

# TWO ROADS

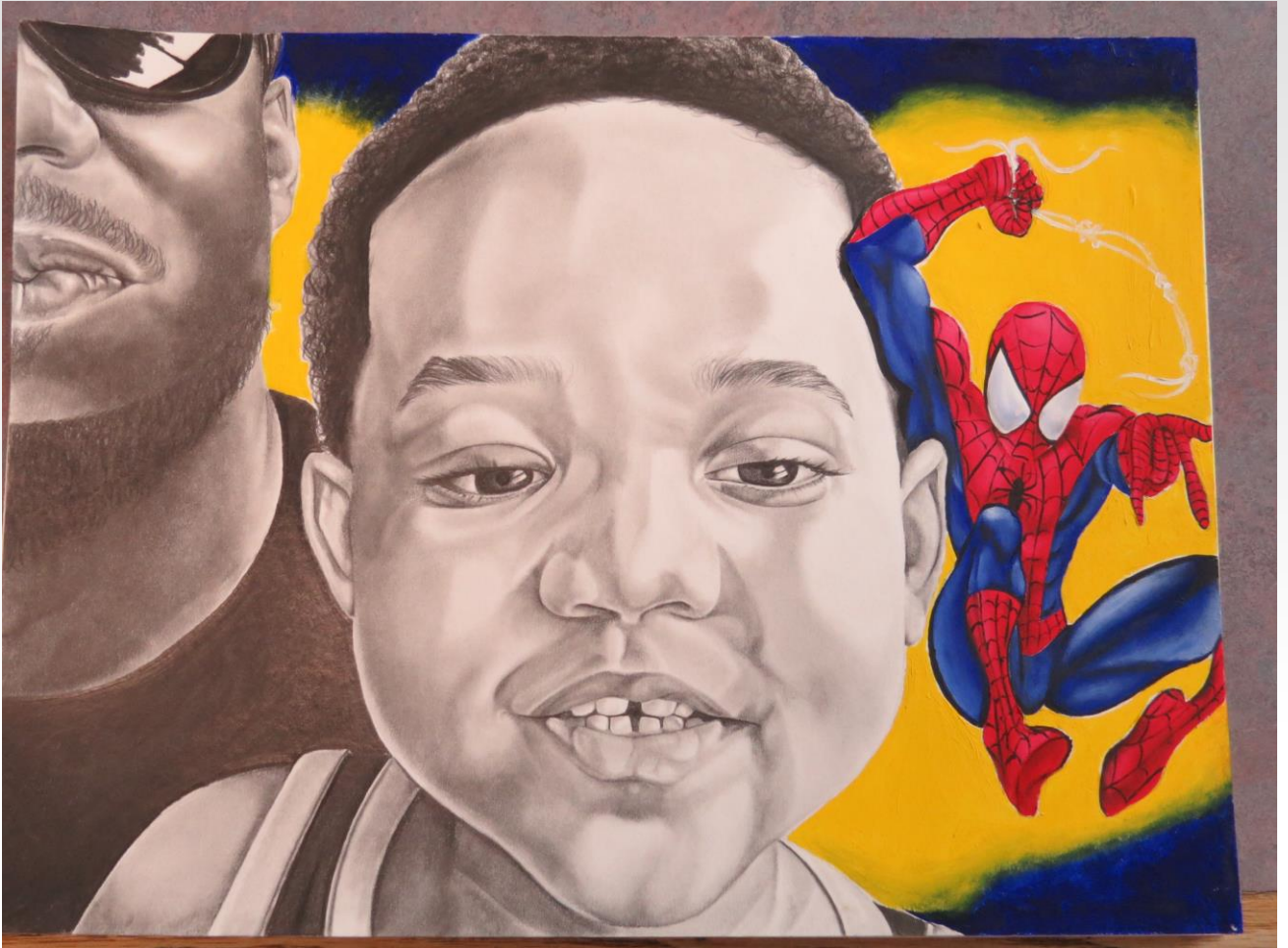


## Father's Day Special

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.”



Representative of the great fathers that take time to love and embrace their children.

