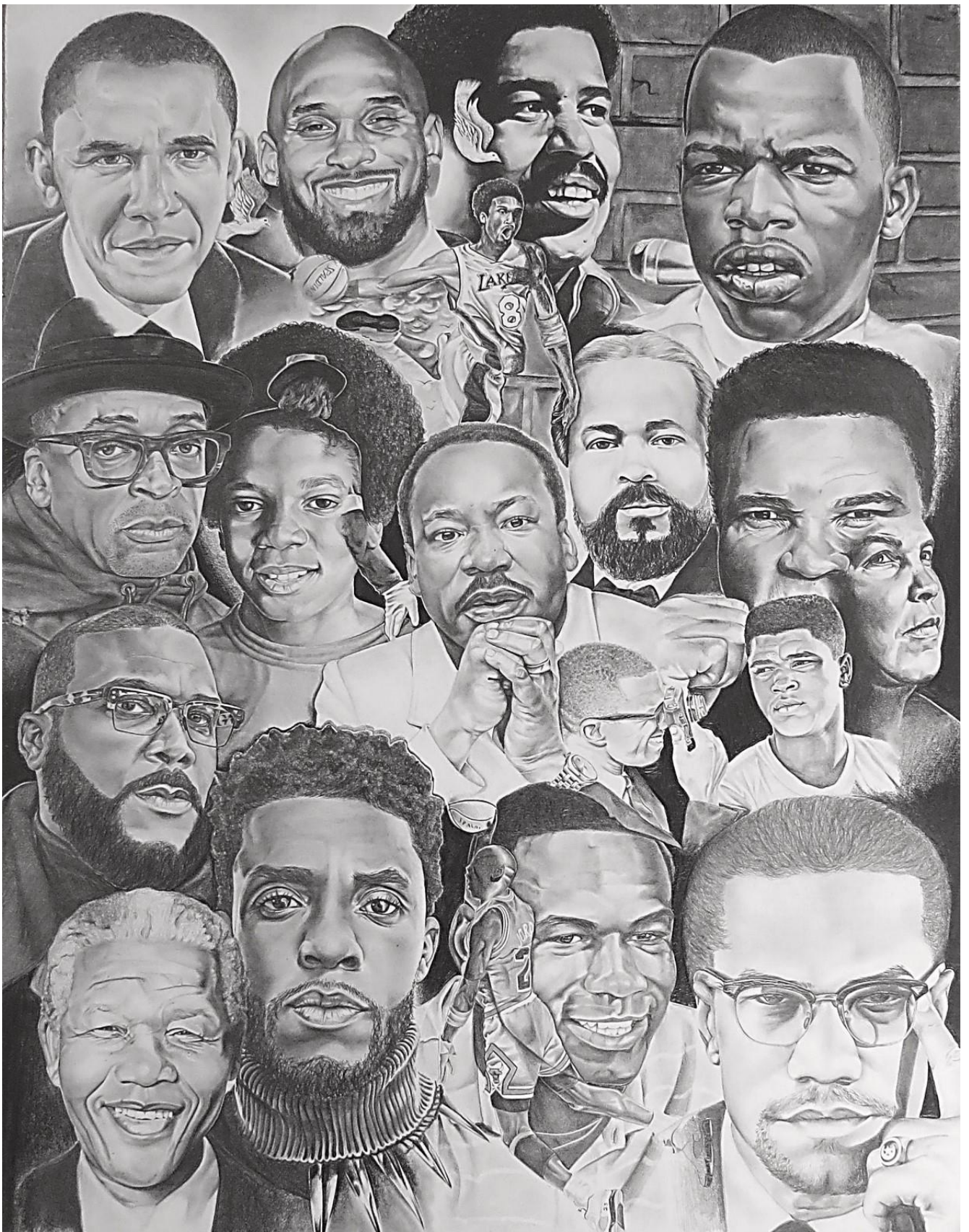
-Victoria Redmon

TWO ROADS

Two Roads House Artist

Charles Murray





"Faces" Pencil Sketch by Charles Murray

Publisher's Letter

Jim Estes



This magazine, Two Roads V.11, has been a long time coming. We changed the platform we use to build our magazine from Canva Pro to Adobe InDesign and have done a lot of work to teach ourselves the ridiculously cool new system. We welcome our new Editor-in-Chief, Nicholas Crayton.

We are worth the wait. As there've been a lot of changes in the world since V.10 Herstory was released, so too have there been lots of changes in the Two Roads infrastructure. Always a Restorative Justice project, we'll continue to explore the stories of the men and women who want to give back, but we've refined our work to focus on stories as expressed in our magazine, podcasts and Town Hall meetings. We develop speakers, writers and thinkers.

We are based at Kewanee LSRC, partnered with the Women's Division and accept open submissions for 1-2 (of our 5-6) magazines a year from everyone. This volume of Two Roads Magazine, "Meaning Makers," is special to me. Our writers were asked to explore a moment in their lives (good or bad), after which everything was different. We asked our writers to deliver the high and low points that broke the surface tension of their lives. We asked them to find the kind of strength it takes to be vulnerable, to grieve, to regret, to open old wounds, to ponder world-shaping new ideas... and they delivered.

Here's a Meaning Maker moment for you. August 11, 2021, 8:30am. Two Roads co-founder, architect, outgoing Editor-in-Chief, righteous citizen, friend and good man Ricky Hamilton went home and, though he leaves a solar system-sized void in his absence for Two Roads, he will do even more good in the world. With you, Rick. Have a great life, man.

Letter from the Editor

Ricky Hamilton



Incarceration in and of itself is a challenge, but what part of it is most challenging? Is it being parceled away to prison, a long way from friends and family? Is it having every aspect of your life determined, such as when to exercise, buy food or even eat? Those are strong examples, but I believe the greatest challenge of incarceration is the great challenge we carried long before hard, cold steel was placed on our wrists.

The challenge I speak of is “Us conquering Self”.

The “Conquering of Self” is our greatest challenge because we can be locked in a five by nine cell, alone with this challenge for twenty-four hours a day. We are no longer distracted by the positive and negative avenues of escapism like work, family, drugs, women, and hustling.

In our quiet, lonely cells we cannot help but face the cause of our struggles sitting right there in bed with us-our “Self”. Unfortunately, some of us have ignored this challenge for years or even decades. Some of us leave prison only to come right back because we never took the time to know and conquer our great challenge.

Yet many of us do overcome our internal challenges. This usually happens after a moment in our lives that is full of meaning, a moment that forces us to deeply consider our choices and change our lives.

On March 30th, 2018 we did an amazing thing here at KLSRC, we had thirty men agree to be interviewed and discuss their “meaning maker” moments. For some, it was subtle moments in their incarceration; like a conversation with a five-year-old daughter explaining to her dad that all she wanted for Christmas was him, or moments heavy with gravity, like when a man lost his sister to a car

Letter from the Editor -2

Ricky Hamilton

accident while driving to visit him in Menard.

These moments force us to really face ourselves, not just to see the flaws, but to push us to actively confront our choices and the trajectory of our lives.

These are the moments that lead us to true rehabilitation. True rehabilitation, of course, starts with us. So, I ask you now, as you sit in your cell reading my story...right now, "Yeah you! Have you had your meaning maker moment?"

If not, then ask yourself, "What's it going to take? Do you need another tragedy in your life? Have you had enough?"

My hope is our stories will help push you to ask the hard questions of yourself, and answer them.

Before I say goodbye, I want to introduce you all to the man who will become the next chief editor of our magazine, Mr. Nicholas Crayton. In the time I have gotten to know him I have come to know him as a brother.

I am confident in his ability to work with Mr. Estes and use our magazine and the Two Roads Restorative Justice project as a platform to grow the idea of restoration. Our work is important and helps all of us understand we are more than incarcerated people; we are humans, and we are all becoming...

I want to thank the many men and women who have helped me survive my long journey through prison. There are too many of you to name individually but know that you will remain in my heart and thoughts as I find my way in my bright new world.

May Yahweh continue to bless and keep you all.

Peace, Ricky.

"Look through the eyes of love, and you shall see everywhere the beautiful and true."

- James Allen

Redeemable

Nicholas Crayton
Editor-in-Chief



The day you realize your life has not been what you thought what it would be, is the day you wake to the reality of where you are and what you've done. I took a life, and I cannot give it back.

