

# TWO ROADS

# ADDICTION

An honest chronicle of the stories and service of the Incarcerated Women and Men  
of the Illinois Department of Corrections

Volume 32

# To All Readers

Our monthly newsletter focuses on three phases: *Rehabilitation*, *Restoration and Re-Entry*. These are the necessary phases of a successful incarceration and transition back to society.

*Rehabilitation* involves the struggle for change one confronts during incarceration.

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

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

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

TWO ROADS Editorial Staff

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



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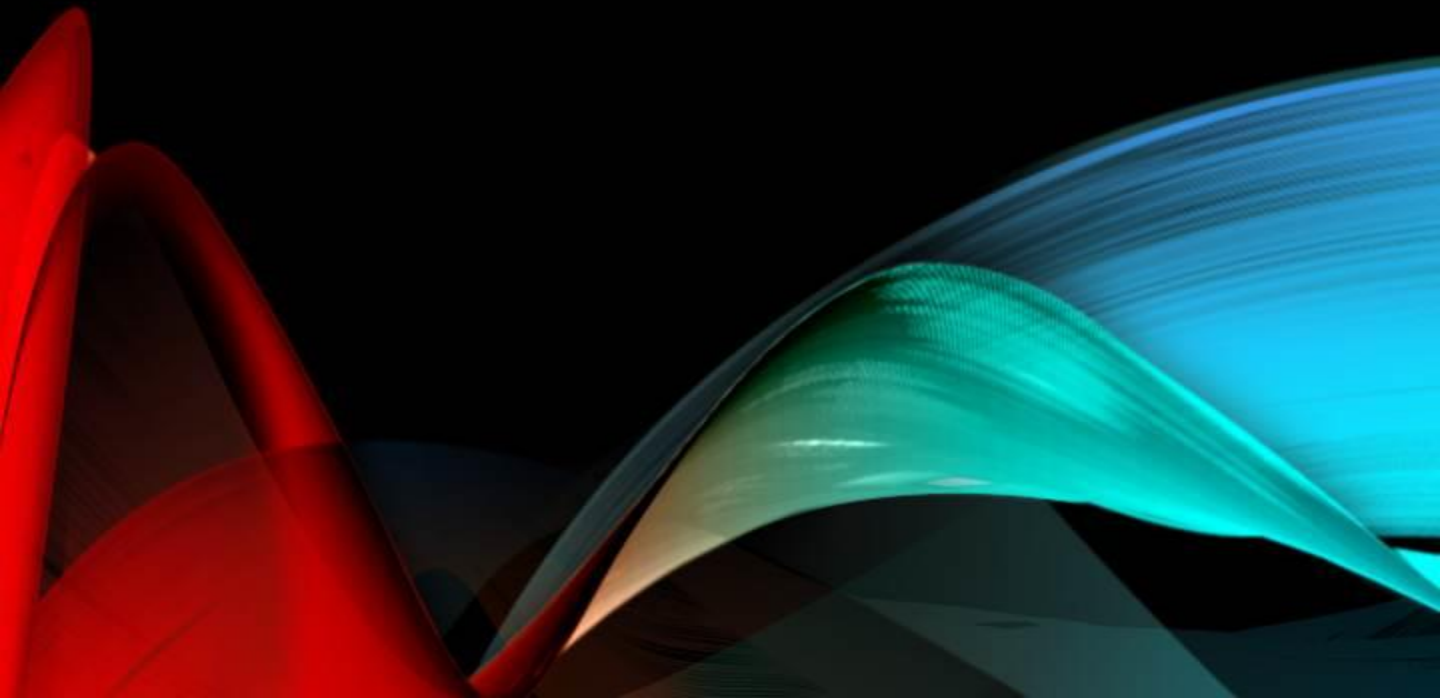
TWO ROADS is built for bringing integrity and honesty about the people who are submitting their stories. There are times where the editors are required to make changes due to spelling errors or grammatical structure. Please know that we will never take away your voice, however, understand that we take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

Thank you.



# *Our Mission Statement*

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



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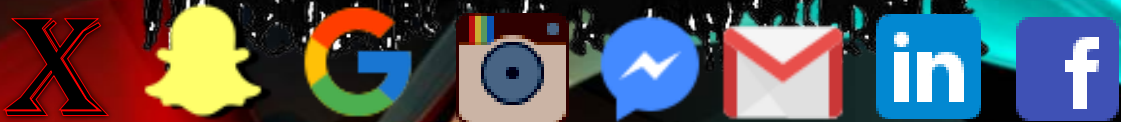
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TWO ROADS  
ADDICTION 2024  
ISSUE

# *Editor's Take*

I am thankful for the brave souls that take their time out to give back to this community. The TWO ROADS family works very hard for you and will continue this path as we are ending another year. This year, I am thankful for four of our editors: Mr. Abdul Khabir, Ms. Lakisha Woodard, Mr. Kelly Bennett and Ms. Evelyn 'Qiyamah' Jackson. Each one of them were given tasks to make sure that this issue was impactful and a joy for our readers.

As you will see, the "Addiction" issue tackles more than meets the eye. It deals with the ills of not only drugs and alcohol, but the simple things...like food, fear, depression, and the like. No matter how we cope, we must understand that we cannot be helped, until we ask for HELP.

Many of our sufferings come from not seeking help nor getting support. We tend to be prideful, and we know that "pride comes before the fall!" so why fall? Why allow ourselves to deal with the demons that come with this and suffer? Why bump my head??

For change to happen, there has to be some form of understanding to whatever the issue is that we are dealing with. We have found ourselves feeling sorry for ourselves, and when this happens, the excuses are boundless. Change never comes! I would like to leave you with this:

"Courage faces fear and thereby masters it. Cowardice represses fear and is thereby mastered by it. Courageous men never lose the zest for living even though their life situation is zestless. Cowardly men, overwhelmed by the uncertainties of life, lose the will to live."

Martin Luther King Jr.



# The 12 STEP PROGRAM

Recovery journey for people  
Struggling with addiction

**Accept reality** – After years of denial, you are ready to accept change is needed.

01

**Submit to higher power** – Admit you'll need support from your higher power and peers.

03

**Admit failings** – Accept your flaws and start your journey of personal growth.

05

**Show humility** – Ask your higher power for help in becoming better, as sheer will is not enough.

07

**Make amends** – At every opportunity, make amends to those who you have harmed.

09

**Discover your purpose** – Learn what plan your higher power has for your life in the future.

11

**Have faith** – Affirm your faith in a higher power can help to heal you.

02

**Do some soul-searching** – Identify your problems and understand how your behaviour affects others.

04

**Let go** – Let go of the damaging traits that are underpinning your addictive behaviour.

06

**Show willingness** – Be totally willing to make amends to those you have harmed over the years.

08

**Check-in with progress** – Maintain progress by returning to self-reflection and continuing to make amends.

10

**Share the message** – As your journey continues, share the message with others struggling with addiction.

12



# My Addiction and

# My Road to Recovery

Abdul Khabir, Associate Editor  
**TWO ROADS**

Addiction has been like one of those dark, gloomy clouds you see in the cartoons; following me around all of my life dumping buckets of freezing rain on me with deafening thunderclaps that made it feel impossible to have a clear or sane thought. I have gone through long arduous periods of life afraid to look into the metaphorical mirror knowing what I would see if I dared peer beyond my own exterior. When I finally chose to

peer into that frightening muddled mirror I saw un-tainted truth. It is not drugs or alcohol that choose self but self who chooses drugs and alcohol. There are defects of character that I (self) have developed along the way that I fed and fed continuously. As they developed, I refused to see the damage I caused along the way. Each time I made a choice to use, knowing that the consequence of doing so would most likely prove negative or even fatal for others and me.