# TWO ROADS

*Fathers Day Special*

7. Ricky  
Hamilton

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*Father's Day Special*

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# TWO ROADS

Two Roads House Artist

**Charles Murray**





# *PUBLISHER'S LETTER*



## **Matt Warnsing (guest editorialist)**

It is an honor to be asked to write a guest editorial for the Two Roads E-Zine for the Father's edition. I've spent the last 24 hours thinking about what I want to say. Thinking about being a dad and about my relationship with my father, I wracked my brain trying to think of one story that summed up being a father.

I remember many moments of laughter growing up when my dad would tell his one dad joke. Any time someone would say to him, "See you later," he would always reply, "Not if I see you first." As I kid, I always pictured him seeing that person and taking off running to hide. I remembered times on the baseball field, when he played the role of coach and was teaching me not only the sport but also how to be a good teammate. Days out on the lake drowning worms were always time well spent. It was never about catching fish; it was always more about the conversation and the peace and quiet.

Not all memories are positive: I remember the day in 9<sup>th</sup> grade when I lost my glasses, and dad asked, "How do you lose your glasses if they are on your face?" Explaining my mischievous five-year plan of not wearing glasses at school ended with him telling me that he was disappointed in me; seeing Dad return home at 5:15 every night exhausted from a long day at work at a job where his sole reward was being able to care for and provide for his family; and the time after a horrible accident had me in the hospital unable to see but being able to listen to my dad plead with the doctor about his willingness to be a sacrifice for his son.

Not one moment stuck out more than any other; the one thing that 24 hours of thinking about fatherhood led me to see was that one moment does not make father. It is a collection of every day – every small experience – that counts. So, make sure that you make that call, talk to them about their school day, spend a little time at the park or lake, hold them accountable, care for them, love them and always make sure that you see them later...of course, unless they see you first!

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## Nicholas Crayton



This issue is about appreciating and giving credit to those that rarely receive it, whether inside or outside of these walls. I, myself, am not a father nor was my father in my life, but I do have certain men that are in my life that I consider to be fatherly to me.

I believe that it takes certain qualities to be considered a good father. For me, and I am not the authority, but character is big. I like being led by someone that I can trust and believe in. A father is supposed to be a major point of reference for a child (as well as a mother), so that a child may form their personality not just from

the outside influences that surround them day to day, but from those that affect them the most whom they see every day, their parents.

We are appreciating a special father this year, our Publisher, Jim Estes. He is a father of three and someone that rarely gets the credit that he deserves. This man is very compassionate and thoughtful when it comes to other individuals' feelings. At times, he pushes his own problems to the side in order to help those that need it.

Men like this are not appreciated enough for their efforts because it is those moments that are required to help some of us get through the day while maintaining our sanity. Today, we say thank you to Jim Estes, and all of the fathers that take their careers seriously and lovingly because you will always be a father.





# FATHERS WANTED

## Luis Diaz



I want to take this opportunity to shout out my father who unfortunately passed away recently. My father was not perfect; he made a lot of mistakes, and I'm sure he wished he would have done a better job with my siblings and me. He was not a good communicator, was not very loving, and he seemed to be in a bad mood most of the time. However, what he did do is that he was present in my life; he was the pillar that men are supposed to be in a home and in a child's life.

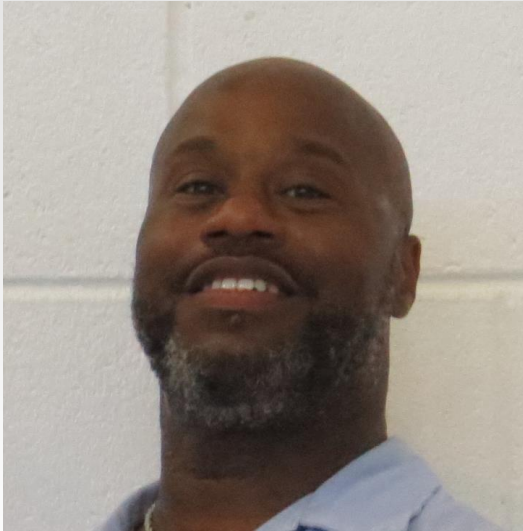
Growing up I watched my father bust his butt day in and day out to provide for the family and ensure that we had the essentials. The thing that I

most admire about my father is that he worked very hard all of his life to make sure that he met his responsibilities as a man, and while doing so, he never sacrificed his principles as a law-abiding citizen. He instilled in me morals and a good work ethic which I will carry for the rest of my life.

