

PERCEPTIONS REIMAGINED

MOTHERHOOD AND FAMILIES

Welcome to the third issue of the newsletter called, "Perceptions Reimagined," an idea conceived by Assistant Commissioner Tomé, a newsletter by the women of EMCF, for the women of EMCF. Her vision was to document and capture the history of EMCF as it develops into a different institution that is trauma-informed.

We, the editors, are charged to present diversity and inclusivity as a demonstration of collaborative efforts of the exceptional talents within EMCF. This issue is focused on the theme of "Motherhood and Family" and how confinement has affected their roles as mothers, daughters and members of a family. In this issue personal thoughts are shared about specific experiences of motherhood. The women of EMCF share concerning their experiences and being separated from children and family.

Within this issue the common thread shared is the effect that incarceration has on "motherhood and family." The impact of missing one's children and

loved ones is shared from the first-person experience. Also included are stories about the separation and the loss of shared moments that cannot be reclaimed and the amount of time that has elapsed while life goes on that cannot be relived. When a mother is incarcerated, the loss is felt immediately by the family, its impact can be experienced over generations. The maternal bond is the first and most powerful relationship an individual experiences that establishes their foundation as a person. The process of incarceration causes a trauma that distorts (or changes) the whole family and their relationships, causing transformations due to separation, stress and insecurity.

Some women have shared the experience of being separated from their child, mother or other family members at this time. There are not adequate words to convey the depths of this pain. The grief and the loss is being communicated in a way that sheds light on another influential collateral consequence of mass incarceration. For any woman who finds herself newly confined or having difficulty nav-

igating her confinement, there is important contact information included.

This newsletter contains a description of available programming for women to participate in that would help support their roles as mother and family member. Most importantly, it takes the combined efforts of the woman along with the use of available resources to create a favorable possibility for a successful reintegration into family life.

The contributors have shared their artistic talents, and poetry. The emotions elicited are powerful and moving, requiring reflection, serving to inspire new perspectives and considerations to be formed in ways that matter most, policy creation. It is difficult to convey the magnitude of the effects of the separation of mother and child. It is the women of EMCF who inspire contemplation regarding the position that women and mothers possess within the Criminal Justice System.

VOL UME TWO

ISSUE TWO

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Understanding Confined Motherhood
- Family and Parenting Using Technology
- Dear Son of Me
- A Lesson of Unconditional Love
- In Memory and Celebration of my son Michael
- Communication is the Key to Family Unity
- Our Families are Incarcerated Too

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Understanding Confined Motherhood

by Maria Montalvo

When a woman becomes confined there are different considerations taken other than those of her male counterparts and many opinions are formed about her as she begins her interaction with the criminal justice system. The first consideration is that she is a woman and with that the stereotypical thinking of what society believes about women comes into play. There is a stigma attached to women who become incarcerated, a falling from grace. This idea may sound archaic to read, but it is an important factor to address. According to Linda Singer, a criminologist, prisons were created by men to punish the most violent men.

There is no consideration of how to confine women or what their different needs would be. The history of the carceral system does not hold women at the forefront and to date, women are held within a system that was designed for men. Even the uniforms that they wear, are designed for their male counterparts. There is a difference in the way that women experience incarceration and it is not the same as men. Women have different

needs and complications that their male counterparts do not experience. By no means is this article written to discount the male carceral experience, it is that women need to be included into the discourse of incarceration with consideration to their gender. Women have female-related medical and mental health needs that are unique to them and may have experienced sexual and or physical abuse by a male that requires specialized treatment and services.

Many of the women who are confined are mothers and primary caretakers within their family unit. They experience the trauma of separation from their children and family with great difficulty while also adjusting to confinement. These factors take a toll on women that affects them in ways that may present themselves physically, emotionally and or mentally. A woman may experience pregnancy during confinement which is not the same as being in the free world. There are challenges that she faces such as clothing, nutrition and prenatal care that are subject to limitations that are implemented because of her incarceration.

A woman who is in labor in the carceral setting is shackled during labor and delivery and the amount of time she can spend with her newborn is limited. A family member must be prepared to take the baby soon after birth or the newborn will go into the foster care system. So, this happy time for a woman or the time to expect a change in her role is complicated by the urgency of making plans for the accommodations needed for her baby. The natural need to bond between mother and child is disrupted and the mother experiences postpartum in a more heightened way.

Being a confined mother means being consumed with ways to be able to bond with your child, but sadly for some it means finding ways to accept the loss of their child to the foster care system. For those who are fortunate to have familial support it means coordinating visit times and transportation for the baby to come to visit. There is not a time that a confined mother is not trying to make contact with family members to inquire about her child (ren). This translates for her at times as pain, suffering and frustration, in addition to the normal worry that a mother may feel on a daily basis. There are disappointments when visit times may have to be canceled because the child is sick, the caretaker cannot coor-

dinate the visit or there is an issue causing the institution to be unable to facilitate the visit. The impact caused by the dependence on others to facilitate the mother/child bond matters in generational terms. It is a trauma that crosses over into the next generation that requires healing and attention. The reason is because a child may grow with emotions that they do not understand and they may act out in ways that effect their discipline and education. All attempts from all parties must be a united front in regards to parenting and the nurturing of the child (ren).

The way that women cope with confinement is different from men, in regards to how they socialize differently in regards to nurturing. There are many relationships where women will develop bonds that take on the role of mother or caretaker of another. These relationships form based on the need to nurture or to be nurtured, a way to cope with the separation from family members that confinement brings.

For those women who are mothers and/or caretakers in their family unit, confined motherhood is difficult to navigate. It means being able to navigate a system that is not designed to accommodate women, therefore, motherhood. It means that a woman has to be understanding, flexible, humble, yet resilient in times of frustration and disappointment.

For women who have family members supporting her role as a confined mother, you are all highly regarded and held in high esteem by all who are witnesses to your efforts. Fortunately, for women, times are changing and the criminal justice system is moving towards gender-specific models in consideration of women who are confined. For confined mothers and all women, change is on its way and we are all being considered in the criminal justice dialogue. No matter how progressive or innovative, change within a system takes time.

Helping Offenders Parent Effectively (H.O.P.E.)

H.O.P.E. explores child development, discipline, communications, problem solving and handling conflict, while exploring the role, responsibility and rewards of becoming a parent.

H.O.P.E. participation is required in order to enroll in the Mother Child specialized Visit Program.

Family Reunification and Transition (F.R.A.T.)

F.R.A.T. is designed to address successful reentry and transition through family reunification and strengthening. Participants will discuss rebuilding relationships, communication, forgiveness, anger and anticipate.

Mother/Child Visitation Program

– This program is

available to maximum/medium and minimum custody inmates with children aged 18 years and younger. The program gives participants the opportunity to see and visit their children outside the regular institutional visit program. Transportation of the children to and from the facility for visits with their mothers is provided by department staff from centrally designated pickup points within the following counties; Camden, Mercer, Middlesex, Union, Essex, Monmouth, Bergen, Passaic, Hudson and Morris. Lunch is provided during the visit along with various play activities for both the inmate mothers and their children. Mother/Child visits are scheduled on Monday, Thursday and Friday. All visits are supervised by a member of the Social Service Department. Interested incarcerated persons may write the Supervisor of Social Services using the INQUIRY FORM for enrollment consideration.



Communication is the Key to Family Unity

by Tina Lunney

An important factor for strengthening the bond within a family unit and many social relationships amongst incarcerated women is positive communication. Many of us are learning to express feelings of fear, doubt, and uncertainties about our families and external relationships for the first time, while simultaneously concentrating on self-care, mental health care, and rebuilding and building new healthy relationships. For many years, we, as women, have been forced, coerced, and threatened “to remain silent” despite our influences, impact, and presence in communities. Yet, we are learning how to speak up and speak out about the obstacles we face in our lives in order for **us** to heal. Taking responsibility for our actions and being self-aware are key components to successful rehabilitation.

Before the pandemic, an organization called, Alternative to Violence (AVP), came to Edna Mahan Correctional Facility to facilitate three day workshops throughout the year. These workshops consist of: basic, intermediate, advanced, and facilitator courses. It taught different techniques in order to communicate and resolve conflicts through expressing our feelings with words and not reactions. As one incarcerated persons facilitator stated, “Violence comes in many forms: physical, verbal, and emotional.” When trying to repair any broken relationship, be it family members or others, we first learned that we need to identify the various ways that we all may exhibit violent behavior. Recognizing “triggers” is the start of rebuilding self, and healthy communication helps resolve and repair bonds with family and friends.

It is not always easy to express your thoughts and put your feelings into words, especially if you have never learned how to positively channel negative emotions. Yet, doing so is crucial to maturing, and maintaining and cultivating healthy relationships. Even when it is a hard conversation that needs to be addressed, it is important for you, your family, and friends to feel safe to express yourselves, and to respect each other’s feelings; whether you agree or not, in order to be able to resolve conflict and misunderstandings. Among the various tools regarding positive communication that AVP teaches in their workshops, the one that can be used by everyone when approaching an uncomfortable situation, or trying to resolve a conflict are the “I” statements. “I” statements enable you to express how a situation or conflict is affecting you mentally and emotionally, while also allowing you to take responsibility for those emotions and actions.

“I feel....”

“I want to express....”

“I take ownership for.....”

Communication is a critical factor in fixing damaged relationships. Utilizing the “I” statements practice when expressing your feelings, is an attempt to heal broken bonds between you, your family, and loved ones, and a great place to start to reconnect and grow. AVP workshops are not only available in jails and prisons, but in our communities, as well. AVP is a Quaker-based program, and the Quaker reputation is of peace. That is what the world needs more of, right now.

COMMUNICATION IS THE KEYTURN IT!

Family and Parenting Using Technology

by Myrna Diaz

I have been here since 2010. I am the mother of two young men who are the most important people in my life. Motherhood and parenting has been a challenge while at Edna. Originally the telephone and visits were the tools that I used to assist in bridging the gap in communication and creating an essence of being present in their lives. Recently, with the introduction of new tools in technology, Edna Mahan has introduced the KIOSK into our lives. At first, the kiosk was mainly for emails and purchasing games and music, but as time has progressed the kiosk has become an asset and one of the innovative tools used to help in parenting from a distance. Video visits have been a key in helping with homework, tutoring, reading children's books to our small children, advising on how to tie a tie, and among other things seeing a new magic trick.