The real meaning of insanity is not: doing the same thing and expecting different results. It is: doing the same thing over and over and over while knowing for a fact that the results will not be favorable.

Constant shame, guilt, regret, remorse, and sorrow, followed by a continuation of the exact same actions that brought on these feelings in the first place. I was never happy with the results, yet knowing they would be the same, I continued walking the same path over and over repeatedly.

It is still a hard truth for me to face that the only reason I took a look in that mirror is because things were not going my way. But something has got to get us to look, right? Selfishness, self-centeredness, and self-seeking have always been a motivating factor for me. I always used to tell myself if only I had taken the scholarship, if only I had a better job, if only I had a better relationship, if only, if only, if only... These are just mere excuses that I used to try and justify my behavior.

There is the saying "wherever I go, there I am" The fact is, all of the circumstances in my life were relatable to other people's and yet

they did not make the same choices that I did. I was told the problem was never drugs, alcohol, money, relationships, or status; the problem was me. Even the motivating fact of my beautiful baby girl's birth was not enough for me to change. I wish that were not so true but my goal here is to be honest. It was not that she was not enough; she was the most precious thing in my life. I was just too caught up in myself to realize that I could lose her and everything else.

Although I am not pleased with myself about what it took for me to be honest, I am happy that I was finally motivated to do so. It was an onslaught of verbal truth from my precious daughter, verses of the Quran, and sitting in a room with individuals who had walked the path I wanted and needed that spoke to me most. She gave me the rawest form of truth I had ever heard. I do not know that I would have heard it the same if it did come from anyone else. But even her words were not the exact thing that set me right because at first I reacted to them by setting into place a

defensive victim stance and a series of self-destructive choices. But her words never left me, they spoke to me of a lifetime of failed promises and let downs. Here I was forcing others to experience things I had been sore about my entire life. I had definitely become all the things I disliked. I had violated all the principles, values, and moral codes I had claimed to live by.

I would say that we all have an interest in self; it is, after all, human instinct to preserve humanity by protecting our social, financial, and sex life. It is only when someone like myself allows self-will to run riot and demand more than what is instinctually necessary that problems begin to occur. As some of my closest companions would say, I am a person who is not just addicted to drugs and alcohol, I am addicted to more. I wanted more booze, more dope, more friends, more popularity, more money, more material, and more sex. What is enough for others was never enough for me. This was due to fear, fear that I would lose what I had and fear that I would not get what I wanted. A fear driven lifestyle will set you into a cycle of bringing to life

exactly what it is you are afraid of. To me it is like a man who fears dying from a headlong fall so he climbs to the highest cliff and with no gear or parachute he jumps hoping to overcome his fear and live to tell about it; the entire time he is falling piss is running down his leg and when he hits the ground he dies.

You could say he faced his fear, but the result was exactly what he was afraid of. I will not examine this man's motives in facing his fear or what drove his fear in the first place. I try to stick to my own experience. I discovered my fears were at times very realistic to me and sometimes fancied, but truth remains, they were driven by selfish motives. The motive: to keep what I had and get what I wanted at any cost.

The path to my recovery is in doing the opposite of everything I was doing before. Instead of living a life full of greed and selfishness, I try to live a life service and selflessness. I ask Allah (Praise Be His Name) to show me where I can be of service, and when he shows me, I get to work. And I do not always have to wait for some grand sign. I can almost always find a way to be



useful. Instead of worrying about what is happening tomorrow, I focus on the moment, living my life day by day. The biggest thing for me has been the process of holding myself accountable, being honest, and taking inventory of my day to see if corrective measures are necessary and how I can do better.

I am bound to make mistakes; the difference today is that I am prepared to face and correct them. This coupled with trying my best to be open-minded to how my actions affect others are tools that I know I cannot happily live without. And I no longer live in the pain of the past. I think I said this before, but I will say it again; although I am still ashamed of my past actions (as I should be), I no longer have to be buried in the shame and guilt experienced from them. The best thing I can do with the pain of my past is utilize it in my journey to help others. By being honest and sharing my story, I hope to help others. Fear, shame, and guilt are crippling, and they rob us of living a

live worth having. Not only do they rob us, but also, they rob our loved ones from experiencing the person we have the potential to be, and they rob those who may otherwise benefit from the best version of ourselves. I leave you with this if you have lived as I have, and your actions have led you to a place where you feel despair and hopelessness, you are tired of facing the same consequences, living in a cycle of hurt and pain, if you have been trying to go at it alone with no obvious success, then ask for help.

Do not try to go at it alone anymore; reach out. There are many avenues which one can take to receive help. If you are as I am, your track record shows that going at it alone has not proven successful. Why be stuck in a cycle of insanity trying things that have constantly proven unsuccessful. How much more do you need to lose in order to try something different, something new?

# This Love Hurts...

A warm push in the veins, as this medicine hits my brain,  
Pure bliss as I nod in and out of this coma.

My whole life has been a bad omen  
everything I ever owned was stolen.

I am possessed by this demon, she leaves me feenin,  
I am out of control no sense can be made of my decisions.

I'm only gonna do what's gonna get me my next fix,  
And keep me from being sick.

Ain't it crazy how when we don't have dope we call it being sick,  
And when we do we say we are well.

What kind of twisted hell have we created

If you can relate our destiny are fixed we failed for the bait,  
Thought the dope was our savior.

Sad part is we should not have needed saving not loved enough, never felt  
we were enough hoping someone tells us we were  
Till we give up saying we've had enough we just want to be loved  
But if you don't love yourself, you'll never accept it.

# A Journey to a New Life

**Anonymous**

**Outside Contributor**

When I think about recovery with the perspective of my experience, it is a look back with the understanding that I have today. My experience has been with a 12-step program, which I would describe as a journey.

I have to go back to a point in my early exposure to the disease of Alcoholism/Addiction. Looking back, I can see the situation differently, but what was that “magic” ingredient that allowed me to have that “moment of clarity,” that allowed me to see my true state of addiction, as described to me through the experiences of others and some of the literature I had been presented with.

It amounted to the realization that no matter how much I wanted/needed to believe that somehow I was going to gain control over my drinking, I obviously wasn't able to and more

importantly wasn't ever going to be able to on my own. The dilemma that remained was that I couldn't conceive of a life without drinking.

Somehow after hearing a speaker tell of his sponsor having returned to drinking after being sober for 25 years, I had a “moment of clarity” in which I was able to see and believe that I was an alcoholic and was not ever going to be able to control my drinking. This was not necessarily a comforting thought, although it had a profound and critical impact on me. I often think of the phrase “we stood at the turning point”. This was for me a crucial realization. Although this experience was vital in what was to come, it was not enough in itself, as it was only a realization but without a course forward. At this point, I was in a limbo-like state of not knowing what lay ahead except the certainty of drinking again, with its familiar consequences.



I started listening and paying more attention to the people, I had come in contact with, and to realize that they had a solution to their alcoholism and that it was something I would like to have. They assured me that they too had felt as I did but had put the process of working the steps of this program into action with the results being what I was observing.