Fathers are way more than donors – they are teachers, protectors, providers, and superheroes. Our youth are in dire need of good role models of men who can show them the way. I know at times it might not seem like such an important job, but we have the opportunity to change the world one child at a time. I know some never had a father present in their lives, and how can anyone blame them for not knowing any better. But if you want to make sure that the life that you created has it better than you, it is on you to figure it out. It falls on us to make sure that our kids have a better future.

# *BE A FATHER TO YOUR CHILD*

## **Rodney Kinds**



Peace and Respect to all fathers behind bars and in the free world. I can't exclude any man that is really involved in his seed's growth. For me, it wasn't an easy journey. I had to learn to communicate with the mother of my children. I had to change my way of thinking, by getting educated and putting my children first.

This formality opened my mind up and allowed me the opportunity to actually get to know the women that I created life with. Even before I took those necessary steps to build that line of communication with my kids' mothers, I wrote two to three letters a week, and I never missed a birthday, special day or a bad day. I got that concept from my father who wrote to me weekly,

and he always answered the phone when I called.

That all changed in 2014; my calls went unanswered, and I knew something was wrong, I lost my best friend. Not to breeze past that, but this is not about me losing my best friend, this is about being a father to your child or children. So, let's get back on track; the phone calls helped a lot and the older my kids got, the easier things became.

I spoke with them at least once a day and I was very involved in my kids' personal lives and education. I have six girls and two boys, and all of them graduated high school, for that I am super proud. You will be surprised at how much influence you have over your children when you are involved.

Men, all I want you to know is to never give up on yourself or your children. Stay involved and believe in something, because anything else is uncivilized!

# HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

## Keyanna Daniels



On March 27, 2021, GOD called you home. Not a day goes by that I don't ask myself why. You may not have been in my life how I needed you, but at the end of the day, I still love you.

Forgiving you was your thing, so I said, "Why not forgive you?" The day I forgave you, so much hate was lifted from my heart. I wish you were still here to show me where to start. If I could only talk to you one last time. I did not know that the last conversation we had would be our last.

I remember the day I woke up to that phone call saying that you were gone. I wasn't able to say my goodbyes, but I promise you I'll be just fine. I love you daddy, rest easy. Save me a spot right next to you.

**Happy Father's Day!**

Darnell Daniels  
April 2, 1973 – March 27, 2021

*Gone But Never  
Forgotten*



# THE FIGHT

## Donial Garrett



After 16 years of incarceration, I still get the same feeling when talking to others about my daughters. Some people hear my story and give responses like, “I do not know how you managed to get through all of that!” Finding something to fight for, that’s exactly how I did it.

It all started when I was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Family services got involved and took my three daughters into foster care. My eldest was 6 and my youngest was 3 months old. Custody and criminal court was something I had to deal with at the same time. Immediate family had other things on their agenda, and the mother of my children

seemingly wanted no involvement with our kids.

Just thinking about their well being was more stressful than the 17 years I was set to do. What mattered to me was their safety, mental state, and how they would be affected. Due to a lack of outside support, they were placed into a foster home. Although they were young, I knew that my eldest was suffering the most. That notion proved to be a fact.

Six years into my incarceration, I was awakened at 4 a.m. only to be informed that I had a surprised court date that I did not know about. I sat in that van with chains around my hands and feet, not knowing what was about to happen. Upon arrival, information about why I was even summoned to court in the first place still hadn’t been made clear. Nevertheless, I knew I had to be strong.

My heart pounded as I entered the room to speak to the court appointed attorney. It was time to find out why I was there. “Mr. Garrett? You were called to court today because someone wants to adopt your daughter.” It was still unclear as to why they specifically needed me. I was told

# *THE FIGHT (CONT.)*

## **Donial Garrett**

that they couldn't find the mother of my child, and they needed consent from a biological parent. I was close friends with someone who grew up bouncing from foster home to foster home; therefore, I was aware of the kind of traumatic experiences children could potentially face when placed in those predicaments. Subsequently, my answer was easy; I signed the papers.

I no longer knew what was going on with my younger daughters. All contact had been lost. These actions were solely based on requests made by the foster parent. On the other hand, I was still able to contact my eldest. She was now 12 years old.