As an asset we have incorporated instruction, guidance and counseling into the mix. I, myself, recently had the chance to see our family pet dog – Pau – eat the biscuits I sent him from Petco when he came home from the vet after getting his shots. Small things like that have greater significance in our lives that we are able to partake in. What gift has the kiosk given me? The ability to be able to have a real-time visit on days that the weather, distance or particular conditions would not allow for a face-to-face visit. A fellow mom recently read an entire children's book to their grandchild via video visit and the squeals of laughter coming from both grandmother and grandchild was refreshing to hear. This ability to still be able to bond and create memories even while here speaks volumes on the desire of needing and wanting to connect with our loved ones. Another

mother I know had the chance to help her child with math homework on a video visit and by phone. These are the steps that we take to make sure that important aspects in our children's and families' lives still are being fulfilled. Having the kiosk has also introduced the video gram. Video grams are small video clips that capture our loved ones in motion doing various things. I recently had the chance to see a virtual tour of my son's new apartment. A new mom recently showed me a clip of her little one running around in their walker at full speed. I had the opportunity to meet my mother-in-law's new boyfriend, who sent me a beautiful heartwarming message. I get to see the smiles of distant nephews and nieces, and share in the pleasantries, but also occasionally in the sadness too. I recently received clips of the new member of the family babbling away in baby talk. In this blur that we live in, and as we lumber along, for time in our eyes goes slow, but for our children and family their days move fast, having a video visit or receiving a video gram grants us the opportunity to always see something new. Technology has given me the opportunity to continue on with my parental job and be immersed in the daily lives of my family and friends. I look forward to the new technologies and initiatives that Edna will offer in the future to help me and others continue being present in my and our families lives.



And now it's time for...
Positive Elevations with
Natasha & friends

"Let's Give A Round of Applause" by Natasha White

I'm pretty sure we can all agree that we are kinda short on positive "things to do" around here. If you've taken every group there is (for the most part), you may be at a point where you are scrambling to find something positive to do. We do have our social clubs, which are still very much up & running, regularly, but at some point we just need...more...right? Well, if this is you, I want to encourage you to take advantage of the events that the facility provides for us. Go to them! Don't just sign up because "we sign up for everything", then, not show up. First of all, when you do that, especially for events that only allow for a specific number of attendees, you take a spot from someone who really wanted to be there. Second, you miss out!

On May 14th, Director Leanne Scott of Women's Services, and Program Specialist, Jamie Sferlazzo (a.k.a Ms. S.), hosted a *"Mother's Day Flower-Making Luncheon"*. Now, we didn't have hors d'oeuvres and drink mimosas, but we did get to meet up and have lunch with our friends from Satellite (or meet up with your friends from MAX, depending on where you are currently housed. Plus, how often do we get to do that?), as well as make colorful flowers out of paper. Being incarcerated doesn't stop the world from going around, and innovators are creating new and interesting things to do every day, even for us in prison. Someone thought of a simple, fun way to make colorful, paper flowers from tissue paper! All you have to do is open the plastic, take the folded tissue paper out, and pull each layer apart, and it turns into a beautiful flower. Done. The paper flowers come in different colors, shapes, and sizes. We were also able to make stems for the flowers, decorate butterflies, and mini, paper picture frames. It was simple; it was different; it was fun, and it was well needed. We got to enjoy the company of those whom we haven't seen in a while, eat together, laugh, and be creative. If you didn't attend, I'm pretty sure you saw the beautiful flowers from someone in your unit who was there.

If there's a next time, sign up! If you signed up and didn't get chosen to attend (remember I said, sometimes events only allow for a specific number of attendees), sign up again, and hopefully you'll be able to attend the next one. If you signed up this time, was placed on the movement sheet to attend, and chose not to go; I implore you to sign up again, and this time...GO!

Thank you Director Scott and Ms. Sferlazzo, for this innovative and fun event. We appreciate

everything, and look forward to all you have planned for us in the future.

In terms of “taking every group there is”, the Office of Victims Services is not short on providing help for our community. The work that Chief Dr. Darcella Sessomes, Dr. Dawn McRae, and Rev. Esther Maurice are doing in the “Trauma Care” department for our community, is exceptional. As you probably are already aware, The Office of Victim Services are currently running, “*Releasing Trauma and Embracing Faith*” (RTEF), *Focus on the Victim* (FOV), and about to embark on covering domestic violence programs and groups to our population. We all are, or, are aware of, people here and beyond these walls who are in need of mental health care. However, what the Office of Victim Services is providing for our community goes way beyond **mental** health care. Their programs are delving into the core of us, and providing **trauma** health care, a term we don’t hear as often. And boy, are they not short on help! You heard of “getting to the bag?” Well, they’re getting to the trauma!

If you’ve already taken “*Releasing Trauma and Embracing Faith*”, then ready yourself for “ACE”. Some of you may already be aware of “ACE”: Adverse Childhood Experiences. Yet, this acronym stands for so much more. The Office of Victim Services has introduced to our community, Ms. Petrena Young. Ms. Young is a member of the “I’m FREE” organization. The word “FREE”, being an acronym as well, stands for: Females Reentering Empowering Each Other. For all of you who know me.....you know that this type of work hits home! So, you can understand how excited I am to be able to meet with Ms. Young, work with her, and be able to put language to my trauma experiences, as an extension of my trauma healing journey. And I pray that you get to be introduced to her, personally, as well.

So everyone, if you haven’t taken *Releasing Trauma and Embracing Faith*, I beseech you to sign up for the next cycle. And if the cohort for that cycle has already been chosen (people have been on the waiting list for months) and you did not get in this time; keep your name on the waiting list, by signing up, again! Don’t just automatically assume that you’ll be chosen for the next cycle because you interviewed, but didn’t get picked this round. There are many people signing up in advance, and sometimes data entry errors cause for oversight. And you **want** to take this group. One of Dr. McRae’s famous lines in her groups is, “We will not drop you”, and she means it. “Not dropping” us means more to her than just facilitating a group for 12 weeks, starting another group within that same department, and having us sign up, and attend. No, she means that they will continue to choose groups for us according to trauma care, and some of the groups after RTEF are extensions of RTEF, like RTEF-Alumni group, and ACE. Thus, you’ll **need** to take RTEF in order to be introduced to Ms. Young. And trust me, you want to meet Ms. Young.

Briefly, I’d like to share with you something I learned from my time spent with Ms. Young. Question: “Do you know how to ground yourself when you are feeling like you’re going to explode?” Think of your answer in terms of not being able to “take a walk” to “cool off” because you may not be able to “get up & go”. Here is an exercise that you can do, if you’re in a situation and place where you do not have the ability to move around, but you need to ground yourself: “The 5 Senses.”

Look around and locate:

- 5 Things you can see.
- 4 Things you can touch.
- 3 Things you can hear.
- 2 Things you can smell.
- 1 Thing you can taste. (i.e. toothpaste in your mouth)

I am pretty sure that we all saw the flyers posted up around the unit regarding the movie, "Kemba". A few weeks ago, on a show called, "America In Black", there was a brief segment on her story. If you were able to watch that brief synopsis, than you would really appreciate and enjoy the documentary. The movie is based on the life of a young, suburban, college-educated woman who was convicted to serve an excessive amount of time for crimes her abusive boyfriend committed. She overcame the odds, was freed from him and the criminal justice system, became an attorney and started her own justice impacted organization. After the movie, we were able to unpack our thoughts and feelings with a panel discussion. I implore all who weren't chosen this round, and all who didn't sign up at all; when the opportunity comes around again, attend! For some of us, it is a very understandable, identifiable story; and for others, it is a blueprint of what can easily happen to anyone, anywhere.

To Chief Dr. Sessomes, Dr. McRae, Rev. Maurice, and everyone a part of the Office of Victim Services Department, thanks for keeping your word. Thank you for, "Not dropping us."

And last but not least, a special thank you to our very own Religious Services Department: Dr. Lynch, Sister Rooney, Rev. Maurice and Dr. Walker for our annual (I say "annual" because we had one last year, also) "Mother's Day Jazz Festival." Another year we celebrated mother's together, with music, food, games, and laughter. Our Religious Services Department never stops seeking to provide events that bring us together to celebrate life, peace, joy, faith, and hope. We are ever grateful to our Chaplains for continuously caring for us in all areas of life and beliefs. What they do is for us! They are **our** Religious Services Department, and **our** Chaplains, and they care about how we are being motivated in an environment that doesn't always call for much positive togetherness.

To all of you who are so kind to "the least of these", thank you for emerging on the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late."

Thank you for your concern, care, and kind acts.
Peace & Love



The Mighty Pen

- by Antionette Stephen



.....AND THE BRILLIANT AUTHORS WHO WIELD THEM...

Addiction is a terrible disease. The impact of addiction on children is even more devastating. As a kid and a teen, you are not in control of your own circumstances and childhood realities perpetuate themselves into adulthood...if you let them. In Jarrett J. Krosoczka's memoir "HEY, KIDDO", about growing up in a family dealing with the consequences of addiction, he chooses not to let his circumstances get the best of him with the help of people who love him in their unique way and through his artistic talent that helped him survive. The National Book Award finalist graphic novel is written and illustrated by the bestselling author, who was designated as a Distinguished Alumni of the Worcester Public Schools whose TED Talk about his childhood has been viewed over a million times.

The graphic novel outlines Jarrett's true story about how complicated the truth about his life is when he was asked to draw a family picture in preschool. The son of an addict mom, in and out of rehab and a mysterious father he had no knowledge of, his only sense of parental bonds came from his old-fashioned but loving, brash, highly opinionated grandparents who thought they were done raising children until Jarrett landed on their door. The graphic novel offers a profoundly poignant view into how a child in these circumstances goes through life as normal as possible, finding a way to express himself through his art, despite growing up in a household where a lot of things remain unsaid. His later years as an adult, the reader

is introduced to Jarrett's journey of discovery, as he begins to piece together the truth about his family. He reckons with his mother, tracks down his father and finds his own identity.

