

This issue goes out to the all those poor souls who have been affected by the murder rampage that happened. AS most of you now know the 4/16 Monday killing spree, marked the worst shooting rampage in American history. A young college student at Virginia Polytechnic, a university in Virginia, shot and killed thirty-two fellow students and then killed himself. Daily, since the tragedy, the newspapers have been full of questions and commentaries about how this tragedy could have happened.

We can't help but think of how many people were affected by this angry young man. Words can't explain how we feel here, let alone how you feel where you sit tonight. All of us across this great land of ours have been hurt by this incident. OUR hearts and prayers go out to the victim's families and to all those students who sadly were witness to such a crime. We can easily describe what people saw or heard, but will let the newspapers and the television news media do that.

We want to vent... How can someone do such a horrific act? How come this person never had his needs met via mental health and medication? Or did he? How can someone so unstable walk into a gun store and purchase a gun? Is there anything that could have been done to prevent this crime?

How and why are guns so accessible? What can we as a community do to stop the violence? Do you have any answers or thoughts? We're always listening. Actually, last week we presented topics in our workshops that were related to this ugly episode, which we'll feature in an upcoming issue.

Obviously, none of us want to bare witness to such a violent act, yet many of you have seen violence up close and personal, when close friends fell prey to the violence in the streets, or you fell prey, due to gangs, drugs and hate. Some of you have seen your best friend's last breath, as red blood splattered all over you. Then what? Too many of you have to carry that burden for the rest of your life! Is it fair? Hell no it isn't!

How did it get to this point? Why do you/we put ourselves in such a position of having to face death? Why do many of you pack guns? What is it about having a gun? Is it really for protection? Does a gun really protect you? Does a gun make you big and bad?

Sure, violence is everywhere. It's in our music. It's on the television screens every hour on the hour or so it seems. It can be found on the Internet. Many of us love to watch it at the movie theater or read about violent murderers in the books we choose to read. We can't tell you how many pieces we have read over the years of murder and death! More than we care to, but this is the reality of our time.

We're not saying any of you readers who are in jail for a serious crime would ever do such an act, as what happened in Virginia, but this gun situation is bad, really bad, really scary and really-really unfortunate. We suppose guns, like drugs, will never go away, no matter what new laws go into effect. We suppose there will always be a coward who thinks they need to carry a gun, use a gun, and take a life. What gives one such the right to try and kill? Don't you know how many people are affected by your decision to pull the trigger? Think about the family. Think about the extended family! What about the community? What about the schools? The ripple effect huge, and for many the pain and loss is never forgotten. And do we have to say, what about the shooter? Do we have to mention the revenge factor that way too many of you feel is necessary?

When will the killings and violence stop? Can you be a part of that solution? Can you envision dedicating your life to stopping the violence? Can you see yourself educating your peers that there is a better way to living than using drugs, hating, beating and shooting people over stupid shhh - meaning over a block you do not own, meaning over a gang that you feel loyal to but who could give a shhh about you. We can only wish our old friends who have come through the hall on murder charges and are now in prison if they could only talk to you guys. We know what they would say too, they'd shout at you and shake you to WAKE THE HELL UP! PRISON IS NO JOKE. PRISON EQUALS PAIN AND LONELINESS. Is this what you want? Sadly, if the adult system is where you going, please report back to us and tell us what you get out of the adult system. Today we

got a letter from our old friend Frank who was once in our Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall workshops, who is now in Salinas Valley State Prison doing a life bid, try 25 to life. This is not juvenile. The adult system is cutthroat. It's long days not doing much. It's sitting in isolation for months on end. It's growing old alone - no love. Speaking of letters we receive close to several hundred letters a week from lonely men and women doing time in prison.

We hope when you one day realize this isn't the life, that you make it your mission to reach out to the next generation and let them know just that. Make it your mission to educate. Make it your mission to tell young people to go to school, to get out of the system, to live a life free of gangs, drugs and violence. Hey, it can be done, and you don't have to be a square either. If you are returning home shortly, try leading by example when you are back in your community. Show the community and those that know the old you, that there is a new you. That the new you is through with the bullshhhh that brings you to places like this. The time is now to step up to the plate and be a leader. The time is now to get support if you need it. The time is now to re-examine your self. Take a look at your self in the mirror and ask yourself if you like who and what you see? If you don't, fix it! Ask for help. The help is here.