Correspondence was difficult because our letters still had to go through a case worker. It didn't matter. She became the reason I began to fight. I vowed to never let anything get in the way of our communication. I began to use that same pain that wore me down as a source of motivation. I would fight for my daughter!

In the midst of that fight, while within the first 6 years of my incarceration, I found out that I had another child whom I had no knowledge about. Her mother contacted me and informed me about another daughter I was now tasked to care for. Emotions were mixed; nevertheless, I was also ready to express the love I had for a child whom I had not yet met.

Until this day, I still don't know the identities (because of changed names, etc.) and whereabouts of my two daughters who were sent down a different path within the system. Yet, I will never give up on trying to reconcile with them.

However, I gained another beautiful daughter in the process! She also became a part of the reason I knew I had to fight. It was time to pave the way for what would eventually become something special.



# THE FIGHT (CONT.)



It has always been about my beautiful princesses! Here I sit, on my 17<sup>th</sup> and final year. The bonds with my daughters have become something special. People will tell you that you cannot be a father from prison; while it may prove to be difficult at times, that could not be any further from the truth.

Those young women still seek advice from us. There are things going on in society that require advice that can only come from a father. Even on the inside, what we can offer is imperative and has proven to be extremely vital. I have lost count of how many times my daughters have come back to me and thanked me for my advice.

One of the most beautiful feelings I still get from this day is hearing my daughter say, “Daddy you were right. I do look for your advice, because I need it!” At 22 years old, my eldest is still willing to admit that.

In the end, we all have some kind of fight in us. Discovering what that fight is becomes the task at hand. Don’t undermine the importance of being a father to your child. Sometimes they may not know how to express it, but they still need their Dads!!!



# WHERE MY HEART LIES

Jaron Livous



When I think of my daughters, I'm at complete peace. They are a part of my every thought of each day. This love was started from the first words, to first walks, first cries, to first smiles. I have admired the transformation from daddy's babies to daddy's baby girls to daddy's lil' ladies.

Throughout the ups and downs of learning how to come into their own identity, I will always reflect on their firsts in life and know they will conquer anything in their path just like they did in the beginning.

I would like for them to know that they each have a half of my heart, and when put together, I feel complete. Without them there is no use for me because there is no life that I would want to live that's without them.



# *THE SOULS IN MY LIFE*

## **Antonio Aguirre**



As I reminisce about my daughters, Sol and Sky, and of the precious but brief moments we shared, I'm compelled to dismiss all notions that I, your father, never cared.

As a man, I admit, I was flawed and far from perfect - withholding emotions for fear of what may resurface.

It wasn't until your births that I truly felt great joy and purpose; as I tremendously enjoyed playing the clown in your delightful circus.

As we danced and sang that silly banter, it's funny how causing mayhem and disaster, always made you both cry hysterically in laughter.

Such a beautiful creation, God's blessing upon this world as a divine

donation; every day we spent together felt like a holiday celebration.

Know that a father's love for his daughters will never be extinguished nor hidden, for it tortured me to be physically removed and emotionally forbidden,.

My departure from your lives was not for self-centered reasons; Marriage at times, may turn cold and dark like those unwanted seasons.

So Slippery the slope when love turns into agony and our heart's calamity shatters our sanity.

Prison kept me blind and prevented me from seeing, yet, the memory of your voices kept me breathing, long enough, to once again, start believing.

It was your adorable baby styles, big cheeks and toothless smiles, which radiated illumination in my darkest of hours, while being held in those lifeless towers.

Thus, I stored those wonderful images away, patiently, awaiting the day, to do the ultimate Father and Daughters' reunion replay.

That belief has always filled me with warmth and might, encouraging me to keep up the redemptive fight.

I'm eternally grateful for the gift of your celestial essence; knowing you're not near, but deeply feeling your combined presence.

Especially now, through all this solidarity and strife, it's your love and divine souls that continues to sustain my life!

# FATHER'S DAY

## Henry Ealy



Extended greetings to all of the fathers, brothers, and sisters in I.D.O.C.; I salute every single one of you.

Fathers Day is always a moment in time for us to reflect on who we are - what we mean to so many people - and a call for us to do better. We are fathers, husbands, and some of us are even grandfathers.