I received a twenty-four-year sentence and my world crashed. I believed my life was exhausted.

I sat in my cell in Statesville, feeling abandoned, worthless and a failure. I was at a point where I felt I no longer existed, so why go on? Depression is something we don't talk about much. At first, I didn't even realize I was

depressed. I felt like there was a huge hole in me. I attempted to fill it but couldn't. The hole was insatiable.

I received a letter one day from my cousin Princess and we hadn't spoken in years. She told me about her life and told me how important I was to her. My friend April (who I thought was long gone), sought me out as well. I realized I wasn't alone.

My connections allowed me to resurface from the depths of hopelessness I'd fallen into. I recognized I could not survive prison alone, so I asked for help.

In order to learn who I needed to become to survive, I had to understand who I was and what direction I wanted to go.

I understood my selfishness had kept me isolated and alone. April told me she believed my purpose wasn't extinguished, only delayed. She was critical in helping me realize my purpose and pushed me forward.

I made a list of the things I felt were ineffective in my life and began to purge those things that were hindering my character. Things such as smoking, drinking, and corruptive thinking. I stopped being a slave to other peoples' ideas of who I was supposed to be.

Redeemable -2

Nicholas Crayton
Editor-in-Chief

I made a choice to become a better man.

I often tell people the conviction for my crime only repays my debt to society, but my purpose will fulfill my duty to humanity. Society may forgive me for the guilt of my crime but that does not absolve me of my responsibility for my crime. Thus, coming to a reconciliation with who I am reveals my

purpose. I will care for those who need it and help those who cannot help themselves.

My life and my victim's life were intertwined in a moment. Now, I must live for two lives. I have no more time for irrational errors, and if I am to truly achieve redemption, I must become redeemable.

A Rose That Grew From Concrete!

Mishunda Brown-Davis



I grew up from under the concrete, behind these brick, prison walls. I came in at 18 with no clue at all. I was used and abused, I didn't know how to leave the man I thought would protect and love me. Seven months pregnant and full of depression, I couldn't understand why I was always stressing. No goals and no direction, I didn't know how to cope.

I needed tools. Lord grant me some hope. No high school diploma and no G.E.D, no goals and no dreams.

I was covered in weeds.

I didn't yet know how this seed could succeed. It was buried in the dirt beneath the concrete. Then one day it rained and seeped through a small crack, nourished this seed who took her life back. And through that small crack I saw the light. I found the might to continue my fight.

I pushed my way through the trauma and pain, enrolled in classes in order to grow. I began to change, it was something divine, G.E.D, college, I accomplished in time. With nourishment I transformed and arose, I pushed through that crack and became a rose. With my new view from up high I glanced down to see, all the dirt and concrete that once held me.

I realize now, it's all become clear, those things that once seized me and buried me were necessary. They made me the strong beautiful rose you see now, which I was always destined to be. Embrace your life, learn from everything, grow and grow and grow until you're strong enough to help someone else with your story!

Buck Wild

Janelle Rich

I was a buck wild girl
from the streets.

I had no respect for anyone, not
even me.

I had a bad-ass mean streak
and a reputation
to keep.

Buck Wild was the only way to be.

Little did I know, I was in too deep.
I'm loyal, so there's secrets I'll always
have to keep.

They are imbedded in me too deep.

The pain of prison has helped me. You
may find this rare, but I no longer keep
that blank stare shootin' outta me
without a care.

I've got a new story I must share.

I'm stronger now, smarter, and wiser.

Time's been a good mother and I strive
to see,
but most importantly I'm workin' on
me.



Sometimes You Have to be Brave Enough to Kill Your Old Self, So Your New Self May Live!

Anthony Brown



A brutal rain-storm assaulted the frigid fall night, and through the murky, condensed clouds, the illumination of lightning could be seen and thunderclaps heard. Thing was, it wasn't Mother Nature's stormy mayhem, but the bright flashes and ka'booms coming from my gun that caused the night to be filled with so much chaos and confusion. I didn't realize at the time, but I committed two murders that evening.

One was my deceased victim..., and the other was my unloved self. I was deservingly sentenced (on a plea-deal) to twenty years of

incarceration within the Illinois Department of Corrections.

The first years were nothing less than a mental and emotional torment. My gang-affiliates abandoned me, my family turned into relatives, and those relatives became strangers.

With a rebellious attitude, I caught I.D.R's like free commissary coupons. My offenses got worse and worse, landing me inside the S.H.U in Menard C.C (aka The-Pit) for months and months at a time as a consequence.

In segregation, within the solitude of my loneliness, I began to see the defects of my character and behavior. Those Chi-Raq streets had desensitized me, placed veils over my eyes and ear-plugs in my ears!

My felonious mentality had caused me to dim my own light. I remember thinking I was shining, but the truth was I had been living within an internal darkness and wandered aimlessly with no real sense of direction.

My time in the S.H.U. done, I reached population, surrounded again by brick walls, and barbed-wired gates I was barricaded in.

Everyone I knew was likely to spend the rest of their natural lives in prison.

Sometimes You Have to be Brave Enough to Kill Your Old Self, So Your New Self May Live! -2

Anthony Brown

Although I committed some of these same crimes, I knew I would one day be given a second chance, and most of them would not be afforded that same opportunity.

I began thinking, what would I do with such a gift..., the gift of another chance in society? Well, with the time to sit and analyze my life, I began to understand that life change starts from the inside-out. I realized that, unless I could become something new I would never achieve something new!

For so long I was devoid of virtue, self-respect, respect for others, and a sustainable value-system, but now I believe I have become a man of respect, morality, and faith!

There are only a few months remaining in my twenty-year journey, and I can humbly say that it's because of the many great men who were selfless and brave enough to instill "Meaning-Maker" lessons within the core of my mind and heart that I believe that I became courageous enough to kill the old me, so I can finally allow the new and improved me to live!

May Allah (Most Glorious) reward you all for your contributions in my growth and in my life!

Move Mountains

Janet Richmond

“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible to you.”

-Matthew 17:20

Doesn't that scripture dare you to spring into action? Well, before I matured as a Christian, before I had sufficient mentors, I took the scripture at face value. I spoke to my mountains over and over, and nothing happened. The more I spoke to them, the more I doubted. I questioned why my faith was not working wonders.

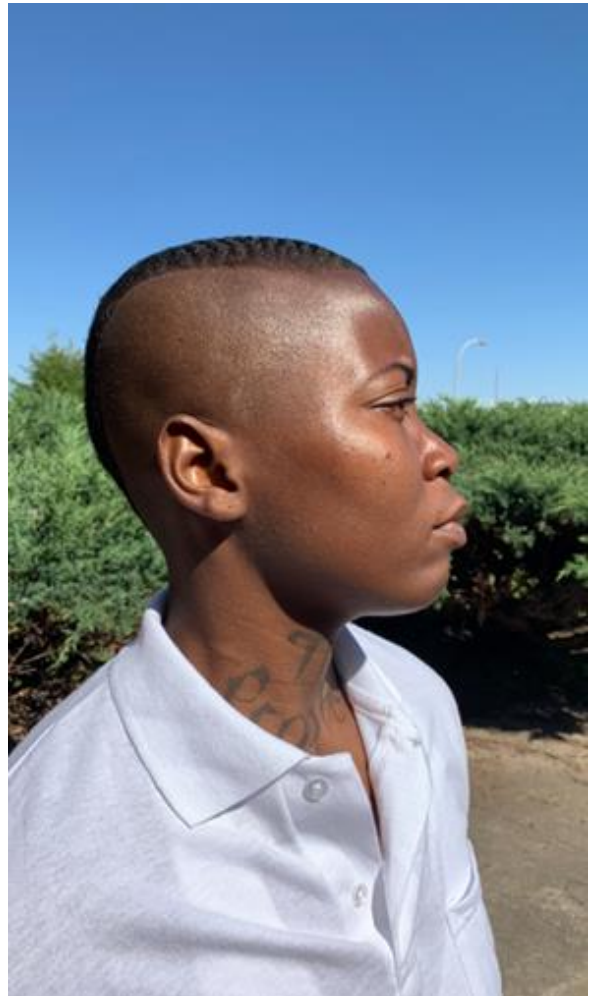
I had already experienced the power of God. I had no doubt in God, but I did not believe in myself. I still suffocated under the opinions and judgements of other humans.