While one might initially feel sadness at the loss and loneliness Jarrett faces, the memoir is instead an inspiring example of the beauty of growing up, where you get to create your own reality and family. A family that may be a group of tight-knit friends, grandparents, the family that may be a spouse and children of your own. The lesson that Jarrett emphasizes in his memoir is the story of resilience and the value in not dwelling on the ghosts in your past that haunt you. Ignoring them is just as bad but acknowledging them and learning through them with the support of people who care can make the difference. Jarrett's childhood pain, watching his mother go through a downward spiral and overdose, through letters from prison, is transformed later into understanding her and learning to accept her love in the form it was given. His discovery of his step-siblings and his mysterious father introduces him to another set of relationships that he comes to accept as they are. An inspiring path for those who can relate to complicated truths about family. Try this beautifully evocative graphic novel about finding your identity amidst the storm.



Do you have thoughts on a book, series or author you would like to share? Great!! Submit your review to the unit ILC for collection and you may be featured in an upcoming newsletter! You may inspire someone to pick up the book or select the author.

IN THE KNOW

by: Myrna Diaz

Children's Literature & Books

Some of the fondest memories I have, from when I was a young girl, are of snuggling with my grandmother or father and having them read me a story. That loving act instilled in me a love of books and reading.

At home in my sons' bedroom, I had a small reading corner and I would take them to Barnes & Noble and allow them to discover new books for their library.

Here at Edna Mahan in the Title XX room, they have a roomy reading corner with a colorful rocker that family and friends on visit can use to cuddle and read to their loved ones.

The library is stacked with a variety of books that include old classics and new modern books that include all subjects of interest for the young and old. There are books that dedicate themselves to deliver a message that embodies inclusivity and learning enrichment. Two books within this category are: Poet Jorden Scott's children's book *I Talk Like A River*, that demonstrates with huge beautiful illustrations how to manage stuttering, an excerpt from the book, states the following, "I wake up each morning, with the sounds of words all around me. And I can't say them all...". A second book which is for a young adult (teen), is Elizabeth A. Trembley's graphic memoir, *Look Again*, which deals with grief. The book is illustrated in a simple fashion that runs like a comic book strip.

There are books available for all ages, languages, genres and interest: *Gazpacho for Nacho* by Tracey Klu, Dr. Seuss books, *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* by Maya Angelou, *Amelia Bedlia* by Robert Scient, *Dirt Bikes* by Golden Wheels Books, *1,000 Things to Search and Find*, *Sometimes I like to Curl Up In A Ball* by Vicky Churchly (about a wombat that likes to have fun), *Chicken Soup For The Teenage Soul*. Non-fiction books include, topics on Hurricanes, the Universe, Sports and many other subjects. In the library there are multiple biographies that include *Jackie Robinson – Baseball's First Black Major-Leaguer* and *Frida – a Spanish Artist*. There are books on science: *Winter Solstice* by Clieen Jackson, the Seasons, all Holidays, Mysteries, Horror and Humor. For the very young they have Sight Word Readers like *I See*, and *When to Learn to Read* by Meredith Johnson, and many baby books for little hands to discover.

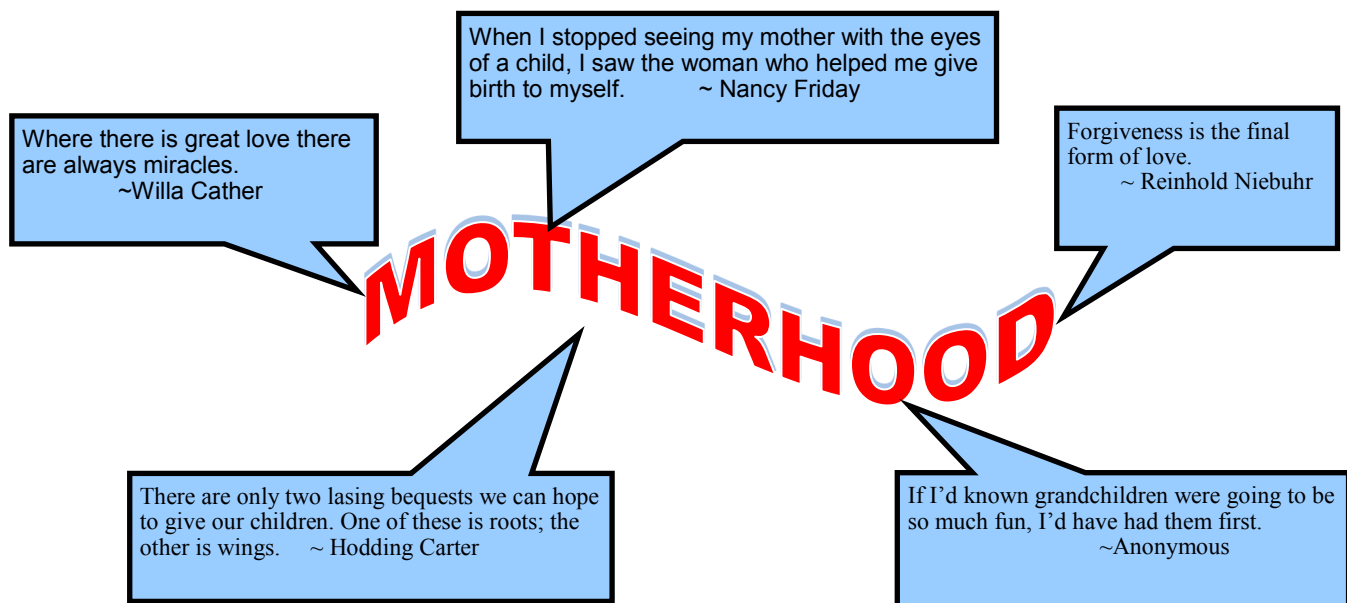
I encourage all visitors to enjoy the vast library that the Title XX offers their visitors and to take time to rock in the colorful rocking chair and enjoy the moment. Let the joy of reading continue on!

Non-Fiction Spotlight - Recommended Reading: by Maria Montalvo*Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Hears and Rekindle the Spirits of Mothers*

By: Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Jennifer Read Hawthorne & Marci Shimoff

This is a perfect must read, not just for mothers, but for everyone. It is a celebration of motherhood and a tribute to mothers. The stories within the book are divided into ten categories that are written by different contributors of different genders, walks of life and professions. Some stories share memories that are comical, sad, or happy, while others teach lessons. The stories that teach lessons are based on experiences of the contributor, either as an adult child reminiscing or an expectant mother anticipating the arrival of her child. Some stories are told about the comfort that a mother can bring no matter your age. While these stories speak about different experiences of motherhood: the letting go when children first go to school and then later to college. There are stories that express the experience of losing one's mother: the grief. Another type of story shared is about the joy experienced by women who believed they couldn't conceive or who were approved adoption unexpectedly.

There are some examples of profound quotes contained in the book that encompass all of the different facets of motherhood.



The stories contained in this book take less than five minutes to read, but can change a frown into a smile, and provide an opportunity for reflection. Some stories are so poignant that they can elicit tears to fall while others encourage forgiveness to become an option. The contributors have provided written testaments that are not unique solely to them, but beneficial to many. Take a moment to read this book for self-enrichment.



LEGAL NOTES

by Maria
Montalvo

Know Your Rights

Women who are mothers still retain certain rights regarding their children while being confined. There must be an understanding of your own specific set of circumstances and how the law affects you in particular. Before taking a plea, a mother should ask questions about how her sentence will affect her. Any sentence over 15 – 22 months can place custody in jeopardy. It is important to have child-care arrangements made and communicated. A Power of Attorney should be drafted for the primary caregiver of the child and notarized. This document will provide permission for arrangements to be made in the best interest of the child by the mother. It provides the caregiver formal permission to have the child in their care, to make medical decision, arrangement for education, housing and material support of the minor during the mother's incarceration. This basically is an agreement between the mother and the caregiver, she is giving the caregiver of her child the authority to act on her behalf.

Next, the Family Court Motion which is a formal procedure that requires the involvement of a judge, who will

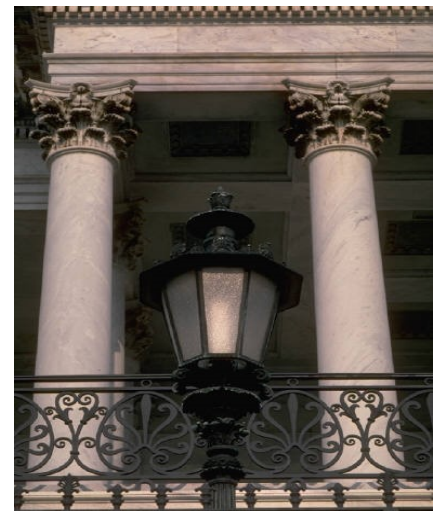
decide on presented evidence on what living situation would be in the best interest of the child. This process is necessary when a parent and caregiver cannot agree on the living arrangements and what parenting time a confined parent is entitled to have.

Some families may be unable to take a child in or there may be instances where there is no available family to care for a minor in need. It is at that point that the Division of Youth and Family Services may become involved because of the need of placement for the minor. This process is not an easy one and a foster family is not always an ideal placement. There are times that a foster family is ideal and best for the child. At this juncture the mother still has her right to interact and visit with her child, but it is a caseworker that facilitates this interaction.

Finally, the last option may be the need to allow a child to be adopted. This is not a decision that is made lightly and many conversations must occur between all involved parties. The process of adoption not only considers the mother, but the father and other family members who may be able to take over the care and responsibility for the child. The court system will work diligently to ensure that all options have been explored

before implementing this action. The idea is to maintain the mother/child bond intact where possible, but the best interest of a child is always foremost.

No matter what situation a mother may find herself in while confined, it is important that she seek the counsel of the services that are available to her. This means asking the attorney who is defending your criminal matter for advice and referral information, seeking the assistance of Social Services and making an appointment with ILA to ask questions and to research. In times of great conflict and confusion seeking the support of Mental Health and Religious Services is also indicated. The transition and trauma of becoming a confined mother/caregiver and the separation from family requires attention for all those involved. Always remember to ask for what you need and accept the help that is offered.





SATELLITE LEGAL NOTES
by Maria Montalvo



Making Contacts

The following are some useful contact addresses that may provide sources of information relative to the custody and care of minor children. Each region of New Jersey has its own office and contact person. A copy of the New Jersey Lawyers Diary and Manual also known as the “Red Book” is available in each ILA office within the institution.