Hey for many of you it is not too late to get the high school diploma and to graduate walking across the stage. The time is not late to get a college degree, to learn a trade, to be a happy young person, clean and sober. Try it! Don't you think if you only worry about bettering yourself, and you do better yourself, then you are helping better the community and you are doing your part to shutting down the system and putting everybody who works in the hall out of job! Do it! Just do it!

OK, thanks for letting us ramble, now it's your turn to ramble. Let us know what you think. Challenge us! Challenge yourself to see a new way. It can be done, and we believe most of you want to do it too, so do it in the name of your family, for the victims in Virginia, for yourself! Life is too short.

Saying this brings us to the topics that were addressed in our workshops and for the most part written on several weeks back. They were the powerful... "My Earliest Memory Of Violence" -How old were you the first time you remember experiencing or witnessing violence? Was it at home, on the street, at school? How does the memory of it still affect you? Was it harder for you to witness someone you love being the victim of violence, or was it harder to be the victim yourself? Try to recall the details of that first experience, and write as much of what you remember as you can.

The second topic, "Are You Doing Time By Yourself?" - When you get locked up, we know how it affects you, but how does it affect those that love you? How do your mom, your dad, your siblings react to your incarceration? Do they blame themselves? Are they worried for you, or angry at you? Do they blame the system? Do your younger brothers and sisters look up to you and want to follow in your footsteps? Are they forgetting what you look like and sound like? Do they cry because they miss you terribly? So tell us if you're doing your own time, or whether your entire family is doing it with you. How does your incarceration affect your loved ones?

Last but not least, "When Spring is sprung" -The poet Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote: "In spring a young man's fancy lightly turn to thoughts of love." This week marks the first day of spring, so - whether you're a young man or a young woman - what do your thoughts turn to? What do you love about spring? What do you miss most about being in here during the spring season? If spring means new life, does it make you want a new life, too? So tell us, what thoughts spring to your mind when Spring is sprung?

All right, before we call it an ed note, lets give shout outs to this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients, they are Lil' Tonio, Lil' D, Mainy Bo, Brown, Jesus Coleon, Carlos, Nunu the System Victim, Domo, Koho, Big Vick, and Goldylocks all from the 150 Crew. Also we have Young Meel and Freshy from SF/YGC and Angel Kissez from Walden House.

In closing we send this one all the parents whose children have fallen prey to violence. Thinking good thoughts.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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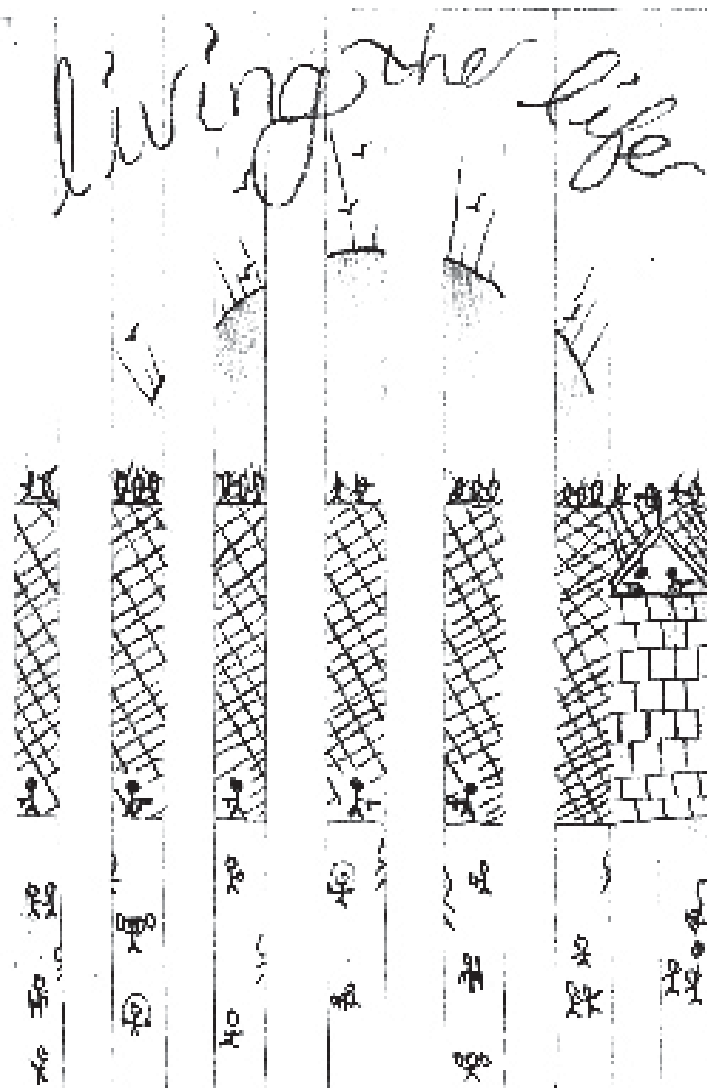
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www.thebeatwithin.org