Sure, God can move mountains, He is the spectacular power that holds everything together. But He did not create us for us to live as spoiled children. He revealed his presence in my life, knowing it would draw me closer, to make me thirsty for him.

It took time, but I got to know him and with that effort I matured and developed.

I grow more and more into the person God pre-destined me to be. I am becoming strategic enough, strong enough and wise enough to move mountains on my own.

Glory to God who makes all things possible.



Al-Islam Is My Meaning Maker...

Tiffany Rogers

When I was at home I lived a very fast life, and I was surrounded by Muslims. I was always fascinated by their level of dedication and their ability to put prayer and Allah (Most Gracious) first. When I got arrested, my life went from fast to slow, so I used my time to equate the Holy Quran and the Bible with one another. I spent my days with an open mind and heart and studied. I was raised in a Christian home and always had questions, but the answers I received never felt complete. I was left feeling empty and in a state of confusion.

After reading the Quran many times, I memorized the Shahada and said it over and over to myself, filling my heart and mind with its declaration. I decided to pray, and when I got down on the floor, I felt a weight being lifted off me and the tears ran down my face. I was so happy to find something that felt natural and nourishing for my spirit. I cried hard, but the tears were of joy and relief. I ordered to teach myself Islam, and how to pray, read and speak Arabic. I enrolled in an Islamic school through the mail.

Now, 3 years later, I can say I've grown because of Islam. Spiritually, I no longer fear death, and this brings me great peace in my life. I am constantly trying to increase my knowledge, faith, wisdom and understanding.

Over the last few years, I've been laughed at, mocked for my faith. Regardless of this response from people, I will continue to prostrate my forehead to the ground in humbled submission to The Most High and wear my hijab proudly. I've become a better woman on my humbling journey, while I reform my mind and way of life. I am thankful and blessed that Allah (Most Merciful) has opened my heart to Islam. My faith has truly been my Meaning Maker. Alhamdulillah!!!



“When machines stopped
living for my brother, I
stopped living for myself.
My thundering heartbeat
was a deathly requiem.... I
reached for quietus with
fervor and desperation,
searching for oblivion
from my angst. I grabbed
ahold of my own Reaper.
Drugs! My bittersweet
reprieve. When the world
lost my brother, I lost
myself.”

-Elisha Hallam



In the Blink of an Eye

Alicia Stephens

It's a strange feeling to look in the mirror and not recognize the person looking back at you. Have you ever felt that? Have you ever sat and wondered who you've become? Maybe you've said things like, "I'm just having fun." or "I can quit whenever I want.", or "I don't have a problem."

I always thought I'd have a picture-perfect family of my own because I had a great childhood, amazing parents, and a good home. I grew up believing addicts came from broken homes. But on November 30th, 2017, I made the choice to get behind the wheel knowing I had drugs in my system. Next thing I knew, I woke up in the emergency room, doctors all around me, and a State Trooper told me there had been an accident.

I screamed and everything went black. I've never been so overwhelmed in my life. The accident was my fault. A man lost his life because of a choice I made.

I can't tell you how many times I've screamed and cried to God asking him to take me instead.

The first time I looked in the mirror after my accident I swear I didn't know the person looking back. My whole life had been flipped upside down. I was disgusted with myself. I asked God to help me. I knew I wanted to be sober.

Today, I'm grateful for my sobriety and I'll never forget the tragic events of that day. I ask God for forgiveness every single day. I'm not sure why I got a second chance. All I know is the worst day of my life made me open my eyes for the first time in my life.



My Daughter is Strong

Connie Blair

Being a mother and grandmother is a wonderful gift from God. My daughter is caring, loving, and full of beautiful qualities. She's married and lives in Texas. She had a real hard time conceiving. The day she found out she was going to have a baby, she bought books, and started searched the web to find the safest cribs, high chairs, and toys.

My daughter called me to let me know. She was so full of joy, and crying, just over-running with happy tears. I told her she will be an amazing mother. She has patience and so much love to give her baby. At six months my daughter had to have a medical procedure done. She had no other family support in Texas, just her husband. She was very scared, but she thought about how strong her baby will be and how her faith would help her though the surgery.

I remember it all, as if it had just happened. I'm claustrophobic so I had to take medication before I could board the plane. When I landed in Texas, I saw my daughter in the distance.

I wove through all the people, both of us already crying and I held my daughter and her big belly and we cried many happy tears. My daughter looked so beautiful pregnant and she was so strong.

It was time for my daughter to have her baby. We were at the hospital in her room and she sat up in her bed to tell me how much she loved me. She thanked me so much for being there with her. She started crying and told me to be strong. The nurse came in, her husband gowned up and they wheeled my daughter out. She was singing... "here comes the baby", not the bride.

Later the nurse came to me with a gown. I got to see my daughter and hold my granddaughter. She was beautiful and orange from jaundice. She was long, with a lot of dark hair. She was perfect.

After a while my daughter and I were taken to the area where she could nurse the baby. She was upset because she was told she would be released the next day, but her baby would not be able to go. The baby still had jaundice.

She did not want to leave her baby there.

My Daughter is Strong -2

Connie Blair - 2

She worried about who would feed her baby. She lived far from the hospital and her health would make the drive hard. My daughter was confused and did not know what to do.

I told her God will make a way, he always does. I told her to dig down and find strength and courage. To do it for her baby. The next day the nurse came to my daughter's room and told her there is a waiting room no one uses. The nurse took us and a pile of blankets, pillows, everything we needed to the waiting room. We slept on the floor.

My daughter was in pain and stressed. It was hard for her to walk without help. We'd been there for two days but she was determined not to give in to the pain. We laughed, cried, and bonded even more deeply. My daughter is compassionate, with a great sense of humor. She is strong, and never gives up.



My Mother

Eva Morris

The grief I carry is heavy and deep. The loss of my mother is difficult to keep. I don't know how to deal with the "not knowing". I'm stuck in limbo, and into this dark abyss I fall.

"Mother, where are you? 33 years long and it's you that I miss.

*Hers is the story I crave to tell,
I feel if I don't,
I'll stay stuck in this hell.*

*My father told me horrendous things,
He doesn't care about the sadness it brings.*

*Addiction is so hard to fight.
The reason I know is because its now my
personal plight.*

*In rehab years ago, I looked in the mirror and
saw your face.
I cried at that moment, I gave you my Grace.*

*Now life isn't fair and we're one and the same.
I needed to know where you were because my
worry for you made me insane.*

*My daughters, I fear, are now feeling the
same."*

Life's about forgiveness and learning to be the woman of courage God created me to be. Now that I'm here and accepted, I am part of a plan

God refined me with fire so I know that I can...

I'll make a difference in this world; I'll hold my head high.

My daughters have been so brave and have hung in there with me. I am bursting with pride. I am beginning to tell my story. I've got nothing to hide. All the Glory goes to God my real Father.



The Walks

Gerald “Talib” Pitts

I remember it vividly. I was 8. My father and his girlfriend got into an argument. It was past midnight and my father, still in the young, hot-headed stage of his life, stormed out of the house taking me with him. Fortunately for me it was Summer, and the breeze was warm as we walked for what felt like hours. I remember telling my father I was tired. He picked me up and carried me from the Southside to my grandmother’s house on the west side.

It wasn’t traumatizing but I never forgot that moment and shortly after I experienced the same type of situation with my mother. We’d moved to Zion, Illinois with her boyfriend’s family. We didn’t have our own space and it wasn’t our ideal living situation. But my mom’s boyfriend’s family was nice until the night my mother got into an argument with what seemed like the whole house, which led to us getting kicked out.

Past midnight on a summer day, just like me and my father’s situation. We walked hand in hand until we reached a motel, where we

checked in and stayed the night.

We all experience hard times, abuse and neglect in its different forms even before we know what they are. We don’t know what “normal” is, we just think “normal” is whatever we have. As I remember those moments, I feel a deeper love for my parents. I see the strength it took to raise a child in unhealthy relationships, trying to do their best with me, their hard-headed child and never succumbing to the pain in their own lives. I know I have to do my best for them, as they have done for me.

Imagine

Leondus Carter

Imagine living life in the pen with 18 left when you only have 8 in. This is the breaking point for many though they may not see it.

The moment that defines who we'll be.