I had to weigh the information I had, both to my situation and the willingness to attempt this program of action. It took both of those components together for me to decide to honestly, to the best of my ability, to make a commitment to try this process. As I proceeded

along this program of action I slowly started to see and feel differently (usually in retrospect) and was carried along from one step to the next, all the while gaining more faith in both the program and the power which underlies the transformation, which is “recovery from a hopeless state of mind and body”.

A lot of time has passed and as I have been able to use this “design for living” as my guide. As a result, I have been able to find a life beyond my imagination, a journey that proceeds “one day at a time”. I am so grateful for this gift that I did not deserve but was given freely.

*“You are never far so far under water – that you can't start swimming...”*

- Taji K. Marshall

# Prepared for Success

**Preston Graham  
Sheridan**

Back when I was in the midst of my foolishness and addiction, I could see one objective. My days and nights became a never-ending quest to seek; find, use and abuse the illegal substances that gave me a temporary way of escape. I often ended up late at night feeling lost and defeated.

These were some of the saddest and loneliest times I have ever faced, and I would look for others to blend in with who made me feel wanted and accepted. I relished the thought of having these so - called friends. What I soon came to find out was that most of these “friends” were hanging around for the high they could get, and when the deal went down, none of them were anywhere around. It never occurred to me that we were all

hurting inside, and were trying to cover up the pain, the shame, and the guilt with cocaine, heroin, weed, alcohol, various pills. Once the effects wore off, there we were left to deal with the damage we had caused to our family and our loved ones. The lies we told, the people we hurt, the relationships we destroyed, all served as evidence of our dysfunctional lives. At best, we were our own worst enemy. Guess What? Now that the smoke has cleared, you can begin to reawaken that dream that lies within you! Your true purpose in life lies right behind the excuses we make. What is it that you really want to achieve? What besides prison is holding you back? Have you lost touch with your dream?

Begin day by day investing in yourself. Be extremely careful how you spend your time, it cannot be regained.

Each moment is precious; Take a sober look at what is going on out there. People are dying every day from Fentanyl overdoses, people are being killed at an alarming rate, and nobody seems to have an answer. What can we do? We can start by becoming better men and women. Better fathers and mothers to our children, and most of all, better citizens. Most of us in here are returning back into society. Some

sooner than others. How do you want to live? Are you preparing yourself for success?

It all begins with you..... Do you have what it takes to make better decisions?

**GIVE YOURSELF A**  
**CHANCE TO BE**  
**SUCCESSFUL.**

# The Ripple Effect

## Anonymous

Have you ever thrown a stone into a lake and watched the water ripple out away from the impact? No matter how big the stone is, it always ripples, touching everything in its path and leaves agitated waters in its wake. Our lives as alcoholics and addicts are no different, our lives are the lake, our decisions and action are the stones, and the ripples are the consequences of our decisions.

I am selfish and self-centered by

nature, because of that, for a long time I believed that the only person my poor choices affected was me. I also blamed my poor choices on the actions of others. When I got sober I used to say that my alcoholism hurt me more than it hurt anyone else, today I understand that isn't true. There is no way to measure my hurt against the hurt of others. When my alcoholism and depression started to take off, my friends and family started to disappear.



I blamed them for leaving me alone. I thought I was the only one hurting. I now know that my friends and family had to step away, for it was too painful for them to watch me self-implode. I now know that my actions changed the dynamics of my entire friend group, my family and all the people that I came into contact with. With every choice I made, I sent a shockwave throughout the world. Some waves were bigger than others.

When I got my second DUI, I cut a semi-trailer off merging into a construction zone, where I was rear ended. I went to jail as a result, for I wrecked the car that night, my girlfriend broke up with me that night and I was angry and depressed. That was as far as I had ever thought, how it affected, me. What never occurred to me, was that due to the accident, the interstate was closed, traffic backed up, people had places to be, lives to live, and things to do, which my carelessness prevented them from doing that.

Oh, did I mention I damaged my mother's only car, the car she worked hard to purchase, and

struggle to pay for each month? Still, my girlfriend and family were worried, not knowing where I was, was I alive, when I failed to show up on time, as well as not hearing from me. When I became a felon, the only thing I could think about was how that day hurt me, and how it had changed my life. What I didn't think about was how painful it was for my mother to find her son dying from a drug overdose, how it emotionally it hurt her, when I had pushed her against the wall when I tried to run out of the house before the police came, how disrespected the police officer felt, how broken-hearted my grandfather was, and how it hurt my family financially to post my bail or how going to jail with me would impact my girlfriend's future.

Until I came into the fellowship and worked the steps, I never realized how many people my alcoholism touched. What I also found out is that my recovery has a ripple effect and touches many more people's lives than I will ever know.

Every moment we spend in the program, the world is a safer and better place. Our way of living has its advantages for all.

Our recovery can allow people to find hope, to find solutions and to find a way to heal. Our recovery

allows us to be useful, productive members of society, and more importantly, there's no limit to how far the ripple effects of practicing these principles can reach...

Your Brother in Recovery

# Microscope Fiend

**Keith Owens**

**Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry  
Center**

**Microscope** *An instrument for making magnified images of minute objects.*

**Fiend** *A person excessively devoted to a pursuit.*

I have gone through this life looking at addiction as being only about alcohol and drugs. Being a person who abused both drugs and

alcohol, I became multi-addicted. Now I must recognize this lifelong addiction of "microscope syndrome" which I find it just as debilitating as the alcohol and drugs. I have spent years looking through a "microscope at things in life that only I see fault in and also why I am not receiving my proper portion of goods and that bothered me . Experiencing more downs than ups, not getting the answers I wanted when I wanted them, or not at all, always had me on the back burner of life so it seemed.

When my turn came to be observed under the same set of lenses, what I saw was the plain truth. Now I am in the light; everything in life that I was so upset about such as the pain of never being satisfied, the blaming I did all of it. 50 years of complaining - the image showed me I was a complete waste of time and space. Habitually being more of a problem to myself than anyone or anything else. This was the hardest addiction in life - the one I not only had to face, but fix.

Brothers and Sisters, in order to move forward in life freely, one must first overcome self-inflicted wounds. How: by first taking a hard look at yourself and being honest with what you find, fix that first get correct within. Then and only then can you experience all that God has given you freely to enjoy.

A wise man once said,



“To solve a problem find the source of the problem”!



# Right Where You Need to Be: My Thoughts on Drug Addiction

**Nicholas V. Barfield**  
**Vandalia**

I paroled from Vienna CC in 2016. I had served four years for meth conviction. I hated prison so much I swore to myself I would never do drugs again and risk coming back. I kept my word to myself for over three years, I was clean and drug free. I had a home with most of my kids in Kentucky, working for the union. I was very happy and content with my life. However, I was not practicing recovery at all, no meetings, no steps, and no sponsor. Therefore, when I started slipping, I did not have anyone to answer to. No one to call me on my bull crap. In addition, I relapsed and was right back in prison.

After going back to Graham C.C receiving, I was then transferred to Shawnee C.C.

I met two people there made me want to change my life. One was a twenty-year-old kid a few years

younger than my oldest son was. I decided that I wanted to be a man of change. If in fact, he was my son I would want him to meet a better man than I was at that time. My other friend really showed me how to be that man. My younger friend transferred soon after our meeting. Then I and the other man started our own dayroom NA meeting at that time.