Office of Parental Representation
Hughes Justice Complex
25 Market Street
P.O. Box 850
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

This office provides representation to indigent parents/guardians who are named as defendants in actions filed by the Division of Youth and Family Services pursuant to N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.43 and 30:4C-25.4.

Office of Law Guardian
Hughes Justice Complex
25 Market Street
P.O. Box 850

Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Provides legal representation to children in abuse and neglect cases, serving only the interests of the child; also represent children in Termination of Parental Rights cases through which children in foster care become available for adoption.

Social Services can provide information regarding Kinship Guardianship which may be able to provide financial assistance towards childcare.

These are available resources to help you as a parent to make decisions in the best interest of your child.

The following excerpt is from the San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents that highlights the rights of your minor child(ren) while you are away.

Rights of children of Incarcerated Parents

- I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.
- I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.
- I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.
- I have the right to be well cared for in my parent's absence.
- I have the right to speak with, see, and touch my parent.
- I have the right to support as I struggle with my parent's incarceration.
- I have the right not to be judged, blamed, or labeled because of my parent's incarceration.
- I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.

Bilingual Corner:**by Myrna Diaz****Mother's Day Visit at Edna Mahan**

by Myrna Diaz

Mother's Day visits at Edna Mahan are quite exciting and busy. The women start to prep early: showers, hair and make-up are delicately done. Emotions are mixed: joy, anxiety, nervous jitters, butterflies, and happiness. But, smiles convey that this is a good day that they are looking forward to experiencing it with their loved ones.

My friend, Germania Terrero, is one of the women who had a visit on Mother's Day. I asked her if she would like to share her experience and enlighten us on how the day began and ended on that special day. The following is an interview on her experience.

MD: Germania, how was prepping for Mother's Day visit different than any other visit day?

GT: The day feels a little different than normal. I was nervous and emotional to be able to see my daughter and my three granddaughters. It was also a time that I reflected on my own mother who has passed, but I still feel her presence with me.

I thought that it was going to be a regular visit but we had a surprise. There were many women on visit and the atmosphere was happy and lots of mothers came, custody was amazing and they gave ice cream to everyone and lots of happy children were running around and playing.

Of all my visits this was one of the best visits I have had in a while – there were so many happy, beautiful babies, lots of laughter and I felt like I was not in prison. My granddaughter was playing with the little kitchen set and she made hotdogs and hamburgers for everyone. We took photos and we sang songs.

It was a positive experience for my daughter and my grandchildren. At the end of the visit they gave out flowers to all the guest visitors. I have to say that the Lieutenant and Custody did an excellent job to ensure everyone had a beautiful day.

MD: How did your guest feel about the experience?

GT: My daughter said, "Mom this is the first time that we really had a beautiful Mother's Day in a long time here." She was happy to be with her mom and grateful, but her desire is that soon, one day we will be able to celebrate mother's day together at home. She felt that this was a special day for her daughters, my granddaughters, and she wishes that this tradition continues at Edna and that they keep it as beautiful and special as today.

MD: After the visit ended and your day was winding down, any heartfelt thoughts you would like to share?

GT: For me Mother's day in the Dominican Republic is the last day in May, it is a very big celebration. Celebrating Mother's Day and having the memory of the visit is irreplaceable. Spending the day with them and the effort that was dedicated to us was heartfelt and appreciated. My daughter drove with her children quite a distance and was up very early to make sure the girls were dressed nicely and ready to go and arrive on time for the visit. I am grateful that they had a beautiful day as I did.



SALUDOS

Reflections of Generational Motherhood

by Maria Montalvo

This article is about my own reflections of the examples of mothering within my own family and how I have experienced motherhood.

My great-grandmother taught me how to stand up tall, head up and to listen to what the elders were talking about without interrupting. She taught me how to sew with a needle and to quilt when she would spend summers with my maternal grandmother, Doña Simona, as I called her, She shared stories about our family history and about how life changes unexpectedly. She taught me about the importance of family and belonging.

My grandmother, who I called, "Lita," helped to raise me so that my mother could finish college, then graduate school. My grandmother taught me how to read, spell, cook and crochet. Lita was my comfort and helped me to understand being a child of divorce. She taught me to embrace my culture. My Lita encouraged me to do or be anything I wanted to be. She taught me not to be afraid of failure or mistakes, because I wouldn't learn without them. She encouraged me to work hard and to dream big – to focus and to pray.

My mother, who is like a sister and my best friend, taught me about life and living it as it unfolds. My mother guided me through the ups and downs of being a teenager, my support and confidant. She was the one who taught me about myself, my strengths and weakness and how to overcome difficulty with poise and resilience. Mommy stood by me through pregnancies by teaching me how to be a mother, through nursing school and divorce. She taught me how to stand up and withstand my interactions with the criminal justice system and the transition of being justice impacted. She set the tone of how I was to be treated and supported, upholding my position as a confined mother. Despite my incarceration, she was proud of me. She weathered all kinds of disappointments and celebrated my victories, no matter what they were. She pushed me to always remember who I was and to think of the strong, proud women in our lineage and my position in line. Mommy taught me life lessons, that were led by example and prepared me for her death and dying. I would be remiss not to honor my own mother in this publication. I lost my mother in October and there are no words that can convey the emotions that I feel and experience, I miss her every single day.

I am sharing about being confined, away from my family and unable to be hands on during her failing health which tested me as a daughter, mother and sister. I had to rise above the pain and reach into every lesson learned from my great-grandmother, grandmother and mother to be able to function. My mother taught me how to lean on my faith and embrace my position within our family. It is difficult to be confined, to organize and decide whether a bedside visit or viewing would be best when your mother is in the process of dying. There is no opportunity to ponder when time is of the essence. At this time, my own feelings of helplessness and guilt jump in, but even in her last moments, she was my strength and guide. I am grateful to my mother for finishing my job, raising my sons, they are men that I am extremely proud of. I am grateful for the love of my sons and sister, they keep me going no matter what happens. My sister, who is my right hand, support and confidant who I took care of as a baby, now cares for me.

My experiences with confined motherhood has been a privilege and honor, to be able to guide and mentor many as I call them my "young ones." They remind me every day of who I am and the joys of interacting in their lives. I hold each one in my heart, each young one with different strengths and needs when I see them, I see the potential they hold. So, I am proud to be their support, Madré, Mami, Ma, Titi, and Ms. Maria over the years. As a few have gone on to live their lives, a few remain in touch and share about their new lives. One in particular was with me here for 15 years and remains to date in my life; I call her "Da Baby."

I am grateful to the strong women who embraced me and took me under their wing over the years, MaVena, Ms. Rasheeda and Ms. Loretta. There would be no way that I would have survived confinement without their lessons, support and love.

My Person

by Shonette St. Clair

At one time, maybe several times in life, we fall in love. Some will fall fast and hard. Some will admire from afar, but never engage, leaving them to wonder what could be. While some dive in head first and see what will happen.

For me there is that one person who makes me tingle, my heart starts to beat faster, my pupils dilate, and I get butterflies just thinking about my person. It's as if the world stops when we are together. My mind goes blank, every single time.

Now I'm in a relationship and we are so in love. My body releases chemicals I never knew I had. I feel alive. My brain functions differently and stress levels decrease. Everything is amazing! I'm full of nervous, raw energy. It feels like heaven on earth.

As our relationship matures, I'm learning more about my person. I begin to understand more. The more intense we become, the deeper I fall; the more I depend on you. I still get butterflies and I feel the raw energy between us flame. I'm experiencing true happiness. I start to abandon my senses, my responsibilities change. My world and every thought are about you.
Can you feel the rapture?

Then things take a turn for the worse. The blinders have come off. It starts to feel like abuse, and affects me in so many negative ways. Because of you I start lying, being selfish, unreliable, and self-loathing. I start losing myself. My world starts to spin upside down. Everything was fine...until it wasn't.

I'm lost in my own mind; running on autopilot just to make it through the day. It hurts; I hurt. I'm tired of fighting and feeling hopeless. My person is no longer the same. Yet, I still crave you, and easily fall back into the vicious cycle. I'm looking for satisfaction, even though it never comes. There isn't anything to lessen the pain. There is a constant battle between my heart and my head. My reality is skewed. I soon realize that I have nothing; no one; everything has been destroyed.

I think about how my life is changing. I'm becoming a shell of the person I used to be. I'm wasting away. People barely recognize me, and they no longer depend on me. They are giving up on me. I'm giving up on myself. What once was a beautiful romance, is now disgraceful and shameful.

I'm alone with my thoughts and demons. I just want it all to go away. I don't want to suffer anymore. I barely know how to exist and I still want to be in love one last time. I know it's wrong.

This is what happens when your love, your person, is a drug.

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MENTAL HEALTH NEWS:**by: Tina Lunney****Moms, It Will Be Okay**
by Tina Lunney

New mothers experience a range of emotions and feelings during and after childbirth. Whether it's exhaustion from being sleep deprived, depression, or anxiety there are no shortages to the various feelings and emotions that new mothers may go through. But, this is supposed to be the happiest time in a new mother's life, and many cannot understand how they could possibly feel these adverse emotions.

Yet, as new mothers, we are unaware of why these feelings have taken over our bodies and minds, and some new mothers are ashamed to even admit that they exist. Educating ourselves on the different mental illnesses that may accompany being pregnant and post pregnancy is key to understanding what is happening to you mentally and emotionally during your pregnancy and after giving birth. One common mental health condition is known as Postpartum Depression (PPD). Though common, thankfully, it is treatable. As new mothers are focused on the health and wellbeing of their new born child, they unfortunately neglect their own mental health care. A mother's physical health should take priority, but her mental state should be taken into consideration just as much. Healthcare providers focus on preeclampsia, the fetal growth and development, but, meanwhile, neglect a mother's mental state, which is being affected just as much during this time.

PPD is part of the family of diseases referred to as, Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD). This term is fairly new, and describes a vast amount of mental health conditions that transpire during pregnancy, after the loss of a pregnancy, and in the first year postpartum. PMAD is not like "baby blues", which leads 80% of women to experience sadness, weepiness, and irritability. "Baby blues" fade, PMAD can lead to additional trauma.

Consequently, some women suffer from PMAD and don't even realize they are suffering. Sadly, many women don't want to admit they are experiencing any type of suffering as a new mother, because their main priority and focus is being a good

mother to their new born child.