Time is a predator stalking its prey. You never see it's form in the jungle bush. I heard it said, "Time flies in jail." Well, I can't tell. I felt every day of those 8 years.

Some days took the strength of two days to overcome.

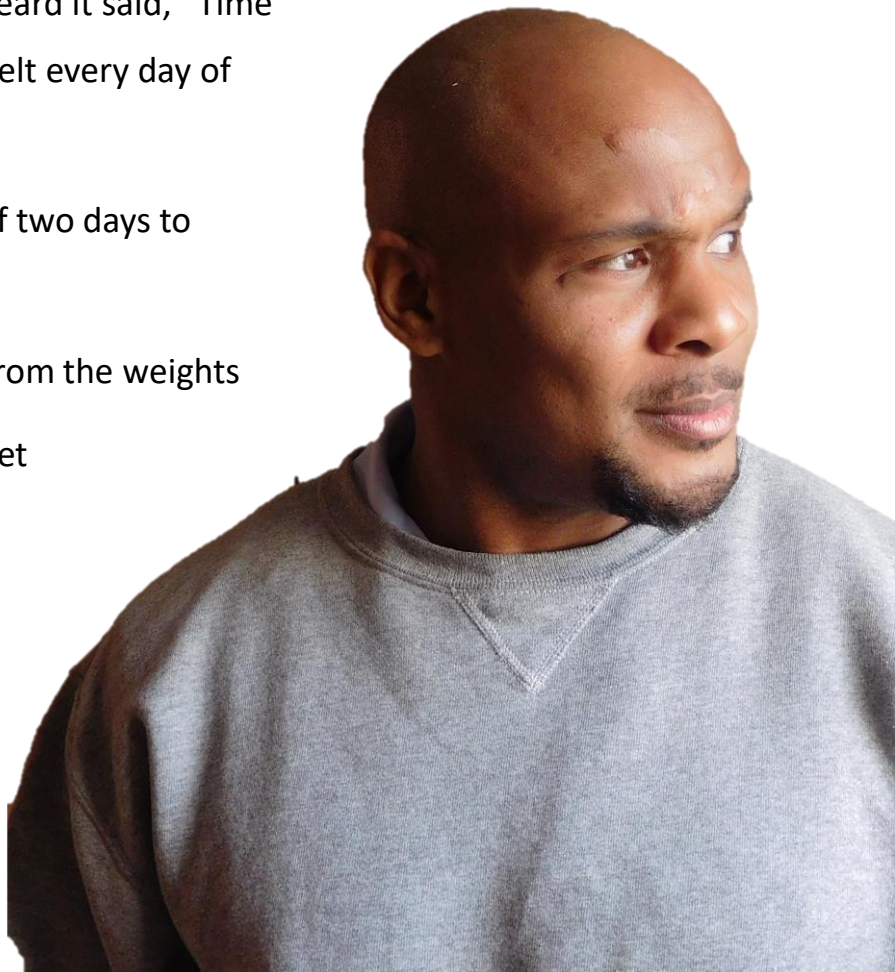
I have callouses on my hands from the weights in the yard. Callouses on my feet from State boots.

I feel prison. I smell prison.

I taste prison

and I see prison.

But I will not become prison.



The Yard

Leondus Carter

I live for the yard.

After hours and sometimes days of being caged as a captured bird, to see the blue sky and yellow sun is my only freedom: my inspiration for dreaming.

I've had many sleepless nights even after an intense workout on the yard...

The smell of the green grass, the good sight of trees resting beyond my captivity. To behold the beauty of the forever changing clouds touches my heart like the love of a good woman.



Turn it Around

Jackie Claypool

I grew up in many different places, I had many different homes. Once I got comfortable in one place I had to pick up and go somewhere else. I never really felt I belonged.

I have been through a lot of trials and tribulations. I know what it feels like to love and lose people you love.

I am married to Jeremiah Matthew Claypool. Jeremiah and our son came up missing September 5, 2005. I never allowed that to stop me from searching. Finally, 15 years later, my son and I were reunited. No one knows what happened to Jeremiah.

How does a person find closure? I don't know if I can. What my loss has done is make me realize life is too short. Don't take people for granted, even for a minute. Be honest and true to yourself.

Never give up hope and remember that for every difficult path there's often a beautiful destination lying ahead. It doesn't

matter where we are right now but where we are going. Life is precious; let's make the best of it.



A June Night in Chicago

Ledore Lenoir

Night sweats are the worst; especially when you wake up wet, hot, and pregnant.

June, in Chicago, is the bi-polar month; It's sometimes hot, and sometimes cool. I 'd just woken up from a nightmare. In the dream, my cousin Tana got shot 5 times and died in my arms. Tana and his brother Mechie, were my cousins. My uncle called them "Sin" and "Blessed", because Mechie was bad as hell, and Tana blamed all his mistakes on Mechie.

I got up to get myself ready for the day and my twin brother Tae asked if I wanted to go play ball at 5. I told him, "Boy, ain't shit bouncing here but this stomach"

Lol. I was due July 19, but said I'd go watch. Tae, Tana, Mechie, my older brother King, and I went to the court, on Monroe and Pulaski. I wanted to watch my brothers whoop my cousins. The game went good; my brothers had 23 points and my cousins 18. King had the advantage of being older (20), taller (6'3), and faster. Tae was only 5'7, fast and knew all the trick moves. But Sin and Blessed were in sync,

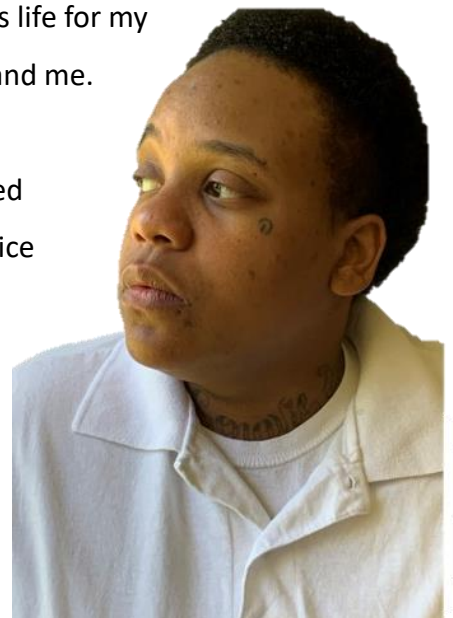
they played college ball together.

Well, it was hot, and I couldn't wait to be in the car with the a/c. Tae scored the winning basket. My twin's face lit up, and I'll never forget his smile. My mom says I share his smile. Five seconds later shots rang out and a chill ran up my spine. I remembered my dream, and yelled for Tana. Tae dove on top of me, (to shield the me and the baby). After the shooter was gone, King yelled if everyone was ok. Everyone said "yeah."

Except for Tae. He just blinked, and when he opened his mouth blood spilled out. My twin brother, my best friend, had been shot 5 times. He died in my arms.

He gave his life for my daughter and me.

That day I experienced loss, sacrifice and love.



A Woman, Unafraid to be Alone

Haley Rose Gallagher

It's not confusing anymore.

I can see you for who you truly are.
Nothing compared to what I have become.

A fearless woman once damaged by pain,
Wears dignity and strength, you can hear it
in her name.

This isn't a myth or fairy tale you were once
told.
I'm just a misfit who broke the mold.

I was hurt by this world and stood under
your umbrella.

I gave you control,
For some reason that's what I felt I owed.

The best way to get clarity is to give
it to yourself.

You did me wrong, that was nothing
new.

The crazy thing is, I'm not mad.

All I wanted with you,
was to give my daughter her dad.

Obviously, my judgment was clouded.

Too bad you're the one who set the
G.P.S. I wish I could have been strong
enough to re-route it.

The past is the past.
And there's no way to take it back.

My mind frame has changed.
I won't allow a man to treat me the same is
where I'm at.

I am a woman unafraid to be alone!

I'll be the best mother I can be.
And I'll do it on my own.



An Open Letter

Jamie Boyd

Hello. My name is Jamie, and I want to tell my story.

I have been locked up for 21 years. I used to fight and cause a lot of trouble. I was full of rage because of my time. I had to learn the hard way. I was very unstable, and I was a cutter. I tried to kill myself so many times, but it never worked. I didn't want to live because I hated my life, but even though I hated my life, I wanted to change.