I really did not have that much going on, the job I had we only worked a couple days a week and that did not occupy that much of my time. So, reading the big book or any recovery material with my friends was a good way to pass the time. My friend was getting ready to parole so I decided to submit for a transfer back to Vienna c.c. Then things started changing, I was extremely lucky and was accepted into the dog program. If your facility has a dog program, it would be wise to do everything you can do to be a part of that program. It does your heart and soul good.

In all the time I have served in prison I have never experienced anything Like Shawnee S.W.A.T.T. Program. I have worked for many good people in IDOC; however, Mrs. Autumn really used the training of the program to get us to think in ways to help us be better people. The men that were in the program with me became more than co-workers. Nobody can replace family in prison; however, the men helped me remember exactly what those bonds felt like. Then the knowledge that you are helping these awesome dogs find forever homes - it changes you internally. It is probably obvious that I no longer wanted to transfer. I did everything I could to try getting that transfer cancelled, yet God had different plans for me. Everyone around the SWATT program saw how distraught I was when I was called to pack my belongings. Mrs. Autumn told me "no matter what you're exactly where you need to be" but at the time I was not hearing a word she said. I learned to like where I was and did not want to leave.

However, when I arrived here at Vienna CC, what she said had stuck in my head. She was right, the first thing I realized was I was doing something at Shawnee that I did before when I was first paroled. I was happy and content and the entire "NA" thing my friends and me began just faded away. I quit trying to find people who would sit and discuss recovery, and that is dangerous for a person like me. I needed to see that, and I would never have seen it if I stayed there with the dogs.

Vienna is a very small facility; I cannot go anywhere and not see the affect drugs has taken away from us. I see my friend Phil every time I am on the sidewalk. It is where we always crossed paths while he was doing his job (Inside grounds.) Heroin took his life when he returned home to his family. When I am on the patio, I see one of the strongest men I have ever met doing his speed walking. I know I will never see that again because he is now confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

I have now returned to my old job in the laundry, where I worked with one of my best friends, Brian. We both paroled at the same time and worked laying concrete with our brother up until Brian lost his life as a result of drug use. I often hear his laugh, which mimics sponge bob, every time I enter the laundry room. This is a constant

reminder that I must do better for myself and also for my family.

None of this would have crossed my mind if I would have stayed where I was. I sure did not want to leave; however, I am glad I did, because Mrs. Autumn was right. I am where I need to be.

# Art of Greatness

**Malik Shabazz**  
**Joliet**

I am the best that ever did it.  
My art is greatness.  
From the bottom to the top.  
Even thru death, I made it.  
A hundred-rounds could not stop me.  
Not even prison.  
My friends turned into my enemies.  
In return, I gained wisdom.  
The devil even tried to subdue me,

but I slaughtered him with no effort.

It used to rain on me like hell and like God I changed the weather.

My pain turned into my greatest success.

As these bars helped me overcome my greatest stress.

I am something great and no one can take that away.

I finally found my path and purpose thru my darkest days.

This is why I am so great.



# Somebody Save Me

Anonymous

*"Somebody save me, me from myself. I've spent so long livin' in hell/They say my lifestyle is bad for my health, it's the only thing that seems to help/All of this drinkin' and smokin' is hopeless, but feels like it's all I need/Something inside of me's broken, I hold onto anything that sets me free/I'm a lost cause...don't waste your time on me/I'm so damaged beyond repair, life has shattered my hopes and my dreams."*

Those are the words from a song called "Save Me" by Jelly Roll. The message really resonates with me because I've cried similar words from my knees many times. I truly thought I was "damaged beyond repair" and there was no saving me.

I'm an alcoholic and I have suffered from the disease of alcoholism for over 35 years. The first 22 of those years were spent as a stumbling, slobbering, depressed, and full-fledged drunk. I've been locked up the last 13 years and completely abstinent. *Abstinence* doesn't necessarily mean *sobriety* and I'm never gonna be cured. I will likely struggle with sobriety the rest of my life. I cannot drink, **period!** One drink is *one too many* and one more is *never enough*. It's a life or death situation for drunks like me.

Now, you might be thinking, "this guy can't really be serious!" Well, without turning this into a novel, here's a quick, embarrassing synopsis of the last 38 years — I started drinking around the age of 17. By the time I was 20, I had already dropped out of college, because I couldn't make the A.M. classes, due to hangovers.

I joined the Air Force at that same age, basically to redeem myself in my parent's eyes. Over the next 3 years, I was arrested 3 separate times for D.U.I. on a military base and subsequently received a *bad conduct discharge*. I returned home, with my tail between my legs – my self-esteem and self-respect were very low.

Can you guess what I turned to for help? Yes, more and more alcohol. Most normal people might see those incidents as “major warning signs”, and that change is needed. Oh no, not me, nothing changes if nothing changes, and things only got worse.

At 25, I was in a very dark place. My parents had been trying to help me get back on my feet, but eventually they had to put up with my B.S. for too long and they kicked me out. Later that year, during a moment of desperation and weakness, I took someone's life. A completely senseless murder that remained unsolved for 17 years.

It was during that timeframe that

I really fell off the deep end. Once the fog in my head cleared, I understood committing that crime was completely out of character for me. Yes, I was a worthless drunk, but I've never been prone to violence. I just couldn't wrap my head around what I did. So, I self-medicated to numb the pain as I just wanted to die. I was depressed, I was disgusted with myself, and I became very paranoid.

Can you imagine the anxiety of always looking over your shoulder, every day for seventeen years? The whole ordeal was utterly eating me up inside and I couldn't tell a soul why I was so depressed. I contemplated killing myself. Many times I devised a plan and many times I chickened out because I was too much of a coward. I actually attempted suicide four times. Thankfully, by some divine intervention, I was unsuccessful. Basically, my life was *wash, rinse and repeat* for seventeen years. Oh, I also received four more D.U.I.'s during that period and I still didn't seek out help.

Fast forward — 2010. I was so tired, tired of depression and the anxiety. I was ready to explode. So, after my fourth and final drunken suicide mission of which I purposely rolled a stolen truck off a ravine at nearly 100 mph during a high-speed chase, (I unbuckled my seat belt and rolled her, knowing it would end me. Did I say *divine intervention*?) I was thrown out on probably the first roll and was barely injured. My dad told me later, had I been buckled in, I would have been smashed by the cab (of the truck) and probably died.

I was released from the hospital, but my parents wanted to commit me for mental issues after I told them that the accident was intentional. It was at that moment I told them the truth. They almost immediately forgave me. We contacted a lawyer and after some intense conversations with the Illinois State Police (ISP), I finally came forward and confessed.

Oh my God, the weight was lifted and the burden diminishing from my heart, it was then I began a new

journey. Don't get me wrong, I still hurt to this day, and I haven't forgiven myself completely. For the first time in my adult life, I could say, "I can be a new person" and "I don't have to drink anymore." My life is full of unconditional love from my parents, my kids, my extended family and my friends who truly believe in me.

I don't have anything to run from anymore. I am an alcoholic, and the opportunities and triggers are going to be ever-present in my life. I have so much to live for and I can't imagine one reason to throw it all away. My goal is to achieve complete sobriety, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I am a work in progress.

If (for whatever reason) you feel your life is meaningless, or you feel you're running from something, and you think drinking and/or drugging is the cure-all, I'm living proof that it is not! Please talk to someone; your life does have meaning.