I encourage you brothers to do everything that you can to live in your role and fulfill your purpose, even from inside prison. It doesn't matter how much time you're serving, whether it's natural life, 80%, or 50% at 40 years, all is not lost. Your spirit, your voice, your guidance, from prison can still influence the lives of your children,

grandchildren, nieces, and nephews; so never give up! Stay in touch by writing letters, sending cards and showing them that you care. Do what you can regardless of the results or recognition.

I personally want to salute and thank the father figures that I had in my life. Also, I want to thank my children, who are young adults now, for giving me a reason to live and not give up even in my darkest hour. Most importantly, I want to thank God for giving me the strength and will to endure, and the grace to overcome these last 25 years.

After 30 years of my life wasted in prison, I can finally say that it is over with. The shackles on my mind are gone and the chains on my body will be completely off. This year, 2022, I, Mr. Ealy, am about to live my best life. Again, I wouldn't be anything without my children and grandchildren. I love you all and look forward to creating new memories: **Terrell, Teonna, Taraji, Kyla, Terrell Jr. and Tashaunna**

*Moving forward with  
you in mind.*

# *CHERISHED FATHERHOOD*

**James Gouty**



While incarcerated, being a father has been very hard for me. Nevertheless, I still believe that it is important to do the best I can from inside these fences.

My relationship with my father is one of the most important things in my life. I am 44 years old and when my father passes, I don't want his memories of me to be of me being incarcerated and never being able to truly live my life. I want my father to be proud of me for my accomplishments, not saddened by my life of prison.

Knowing how important it is to me to have a good relationship with him has made me want to be the best father I can be from inside these fences. Being a great father is knowing that I have to accept the fact

that I have been in prison for almost my entire life, and that my kids have their own feelings about that. Also, I have to understand that my physical, everyday absence and the toll and strain it has placed on our relationship is not their fault.

I have to work extra hard to prove to them that I won't leave them again. I have to understand that things can't move at my pace, but theirs. The things I can do are show them unconditional love - support all their decisions - be there for them - and most of all, when I return home, show them the love that I know they have always deserved.

I am blessed to have two step-children as well as two beautiful daughters of my own. Like the way I cherish my relationship with my father, I hope all my children will cherish our relationship as well. Life is what I make it! No longer will I stand on the sidelines of life. I will be the loving father that God made me, and I will cherish that forever. Happy Father's Day to all and work your hardest at being the father God intended for us to be.

# *THE FUN DAD*

## **Charles Murray**



I can remember the first time every time. I can remember the first time I saw all five of my kids' eyes. Each time it seemed like it was more about them than me. In all actuality, after the first kid, it's not about you anymore at all. If we as fathers could get that through our heads, we'd be... fathers... men. A real dad!

It means so much to me, and it always has. Everyday I speak to my son or my girls, I learn. I am learning to be their father. We don't become a father or dad

because we made a baby. That happens from getting to know them from babies to young adults. They teach us how to be a father. Now, we may look after them and take care of them, but that's the easy part. Learning, listening, and accepting who they are is the hard part.

I am only the tour guide, but for some reason I feel like these kids are taking me on a ride. At the end of the day, they are why we (fathers) are here.

No matter how many grey hairs they give me, I love my kids. That's my job, and I will retire when I retire.



# A FATHER'S LETTER

**Ralph Pollock**



**Dear Son,**

Another Father's Day, and we are not able to spend it how I would have liked. Still, there is so much to be thankful for, and so much to be reminded of.

You've grown so quickly, or at least, it seems that way. I was gone from your life for too long. I wish I could get it back – the time I lost with you. But maybe somehow, we needed this time apart.

You have grown into a fine young man, and I know other people have stood in the gap that was left by my absence. I am thankful, and maybe a little jealous.