I started to change when I got a job, which gave me something positive to do. I then got the privilege of living on the center wing in a 2 person cell.

Sadly, this was not enough – and I still had no hope for living. One day I went into the shower and sliced my throat. They didn't think I was going to make it. I made it. They saved me. I was mad at first, but now I am not. Had I died, I wouldn't be here to tell you my story. Today, I'm on the right meds so I am stable. I'm doing real good. It's been 2-3 years since I got a ticket. I am in the G.E.D. class. I have 3 more tests to take and I'll have my G.E.D. God has been an impact in my life.

I believe God brought me this far to help someone. I've learned a lot over the years. I am someone who has changed for the better.

I love myself, I love my life, and I'm looking forward to my future now. I have an outdate, and I'll be going home. If you are full of anger and rage turn to God. Only He can help you. It's time for change.

I grew up in prison and I've changed for the better. I hope my story has touched or moved you to change too. May God bless you.



Bud

Elisha Hallam

“You have to accept whatever comes and the only important thing is that you meet it with courage and with the best you have to give.”

-Eleanor Roosevelt

That’s an amazing quote, and one I wish I had the strength to embody. That, however, is not how my consequential twinkle in time goes. It started with my brothers passing, the moment I heard the pounding on the door. I can still feel my heart slamming against my chest as my feet hit the floor to meet the messenger behind the door. “It’s your brother, get dressed,” my Dad said. He might as well have been an officer with a warrant. I’ve been locked up within myself since. Addiction has been a familiar cell I’ve visited since I was very young. When my brother passed, I walked into my familiar cell and locked the door.

When machines stopped living for my brother, I stopped living for myself. My thundering heartbeat was a deathly requiem. Ghostly visions haunted me when I was afforded sleep. I could no longer carry the weight of my loss or withstand my

heart’s hammering hymn of death. I reached for quietus with fervor and desperation, searching for oblivion from my quiet angst. I grabbed ahold of my own Reaper. Drugs! My bittersweet reprieve. When the world lost my brother, I lost myself.

I lost sight of the future. I couldn’t remember our hopes and dreams. I couldn’t let go and accept a life without him in it.

I never imagined I would find what I lost inside prison walls. I found people who have changed how I see Life. I’ve found the strength to live for my brother and myself. I have many accomplishments he would be proud of. I’ve built bonds that have changed me forever.

My life is becoming richer, every day, in ways that never would’ve happened if I’d kept holding onto the pain of my past. Everything happens for a reason, as hard as it is to believe, even prison. To everyone I love, “Thank you for helping me find myself”.

Nothing's as it Seems

Erika Stainback

God, it is cold when I go to sleep, then wake.

I hate how the cinder block walls and metal bars
make my body shake.

How the water makes my skin dry and flake,

I am lonely.

I feel like there's no hope here, a part of me has
been stolen.

Sometimes it feels like you're close Jesus, other
times you seem far.

This is no way to live, but it does serve to get my
attention.

Demons love it here, they roam a lot, and being in a
cell can make things seem what they're not.

But when I kneel to pray, or read the Word, I begin
to heal.

Moments in Time

Facionda Washington

Getting arrested for the second time and knowing I was on my way to prison for the first time, was a very bad moment in my life, but I got over it quickly. I told myself that I will use my time to make a new me, especially for my daughter. I let so many things distract me, (like the drug lifestyle). When I was home I never finished anything that I started, (even if it was just a thought). I hated those moments, but I also never fixed them. Now I have a chance to fix all those moments.

So I began county jail by attending church, counseling, and anger management. Most people say, keep your head down entering prison, but I went in with my head held high with goals to accomplish. I started studying even though I wasn't in school, since the pandemic slowed and shut down a lot of programming. I was still determined!

After two months I was enrolled in school. I felt more whole as a person than I had ever felt before. I felt like I had a life

to live, I wasn't so hopeless. I got answers that the 5 year old me, had been asking for 19 years, and those answers gave that little girl a purpose.

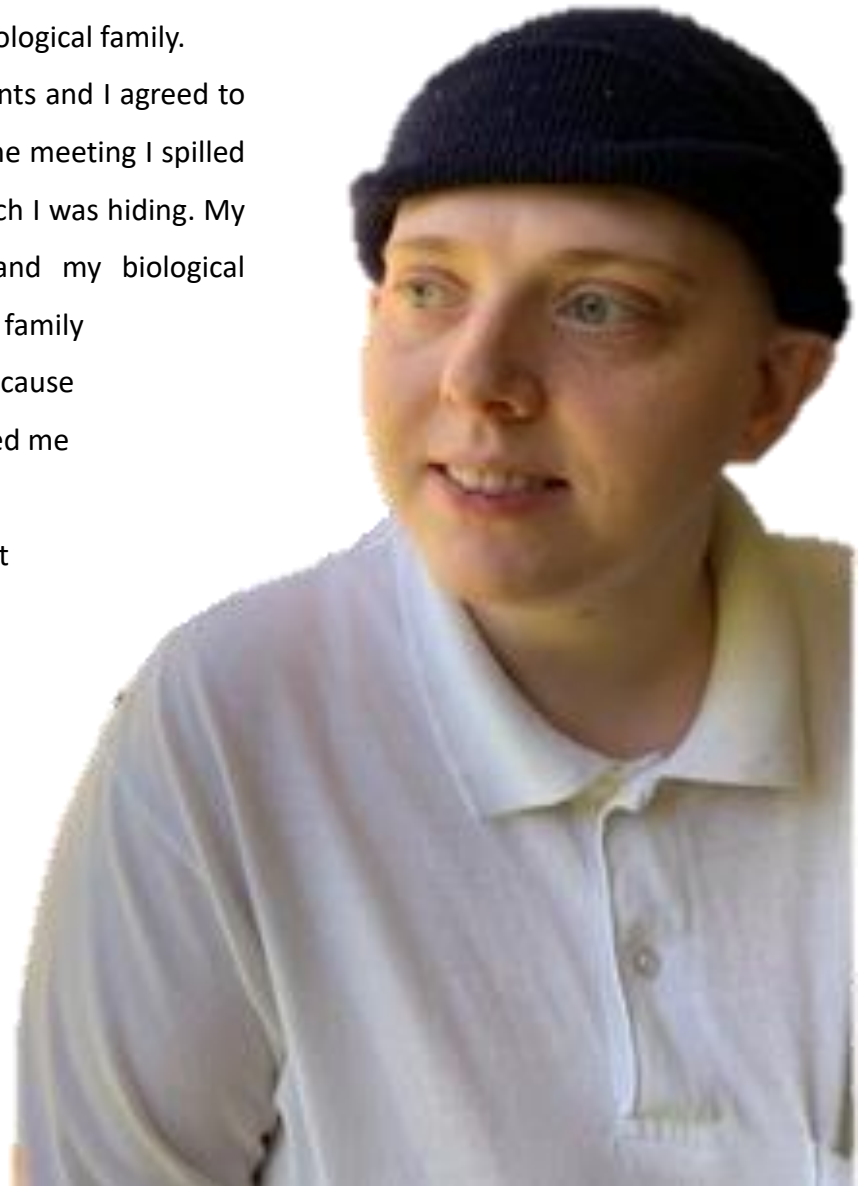


My Life

Jessica Breuer

I was adopted at age 5, and for 19 years I carried the feeling of being unlovable. My adopted family poured out love for me, but it wasn't good enough. It couldn't fill the hole in my heart left by my biological family.

When I was 24 my adopted parents and I agreed to meet with my biological family. At the meeting I spilled my feelings of the last 19 years, which I was hiding. My adopted parents were shocked, and my biological parents were shocked. My biological family explained that I was given up, not because I wasn't loved, but because they loved me and wanted better for me. It was a second chance for a life they couldn't offer me. I cried, not due to sadness, but of relief. I was loved more than I thought possible. The hole in my heart started to heal and fill in.



Let Go, And Let God!

Sonja Myrick

Hello! My name is SONJA M, but I was formally known as DELICIOUS. You know the type, dressed-up on the outside but messed-up on the inside!

I remember when I was homeless; I would walk so long that when I sat down it felt like my feet were still moving! I was so lonely and scared. I've been in survival-mode since I was molested as a child and gang-raped as a teenager.