Get help and don't let that pain keep brewing. There's a bursting point, and you may not survive it. Thank you for allowing me to share a portion of my story. It was

difficult to open up, but it's therapeutic for me and maybe, just maybe, it will touch someone's life. Wishing you all the love, peace and prosperity.

# Finding My Purpose

**Ignacio Carrillo**  
**East Moline**

At 40, I felt like a total loser. I was dealing with a litany of mental and physical complications due to a life suffering from deep depression and addiction. I was an alcoholic, a dead-beat dad, broke and, oh yeah, looking at a double-digit prison sentence. At the urging of writing a teacher at the county jail, I put those feelings to paper and submitted them to the Prison Health News (a national publication that helps persons in custody address and seek help for health issues). To my surprise, they published it!

Something broke me when I put

those emotions on a page, and then again when I saw them published. It was hard to write and even harder to know others might read it and judge me. Surprisingly, the response was encouraging. Detainees approached me privately to offer encouragement and thanked me for shedding light on a subject mostly ignored in our shadow community: depression.

Soon, I'd be writing essays about mental health behind bars, winning awards and being asked to speak at prison seminars. It seemed I'd found something I was good at. So, despite my initial hesitations, I became an activist writer on a really tough topic.

I wanted to do more. Write a book. Start a foundation. My inner voice chides me, "Why do you think you deserve to be heard? Who are you? You're no good activist. You suck." I've come close to listening to that voice, packing it all up, and doing my bit quietly on my bunk, splitting my time between sleep and TV. That's when I reached for my *brag book*.

This brown taped up file folder is where I'd keep copies of my published pieces along with feedback and notes I received over the years. I keep pictures of my family, as well as clippings that work as a pseudo vision board. My goals are humble:

I want to help just one person get through what I've already endured. I want to give them hope and promise.

Wouldn't that be incredible? Maybe, in this small act, I can start to make up for some of the harm I've caused.

Everything in that folder holds some intangible value to me, like the letter from the editor of *The Beat Within*, a

prison newspaper dedicated to inspire and support detainees across America through the power of writing. David wrote, in part, "Your essays really inspire some of the younger guys. They often look forward to reading your submissions." Even to write that sentence today chokes me up. Therefore, I keep all these precious remnants and stuff them into this dingy nondescript folder for safekeeping.

Whenever I begin to doubt my resolve or myself as a writer, I reach for my lifeboat and refill my emotions reservoir. Do you, gentle reader, keep something similar? I highly recommend it. It doesn't have to look like mine. Maybe yours has art or motivational quotes or personal pictures, or maybe it has letter from loved ones or others you've written but never sent. It could be where you store your accomplishments: certificates, report cards, whatever is important to you. Anything that lifts your spirits and reminds you to keep your chin up is a candidate for inclusion.

I would've certainly quit this writing experiment years ago had it not been for this anchor — my brag book — and the cherished lifestyle hidden within. It contains proof that I'm more than my worst mistake; that I have value and am capable of redemption. Writing isn't easy, nor is whatever you do, but my brag

book keeps me paddling against the current that wishes nothing more than to drown me in the social stigmas and self-doubt. As it turns out, I'm no longer a loser. I just needed the right perspective. I needed to find my purpose, and that purpose is helping. I pray you find yours.

# The Power of Powerlessness

**Tommy Hill**

**Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center (formerly of Murphysboro Re-Entry Center)**

Most of us when we enter the program, we are a mess. After a lifetime of hanging on to our destructive, self-indulgent behaviors, we are at a place where it can no longer be denied. Few of us make it to the doors of recovery skipping a whistling a happy tune of our own will. More often than not, we are there because we have no choice — drugs (or our obsessive behavior of choice) have taken over;

we do not *want* to get high, we *have* to get high. We have burned bridges and have hurt everyone around, especially ourselves. Broken and with no other choice, we find ourselves at the first step. **We have admitted we are powerless over (insert addiction of your choice here) and our lives have become unmanageable.**

This simple seeming statement is where it all starts, but what on the surface appears to be an obvious no-brainer is the start of a lifetime of work. Recovery is hard anyone who tells you different has never done it.



It requires wading face first through a lifetime of pain, mistakes, trauma, and bad choices. Many of these memories and emotions are the very baggage we used to avoid and even harder to unpack are the bad things we left in our wake. The first of these is no matter how we viewed ourselves to this point, we are not good people in bad situations. We are not addicts because we use drugs or drink or what have you; we are addicts because we are selfish obsessive individuals who have chosen to give up the power to control our lives.

Not using does not make you in recovery, working your recovery does. Abstinence without the work just leads to finding a new object to obsess over and give up the control to. This leads to so called dry drunk syndrome in which the addict is not using, but their lives are still chaotic and unmanageable. It also leads to replacement – we fill the hole inside us with new things like food, sex, relationships, religion, even the program itself can become an object of abuse if we use it as a substitute for our substance of choice.

The first step has two parts.

**Part One:** we are powerless over drugs (or whatever). Seems pretty cut and dried, does it not? After all, every one of us has tried the various methods of managing our addiction, with no real success. Sure, trying to manage our use seems to help in the short-term maybe. I have seen folks who only used every other day or have detailed schedules when and how much, and we all have tried the dope diet where we slowly reduced use. Every addict has a laundry list of excuses and justifications as well. One of my favorites was I had to keep using because I sold dope (hey a person has to work right?) In addition, I could not keep up with a bunch of tweakers unless I was tweaked myself. This seems in direct conflict with my “I have to sell dope because I use it, and I do not like paying for drugs” excuse. However, logic is never an addict’s friend is it? The point is, we all have our dire reasons we use, but every single one of them are lies. We use because we are addicts, not the other way around. Simply put, we have to use because the object of our addiction

has the power. We have no choice- live to use and use to live. For us the only thing worse than the suffering our use has caused is the suffering we experience without it.

Once we come to the point of surrender, when we say I cannot do this, I do not have a handle on this anymore if I ever did, the step (or half step) this lack of power is forever, and it will never get better or go away. There is no getting a handle on it and then go back and use responsibly later. There is no cure, no graduation, we are addicts, powerless today, and powerless all our lives.

## **Part Two:**

Our lives have become unmanageable. This is even more obvious to everyone except maybe us. The human capacity for self-deception is remarkable and the addict is the true master of this art. Nonetheless, even we see the suffering and misery we embody, if not the suffering and misery we leave in our wake. Being the selfish petty creatures we truly are, we hurt hence we use more. Because as addicts we have zero resilience- every ache, real or imaginary, slight and mild discomfort is an

emergency and has only one treatment, to use. What we do not see in our self-involvement and obsession-colored lenses is the disruptive, destructive, corrupting influence we have on everyone and everything around us. This wake of destruction we cause follows us like a poison cloud. Until we stop and say, hey I can no longer do this, we do not even begin to see the chaos we have sown. Most of us will not realize how toxic and disruptive we have been to everyone until later on (step 4 for most of us), but we can see what directly affects us. Therefore, we come to admit we are not only powerless, but we simply cannot manage our own lives. This is humbling, also scary. We are adults; we should be able to function as such, and if our addictions have control over us and we give up using, well what else is there?

This is where the Program starts to work. By admitting, we are powerless to control our use and unable to manage our own lives.