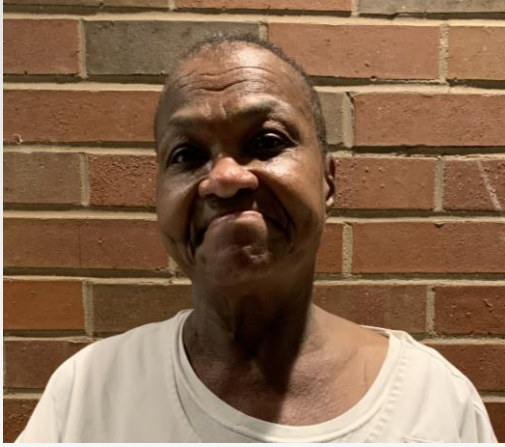
Sometimes I could hear the anger and disappointment in your voice about where I am. When you were little you let me blunder through fatherhood and still thought I was the greatest. Then came the “wait until your father gets home” moments, and in my own anger, I remember boasting that, “I am your father, not your friend.” But when I couldn't be a father, you decided to become my friend. Here's to a father and son...who can be friends.

Love Always,  
**Dad**



# *A VILLAGE OF LOVE*

## **Jeanette Daniels**



I was raised in a single parent home. I am an only child. My mother was my sole provider. She worked two jobs for as long as I can remember. She always wanted the best of everything for me. But the one thing I longed for was a father, or at least a father figure.

Her boyfriends never measured up. But I was fortunate enough to be blessed with six uncles, my mother's brothers. The first three were all wartime veterans. The second three are in my age group; so, it was great – three dads and three brothers.

The first three taught me what to look for in a husband. They also gave me the tools needed to navigate life: self-responsibility, obtaining a job and a home, shopping for food and clothing, paying bills, and why choosing a life partner is important for survival. Most of all, they taught

me to have integrity, self-respect, determination, dignity and discipline.

The second three uncles are my best friends. Growing up together and how they've always supported me and shown me unconditional love.

Unconditional love is required to be happy in this life, no judgment – only love and support. I learned love and how to love others, as well as how to be a real friend to someone. They taught me loyalty, respect, honesty, fearlessness, and self-worth.

Therefore, I think of all six uncles like my fathers and respect them as my fathers. They have all taught me what a man and father are supposed to be and represent.

# UNRECOGNIZED GIFT

**Steven T. Hanserd**



Like many of us, I grew up without my biological father. He was off living through whatever struggles life had brought him. I, being a child, was too young to know any difference. However, I had a male figure who loved my mother and accepted me because of the love he had for her. Unbeknownst to me, this same love was shared from him to me, and I became his own.

I was nurtured, cared for and raised by my stepfather. Because of one hang-up, he was not my “real” dad, I carelessly overlooked and took for granted all that GOD had blessed me with.

Many years ago on a previous incarceration, I began to reflect on past events and important moments in my life, and in every scenario, my

stepfather was there. It was then that I realized that the biological father that I wished for throughout my life hadn't quite done anything for me; furthermore, he had missed all the special moments that my stepfather was there for.

I had spent so many years searching for someone whom GOD had already placed in my life from the very beginning. It was like having a wish granted, placed right in front of you, and for many years, not accepting it. Sadly, I had missed “the forest for the trees” and failed to receive what a true father meant.

He, much like the father above all and who see all, was there when I needed him and even there when I didn't know that I did; he could be depended upon, trusted and responsible for the things I sometimes had trouble initially recognizing .

I look around me and saw so , so many who have never had a father, but thank GOD, I am blessed to still have one ...

*My Father*

# HEALING

## Keith P. Talley



In a 1998 study created to identify Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), the author – with the goal of understanding the impact of trauma on the physical, mental, and social health of adults – created a simple ten item questionnaire of “adversities” that may have taken place during the first 18 years of life. One of the childhood adversities or questions of the survey to determine Adverse Childhood Adversities was, ***“Did a household member go to prison?”***

Interestingly, the question left no room to factor in regular phone calls, timely birthday cards/gifts, and/or engaging visits. Perhaps, to the author, the mere separation of a parent from their child due to confinement - no matter how the impact is lessened –

has the **potential** to be such a traumatic experience for the child that their physical and psycho-social health **may** be negatively affected even in adulthood. Given that hurt people, hurt people, it would appear that the cycle of generational harm is now better explained, and the all-consuming engine of mass incarceration is further exposed.

Being personally plagued by childhood resentments towards my incarcerated father, I soon realized that I was caught in the grips of a vicious generational cycle. This realization became even more evident when my teenage son angrily barked at me that he was dropping out of high school to get a “job.”

Fortunately, due to awareness and a spiritual awakening, I realized that reconciling the harm and healing that which has been broken had to begin somewhere; hence, I decided that the healing would begin with me .