In 1984, I experienced a George Floyd "Meaning Maker Moment" when my favorite uncle was shot to death by the same police who were supposed to be serving and protecting us. I was meant to be with him the day he was murdered. That triggered my depression. I started drinking and drugging. Eventually I began to lose interest in everything except getting high.

Now I'm 53 years old, and I wonder where did my life go? In reflection, I thank God Most High for every experience because what failed to kill me only made me stronger.

God Most Gracious saved me so I could warn you! What matters isn't what you look like on the outside, it's how you truly feel on the inside.

The Most Merciful Lord has put us in prison for a reason. Most likely to slow us down and save our lives, all so that we may possibly save others. Our minds were trying to kill our bodies. Our conscience needed the rest. We may be in prison, but that don't mean we can't be free from what once held us captive. Let go and let God!

Change the Way You Think about It

Michelle Clopton

Hello brothers and sisters, my name is Michelle Clopton, I'm 50 years of age and this is my 25th and final year of incarceration.

When I look back on my life, I see the many times I went down the wrong path, ignoring advice from my parents, grandparents, and anyone who cared. I made some really bad choices, fueled by anger, grief, and the darkness surrounding my hurting heart.

Pain is pain, it has no color, creed, religion, or status. I read a quote from Mark Twain, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it." I can choose to be dismayed by what I lack or be amazed at my abundance. I can be discouraged by my circumstances or overcome them.

The truth is, when you resolve an issue, another one is waiting to take its place. It's a fact of life. You can't change it, but you can change your perspective. Once the Grace of God enabled me to change my perspective, to see how He sees me, who He says I am, I began to see more clearly and not allow anger and grief be greater than God's Grace and Mercy.

His grace set me free from rehearsing my old victim mentality. My spiritual nature makes me strong and resilient.

My destiny depends on how I choose to endure my circumstances. I have decided to choose life and peace.

There is a direct correlation between where I am now and every decision I made in the past. Each new decision determines my future.



Moving Forward

Tammy Englerth

Nothing was easy when I entered prison decades ago. The first four years I just tried to deal with what I'd done and survive. I was charged with the death of another.

I felt like I had no meaning or purpose. All I could hold on to was my love for my three children. I knew I couldn't change what I'd done. So I determined to better myself and help others so what happened to me wouldn't happen to them. I took every class and every group I could. I am determined to make a difference. There have been so many challenges and obstacles for me, but prison has changed my life.

I know now that my purpose is to help others. We don't realize how much we have until everything's taken from us. We are the only ones who can make the choice to change. I am not the angry, shamed, hurt person I use to be. Through counseling and determination, I have come far.. I've transformed from being a silent onlooker into a vocal activist.

My outward circumstances have not changed; I am still in prison. However, my inner

world has shifted dramatically. I overcome. Prison taught me patience and how to stand up for myself. We're all our own individuals. We all can succeed. We must.

In so many ways prison saved me. What I went through, happened. Who I was, existed. I needed my past and I needed my mistakes to become who I am now. I am still growing. Every day is a lesson.

Remember, love yourself, love others, and know you can accomplish anything you set your mind to, no matter your circumstances.



Life

Elio Gonzalez

I've done segregation time. but one particular stretch of time I did was over a year long. I did my bid in the hole and it felt like the walls were caving in on me and I couldn't breathe. I had to do something, to act, to perform any action.

I started to self-educate myself and dug deep inside to find who I truly am and leave the guy that I'd been for the previous eighteen years behind.

Let's take a walk down memory lane. I'm an average dude from the neighborhood. As a child I watched my mother use drugs to cope with harsh decisions she'd made in life that she could not bear to face sober. I was emotionally and physically messed up to the point where I struggled with my own life decisions.

In the early 90's I was separated from my brothers and sisters and forced into rough group homes that served as alternatives to incarceration. I went AWOL because I felt abandoned. I sought love from my family, but my aunts and uncles were all getting high and

their household wasn't safe for me.

I was left with the harsh streets of Humboldt Park where my life of crime began because I was hungry and did not have the means to survive.

My reckless life as a juvenile delinquent landed me in juvenile facilities across the state and I tried my hardest to make a name for myself in those messed up places. Now I know I made decisions out of confusion because I sought love in all the wrong places and thought the streets were my family. I've learned that being loyal to something that hasn't been loyal to me is not love.

Now that I've grown up, I realize the true love I've been seeking is and always has been INSIDE OF ME. I just had to learn to love myself.

This entire incarceration has been my meaning maker moment. Every bump and bruise led me to find love for myself.

Promise

Armand Isaac

An hour before my mother, Anita Harper died, she asked me why I stood on promises made to everyone but the one person who matters most? I told her as a man I have to stand on my word. She quoted my father, who always said, “A wise man will change many times, a damn fool not once,” and laughed.

Despite 30 years on dialysis, she didn’t want anyone to view her as weak. She said, “if you are going to stand on a promise, make this one to me.” I’m a mama’s boy so I said, “Okay, Suga.” She laughed like she always did when I called her, “Suga”. She said promise me that from this day forth you will be better than yesterday. Put your own happiness first.”

I cried, I’m crying now, but I’m happy.

I said, “I promise, Suga.”

She said, “I know.”

The phone said I had a minute left.

We said, “I love you.”

She died an hour later in her sleep, and I like to think she had a smile on her face. I live my days with the promise I made her and it leads the way for me to be happy.



My Truth

Dallas Donati

My name is Dallas. I had a bad introduction to the world. I was abused when I was a kid. DCFS put me in 15 different foster homes over a three-year span.

By the time I was adopted I was angry and resented anyone trying to help me. I destroyed my relationship with my new family. I burned every bridge I could. I was out of control.

I became pregnant at 17 and tried to get my life together. By the age of 19 I had two children, and at 22 I lost my kids due to my toxic relationship with their father. I started using drugs to numb the pain, which didn't last long enough to do any good and led me to addiction and my arrest.

I believe being arrested was the best thing that could've happened to me. I was forced to deal with my problems and reflect on the choices I've made.

I've confronted my pain. I know I was ruining my life. I don't want to live like that anymore. I was existing, not living.

I want to be happy.



Survival

Patricia Ouska

At the age of thirteen I made a decision that changed my life. To this day I struggle as my heart will forever remain heavy. I've asked myself, "Did I do the right thing? Would I have been next? Why didn't anyone believe me? Would I be in prison today?" I don't have answers to my questions, but I'm hoping you'll listen.

I come from an abusive and broken home. I am the middle child of three and we lived with our father. Most children are scared of something..., the dark, shadows at night, sudden noises... the Boogeyman. I was an anxious child. One night, though, the Boogeyman actually came.

Terrified, my younger brother and I witnessed our father rape our older sister. We went to school, and afterwards I picked up my brother and, with my best friend's mother, went to the police station and reported what we saw. It was 1984 and my brother and I entered the D.C.F.S system. We officially began the journey I call SURVIVAL. I never returned home. My sister was sent away. I stood by the

window at the airport and watched her plane take off.

My heart was broken. I haven't seen her since. My brother has spent most of his life in and out of prison. He passed away a few years ago. I am a survivor, though. I entered the prison system in 1992, and, though I'm still here, I am surviving. I'll always wonder though, "how would my life have turned out if I'd stayed? If we hadn't told what we saw?" I suppose I'll never know. I have life-long trauma, I don't believe a simple dose of medication can help me, but I do work on my mental health. I survive alone. Why? Because my father passed away in 2013, on Thanksgiving, and now I'm no longer afraid of the Boogeyman!



The Life that Grew Within

Elizabeth Kruger

The moment I found out I was pregnant, I became a better person.

Before becoming Jimmy's mom I was confused, scared, hurt and depressed. I didn't care if I lived, and if given the choice I would have chosen death. I believed I couldn't conceive, and that being a mother was a privilege and a gift meant for others, not me.

The moment I found out I was pregnant was the happiest moment of my life. Before, I felt I had no purpose, no real reason to live. I wandered and stumbled through life. I was lost. My son became the reason for all that I did. I was someone's mother now.

Never before had I felt so grounded, so right and so filled with purpose. My life had meaning and direction. I was transformed in an instant, not just for a life I wanted to live, but for a life I was eager to live!

As my son grew inside of me, so too grew my love for life and the deep sense of peace that came from knowing we are here to do more than serve ourselves. We are here for each other, as well.