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Becomin' A Man

As I sit back thinkin' about all the things I used to do,
And all the stupid things I used to get into
I think, damn I was hella young
Following my brothers footsteps gon' from dumb to dumb
All I wanted to do was become a young man
Little did I know, I was sinking in quicksand
I kept on going the wrong way
Didn't even listen to the Lord when He was right in my face
I bumped my head on this, and bumped my head on that
Found my life in the air and I couldn't turn back
In a couple of ours, the DA had my life in his hands
Who knew it could come so fast and I could change my past
Damn I was scared I ain't even gone die
Looking at 25 wit' a L on the side.
I picked up this book and it was called "The Bible"
I could've sworn it was gon' be as long s my trial
Thank God for Jesus -- he gave me a pass
But god told me next time he gon' wash my ass
So when I get out I gotta become a real man
Get a good education and take care of my fam

-Lil' Tonio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a great story - in rhyme too! - about the rise and fall and second rise of Lil' Tonio. Your biggest challenges are yet to come too, because as you've said, it's easy to follow a good path when you're prayin' every night for your life. Now comes the true test - can you continue to do right, respect others, be true to your family, resist the temptations of ugliness, even now that the noose has been taken from 'round your neck? Of course, we believe you can, but we also believe that it's going to take lots of support - from new positive friends and influences - and also deep determination and conviction inside you. To make that happen. How about another poem, from that talented mind of yours, this one about: How Will I Meet My Future.

My Bro

My earliest memory of violence is when I was 10 year old. I was on the block with my brothers and they were smoking and shooting dice on the block, and these boys walked up on the dice game and told my brother to get up and bang for his life.

I was only 10 years old and I didn't know what was going on, and one of the boys told me to run, but I stayed there, just looking at my brother, then one of one of the boys shot my brother in the head two times and the after that shot him in his back. I just looked at my brother and started to cry, but before that my brother said, "you gonna kill me in front of the the baby (me)?" He then looked at me and said, "I love you," and they shot him.

I then ran and ran, so fast, and just cried all day, like my brother is really gone.

What really keeps me strong is that before he died he told me that he loved me and I will never forget that, that made me a beast and just stopped listening to everybody and I just don't care no more, but I am smart about it.

I want to stay I love you Dre.

-Lil' D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: RIP Dre. What a tragedy to have witnessed. We hope the beast in you is controllable, and that you can live a life at peace, free of violence. Is it possible? How do you see your future? We're listening. May the love your brother had for you continue to keep you strong and determined to live a life that will make your community, your family proud of you. Do the right thing!!

When I was on the streets doing dope,
my grandma would come to the park
that I hung out at and would look for
me . . . just to make sure I was alive.

Appreciating Fam Bam

At first I was going to wing it, but now, I think I want to talk about doing time by myself. I don't think I ever did time alone. My family was there for me no matter what I went through. Out of all the times I was in J.H., my mom only missed two visits, and both times she was very ill.

When I was on the streets doing dope, my grandma would come to the park that I hung out at and would look for me... just to make sure I was alive. I look back on that now and am very grateful that I have family I do that love and care as much as they do. Now that I am in program, it's even more clear to me just how much my family is there for me. I am eternally grateful to them and can never express how much I love and appreciate everything they've done for me.