The following are four forms of mental illness conditions associated with PMAD. Generally speaking, they include:

Perinatal/Postpartum Depression. This includes sadness, a loss of interest in the baby, crying spells, and feelings of guilt or shame &/or hopelessness.

Perinatal/Postpartum Anxiety. This includes perinatal/postpartum anxiety and perinatal/postpartum OCD and sometimes can come with possible thoughts of harming yourself or the baby.

Postpartum Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is often related to traumatic childbirth but can be tied to other traumatic experiences, too, such as abuse or pregnancy complications.

Postpartum Psychosis. This is a severe postpartum condition categorized by delusions and a break from reality that occurs in about 0.1 to 0.2 percent of births and is considered a medical emergency. Research suggests that in people who develop it, there is a 5% suicide rate and a 4% rate of infanticide.

As women, we go through many hormonal shifts and changes before and after childbirth. All these conditions can be treated, but first they must be accurately diagnosed. Conversations need to be held between new mothers and healthcare providers before, during, and after pregnancy. Remember, there is no shame in asking for help.

**BE SELF-AWARE
REMEMBER YOU'RE NEVER ALONE**

**Please note that this article's content has not been verified by an outside healthcare provider*

Dear Son of Me,

The questions began to run through my head like rapid fire when the jury foreman said, "We the jury find the defendant Natasha White.....guilty!" "Guilty? Who? Me? What does that even mean? Who are they talking to? What are they talking about? What is happening right now?"

The prosecutor requesting revocation of bail; handcuffs coming.....again.....WHAT.IS.HAPPENING, RIGHT NOW!?! I turned my head as the bailiff is putting on the cuffs, to find **my** Mommy, "Lord, please, strengthen her, I know she's breaking down, right now. Help her to forgive me." *Found her...* standing, head against the wall, looking at me with tears in her eyes....praying. All I was able to do was mouth, "I'm good. We're going to be okay. Don't show the hurt." *Ice...* began to slowly creep through my veins, starting at the tips of my toes. If you ever saw the movie, "Twilight: Eclipse", the part when Bella became a vampire? She was lying on the table after giving birth, and the screen shot to the inside of her body. Everything inside of her was turning to *ice*, then clips of her screaming psychotically flashed periodically across the screen. When I tell you that that scene was based on real life, my life? I felt it, exactly like that scene. *Hate...* I hated me more than anyone could have ever hated another person in that moment, but I don't think I understood the level of hate I had for myself until I spoke to Godmommy later on that day.

You walked in the house, and it was packed, and you knew. You knew you knew, but you wanted it to not be true. "What happened? Where is my mother?" Pain shot through you, and then different questions began being asked, "Why did she let this happen? How could she let this happen? How could you leave me, what about me?" *Sentencing*.....everything seemed to change after that. I know it did for you, for me, too. Angry...not angry... emotions running wild. Knowing the outcome, unsure, praying for a miracle. And then it happened.....The gavel hit, and I was gone. At first everything seemed so quiet because I couldn't really hear anything. Then, all of a sudden, I heard it. Through the **rustle and bustle** of everyone talking and leaving, I heard it. I knew what it was when I heard it amid all the noise and chaos. What mother doesn't know? But I didn't want it to be: your cry. As I sat there in that cage with my eyes closed, waiting to begin to deal with this (bleep) life I created for myself, you, our family, I heard you crying. It reminded me of the day you were born, you came out

quiet, and then when they gave you a little tap, you started screaming like, "What happened? What is going on? I want to go back!" I swear, you knew it was going to be some more (bleep), and you didn't want no parts of this world. *Ice*....If there has never been a moment in life where I hated myself more ; hearing you cry like **that** over something I did to you, was the end all for me. At first I started to cry, then the **ice** in my veins wouldn't allow the tears to fall, all I could feel was hatred and anger.

I know you really want to hate me, disown me; never speak to me again. But, how can you, right? I'm "Mommy". You won't admit, but in my heart, even ever so miniscule, I know you do. And you have the right to, and I wouldn't blame you if you did. You say you understand, but I say, "How can you? I failed you." I was supposed to be there for you, Every. Single. Day. Protecting you, nurturing you, teaching you, supporting you, giving you advice until you were old enough to "fly on your own." And then, still, supporting you when and how you needed. The choices I make in life are supposed to be with concern for you, first; your safety, your protection. Despite what that may have seemed like in my mind, decisions were and are supposed to always be made with you as precedence. I chose to protect me over you. If you would have hated me, I'd have understood, deserving your love and support never felt right. But you love me through and through, despite your own feelings and hurts. And I thank God for you, our relationship, and the hope of making new memories when I'm on the other side of this wall; putting this behind us and moving forward. Prayerfully, sooner than later.

Thank you that, in spite of this situation, you turned out to be a remarkable young man. You learned how to stand on your own two feet, and support yourself without my physical presence. Thank you for not allowing this situation to cause you to become hardened, ill-mannered, disrespectful, or a "street dude". Thank you for allowing me to remain a primary part of your growth, your decision-making, your plans; your life. This carceral circumstance is an isolated incident. It is not a cycle, a generational curse, or a road I ever had to concern myself with you going down, and you embraced that understanding, immediately. You are my heartbeat, the blood flowing through my veins, why I live, and why the *ice* is now no more. Thank you for being my son; it is an honor to call myself your....*Mother*.

Love, Mother of You
(Natasha White)

A Young Mother

A Poem by Alicia Remey

The young mother set her foot on the path of life. "Is this the long way?" she asked.

And the guide said "Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning."

But the young mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years.

So she played with her children, she fed them and bathed them, and taught them how to tie their shoes and ride a bike and reminded them to feed the dog and do their homework and brush their teeth.

The sun shone on them and the young mother cried, "Nothing will ever be lovelier than this."

Then the nights came, and the storms, and the path was sometimes dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her arms, and the children said, "Mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come."

And the morning came, and there was a hill ahead, and the mother and children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary. But at all times she said to the children, "A little patience and we are there."

So the children climbed, and as they climbed they learned to weather the storms. And with this, she gave them strength to face the world.

Year after year, she showed them compassion, understanding, hope, but most of all, unconditional love.

And when they reached the top they said, "Mother, we would not have done it without you."

The days went on, and the weeks and the months and the years, and the mother grew old and she became little and bent. But her children were tall and strong, and walked with courage. And the mother, when she lay down at night, looked up at the stars and said, "This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned so much and are now passing these traits on to their children."

And when the way became rough for her, they lifted her, and gave her their strength, just as she had given them hers. One day they came to a hill, and beyond the hill, they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide. And mother said: "I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk with dignity and pride, with their heads held high, and so can their children after them."

And the children said, "You will always walk with us, Mother, even when you have gone through the gates." And they stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. And they said: "We cannot see her, but she is with us still. A mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a living presence."

Your mother is always with you. She's the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street, she's the smell of certain foods you remember, flowers you pick and perfume that she wore, she's the cool hand on your brow when you're not feeling well, she's your breath in the air on a cold winter's day. She is the sound of the rain that lulls you to sleep, the colors of a rainbow, she is your birthday morning. Your mother lives inside your laughter. And she's crystalized in every tear drop. A mother shows every emotion, happiness, sadness, fear, jealousy, love, hate, anger, helplessness, excitement, joy, sorrow, and all the while, hoping and praying you will only know the good feelings in life. She's the place you came from, your first home, and she's the map you follow with every step you take. She's your first love, your first friend, even your first enemy, but nothing on earth can separate you. Not time, not space, not even death!

MAY WE NEVER TAKE OUR MOTHERS FOR GRANTED

(Submitted by Antoinette Young but written by Alicia Remey from the ORMC Foundation)



“In Memory & Celebration of my son, Michael”
by Dawn Jackson

Hey there My Big Fella...

I just wanted to stop by for a few...

Son... For all those times when I drove you up the wall, callin' your phone like crazy... I'm sorry. I know I must've gotten on your nerves... Maybe even your last nerve. Well, anyway... I just wanted you to know, I truly never meant any harm, okay? "Ya momma" just wanted to call... spend time, and hang out with my boy as much as possible. That's all...

So, then it was those days, Son, when I just had no clue that you've be on your Xbox, gaming your heart out... I dialed your number and your phone would ring, ring, ring... Suddenly, you'd pick up and start fussin' at me. "Ma!... Ma!... Now you know I'm on tha game!" You'd say to me, "Can you call me back later or somethin'?" I'd apologize to you, "Alright, Son... I'll do that. Go on back to your game. I'll talk to you later. Oh, but before I go... Now 'bout those J-E-T-S, JETS, JETS, JETS?!"

So, yeah... I didn't wanna hang up, talkin' with you, of course, and hearin' your voice. But, if *annnybody* knows how passionate 'Michael'... 'Big Mike' feels about his gaming, that person would be me... "Ya Momma." At times you'd just give in and say to me, "Know whatma? Hold on. Just let me pause tha game real quick... Alright, I'm back! So, waddup, Ma Dukes?!" Remember all those times, Son? Remember those days? I know you do. All I could do was reminisce and smile; but how could I not. I know you're gonna keep on makin' me smile, "Michael." Yeah, that'd be you to do that. Well look, My Love... Before I have to 'Let you go' this time around, let me just say this to you, alright?

"Michael", of course I knew 'life' before you came into mine; she was the gentlest flower. My beautiful life's bloom of 'Lo-Lo'; the flower who'd unknowingly someday come to secondarily nurture you. But then what do you know? The unforgettable and beautiful October day of 1989 came around; and there you were. Born to me... "Michael." You breathed life into my garden, an old soul, wise beyond your years... A rich fertilizer making greater difference in everything you touch in everyone you love... in everyone who can't help but love you... "Michael."

Since your first cries you've been making me smile... making me laugh. Even makin' me cry. You're embedded in my heart, soul and spirit. You have this contagious energy about yourself, Son; something that just cannot be explained. So with that being said, how's my heart to ever have that great part of life without you... My "Michael"? Here the day was I'd given birth to you. But 'cause of the impact of love within you, you gave life back to me. I never questioned anything. I simply embraced the love of you... My Child... My Beautiful Son, "Michael."