In putting first things first, I came to understand that my strong and toxic feelings of resentment, guilt and anger were doing a disservice to us all, my father, son and myself. Thus, our path of renewal began with my willingness to forgive

# HEALING (CONT.)

## Keith P. Talley

myself and accept the forgiveness of my father and children.

Then, with the help of the All Powerful, I had to embark on an aggressive agenda of holistic self-development: spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

Subsequently, I enrolled and participated in a wide range of empowering programming. Whether it was through nurturing my existential purpose by attending weekly Jumuah services, exploring the causes and conditions of my substance use disorder in AA/NA, or broadening my education, skills and training, I was determined to make myself worthy of the title of father and capable of fulfilling the role.

Thirdly, after equipping myself with the tools to help me build and maintain a self-directed life filled with wellness, purpose and opportunity, I began to reach out to my children, all the while being intentional in my efforts to make direct and indirect amends. Now I can't and won't front and pretend that everything is peaches and cream, but without a question, things are better.

Trust and respect, once lost, requires time to rebuild. My sincerity and hard work, along with their reluctant generosity, has purchased me that time. Who knows, in time, when the smoke clears and the swelling goes down, my victory over my personal struggles may inspire and help them to overcome their unique and inevitable life challenges; they may even seek my fatherly advice.

Ultimately, I am hopeful and excited about the next chapters in my/our life. Indeed, my excitement is a beautiful flower of hope that is rooted in action and watered by the inexhaustible grace of Allah. Whether it's through a traditional role as the father to my own children or serving non-traditionally as the father figure for someone else's child, I am now fit to be part of the solution . . . Reconciling . . . Healing . . . Building . . . Wholeness.

***Now, if I can only get my son to quit his "job" before it's too late!***

# A FATHER'S LOVE

Carlos De Santiago



Speaking from my own experience, being a father while incarcerated has been one of the toughest experiences I have ever endured. The feelings of being powerless, helpless and useless when your children need you the most is in fact the worst feeling ever.

As a child, I was always taught that a true father should always be the protector and the provider of the family...and I was none of that. It didn't matter how much I yelled and shouted to the world that I loved my kids, the truth was, I wasn't there for them when they needed me the most. When they needed a protector, a provider or a

simple hug from their father, I was nowhere to be found. Instead, I was addicted and blinded by the artificial love given to me by the streets. This led me to neglect and disappoint my one true love . . . **my children.**

In retrospect, I have learned a valuable lesson in life, which is to love and cherish every single moment you spend with your children/family because tomorrow is never promised. It is the reason I make the best out of every visit and phone call I share with my children.

In the approximately 19 years that I have been behind bars, not a day goes by that I don't tell my kids how much I love them. Disappointing them or failing them again is not an option. I have a lot of making up to do for the time lost. It is vital that I repair, rebuild and regain my children's full trust and love so that I can help them to not repeat the same mistakes.

Let's not take our children for granted any longer. Our kids are our future, and they need us as much as we need them. Without my children, I would be lost. Their gentleness, innocence and unconditional love have given me the will, the determination and the motivation to do better and be better.



# FATHERHOOD

## David McClinton



When people think about fatherhood, the image that most people have will be somewhat the same. However, from my point of view, I have a different opinion on what makes a great dad.

I have four children (16yr. old girl – 18yr. old boy – and two 17yr. old mixed twins). Everything that they know and do comes from me and their mom, my wife. We’ve given them lessons on how to treat girls and lessons on the respect to expect from boys. We’ve also taught them about Jesus, finances, schooling, our history as black people and the list goes on and on. Now most people would probably say that is what a father is supposed to do, and they would be right; however, I’ve been doing this

from prison since they were one and two years old.

Believe it or not, I’ve taught my son how to throw a ball from over the phone – I’ve picked my daughter up when she broke up with her boyfriend from over the phone – I’ve taken cell phones and games with just a word from over the phone.

Now, make no mistakes, it must be said and known that without my wife being my hugs when they needed them, being my hands when a phone or game needed to be taken, despite her disagreeing with the punishment, is something that I can never repay. For sure, beauty like that only comes from one place... God!