-Angel Kissez, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: It's clear to us that your family has good reason to love and stand by you. It's one thing to have such a family (and you're very lucky that you do), but it's a different thing to recognize and appreciate them (and they're very lucky that you do). Of course, the best way to express your love and appreciation is not by words alone (though they are important), but by deeds. Show your family that they mean more to you than some destructive chemical that took control of your life. And while you're showing them, you'll also be showing yourself!

Miss You

People have al these ideas in their head about me
who I am

what I'm about

the truth is that nobody knows me

I barely know my own damn self

no one can say shhh to me

unless they been through what I've been through

nobody else could begin to even understand

I didn't ask for the cards that I was dealt

I only played the game the best way that I knew how

I cheated a lot too

but I had to do what I had to do to stay in the game
to stay alive

I couldn't just quit

I wasn't no suburban boy who could call on mommy
and daddy

whenever I got in a pinch

I can't control where I was and how I grew up
because if I could I would have chosen some fly shhh
not the bullshhh I had to live through.

Davon (this is for you) I miss you

you been gone fo' a minute

it's hectic down here

but I gotta remain to stay solid

I know you up there smiling down and thinking to
yourself

in the next couple of years how many of you all gon'
make that trip up here

but I keep yo' name in the air and it remain to be
heard

I miss Davon and that is my word.

RIP Davon

-Mainy Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece speaks volumes on how you feel about the life you have lived/are living. Is there anything you can or want to do to change what it is you have seen or done? What are your plans? Has Davon's death changed the way you think and see the world? How? We're listening.

We Never Do Time By Ourselves

To whoever's reading The Beat, whenever someone is locked up. They never doing the time by theyself. Some people may say they are, but that's just the physical part of being locked up. The way a loved one does time is by not being able to communicate with that person, not being able to feel that person, not being able to hear that person. 'Cause I know while I'm locked up, my moms is going through a lot of stress by thinking of what the courts are going to do with me.

My twin sister is going through it because she's used to me being at home. My little brother is suffering because that was my right hand ninja. Whatever I did, he was always with me. My girl is suffering because before I got locked up she said that she loved me and going to always be with me. But look where I'm at now.

-Young Meel U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, it's true that everyone who loves you feels the pain of your absence. We hope you think hard about this once you get out from under this situation, because we can tell by what you wrote that you feel bad for putting your loved ones through this. Look carefully at what you wrote about your little brother. If he was always with you when you did what you did, then you can count on him being here, too, and that's going to be at least partly your responsibility for not guiding him along a different path. You may TELL him to do things differently, but a long as he sees you doing it, he'll be doing it too. Think about what you owe these people in your life, and then think about how you can deliver what you owe.

I'm Cold

I'm cold I'm so cold
I can feel my bones inside of me
holding my body together
I want to pull them out one by one and rub them together
and make a fire inside of me
to keep my body warm
I feel alone like I'm on the outside of the world looking in
like I'm on a rocket ship going to the moon
staring out the window at the earth
all pretty and blue and alive below me
but here I am dying slowly I'm so alone

-Jesus Coleon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To be alone is such a cold feeling and you do a great job in your writing bringing them sad chilling goose bumps our way. We can only imagine the feeling, that many Beat readers can relate to, of having that feeling of loneliness as if you are on the outside of the world looking in. We must say, we see so much life in your poetry, that we hope you do not give up on bettering your self Jesus. You have a gift as a poet, and we appreciate your work which you share with us.

Earliest Memory Of Violence

I was a very young teen
I had a big sister who passed away
from getting shot by some gang bangers
at the corner from my house
when the police came
we told what happen to my sister
inside I just felt this weird feeling going through my body
spreading all around
I also seen this happened to my sister
I don't even know who I am
like my whole family tells me who I am
or what is wrong wit' me
the only thing I can say is,
"I don't even know."