God gifted not only me with you, but would someday come to prepare you through life's experiences, sharing you generously, using you to touch and impact many o'hearts. God had designed your contagiously gentle smile; a smile that calmly said, "Everything's alright." A smile that made everything alright in my world. God designed your quiet and reserved presence, entitling you with the rarest spirit having chosen you to instill goodness, impacting lives from "all over"... Here, near and far, leaving the greatest of imprints embedded upon the hearts and minds

of all who came to know and love "Michael"... "Money"... "Big Mike."

Michael, my Gentle Giant, your heart breathes unlimited compassion weighing no measure. A man whose heart knows the will to love. A man whose heart has the ability to understand what it genuinely means to wholeheartedly love, having no limits...Always putting others first... Always going above and beyond, extending your heart having no boundaries when it comes to forgiveness, having no boundaries when giving of yourself. You are who you are, Son..."Michael"...truly one of a kind.

As your mother, I'll always know and cherish your worth, and how extraordinarily special you are in my life. Because of you, I knew the difference in different. I came to respect its worth. I knew the difference that became you. The difference in my life is you. Always. You know I love you, "Michael", and that's for all eternity. I'm so sorry, Son, sorry I wasn't there for you; especially when you needed me most. I just can't bring myself to be in the past with you. I'm just not there yet. From the looks of your wings, however, I know you'll keep on makin' me smile....you'll keep on makin' me laugh....you'll keep on makin me cry...

It's always been an honor being your mother. You forgave me with life anew where I failed you. You gave me all of you. You gave me love...You gave me, "Michael." I'm forever proud of you...above and beyond. I'm beyond proud of the wonderful man you are.

So Love, Baby...I'll see you later, 'cause you know like I do, it's never goodbye. I love you true to my whole heart, Son; and so I'll see you later. When the timing is right for you, please just let me know you're alright. Now that you've fought your good fight, go on and rest, Son...For all eternity.

Eternally Yours...Ma Dukes.





“You can only hold your child’s hand for a short time but their heart forever.”

Losing my mother has been the greatest heartache I’ve had to experience: especially being in prison. That doesn’t mean she isn’t still with me and I must remember; I have children of my own that need me too.

- by Deanna Lovius

A LESSON OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

by Ronda Slovin

The biggest thing I am thankful for is discovering what unconditional love truly means. Growing up, I had the usual complaints most young people have, nobody understands me...I don't fit in...my parents are so mean...blah, blah, blah.

When I got arrested I saw just how wrong I was. My family lived in New Jersey, but I got arrested in Florida. My parents immediately put money on the phone so I could call them and they made arrangements to be in Florida as soon as the court process started. They took care of my daughter and were there as much as they could be, keeping me involved in my daughter's life, my new court life, never judging, never wavering.

What I learned was transforming. My parents really loved me. They sacrificed so much, just for me. I did something horrible, changing the lives of not only my victim's family, but mine as well, and they stood by me. We talked about my rebellious behavior growing up and how I thought they were the ones in the wrong. Boy, did I have it so wrong. We made amends. During my incarceration, I transferred to the New Jersey prison system to be closer to my family. They saw me graduate college, hold a job for a long period of time and grow into a woman that was respectful, as well as respected. Then the worst happened...my father died, then my Mom.

Though I still miss them so very much, they never let me travel this dark journey alone. I have the knowledge of their unconditional love and they know how much they were loved by me. With their love and support I was shown how to grow where I was planted, with compassion, respect for others and myself and to be thankful for everything.



Reflections in a Painting by Melanie Slate

I'm often asked how long I've been painting, and many are surprised when I tell them I've just begun over the last seven or eight years. I certainly didn't have the time before coming to prison. I had two boys aged four and under, a family, and a career. That was twenty years ago this Mother's Day.

When I was convicted seventeen years ago, I ceased to be a mother. I'd held onto the role to a limited extent, while out on bail, with supervised visitation. However, after conviction and sentencing, despite there being court orders for contact between my children and me, I never saw or spoke to them again. My parents were blessed to retain visitation for a time, but the boys were actively alienated from my entire family—including their uncle, godmother and their cousins. That's not my subjective interpretation. That was the opinion of the Family Court, and it is preserved on the record. If someone spoke to me or supported me, they were systematically excised from my sons' lives and my boys were raised to think the worst of them and have nothing to do with them. Updates and photos were nonexistent and only obtained by chance.

Now those boys are 22 and 24 years old. I have no idea who they are as men, though I'd like to believe as their mother that I still know their souls. The truth is, that might just be something I tell myself in order to preserve a connection that was, in fact, ripped apart long ago.

I looked at a number of baby pictures preparing to do this painting, just trying to observe things shading and angles. But no matter how well someone compartmentalizes, there is no 'just observing' in a case like this. I have, and continue to, mourn their losses like a death, and the rest of my family does as well. My niece saw a photo of my sons and asked my mother, "Grammy, did they pass away?" They are not just my loss to mourn, you see. I mourn the loss of motherhood, of fecundity, of something other than the identity conferred upon me by *State v. McGuire*. As I painted, I could remember the feel of the babies' skin, the smell of them-sharp, stark reminders of the enemy that is the passage of time—yet time is somehow my only hope.

How do you end a piece like this? A reflection of such sadness? While the piece may end, the sadness certainly doesn't. I guess, as in life itself, it never will, not really. All you can do or try to do, is keep pushing forward, through the time that is both friend and foe.



Mothers Incarcerated: The Impact on Children and Family

by Kameelah Kareem

Can a child comprehend a mother's disappearance? How does the family make sense of her absence? Her missing from celebrating her first born son's upcoming junior prom? Absent from his tech school's auto competition where he won the gold medal? Her youngest son's spring concert, where he excitedly played the trombone? Her middle son's culinary achievements in his freshman year of high school? Her only daughter, her bestie, her baby girl's, 10th birthday party? Celebrations, milestones, achievements, days, months, years gone by. Lost in time. Family challenges, hurdles, awards, and successes. Missing hugs and kisses in sickness and in health. Distant laughter and far away tears. Shared only through prison pay phones, monitored visits or delayed letters. True connections, love and special moments lost in space and time.

The children, another year older, another celebration apart, and myself, alone as a mom, sister, and daughter; I ponder on losses and life, and strive to remain hopeful, grateful and patient. Truly, there are difficult consequences to incarceration that impact the relationships with family... however, there are also enlightening lessons. "Have hope through the sadness," I tell my beloved children. Through the prison payphone I inspire hope, gratitude, prayer, happiness and love. This chapter isn't the end of our story; it's an event that makes us human. A moment that brings out our truth through trials... ultimately, brings out the best of us, I pray. Through tests, weariness, and steadfastness we climb the mountain of life. We don't give up even when we slip and fall back. We rise, dust ourselves off and keep going. Remorse, determination, effort, redemption, submission to the Lord's destiny, and hope. Never give up. Remember we are supermoms. And

from supermoms come amazing, resilient children.

I am a mother. I'm an incarcerated mother. My children are still my world. My heartbeats. My gifts, my loans from Allah. We are all God's children and will return to Him one day. He gives me comfort, and through Him we can reunite in time. We feel the true consequences of a mother's incarceration, but I refuse to lose hope.

As mothers we are natural nurturers to our children. Our children are parts of us, a natural biological, spiritual, and emotional connection. Through incarceration the children become like orphans, separated from their security blanket, and the home is broken. It is very sad and painful because many of us, incarcerated women, came from a broken home, and so the cycle continues.

Remember, we have the power to break the cycle and fix the future. We can make the best of the situation even from a distance. We can speak positive affirmations into our children. Although we are physically absent, we have to strive to be there for them spiritually, socially, and emotionally. When we can't connect with them socially, we use the power of prayer for them. Where there's a will there's a way. With God's will there's always a way. Many times I thought I couldn't go on. The amazing thing is as time passed, my daughter began to speak positive affirmations to me! Pain is a part of life, but as I learned from the late, great Tupac Shakur, turn that pain into passion and be that rose that grew from concrete. Let the journey build great character. I learned I'm stronger, we are all more resilient than we think. I will be here, until I'm not, living, surviving, hoping, moving forward every day for my children. Until we all reunite with our families, inshaAllah, remain the hopeful, grateful, loving Supermom I know you are. Remember, give yourself and your loved ones, grace always.

Visions in Visuals



- by Melanie Slate -



Do you have an artistic vision you would like to share? Submit your piece and any blurb about your art to the unit ILC for collection and you may be featured in upcoming newsletters! Remember, no art is wrong or bad! You never know who you may inspire or uplift!!

SHEROS

by Natasha White

Women are the strongest beings on the planet. We can do mostly...anything... Everything that's needed to get through a day, no matter how long, or how many kids we have. And at the end of it: shower, shave, do our hair, put on make-up, and look sexy-even while going to bed. It is undeniable that we cultivate and maintain communities. We are child-bearers, natural nurturers, unlicensed & unpaid doctors, therapists, and body guards; having impeccable hearing, and eyes in the back of our heads! As a mother, we know our child's cry through the noise, over other children's, and in our sleep. We know how they are "doing"...not when we ask, but when we look at them in their eyes, their facial expressions, body language. An "I'm good" can only go but so far with us when we're in the presence of our child. Mothers....who on earth are like us? Who can do what we do? What can stop a mother from being a mother? NOTHING & NO ONE!

Being incarcerated may make some of you feel as if you are no longer in your child or children's lives; no longer a mother. As if you don't matter, or even exist to them because you're away, and may have been for a very long time, or because of "what happened." Time passes, and children become adults. From afar, we watch as they grow up, get married; and have children of their own. We move from being "mother" to "grandmother", and never understand "How? When?" Life moves fast: you were just "mommy"; now, all of a sudden you've become "Grandma", "Grammy", "Abuelita." They were just were being brought here to visit you; now, they're driving. Along with this new role, comes another addition to your family, another role you are meant to play: "mother-in-law". Your family is expanding in your view, and you feel like you're getting smaller in the sight of those who you love, who....love you.

But you're not! Trust me, you...are...not! Just take a look at your children, their children. How they interact with you during visits, still today. How excited they are when you call on the phone. Then, notice how their spouses are with you on your next visit, in-person or videogram. Realize how attached your grandchildren are to you, and you've never been in their home to tuck them in. None of that matters because you are "Grams". Next time you call home, or receive pictures in your JPay email, smile, and send up a thanks. You are loved! Missed! Appreciated! Needed! And the time will come when you will be home, reacquainting yourself with life the way you desired and desire it to be. Never give up hope. Life in prison isn't easy, especially when you are a mother; and we're more than that. Honestly, words can't express the courage and fortitude of US!