We have found our power. We cannot, so we do not. This act of surrender bestows a new power upon us. The power to not use today. **I DO NOT HAVE TO USE TODAY.**

When that light came on in my head, I was speechless (ask anyone; that is rare). I probably repeated it in my head 200 times. When this truth had seeped into my very being, I felt a rush and was bouncing off the walls with joy telling everyone who would listen, as well as a few I had cornered. I do not have to use today; just for today I can be clean. It seems counter intuitive I know, but the act of surrender is truly the most empowering thing we can do. After

the enormity of this had started to settle a bit, (I am still amazed and humbled every day by this) something even more magical occurred to me. I could hold my power of sobriety up like a shield warding off my sickness for one day. I could also lay that shield down in front of my cobblestone and day after wonderful sober day I could make a path of not getting high days. That I could, if I am careful, step only on them as a path through, a sober lifetime. Therefore, this is I – standing on my stone of a sober day. My name is Tommy; I am an addict, and I do not have to use today.

Tommy Hill



TR



# An Ocean of Tears

**Earl Milton Jr.**  
**Centralia**

Life is good, because the polar opposite is death. As we look through our own lives and see all of the pain, suffering, and struggles of the entire human race, we see if our perceptions are refined - an ocean of tears. In life there are good times, yet there are also bad times, sad times, and even make you so mad times. Life seems to be this process of growing, learning, and developing our life force into what it needs to be in order for us to be all that we were created to become. Sometimes life hurts so bad that death seems better. Sometimes life is so good that we lose ourselves in the bliss of the moment. As we come to appreciate this rite of passage and understand that many times, we are motivated by harshness to keep us moving, to keep us improving, to cause us to

have to dig deeper than ever before. So, we must learn to appreciate this paradox as this is what keeps the world moving forward. There were tears shed before you and there will be tears shed after you. Your tears that show outwardly or the tears hidden within are a unique currency mixed with your genetic code. Your tears are calling for something. Your tears are an indication that you need or want something so bad. The good times that we are enabled to enjoy mean so much more when looked at in contrast with the bad times that we have endured. Did you notice that if there were no bad times, the good times would, in most cases, be taken for granted? How can we know the good and not know the bad? Did you ever think that we notice what is good by what is bad? Did you ever really appreciate the breaths that you breathe before you have

you have watched someone who was struggling to breathe take their last breath? Did you really appreciate walking to take your trash to the curb before you saw someone who couldn't walk and didn't have a trash can or a place to take it out from? Did you appreciate your freedom before it was threatened or taken?

The examples are numerous, but I suspect that you are starting to get the picture. Take an inventory of what you do have and be grateful. When hard times do come, be strong because they are not forever. You can smile while you are crying, because you are still alive when you could be dead or dying. Whatever state you are in remember that you are alive for a reason. And your story is an inspiration, encouragement, or a warning to others. Your tears matter! Every

single one. Make your pain count. What you went through, or are going through, could ease the pain of another. It also could warn someone to watch out and move purposefully. You have to make it because someone needs you to make it, so they will feel that they can make it as well. The tears of humanity's past are helping us all right now. Whether we recognize it or not. Blessed be your tears as well as your smiles. Appreciate them both, because balance is beautiful. Rise up even if you feel down. If you feel elated, feel free to share. And always remember that there are people who care. Always remember, God cares. God bless everyone, everywhere, and peace be with you all.



# Greetings TWO ROADS

**Darrell Wright**  
**Vandalia**

Thanks to all the staff and administrative personnel who assist in the production and those who make available the resourceful publication of this medium. I am encouraged by the publication that allows individuals both inside and outside to share and offer various forms and topics of interest and enlightenment. There is a great and grand calling on the root of positive change in viewing the tenets of TWO ROADS mission statement; Restoration, Re-entry, and Rehabilitation (not listed in that order).

Our great nation is being looked upon to express the foundational roots of such stature. At no less moment than the present, those on the inside of this can and should lead those who believe they are truly free toward expressing change.

Expressing true positive change begins when one comes to realize their part and participation in unjust and negative decisions, actions, and thoughts. I would like to share with you all a viewpoint I received from a devotional where God offers this to all.

“God desires to raise humanity to his/her height of Divinity.”  
Earth gave me her best-a human temple to enclose my divinity and I brought to her the possession of divine power, divine love, and divine strength. To be expressed in those of her children who have accepted me, opened their hearts to me and sought to live life according to my life.

I pray that many read and share in the theme of TWO ROADS mission statement mantra. Moreover, that as a nation we grow to learn the depths of the highest law in the universe -Love.



# Beauty in the Shadows

Take a look  
and imagine this  
how easy it is  
to get lost in the sickness  
not count the cost of this addiction  
and all its afflictions  
many sleepless nights, chasing the  
sunrise  
as my buzz peaks  
distorting my reality around me  
I can see my dreams  
As they surround me  
Paranoid delusions  
Window blinds illusions  
Shadows in the night tricked my  
mind

Shadows in the light tricked my eyes  
Trapped behind closed eyes  
Needles and foil  
Glass pipes and Pyrex  
Waiting on the cook  
So I can cook my brain  
and lungs and veins  
It's a downward spiral  
And I'm not ready to stop spinning  
Because when I do,  
I'll have to face the man I've become  
and the loved ones I've hurt

#END  
OVERDOSE



# Addiction

**Nathan Bitner**  
**Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry**  
**Center**

I have been suffering with addiction for the first 40 years of my life. As a result of using drugs — from time to time — and being a “full-time” alcoholic, not only was I in denial with myself but I was in denial with everyone else about my addiction. The role I played in my life caused me to see myself as a victim of circumstance taking no accountability or responsibility for my own words and actions. I was a victim of how others reacted to me.

Nowhere was I at fault. I could treat everyone how I wanted to and how dare they feel wounded, act in an instinctive manner towards me, and treat me bad. I could not be honest with myself nor anyone else. I’m a dishonest liar and that is one of my many character defects. While working the fourth step and taking a moral inventory and being rigorously honest, I have come to

realize that I’m at fault and that I have character defects. The reality set-in that I am one messed up person. That thought is not supposed to belittle me, judge me, or make me feel bad. My actions already do a good enough job of that. That thought is supposed to act as a proverbial “slap upside the head.” When I was on the “wagon” and doing well, I was able to lie to myself and tell myself I did not have a problem.

Nevertheless, when I drink, ALL of my character defects come glaringly through. I drank because I had a God-sized hole in my heart. Not only was I made for a relationship with God, as I know him, but with a woman and my family. My addiction was a treatment for that God-sized hole symptom and not a cure for the root cause. I asked myself, “Did the alcohol cause my character defects or amplify them?”

The answer is simple! The character defects were there all along. That is because in my early childhood years I was around drug addicts, drunks, domestic violence, domestic abuse, and violence towards others. I did not have God, as I know him, in neither my life nor an honorable male role model to teach me how not to be a piece of shit. Therefore, I inherited all of the character defects of those around me and I did not like myself because I knew those behavioral defects were not morally or integrally proper ways of behavior.

The alcohol really brought the defects to the surface. However, I could hide them very well when I was sober. They were always there. Now that I know the exact nature of my wrongs and I can be honest with myself about who I really am, I can begin the healing process by asking God to remove my character defects and then being willing to make amends wherever possible. Never should I attempt to heal my wounds at the expense of others.