-Carlos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ahhh, what a tragedy you experienced and continue to experience. How are you working through the loss of your sister? RIP to your sister. Are you talking to anyone? Are you seeking any help in learning how to cope with the violent death of your sister? As hard as this must be, we want you to know, that you are somebody, we were very encouraged, when we met you. We were equally encouraged when you called us about a job. We hope it works out where you will be working with us one day, as you move forward in the memory of your sister. This is what your big sister would want, you handling your business legitly!

A Vicious Memory

My earliest memory of violence was when I was four years old and I was in my living room, and my step-dad was outside arguing with somebody he had problems with.

Well one thing lead to another and my front living room window got shot out. When I got up from under my mother who had grabbed me so fast was I did not see, until after.

When I arose I walked up on to my front door and saw one man that my step dad shot and he was begging for his life, but my dad was about to kill him, but when he looked up and saw me he decided to put the gun away, in a kind of hiding motion. This affected me by allowing me to see just even the people who seem nice and kind-hearted can be, and most likely are, the most vicious people.

-Brown, 150 Crew

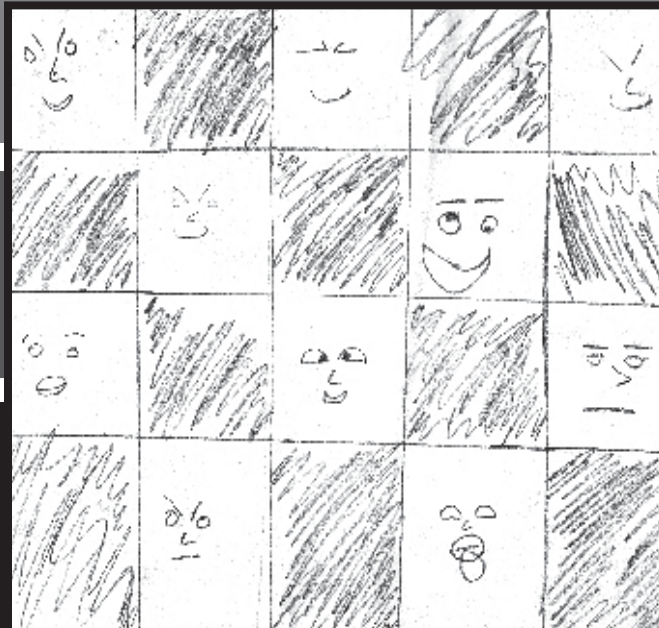
From The Beat: Your description of this experience is very vivid and well-written, and we can understand how it must have made an incredible impression on your young mind. It sounds like your mother's quick thinking and protective instincts helped keep you out of danger. What do you think was going through your step-dad's mind when he put that gun away? What did his eyes say to you when he looked at you? Is it really true that most people who seem nice really are vicious? We hope (and believe) that this is really just a small minority of people. There are a lot of nice and kind-hearted people out there who are for real. Stay strong and keep writing.

Spring

When springtime comes, it's somethin' I don't focus
Locked down or free, it's somethin' I don't notice
I guess because to me it just says sunshine
Spring is a time when you plant ya seeds frontline
Everybody act like it's a new beginning
Only thing change is seeds and love winning
Not sayin' it's a bad thing in general
Hopefully a new start is less lives to General
I'm just a weatherman lookin' for hot or cold
Expectin' season after just for me is not the code
Now summer and winter I pay attention
That's when I get happy must I mention
But the start of spring doesn't start in me
Any objections pardon me
Critically thinkin' and spiritually speakin'
Spring is not a jump off, just anothe season

-Freshy U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really appreciate how you put this together, Freshy. We don't know exactly why winter and summer are more important to you than spring, but that's not important. What is important is how well you express yourself! What other knowledge can you spit our way? We're looking forward to more.





Dreams

I close my eyes and visualize freedom and peace
A world where everyone's life is complete
Where everyday is sunny with a cool breezing wind
Holding my Mariposa while I'm kissing her caramel
skin

Watching the game with my dad and my brother
seeing the Raiders win
Sitting in the locker room with my pads anticipating
For my football game to begin
Laying in front of the moon with a million stars in the
sky

Trying to catch a shooting star, so I grow angel wings
and I fly

Hearing my son say, "daddy brings a tear to my eye"
Seeing my big brother carrying my son telling him,
"Your father is a respectful guy"

Swimming with the dolphins in turquoise seas
Breathing in air scented by tropical leaves
Living in paradise with my father till he ages to one
hundred and three

No need for hard labor 'cause everything free
laying on a cloud thinking of al my themes
And suddenly I awake from my beautiful dreams.