So, to every mother who is doing time, I know it's not a walk in the park, no matter how good a day you have. Whether you're in contact with children or not, you are still their mother! Thank you for the strength and courage to face this life day-in and day-out, standing on your feet, with your head high and shoulders back. I'm in awe of you. You are my.....

Sheros....
With Love, Natasha

“Ha! Ha!”

By: Natasha White

1. If a 50-cent piece and a quarter were on the Empire State Building, which would jump first?
2. Why were the little strawberries upset?
3. Why didn't they let the butterfly into the dance?
4. What starts with an “E” and ends with an “E” and only has one letter in it?
5. How does a flea get from place to place?
6. Who makes a living by driving his customers away?
7. Why did the chicken cross the road?
8. Why did the chicken cross the road a second time?

Submitted by: Myrna Diaz

Q: Why did the hand leave the hospital?

A. He was cured.

Q: What do you know about bonsai trees?

A. Very little.

Q: Saul, “Is your son still afraid of the dark?”

A: Sam, “No, now that he pays his own electric bill, he is afraid of the light.”

Q: John, “Did you sign up for the company 401K?”

A. Don, “There is no way I can run that far.”



What's on the menu?



Big Boy's Delight Cheesecake

Submitted by: Myrna Diaz

Ingredients:

- 1 Chocolate chip cookie
- 2 Maple brown sugar oatmeal packets
- 1 Peanut butter squeeze pack /or ½ table-spoon
- 1 Vanilla pudding cup /or ½ cup of vanilla pudding
- 1 Butterfinger candy bar /or similar chocolate bar
- 5 Cream cheeses single serve cups /or 1 (5oz cream cheese portion)

Directions:

In a bag, crush the chocolate chip cookie into crumbs. Then add both brown sugar oatmeal packets. Mix them together. Place the mix into a bowl, and then add four teaspoons of water and the peanut butter. Mix it all together until it molds to the bowl. In another bowl, empty out the five cream cheese cups and then add the pudding. Stir together until blended. Crush the candy bar (in a plate or even in its original packaging) and then add three-quarters of the crumbs to the cream cheese mix. Stir it together and pour into the first bowl (of the peanut butter mold). Finally, place the remaining one-quarter of the candy bar crumbs on top and set the bowl in the fridge for two hours until chilled. Then enjoy.
(source: Steven from Florida)

Cauliflower Parmesan

Submitted by: Myrna Diaz

Ingredients:

- 1 Small Bowl Cauliflower florets (the size of a small head of cauliflower)
- 3 Tablespoons of butter, melted
- ¼ Cup bread crumbs /or crumbled toast
- ½ Cup grated parmesan cheese
- Pinch of Salt and pepper
- 2 Cups marinara sauce /or regular spaghetti sauce
- 1 Cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Directions:

Toss cauliflower florets with melted butter in a large bowl. Add the breadcrumbs and ¼ cup parmesan; season with salt and pepper, and toss to combine. Spread the mixture in a flat baking pan/or bowl and cook until tender. Then transfer the cauliflower to a 3-quart bowl. Top with the marinara sauce, mozzarella and remaining ¼ cup parmesan. Cook until bubbly.
(source: Food Magazine)

Starry Party Punch

Submitted by: Maria Montalvo

Ingredients:

- 1 Starry Soda
- 4 Tablespoons Kool-Aid Fruit Punch
- 8 oz (1/2 cup) desired fruit

Directions:

In a big cup, mix the fruit punch with the fruit. Next, slowly pour in Starry Soda. Then add ice. Now you can enjoy your refreshing Starry Party Punch.

HEALTH CARE HUSTLE: Things you NEED to Know

by: Melanie Slate

Meeting Menopause

As aging populations increase, both inside and outside of prison walls, we hear a lot about preventative care and wellness treatment. Great focus is placed on serious conditions such as high cholesterol, heart disease and diabetes, and deservedly so. For incarcerated populations, even relatively common conditions can be challenging to prevent and treat due to limitations in terms of diet and supplements. Symptoms may feel more dramatic because we lack the ability to seek basic holistic care. So many conditions are preventable, but for women, one is all but inextinguishable. Menopause – it's something nearly every woman has or can expect to experience. So- what is it?

Menopause, sometimes referred to as 'the change' or 'change of life' by older generations, is defined as the complete cessation of menstruation. It typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 represents the end of reproductive capability. After one full year without a period, a woman is considered post-menopausal. Menopause has its stereotypical reputation – vasomotor conditions/hot flashes, mood swings – but, in fact, symptoms can begin years before that.

Perimenopause – now, that's where the changes begin. For a period of up to 10 years (you read that correctly), a woman can experience a myriad of changes associated with hormonal fluctuations. It's not uncommon to experience symptoms intermittently, and they can include everything from supplementation, or even low doses of antidepressants, but as an incarcerated population, we lack the options and the agency to determine whether we choose to treat or not.

The period of time your body takes to achieve menopause is marked with irregularities and everyone is different, so it's important to see your provider to confirm your situation. Once you've gone a year without a period, you're considered post-menopausal. Certain symptoms may improve, but other concerns for our health emerge, such as diminished bone density leading to osteoporosis. **Should you experience any bleeding after that one year without your menses, contact your provider immediately – this could be indicative of a serious medical condition.**

In the meantime, I can tell you this period of your life is unlike anything you've experienced before, so make sure you see your provider to confirm what stage of the process you might be in and better understand how to deal with it. In the future, we hope to one day see OTC herbal supplementations that specifically address menopausal symptoms made available to us. Seeing your provider is key – and remember: no one knows your body like you do.



**Please note that this article's content has not been verified by an outside healthcare provider*

The Invisible Woman by Shonette St. Clair

Whether your sentence is 6 months or 60 years, that is time away from your family, your children, and your loved ones. Time that you will never get back. Once you hear that click of the lock, the slamming of the door, you realize this is real, it is not a dream, and your life has just changed forever. There is no one to help you, this is a journey you must walk alone. You must be mentally strong, no one else can do that for you. I'm blessed to have my family and friends to support me. They are there for me financially, emotionally, and I know they love me. However, none of those things change the bid. While incarcerated you do not want to be forgotten by those who love you. You don't want to become just a fleeting thought.

I'm missing my 4 youngest nephews grow up. 18 months ago my newest nephew was born in November 2022. I have never met him, held him or said, "I love you" to him. I'm missing all of his "firsts". There won't be any pictures of us from when he was a baby. No memories or mementos of birthdays of birthdays, holidays and those spontaneous moments of life. Memories that I cherish with each of my older nieces and nephews. I'm devastated that I can't be there for all of those special occasions. It crushes my spirit to know that he won't know who I am. I am a stranger. He will only know of me through the pictures and things he is told. I am even more heartbroken that I am not there for any of the boys.

I'm not there for anyone. I'm going to miss my niece, A's wedding. I missed my niece, J's college graduation. I have missed family vacations, recitals, celebrations of life and the everyday interactions. Sometimes I receive pictures and hear stories, but it isn't the same. I feel like I am watching a movie and can't hear the soundtrack. This injures me so much. I feel sad, lost, angry and confused. I feel like I am on the outside looking in.

I have seen and experienced so many different things in the past three years. The most traumatic situation I have gone through was not being arrested, not even going through my trial, it was the day my mother passed away. She had been ill and was hospitalized. She was in a coma and breathing using a ventilator. It

was a Friday night when the decision was made to remove the machines. My older sister was in the room to say goodbye to her. I was on the phone with her to say, "I love you" one last time, and the phone disconnected. I never got to say goodbye. She passed away that following Tuesday, April 4th in her sleep. I didn't find out that she had passed away until 18 hours later. I had called my brother to see how she was, he took a long pause, and I knew. My knees buckled, and I slid down the wall and dropped the phone. I couldn't breathe, I couldn't feel anything, or see anything. I started to cry. I hung up the phone without a word, and cried like I had never cried before.

I felt like my heart had been ripped out of my chest. I had never felt a pain like this before. I couldn't speak or move, I was frozen. At that moment, I felt like I had let her down; I felt guilty. I was literally lost. I didn't know what to do, so I cried even harder. I had let my family down. I felt so small, in a fog, like Alice in Wonderland. The only thing I could do was cry more. For the first time reality had smacked me across the face. I realized I was alone; alone with my grief, my pain and my guilt. I would give anything to spend one more moment with her.

I wouldn't have the comfort of my family, the wordless conversations and the hugs that said it all. I would have to do this by myself. I felt helpless. It is the hardest thing I have ever had to do that I am still doing. There are only two events that have made me cry since being incarcerated. The day the baby was born; happy tears, and the passing of my mom; distraught and painful tears. Being incarcerated is not easy. Not only do you suffer, but your family suffers.

Every day is like Groundhog Day. Going to school, programs or groups, as well as participating in clubs; the days all melt together. It's like there is no end or no beginning. Being incarcerated does not allow you to properly grieve, to express yourself or be yourself. It makes you feel desolate and void. You learn to appreciate the small and the big things. In the end, you just want to be part of something, love someone, not just fade away, and become a ghost.

A LIFE IN PRISON? OR A LIFE IN PRISON?

by Anonymous

Speaking from a personal perspective, I am not in prison in my mind. You can get sucked into these walls, mentally. They can take you places you may not want to be. This is a negative environment, but you can take the positive out of it. I, personally have not been incarcerated as long as some have. But really, what is long? Time is time, no matter how you look at it. Any amount of time you are taken away from your family, friends and your freedom can leave a feeling of emptiness. Each day is a new day; another day down, a day closer to a fresh start. One thing I learned is, this place does not discriminate. Whether it's race, gender, rich, or poor we all come here. It's what you make of it that counts. There are many opportunities to take advantage of, from college to social clubs. It's all about the choices we make. Do you want a life after prison, or life in it? That's the question you need to ask yourself. You can fight for freedom, or fight to be locked down more than you already are. You decide.

How are we treated? I can only speak for myself. I'm quiet, laid back, and I hand-pick the people I want to give my time to. I choose to be different, and that's okay. You learn to jail around people, instead of with them. I'm not treated badly although it's prison. The confusion comes when we talk about rights vs. privileges. I have what I need for the most part. As for other things, who doesn't want more?