The objective is to find healing, closure, and not keep adding harm

upon harm.

Initially I could not admit any of this because I was sore about who I was. The truth hurt. I did not want others to see me for who I really was because I was an ugly person on the inside. Never should have I ever acted like a cat covering-up my own crap. That is a sign of an abusive individual. But that was my truth and my reality no matter the guilty behavior. Now each day I take it one day at a time. The past does not matter, and the future is not promised. I simply struggle to get past each daily struggle.

Today is called the “PRESENT” because it is a gift. Therefore, I live in the gift that my God has given me to be better than yesterday and not harm others in the future. I have spent the first half of my life, on a daily basis, being a harmful and abusive person and suffering addict. I will have to spend the next half of my life, on a daily basis, being a kind, loving and peaceful person. These changes will not occur in days, weeks, months or even years but an entire half of my life beginning “one day at a time.”



# A Tale Called..

## Damn!! Life is Complicated

**Yusef K. Brown**  
**Pinckneyville**

I felt so down and depressed. I was dealing with a sick mother, which cancer was killing. Damn I cried out why is life so complicated. My family had a great influence on who I am today. Some of us want to pretend, that our family was or are nearly perfect people. My Dad was a drug user and barely had time for me. I hated him for not loving me the way he should have. Damn life is complicated. I do not want to avoid my true feelings. I made a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself. It is all

right to admit the truth about what brought you to this point in your life. This might very well involve the wrongs committed by your parents and other family members. It is perfectly okay to express your anger and regrets over what has been done to us. We have a right to hold others accountable and grieve the negative effects their actions have had on their lives. We cannot continue to use this as an excuse for our wrong choices or for staying in bondage. Yeah, stay focused and patient, I know life is complicated. Be strong and courageous.

# What Inspires Me?

**Darren Sentz**  
**Shawnee**

If I sit and think about it, there is a lot that inspires me. Nevertheless, people mainly focus on the flesh, or the heart instead of the mind. The majority of the world prefers to receive; what they want is an instantaneous motion with less efforts of hard work. What inspire me are the people who use the "Think First" mentality. We all have a thought process, but how many of us can say; "I wanna do this, but is there a better way?" The majority of us struggle with that step, and the crazy thing is that is the first step always. Not all of us have that mental strength, but there is a way to exercise it and the first step we have to take is realizing if it is wrong and there is a better way.

Our pride is what gets in the way of these steps; pride is what we focus on the most when there is a decision to be made. In reality, it is our flesh and our heart. Another

thing that inspires me is confidence, and not all confidence is good. So being more specific, I lean more to the high self-esteem aspect of it all. Loving yourself more than you do other people's opinions is very powerful in my book. Most people are inspired by the amount of power and respect a person receives, and sometimes it can be important. However, should it be a main priority; NOT AT ALL! You should not care what people think of you. Because it is your life not theirs, and the last thing that inspires me is patience. We all want things to come in an instant, positive things. Let's just say, however, not everything is run like Burger King; you cannot always have it your way. You have to be able to display patience and understand that your time will come. Fame, money, cars, and clothing is what the majority of people strive to get. Adapting the understanding that these things are not just handed out comes with the whole process of life.

I am 24 years old, and I am still working on all these things, that is why I find it inspirational becoming aware of these things. Not only that but fluent in these things is what I strive for. I love making music, and I want to be an influencer.

Therefore, I motivate myself to step up and lead. The above-mentioned are some of the areas I have struggled in. Please understand that

we are not judged for our mistakes, we get judged for our decisions. Humbling me and gaining mental strength is what I am looking for as inspiration. In closing, please ponder this :

**“THE HARDEST TIMES OFTEN  
LEAD TO THE GREATEST  
MOMENTS.”**







ARTS + CULTURE

ARTS + CULTURE



# Art Is Therapy

This edition of ARTS & CULTURE, we sit down with Justin Vantichelt, one of the artists at Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center. When we had the opportunity to talk, he was coming off of a binge – an att binge, that is. He had spent over 7 straight hours working on a piece that was being constructed on the walls of the facility for the CAT simulator and the ATS CDL Simulator. “Work is never done, especially when you’re having fun.”, said Vantichelt. I have been the editor and chief for the last year and a half, and I have reported many good stories of the men and women of IDOC as well as those who are on the outside. What started as a 20-minute Q & A, turned into a fifty-minute life journey.

To understand a man’s expedition through addiction is an understatement. Sometimes, finding your “certainty” is as important as finding your dreams. A lot of us have never tried to understand what and how we do,

but in this interview, you will take a pilgrimage through the ups and downs of his reality that lead to his current “therapy.”

**TR: what are your earliest moments of art?**

JVT: My first was when I was drew a picture of Garfield and I didn’t think much of it but in the years to come, my mother asked me if I remembered the Garfield piece I had done and I told her “no.” She then showed me the work that I had done, and I was amazed at the work.

**So where did that lead you to?**

I was 13 and at the time I was at a local neighborhood party and there was a guy there and he was tattooing.



I was amazed by seeing the work that was being done and I was hooked. At the time I was into building things and the tattoo gun he had was made of a bent spoon and a Norelco trimmer engine. I asked him what it took to make the gun. The very next day I made mine and that was it.

### **How did that make you feel?**

Well, I knew it was permanent and they loved it, and from an artist aspect I thought I did a good job. I've got a steady hand, and I basically learn on the cuff, and no one had any infections or anything. Of course, I'm only 13 years old and I had to keep them away from where our parents could see them.

### **What about high school?**

Once I got in high school, I got into an Art class and the teacher wanted to see what we could do. She ripped out of a page from a magazine and told us to see what we could do. We had to draw the other side, and I did. She came over when I was finished and saw this portrait I drew. She brought out a folder of the work of other people

who had taken her class.

### **Let's switch gears a little bit....what is your thoughts on addiction?**

On addiction, wow that's a transition. I've been an addict, I'm still an addict. I believe that the road to recovery is not a destination, but a journey. I know that I need to take it one day at a time. Addiction is a painful, losing battle; its debilitating. It sucks the life outta you, it makes you do things and think things when you're sober, like I would never do anything like that. I would never knock someone for the things they've done when they are under the influence. I lost a child in 1997 and I suffered a lot. I always wanted to be a dad. I came from a broken family — my parents were divorced — and I wanted to share life with my own life. When my oldest daughter came — we lost her the first day that she was born.



I have 9 siblings, and this was going to be my parents' first grandchild. Anytime I saw a parent holding their kid, I broke down. I couldn't shop, go to the mall, anything because that thought would seep in. A (supposed) friend of mine who was seeing what I was going through said that they wanted to help.

### How did they help?

They told me that I've got the solution and introduced me to heroin. I told him that I would try it because it was bad. My girl and I had split up and I moved back to Chicago. When I used it, I describe it as injecting liquid sunshine through my veins. It was like waking up on Christmas morning and

EVERY present you every wanted was given to you. It was like running through a strawberry field.

### Talk about your first arrest during your addiction?

I was a heroin user and when I first got arrested (retail theft); mind you I was using this drug after my losses in my life, in the very beginning they would ask me what my drug of choice was...and I didn't have a response. So I thought about it and the first thing that popped up in my mind was acid, but it was spelled *A.S.I.D. – Anything Smokable, Injectable and Drinkable*. That was my drug of choice, and I used to push the limit – LITERALLY PUSH IT TO THE EDGE.