The happiest moment in my life happened thirteen years ago.

I've had many happy moments since, and it all began with the moment I knew I was pregnant with my son. Jimmy has given me the best gift I'll ever receive, he has given my life meaning..., and a life with meaning is a life fully lived!



The Making of Gratitude

S. Brown

My meaning making moment happened when I discovered I was pregnant with my son. My mother and I were arguing about something I no longer remember when she stopped mid-sentence, gazed into my face, stepped back and said, “You’re pregnant?”

Shocked, 18 year old me said, “I’m grown. I know better than that.”

“I bet you are,” my mother said.

“I bet I’m not.”

“I bet you are.”

Still laughing a week later, I sat waiting for results at a clinic. The two women I saw walk out of the exam room wore looks of relief on their faces. I was poised to do the same. What I got instead was, “Congratulations, you’re pregnant.”

In complete denial, I countered with, “No I’m not.”

I went back and forth with the nurse practitioner, before finally telling her I’m gonna have to get a second opinion.

“Please do,” she said, her voice filled with concern, “because your pregnancy test is

positive.”

Two days later I got that second opinion, and was told, “Your results show you are approximately 5 ½ weeks pregnant.”

Did I want my baby? Yes, absolutely! At 18 years old however, I lived in a homeless shelter and struggled to escape an abusive relationship. I was a high school dropout. Before Gregory was born, I didn’t care where I laid my head. I dumpster dived for food. I haunted a 24-hour McDonald’s where sometimes people left food for me on their tables.

No baby asked to be brought into my chaotic, heart-breaking life. What was I going to do? How could I take care of him when I couldn’t even take care of myself?

I fell asleep behind a dumpster that night, praying and crying for God to help. I didn’t know how to change my life, but the question of change wasn’t an option. I had to change. It wasn’t just about me anymore. I had to change my life for my baby.

The Making of Gratitude -2

S. Brown

Two days later, God sent help in the form of a social worker who caught me dumpster diving and helped me find long term shelter.

The moment I knew I needed help has forever instilled in me a sense of compassion, kindness and gratitude that seems to be fading in our place and time.

I trust God's Word which says. "In everything give; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus."(1Thessolonians 5:18). And, "I am grateful concerning what he has given me. He continues to give beyond all that I ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20).

Letting Go

Tatiana Au'son

Noemi Wong was my best friend. On December 19th, 1975, she ceased to exist.

We'd been friends since we were 6 months old. Our parents were constantly together. My mother used to say we taught each other, and I believe we did. But I failed to teach her how to tell someone that something was wrong. See, Noemi kept a secret. Her father had been molesting her since she was able to walk.

She made me promise not to tell, but what I didn't tell her was that her dad had been molesting me too. That was my first demon, my first terror, my first nightmare. Noemi always walked to school with me, but one strange day she didn't. Her dad said she was sick. I didn't think much of it and accepted the explanation. After school I ran in the house, dropped my book-bag and was headed out the door to the Wong's when my father said, "You can't go over to the Wong's".

"Why?"

He said "There's been an accident; your friend Noemi is dead. She tied a belt around her neck."

The earth gave-out beneath me. I was in so much pain and I shouted, "Her father did it!"

My dad was furious with me, he yelled "Go to your room!"

I ran to my room and cried. I was sure her pedophile dad killed her because she told me what he'd done. For decades I carried guilt for her death. I felt like I'd failed to help and protect her. I failed. I lost myself that day, and I honestly haven't found myself since.

Believe it or not, this incarceration has actually helped me. See, we have nothing but time so we ponder the path we're on and our paths leading into the future. Our perspective in life changes. We begin realizing that we can't control every aspect in life, so we learn how to let go. Well, I finally did let go. I forgive myself.

The Only One

Jariel Vega

I think it's important for us to know we have a story to tell. In a strange way, I feel it's our responsibility to share our stories, whether good or bad, so people can gain perspective and learn from us.

People tend to assess intelligence first when we try to evaluate each other. But I think experience is more important than intelligence. We don't all have a 4.0 GPA and genius level IQs, but we do all have different experiences, even within the same circumstances.

Today, when I sat down to write about my "meaning maker moment," I realized I am the only one who can save myself and the only one in control of how the rest of my life will play itself out.

My name is Jariel Vega. I'm 27 years old. I'm from the west side of Chicago and when I was just 11 years old I started playing in the streets. My block was my real live home. Whether I was waking up and brushing my teeth or getting ready to go to sleep, all my thoughts were the same drill, drill, drill! I asked myself questions but I always noticed that nobody put in the same effort as me. I was like, "why am I

sacrificing my life for people who won't do the same for me?" and "Why am I throwing my life away so people can live theirs?"

I thought that's what the hood was supposed to be about. I figured my unselfishness and willingness showed my love and commitment, but none of that mattered, especially when it's really every man for themselves. All the "Brother" and "Blood" stuff turned out to be nothing more than tools for manipulation and just another reason to send shorties off and make them feel purposeful. That's the definition of

"CAP" and one way or another you're going to learn that the most important decisions in life are yours and nobody else's.



The Night My Z.Caravichy Shirt Died

Antonio Aguirre

Everyone seemed to be freaking out. There I was, lying in the middle of the street bleeding to death from the stab wound to my arm. My boy Rosas trying his best to keep me from bleeding out. I should have been grateful to have friends by my side, telling me, “Hold on, don’t give up, don’t fall asleep, we love you, Montana!” But in all honesty, all I could think of was how am I gonna to get all this blood out of my white, silk Z-Cavarichy shirt! I spent my whole damn McDonald’s paycheck on this outfit.

I turned to my boy Rosas and told him, “They better bury me in this shirt.” My girl was bawling her eyes out. I don’t know why Susana a/k/a Chula wore so much eye make-up, she didn’t even need it. To me she was a natural beauty. I wish she would’ve stopped crying over my face though, her tears were starting to make my eyes burn, and her runny make up was making her look more like “the Grudge!”

“God, you’re an ass,” she used to say when I made fun of her.

It was a cool summer night and I had just turned seventeen.

There were so many house parties planned for the weekend and the anticipation was killing me. Not far from my house, Lissette Feliciano’s birthday party was our first stop. She was Cheer Captain for our football team, “the Mighty Cardinals”. All the fellas I knew that were going, were going in hopes of getting lucky with a cheerleader that night. I already had my Latina Princess and promised her a good time, plus, I wanted to get drunk on the free, free! I had no idea how much this plan was going to cost me and cost me it did.

Let’s begin. After midnight, me, Chula and some friends decided to go to another house party down the street. My hood was juking that night and we wanted to make the best of it. As soon as we got outside, we saw two rival gangs square off and started fighting.

Chula was like, “Let’s go, Montana!” We hustled to our cars. As I took one final look back at the commotion, I saw my childhood friend Billy Rosas getting beaten with a bat.

The Night My Z.Caravichy Shirt Died -2

Antonio Aguirre

I knew I should have minded my own business and not got involved. But once our eyes met, I couldn't just let this go down. Rosas and I have been amigos since McDonald's happy meals and Legos. I looked around for a weapon and found a tree branch. I went straight for the guy with the bat and almost knocked his head off.

Once Rosas was free, I figured, let's get it in! So, I went all Baseball Fury! At one point, the adrenaline rush was too much to bear and temporarily blinded me.

As the fight wore on we heard police sirens in the background. We started running, and then I heard a loud scream, Chula pointed at me. Rosas grabbed me and said, "Montana, your shirt is full of blood!" I looked down at my shirt and realized what had happened. While I was swinging tree branches somebody was trying to stab me to death, and almost succeeded. I started feeling extremely tired.

I laid in the middle of the street covered in blood. Rosas and my other friends started

to panic, yelling, "We need to stop the bleeding or he's going to die!" Chula rested my head on her lap, and Rosas used both his hands to try to close my wound the best he could. As I started fading, all I saw was darkness and then I felt the bone chilling cold thru out my whole body.

They say when you're about to die your whole life flashes before you. All I could think about was my Z- Cavarichy silk shirt.

The next day I woke up in the hospital bed with my arm and leg wrapped in bandages. My doctor explained I was stabbed in my triceps area, where both my major artery and ulnar nerve were severed. He said I was very fortunate to have both a cardiovascular surgeon and a neurological surgeon at my disposal upon my arrival, because if not, I would have lost my arm and possibly died.