-Koho, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We really appreciate this poem you deliver to us this week. We feel every word you write. We were especially touched by you speaking about your son. You are fortunate you have family to help you care for your child until you return home. We hope that time comes soon. Keep dreaming, and aspire to seeing the good dreams become a reality. Best!

Garbage Girl

Everything I own, put it in the trash can.
Everything I want, burn it and everything that looks like it
Everything I've seen, paint it black so no one else can see it.

Anything I need let me live without

If I think it's cute, tear it

If I like the way it smells, burn it with hair.

All that I hope for, put it in a bag, give it to the homeless.

All I need is:

two wools

A bedspread

two sheets

PJ's

Sweatpants

Blues

Sweatshirt

T-shirt

A cement slab

wannabe mattress

Some food and some water

Garbage girl that might as well be my name -- because
everything I did I should have been disposed of but since
that did happen -- I'm the one to blame.

Please God, let me recycle.

-Nunu the System Victim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We were about to see this poem as a pretty tragic one, we were about to write something about how terrible it was that you should ever see yourself like garbage, but no - you were building up to that powerful last minute finish. Turning the metaphor up on its head by saying "Please God, let me recycle." You turned what could have been a poem of despair into a poem of hope... like you recycled your own lines when you got to the end of your time! Bravo!

My Earliest Memory of Violence

My earliest memory of violence was when I lived in Richmond
when I was barely a teenager.

I was standing outside on the spot -- it was a Sunday
and my potna Rico had just got out of jail and the spot was
rolling. Everybody that had a bundle was outside. Everyone
was excited that Rico was out and was looking forward to
kicking it with him. I seen Rico and yelled "what's up!" across
the park and he banged on me like he always does.

And while I was standing on me corner I noticed this
Honda kept riding through, but no one paid it no mind except
me, because it was so much traffic outside. So I started
getting nervous and told them I got a feeling this Honda was
up to something, but they just "ignored" me.

I said forget it and went in the store to order something.
When I came out of the store and started walking through
the park towards Rico, the Honda came up the street and
made a left towards Rico and stopped in front of him.

He thought it was a sale so he jumped up, about to walk
to the car and the Honda let off about ten/eleven shots. Right
there in my face I seen Rico drop wit' a pistol in hand. M y
momma ran over and took the gun and took it to his brother.
Next thing I knew the spot was packed with friends and family.
I watched him die in front of my face as I stood over him and
made eye contact! All I seen was a glaze in his eyes and I
could just feel he was struggling to hold on, but he didn't
make it. RIP Rico.

-Domo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You told this story the way an action movie director holds a camera, keeping us nervous all the way through, dreading what might come next. We salute your skill and storytelling power, still trying to come to grips with the fact that this violence came not from an R rated movie but from your own life. Think about it - at the time you saw this, you were not allowed to see an R rated film because of adult content, yet you and your friends at to face a something more terrible than any movie. What did you do afterwards? Were you thinking of revenge, or thinking of the sadness of his death, so soon after finding freedom. Did it make you want to quit the game, or did it make you feel even more loyal to your crew? Did you get a chance to talk to his mother, or his brother? We feel anger when we read things like this, because it is such a waste. You and everyone on the street, including your so-called enemies - deserve better than to die this way, taken from loved ones on the pavement.