Fatherhood for me is not just being a dad that’s at home with your kids. It’s getting up everyday no matter where you’re at and thinking about how you can be the best dad that you can be and acting on those thoughts everyday.

**“With one’s will, their mind can change how they see things.”**



# WHERE DID ALL THE FATHERS GO?

## John Williams



### **Where did all the fathers go?**

How come they're not around?  
Look inside the average home.

His presence cannot be found.  
Just mother trying to do their best.  
Just mothers all alone...

Just broken hearts, torn apart.  
Cause daddy is not home.

### **Where did all the fathers go?**

What's become of you?  
The children don't care cause you're  
not there.

Just look at what they do.

### **Where did all the father go?**

Please tell us your excuse. . .  
Will you explain the hurt and pain.

Experienced by our youth!  
Tell us why they're selling drugs.

Tell us why they kill.

Tell us why their hearts are cold.

Why they cannot feel. . .

Tell us why they fail in school.

Their minds we cannot teach.

Tell us why our kids don't pray.

Their souls we cannot reach.

Tell us why they join the gangs.

What is it that they seek?

Another ear to simply hear.

Someone who lets them

Speak.

Look at all our little girls.

Where is their self esteem?

The tragic loss of innocence.

Mothers by age sixteen.

### **Where did all the fathers go?**

How do we stop the trend?  
To quit being fools and use our  
tools.

To strengthen our homes  
again.

We were chosen for this role.

God's gift to me and you.

Let's be the men we're supposed  
to be.

Let's do what we're supposed  
to do.

**LET'S BE FATHERS!!!**

# WHAT A DANCE !

## Harry Thompson



Many years ago, due to my struggles with substance abuse and bad decisions, I was convicted of a crime and have subsequently spent many years in prison. Of the many lessons that I have learned over the past 30 years, I've come to realize that when we are sentenced, we aren't sentenced alone. Doing time takes a toll on all of our relationships, particularly on our capacity to fulfill our role as fathers.

I knew I had to make a constructive change in my life if I wanted to be the father that I dreamt about being; therefore, I started spending my time more wisely. Over these past 30 years I've participated in many programs: Anger Management, Substance Abuse and Inside –Out Dad, just to name a few.

I've earned my high school diploma and a certification in Culinary Arts. Additionally, I've taken a correspondence course for peer mentoring training called W.R.A.P. (Wellness Recovery Action Plan).

Lastly, I've worked many job assignments; but with success comes failure, and when one door closes, another one will open.

These years of incarceration have left me estranged from my sons and daughters. However, fortunately, by the grace of Allah and the opportunity that Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center has provided me with, I've been reunited with my sons and daughters. For the past three years we have been enjoying and discovering each other.

Our reunion was further nurtured by an amazing Father-Daughter Dance held here at Kewanee. What a joyous day it was for my daughters and I, whom I hadn't seen in 26 and 30 years. We hugged, cried, laughed, and oh yeah, cut a rug or two.

# *F.A.T.H.E.R.*

## **Antoine Johnson**



I grew up in a two-parent home with my father being a part of my life, which was both a gift and a curse. I am the youngest, so my mother spoiled me, and despite my father being a tough cookie, I still loved him.

My pops taught me many things, like how to work on a car – explained about different tools – how to keep the trash empty – how to cut grass - and to never argue with a woman because she is always right, even when she is wrong.

However, the one thing that stuck out with me the most was that a man should never sit around with his hand out; he should be the provider for himself and his family.

Although I have misused it in many ways, I try to live by that rule. Even though my pops wasn't the best, he is still a good man. To my siblings and I, he was:

*F*antastic

*A*dvocating

*T*houghtful

*H*onorable

*E*minent

*R*eliable

Our father, Papa J, is 84 years young and still kicking. On behalf of my siblings and I, I just want to say thank you for being in our lives.

# *HOMEBOUND*



## **Manuel Arevalo**

Manuel Arevalo is a man who showed many of us what it means to be a responsible dad in prison. Some people on all sides do not believe that this is a real thing, but I can assure you that coming to prison does not absolve you of your duties as a father. More men must encourage their children, no matter the geography, so that they do not grow up in a world without knowing what it means to experience love from both parents. Fatherhood in prison is a delicate thing, and we salute Manuel for being a great girls' dad. Good luck to you, dear brother.

# MASTHEAD

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