As I sat there for a whole month receiving visits from everyone who cared, I realized that the only person who didn't seem to care I almost died was me. A month lying in a hospital bed forced me to think seriously about life and what I was going to do next.

The Night My Z.Caravichy Shirt Died -3

Antonio Aguirre

I got a lot of advice from a lot of people. Some of my homies talked about finding out who stabbed me so they could even the score. But I told them there was no score to settle and to leave it be.

Others talked about moving away, to a safer place or neighborhood, but I told them that moving wouldn't fix it because I was the one always looking for trouble. I had an unexpected visit from the paramedic who kept me alive long enough for the doctors to save me and my arm. He introduced himself, and asked, "How're you doing?" I told him great, thanks to you. He said, "Don't thank me, just make it count!"

The longer I thought about his words the more I realized he had a point. I got a second chance at life. What was I gonna do?

I needed to do something significant and change my life. I like serving people. I like helping the less fortunate and fighting against bullies. I wanted to be a man my family could be proud of, an honorable man. One who would stand for something other than himself.

It hit me. My paramedic, the veteran, made a difference.

I knew who I needed to become. I would be of service to God, family and country.

I became an American soldier.

As for my white silk, J. Cavarichy party shirt? I could never bring you back to your former glory. I'll never forget our good times, dancing beneath the strobe lights and streetlights. Unfortunately, the moment had arrived when I had to hang you in the celestial amoire of the heavens. It was real, man, RIP!



Different

James Gouty

The question I've always been asked is, "What makes this incarceration different, James?" Every time, I've answered honestly.

Unfortunately, my answers became untruths because I haven't lived up to my honest hope and continued to come back to prison. Ultimately, I lost everything and everybody.

This time, if a friend hadn't saved my life, I wouldn't be here today writing for my friends and mentors in the Two Roads program.

I became my own worst enemy. I set aside the sacrifices my family made for me. I learned so much from so many awesome people and I threw it all away. In a moment, I had nothing and nobody.

Incarceration took the last of it, even me. My choices and criminal thinking took me to rock bottom, the depths of despair and humiliation. My shame was more than I could bear. I hurt my mother, father, brother, and daughter. I broke their hearts.

My mind had stayed strong through my previous five incarcerations. My last bid was

twelve years long. I went home in 2016. I had accomplished so much in that time, CAAP, Associates degree, certified peer educator, vocational training, facilitating and leading many peer-led groups and became a Toastmaster.

I convinced everyone in my family, including myself, that I had changed, and would be successful upon my release.

Five months later I was back. This time I found myself facing the prospect of spending the rest of my life in prison... It felt as if all the good I'd done my previous those twelve years ceased to exist.

It was just too much. I broke. I finally broke.

So, in 2017, in county jail, I decided to take my life.

If it wasn't for a very dear friend, I would not be here today. My friend saved my life. That experience has changed my outlook on life. God

Different

James Gouty

literally gave me a second chance!

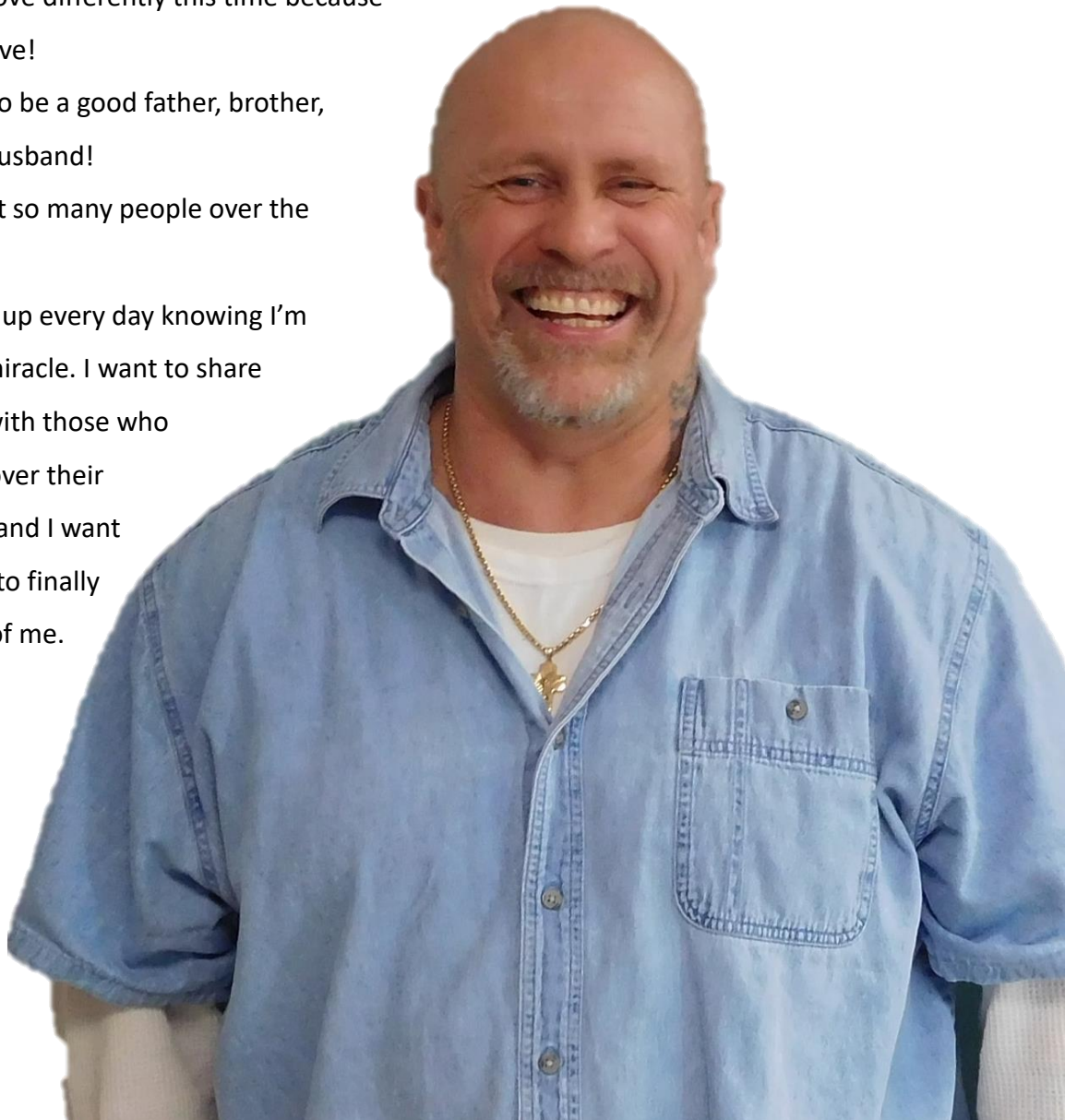
I couldn't see over the mountain I put in front of myself and was consumed by my guilt, shame, and hurt. Now I can finally answer that initial question honestly.

I will move differently this time because
I want to live!

I want to be a good father, brother,
son, and husband!

I've hurt so many people over the
years.

Waking up every day knowing I'm
alive is a miracle. I want to share
my story with those who
can't see over their
mountain and I want
my family to finally
be proud of me.



She Chose

Life

Victoria Redmon

On March 19, 2018 I was confronted with conspiracies, lies and an injustice that can never be undone. My character was cast aside and I was put to the test of the justice system. Perceptions of my integrity was shattered and cast aside. The lies and their aftermath led me to consider the only two choices left to me.

The first of my two choices was death. An escape from the lies, from pain, bitterness, anger and hopelessness.

The second was life. To live in joy, truth, forgiveness and happiness with my boys and hope for our futures.

I chose my boys, my life and the path God intends for me.

Prison could have broken me, left me in a hole, filled with darkness. Instead, my Heavenly Father has used this time to help build me into the strong, beautiful woman of God that I am becoming. I am falling in love with myself.

Choosing to thrive in prison gives me the endurance to never give up on myself, my children and my belief.

I know who I am. I've seen my ugly side. I have failed and made mistakes in the past.

But today I walk with confidence. My Father has given me hope for tomorrow and I have a future worth fighting for. And I will fight.

I'll fight the system for my boys. I am not to be reckoned with when it comes to the fight I have in me for my boys.

I accept where I am right now. What matters is where I'll be.



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