I Can Win

As a kid I never thought I'd be in this predicament I'm in,
no matter the circumstances I always tried to win,
ran from the cops even if I had no wind,
true friendship never break even if they bend,
did a lot of shhh that had my momma cryin' at home.
Did a lot of shhh that had my baby's momma crying alone,
had a down ass chick but I still screwed with them hood
rats,
while my lady was at home trying to have my son take a
good nap,
family always did care for me so much,
but I couldn't feel them though, I was numb to their touch,
ran the streets day and night never seemed to sleep,
now I'm scared with fright, dreaming bout being in them
sheets,
my permanent bed spread where I'll lay for eternity,
all my talents useless 'cause while I'm dead I have no
ability,
so I try to live life to the fullest and don't look back,
the QB of my destiny and I don't plan to get sacked,
want to view the world 'till my vision goes black,
let my knowledge flow freely like a tree dripping sap,
criminal minded so I got to change my ways,
'cause the way I'm living equals less and shorter days,
my dirt nap is waiting for me just around the corner
don't want to be on a table unidentified by a corner,
if I ain't too careful there won't be no ticking in my clock,
it's so dangerous to stray from the block,
I don't want to be the 'cause of someone's tear drop,
I don't want to live in fear when I hear gun shots,
change comes slow like snails in a marathon,
one slip up and all my progress in gone,
the process on my way to achieve my freedom,
to win the ultimate prize and get my kingdom,
I have all the will power to overcome these obstacles,
as long as I got a mind I'm unstoppable,
the regime, the takeover is about to begin,
put in this situation to prove I can win!

-Big Vick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a piece!! Yes indeed it is hard to imagine how our lives unfold, but unfortunately this is the cards you have been dealt, and from our standpoint you have done a great job this past year in using your time as wisely as possible. It's not easy, but you give hope to many of us readers. Thinking back, why do you think you were the way you were? And is this incarceration the wake-up call? Can you see a new you? Can you see you being the responsible son, father, friend? We see it Vick, yes indeed we see you succeeding. You continue to use your brain, and you will most definitely overcome the system and the old lifestyle to leading a very good life. Watch! Oh we're watching every week, with every piece you submit, we get the sense you are more than ready to return home, but unfortunately, that's not quite the case. Until the next contribution, continue to take over these pages with mad game and knowledge and educate us readers the reals.

My uncle kneels down and says in his deep voice "Sweety come out from under there."

The Worst Visit Ever

When I was only four (years old) I went to Sacramento to visit my Aunt Julie. My dad and step-mom were going to Reno for a couple days so that's who I was staying with...

The first few days were fine, my aunt, uncle and cousins were fun to be with, 'cause all we did was have fun! But by the second week things just changed. My aunt didn't really smile anymore, she seemed different. My uncle always seemed angry and didn't really play with me and my cousins anymore.

One day, before we were supposed to go out to eat dinner, I heard noises coming from the kitchen. Curious like any normal four year old, I snuck out of my room fully dressed and peeked around the doorway into the kitchen. What I saw made me fear my uncle from then 'till this day...

He had her by her throat and her feet were at least nine inches off the floor. He was slamming her body in the wall with so much force that the walls shook and the little wall ornaments fell to the floor and broke. My aunt had her hands around his wrists, but he wasn't letting go. Before he slammed her against the wall again, I screamed and started crying. I didn't know what he was doing, but I knew it wasn't good. I was scared!

At the sound of my scream, he let's her go and she just crumples to the floor. She's not moving... my uncle starts walking towards me, he looks even more scary than before. Getting more scared and panicky, I run to my room, but before I can close the door, he's in there with me.

I crawl under the bed, crying...

My uncle kneels down and says in his deep voice "Sweety come out from under there."

I stay quiet.

A couple minutes later he gets up and I hear the door close. I crawl out from under the bed and before I can look around, I feel arms around my waist and he's carrying me to the garage.

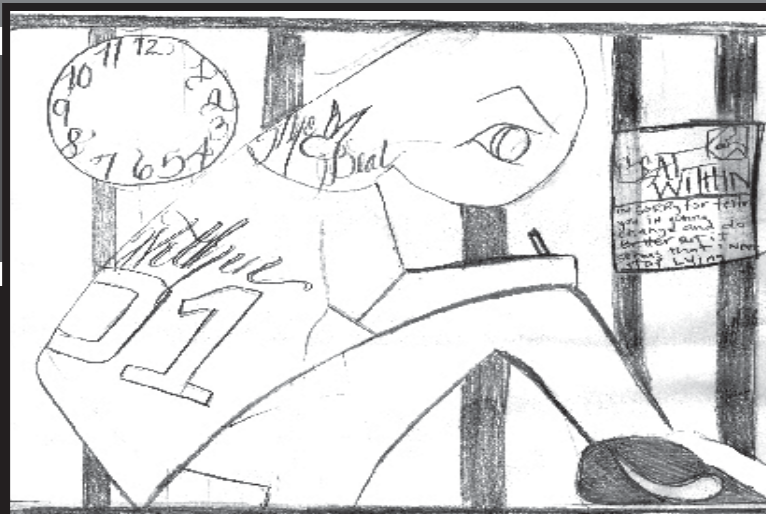
I try to scream but he covers my mouth with his hand.