### How was the recovery?

I was in county jail....DOPE SICK. I always heard about it, but that first morning, I was sick for a week. In Cook County Jail, they had a HRDI program, and I had signed up for it. The whole time I was using, I would question "how do I get clean?", because I was always told how I would become "dope sick" if I didn't have that fix for the next day.



## What did you learn in that program?

That drugs weren't the problem, but it was my freakin' thought process! Here's why: when I got arrested and they put me in that tank and I had to be dope sick for a few days before I could function, ugh, if the drugs ain't there — what's my problem? Day one. Day two. Day three. I'm still going through the withdrawals and everything else, but if I'm not using drugs no more, what's my problem? So, I start delving to the way I think.

## And what did you learn?

I started gaining knowledge on what made me make the decision on what made me use that f\*\$#!^ up drug. Secondly, no problem is so bad that one drink or drug is going to make it better. I turned that one problem — self medicated — into a *plethora* of problems. I lost my business, I lost my house, and car...you name it.

## And was that due the drugs?

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I had the ability to smoke and inject everything I had over a weekend. Yeah, that's bad. I learned that we



think a thought, which creates a feeling that causes the behavior. Period! Whatever ties that emotion triggers that response. And then the addiction, right, the evil addiction on your shoulder will allow you to rationalize and justify your own bullshit. That's denial. That's how strong addiction is. And that leads to jails, institutions and death — and I've said that three times. This is my third bit.

## How long has it been on this bit and how long were your past bits?

In November it will be 11 years. My first two were one year and my second was three years.



**So, it's safe to say that time keeps increasing?**

Yeah, and this time they judged me on my background.

**When you were able to work on your craft, do you believe that it was leading you on a path to recovery?**

It did, but my stinking thinking lead me back to the "let's have some fun!" Again, that's the rationalization of it all. I never looked at tattooing as a means to recover, but only a path to making money. I eventually did the same thing twice. My thoughts were "If I don't use heroin for a few days, I won't get a habit." or "If I do it today and skip a few days, I'll be straight." or I would use the "well, I REALLY DIDN'T get high properly, so I will do it today and not use tomorrow." Then I did it right, and then the next day, I wanted that same feeling again. After my second time incarcerated, my sponsor helped me understand that art was my therapy. I noticed that when I was working on tattooing, I wasn't getting high. I got into airbrushing,

because it was a new medium to me and that's when I realized that when I was focused on my craft, I was thinking less and less about using.

**So, did you improve on you?**

Yes and no. As I got better in my craft, I started attending my AA and NA meetings and AA I got kick out of several times, because I had no desire to stop drinking. I never had a problem with alcohol. Look, I was an open book and an addict; they said that I wasn't welcomed. I said that's sad.

**So, how did that make you feel, because you were an open book with no desire to stop drinking, but the same place that was supposed to help you was saying "there's the door?"**

And that's what it was, and I left that door and said that meetings were not for me. That choice, didn't know how to navigate it at the time. Alcohol Anonymous requirements are that you have a *desire to stop drinking*. So, I was going for the addiction aspect, but I had no desire to stop drinking. It was hard to deal with, so I stay away from AA.



## **Do you think that your painting coincides with your artwork?**

No. I was always asked to paint, because I could draw my ass off, but I didn't want to paint. We went back and forth. Then someone said "challenge yourself." Okay, challenge accepted. There is a quote that says "you fail 100% of the time of the chances you don't take." My first painting was a landscape and that was 2018 and I was called a liar because that was first time I ever painted, and they didn't believe it.

## **Who is Justin now?**

I don't want to fail; I want to stay clean. I hate doing this to myself. You know how many businesses that I have lost? Cars that I have had repossessed? This is my goal, and it was crazy to think that at that time, that the freaking white powder could consume my life. But it did. I navigate my life the way I need to, and I keep my circle small. Art is my creation. It is my "release."

## **Any last words?**

There are always going to be critics. All you have to do is to take it for what it's worth and don't stop! When you are in that cell, with

nothing to do, and you're watching the same old TV shows over and over again, just put pencil to paper. Start sketching something. Take an image you love and enjoy off of a magazine. We have tablets now, search through your tablet, there are some amazing covers there. Start drawing something—the more you do it, the more you get out of it.  
**So, did you improve on you?**



# Addiction

**Keith 'KJ' Terrell**

P.E.A.C.E.,

I think the word addiction has a negative stigma around it, because every time I heard this word used it is mostly associated with nouns and verbs: drugs sex, money, work, etc. In order for me to give my opinion about addiction, let us get the definition of the base root of the word of addiction, which is addict.

According to the Oxford dictionary: addict means a person addicted to a habit, especially to a drug. As expose some vulnerable areas of myself, I ask the reader to reframe from being judgmental of me, and seek understanding: with that being said for the people that see me and deal with me on the daily basis know me for always having nude photos of women of all sizes and nationalities. So to the person that sees me and do not know me may think that I have perverted thinking/view of these models, plus an addiction to women. I am sure in some form or fashion you can create a case for that

prior statement, I do appreciate a beautiful woman. Not all 'hotshots' I have are nude either. See my addiction started with the models then progressed to the hustle of having selling and trading these pictures trading cards of a professional league. Earlier in my bit, I could honestly admit that I was addicted to the models on these pictures. The entire ones I owned in my personal collection, I knew their names and/or seen their work via video or magazine. Everything changed when someone offered me a price I could not refuse, for a collection of four pictures of this particular model. After the deal was done, I asked this person. Why you over pay for these photos, when you could have ordered them yourself? In so many words the answer, as he did not know the name of the model. (Knowledge is power).

By that interaction, it opened another avenue for me to make another dollar. Therefore, I will go around asking who is the next hot model out there,

people want to see. Then do what I knew how to do which is network and hustle. I was not making a lot of money, the business itself was very slow and repetitive; but it is something I enjoyed. One of the rewards with dealing with “hot shots” is that when people got tired with their collection they will give them to the person they know that is going to get something for them. That meant I could always upgrade my collection and sale/trade the pile. Therefore, the hustle itself became my addiction. So on a daily basis I would network with others, to find some exclusive pictures of models and magazines, buy them and resale them for a profit. This became the way I supported myself until I was assign a job. I had to eat somehow, now was my addiction a negative? In the beginning yes maybe, I viewed the women lustfully. Then it turned into an aid of helping support myself, and a way to get the things I needed to survive which I was truly thankful for. Now I am proud to say I have a beautiful woman in my life, which stands on all the business. I still own “hot shots’ but not because I lust over these models but for

bragging rights and entertainment only.

I have become completely dependent on ALLAH. It is he who is my foundation and he who has blessed me with everything. I am now at the age of 34 and counting (inshallah), a living testimony of God’s grace, mercy, and blessings. If you were familiar with me at Menard then you knew my situation. God has blessed me and continue to bless me; so it is only right for me to use this platform and give him all my thanks ad praises; because all glory belongs to him.

I do think it is such thing as “healthy addictions. Like depositing money into a savings account, eating real healthy foods, exercise and anything else that adds value and virtue to you. My only addiction now is legal work and getting home to my family. God is going to do the impossible for us, for his namesake and glory forever. Remember to count your blessings and witness God’s evidence in your life.

Thank you for your time.

P.E.A.C.E

(Proper.Education.Always.Correct.Errors.)





# NEXT MONTH

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