How are we looked at? That's a question for you. I personally wouldn't call myself "an educated criminal". A lot of us have many talents, which we are limited to utilizing. You have to be creative, and come up with ideas that can be implemented in the facility. Many may think we aren't the smartest, but if you look around we make the facility what it is today. On another note, we are a number with a letter attached to it. Either way we are individuals. Not all incarcerated persons are the same.

How do we want to be looked at in society? Well, think about how society is today. People who were once incarcerated own businesses all over the world. From what I've seen, more people have started to advocate for us. They are the ones helping us find jobs, housing, and programs to start businesses, etcetera. It's a world of open doors out there, but again, you just need to pick the right one. It all comes back to choices, so don't let your charges define who you are.

Do you want a second chance at freedom? How do you want to be looked at? Who do you want to become? We can't change people's minds once they already have an opinion about us. Remember, everything isn't for everyone. You never know who you can help.

So, do you want a life after prison? You choose. It's all up to you.



Our Families Are Incarcerated Too

by Karla Freeman

Over 2 decades ago, my life took a turn for the worst. My irrational behavior inflicted pain on both my victim and my family as well. I entered jail and ultimately prison feeling the isolation. What I didn't realize, was that despite of what I thought or felt, I was not doing this time in isolation. I failed to consider that my incarceration was consequential to others, particularly my son. While I was trying to navigate the prison world, dealing with episodes of depression, anxiety, fear, and vanished hope, my son was trying to navigate a world of his own dealing with his anger, hurt, confusion, and abandonment issues due to my incarceration.

How could I explain to a 7-year old child that his mother would spend an extensive amount of time away from him for committing a violent crime? This is a reality that no child can fathom, thus should not have to bear the burden. Painstakingly, I had to accept being separated from him and experience from afar: his mental health issues as they worsened. As we selfishly focus on ourselves, we fail to acknowledge the needs of those we leave behind. My son did not deserve to suffer the deep emotional and psychological issues brought on by my absence. He did however, deserve balance, safety, security, love, and understanding from the arms of the person, he desired it from the most...his mother.

Importantly, insight and acknowledgment reveal to us how our families are incarcerated too. I was not there to

protect my son from the "boogie" man. Not once had I helped him do his homework. Not once did I attend one of his basketball games. Furthermore, I was truly hit with the truth that he'd become part of my vicious cycle, when I made the connection between seeing his teary-eyed little face at the end of each visit evolve into receiving letters from him as a young man writing me from his own jail cell. This truth hit even harder as he began to share things with me that touched a place only a child can reach. My son had suppressed his feelings for years because there was no one he could talk to about them. Without the tools or support to help him process all that he had experienced, his feelings manifested into criminal behaviors that also lead him to prison.

I knew that I had owed my son more than I had given him. I owed him a mother. My son's love helped me take a major step on my journey toward redemption. The first thing I did was take accountability for my actions. Secondly, it was vital that I address my mental health issues and resolve the underlying effects stemming from the traumas that lead to my incarceration. Finally, I can give my son the emotional support and help him find the healing that he also desperately needs. Together, we can begin to pick up the pieces and release the devastating effects that incarceration has imposed on us both. However, for any of us to get here, we must acknowledge that our families are incarcerated too.

Come on Home, Today! by Taheira Hickmond

I talk to my sister on the
phone
It has been years,
but she wants me to
Come on Home
& I was nervous
when I heard this
I kind of wanted to be there,
but I was where I could
hide my lies & just disappear.
She said, Come on Home, today
I just want to see if you ok
She said Come on Home, today
I just want to know if you ok
I said, I can't, I won't, please don't
Tales of a Broken Home



A Garden of Hope by Maria Montalvo

For the women of EMCF, the month of June was a day full of positivity because of the opportunity for camaraderie and the sharing of memories while planting flowers. This program was made possible by Ms. Tiffany Thompson, Assistant Superintendent who shares, "Let's spread positivity and love through the beauty of flowers. A beautiful way to remember someone or something you love by planting a flower."

The horticultural instructor, Ms. Mahan directed a group of incarcerated persons who volunteered tirelessly to prepare the soil for each flower with care. One of our own, Natasha White, provided a spiritual dedication for "A Garden of Hope" for the participants who gathered together in a circle. Mr. Ryan O'Dea was present for the dedication as the participants were in the process of planting their flowers.

Thank you, Ms. Thompson for orchestrating a heartfelt activity for the IP's of EMCF. Each compound had their own garden and celebration of planting flowers. It was well received and gratitude blooms from your thoughtfulness, Ms. Thompson. As a way of memorializing this event, Ms. Thompson, took photographs personally. It was a perfect way to interact and engage with our confined community.



Quote of the Quarter

Submitted by Taheira Hickmond

"My attitude is that, if you push me toward something you think is a weakness, then I will turn that perceived weakness into a strength." -

Michael Jordan



An Internal Inspection by Latonia Bellamy



When new jewelry adorned our wrist and ankles,
a pain was entrenched in our hearts.
We knew from this very start
being a mother while incarcerated would be different.
No more late night dinners,
or kisses at bed time.
No more quick minute phone calls, for bits of advice.
No playing Santa or the tooth fairy.
Missing out on birthdays, graduations and prom night.
Their greatest milestones are being missed.
In secrecy we have teary eyes, day and night.
Quality time is replaced with 15 minute phone calls,
video visits, and occasional 3 hour contact visits.
The crafting of cards and bracelets, gifts from catalogs,
money and handmade trinkets are sent home,
to show adoration, love, and support.
We create an external presence from behind these four walls.
We don't bend or fold.
We stand firm and fight tall.
We fill a void that no one else can fill or feel.



Time Barred by Jamie Farthing

Tick...Tock...Tick.....Tock.....Tick.....Tock.....Tick.....Tick.....My
biological clock use to be deafening, but it has long since been silenced
Penal-ly Barren.

I've always wondered if it's worse never to have been given the opportunity
to have kids or to have had them only to watch them grow up in pictures and
scant visits?

To be or not to be...
Still a hell of a question.



I'm Free

(Author Unknown)

Submitted by: Antoinette Young

Don't grieve me, for now I'm free
 I am following the path God laid for me.
 I took His hand when I heard Him call,
 I turned my back and left it all.
 I could not stay another day
 To laugh, to love, to work or play.
 Tasks left undone must stay that way.
 I found that peace at the close of day.
 If my parting has left a void,
 Then fill it with remembered joy.
 A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss
 Ah, these things I, too, will miss.
 Be not burdened with time of sorrow,
 I wish for you the sunshine of tomorrow.
 Good friends, good times,
 A loved one touched.
 Perhaps my time seemed all too brief.
 Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
 Lift up your heart and share with me.
 God wants me now; He set me free
 In Loving Memory of
 My Dear Beloved Mother,
 I miss u, Ann Cortellino
 I love you
 Your Daughter

Mommy

by Veronica Aguilar

Mommy, I'm hungry...
 Mom can we go to...
 Mommy, please buy me that...
 Mommy, scratch my back softly...
 Mommy, my tummy hurts...
 Mommy, you're so pretty
 She's my Mom, no she's mine, I'm her favorite....
 I miss being Mommy.

Metamorphose

by Taheira Hickmond

You've come a long way from where you used to be, despite what anyone may say. Who knows you better than you? Continue to mature; continue to give your energy to positivity and love; continue educating your mind; continue to not be afraid to be unique, to grow, to change, to be custom-made; one-of-a-kind. Who wants to wear the same shoes as everyone else, anyway? Don't let anyone suffocate your talents, or try and take away your voice. You are necessary, worthy, formidable. *Remember*: "you are one-of-one". Try to remain peaceful, and always nurture your growth. Surround yourself with people who are trying to prosper, trying to succeed, trying to elevate; people who will water your faith, enhance your ideas, and who truly desire to see you flourish, see you fly. *Remember*: "iron sharpens iron". You are a beautiful caterpillar, but this cocoon can't hold you. Now go turn into that stunning butterfly.

Stillwater Awards A Message from the Editors

Our newsletter, Perceptions Reimagined, has just had the honor of winning the Stillwater Award for excellence in prison journalism. The newsletter received Second place recognition for the New Prison Publication category for the year 2024.

This Stillwater Award is the inaugural national awards program sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists and the Prison Journalism Project.

The newsroom would like to share the judging comments for Second place: Perceptions Reimagined: "There's triumph in any publishing while in prison, but Perceptions Reimagined made it look easy. Interviews are a good way to get new information out to readers, even though it's often the hardest way. Yet this issue was what we call "multi-sourced" – in other words, lots of other people quoted besides just the staff. It was also the only issue to feature photos of inmates.





This is an image of Lady Justice at work. The purpose of this image is to inspire consideration of how the criminal justice system affects the relationship between mothers and children once justice-impacted. When a mother is justice-impacted, her child is removed immediately and her parental rights are in jeopardy. If she does not have a family member to take custody of the child, the child may enter the foster care system. The hope is that the perspective may change the way that the criminal justice actors interact with mothers and children who are in the process of navigating within the judicial system.

COMING IN NEXT ISSUE

NEW INITIATIVES.....

NEW IDEAS.....

AND EVEN MORE IMPACTING AND INSIGHTFUL ARTICLES. IP'S, START BRAINSTORMING AND WRITING! ALL OUR ARTISTIC GENIUSES START SKETCHING AND DRAWING! WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING NEW SUBMISSIONS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE !!!!

The Law does not care whether this individual had access to good education or not, or whether he/she lives under impoverished conditions because companies in his/her communities have shut down and moved to a third world country, or whether previously available welfare payments have vanished. The law does not care about the conditions that lead some communities along a trajectory that makes prison inevitable.

- Angela Davis

From the book: *Understanding Mass Incarceration: A People's Guide To The Key Civil Rights Struggle Of Our Time* by James Kilgore

Answers to riddles:

1. The quarter, because it has less sense.
2. Because their parents were in a jam.
3. Because it was a mothball.
4. Envelope
5. Itch-hiking
6. A taxicab driver.
7. To get to the other side.
8. Because it was a double-crosser.

BY EMCF FOR EMCF



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MARIA MONTALVO**

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