All I remember after that is that he hit me on my face, told me what I saw never happened and went back inside. I curled up in a corner and cried myself to sleep.

To this day, he never said he was sorry for anything. Not for hitting me or almost killing my Aunt Julie, who passed away four years later from a brain tumor... I'll never forgive him, and I still blame him for my Aunt's death. RIP Aunt Julie Brown. 1967-1999 I'll always miss you

-Goldyllocks, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This story felt like a horror story. For two reasons, one because of how monstrously your uncle acted towards you, and two, because you told it so skillfully that you reminded us of Steven King. When we were reading it, we were so busy being caught up in the grip of you - the author - telling us about what this little girl was feeling, seeing, experiencing, that we felt like we were going through it. We felt like we were under the bed with you, not knowing what to do. And now, as a young adult, you are in a confusing position... on the one hand, there is the curse of having had to go through such terrible experiences as you have described to us. On the other, you have this gift, your ability to make other people understand what those experiences were like. This could be your calling - to speak on behalf of little children who are too young and helpless to speak for themselves. To teach - the way you did with this piece.



Not Alone Doing Time

While doing time
Not only alone
My vision goes blind
And my mind to roam
It's so hard to see
My loved ones hurt
Causing my eyes to bleed
And loss of my smirk
For what it's worth
I vow to never again
Be the reason or cause
Leave my family in suspense
By breaking the laws

-Paradise U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Only you know what your "vow to never again" break the laws is worth. Having been with you these last few months, we think your vow is worth a lot, because we think you are already on a new path, taking steps away from the life that has hurt you and your family. We see a young man on his way to making his family proud and now letting himself down. What do you see?



Mad That I Let Them Down

When I get locked up, my mom is pretty upset, and my siblings are also mad, but they also are in the hall. Sometimes my mom tries to blame herself, but then I tell her it's my fault, because it's my brain or body that did the crime. Then she starts to get pretty worried, but then mad that I let her down.

Every time I do something, my little brother thinks it's cool or that he should do the same thing, and that's when I have to correct him. When I am locked up, I usually call him and talk to him, but he never sees me, so then he forgets what I look like.

So when I am in the hall, my whole family is doing the time, pretty much because it affects all of my family.

-Estephan U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, it affects your entire family, but your actions affect your little brother the most. We have bad news for you: It doesn't matter what you TELL him about what he should or should not do. It only matters what you DO, because that is the model he is following. So, if you don't want him to do the things that led you to lock-up, then stop doing them. If you continue doing the same as before, then you can be sure your little brother will follow your actions, and not your words.

Haters In The Group Home

Man, it's hard to be in a group home, going to bed early, can't leave out the house without a staff. Man, it's hard. I been in there two months and a half. I just had two weeks left, and a hater put something in my room and got me kicked out. I ran a little, but it was time to turn myself in, and that's what I did. My family said, "Do the right thing," and I told myself to do the right thing in life.

That's what you need to do, change your life and make the right choices. My lawyer said I probably will just be in here a couple of days, but I'm by myself and I pray that I get out tomorrow.

I go to court, and my heart say you going to get out 'cause you did the right thing, plus your family right there waiting for you. They always by your side to the very, very end. Plus, if you have a girl like I do when I get out and return home, I'm done with everything.

My mind is a straight line to college, and me and my girl going to the top with all haters left behind! See you when I see you.

-Lil' Mmo U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You are lucky to have the kind of family and loving support you do at home — and you are wise to know how important that support is. Tell us what is along that "straight line to college." Don't you have to finish high school first? What kinds of things would you like to study in college? What would you like to be as an adult?

Guns Poppin' Off On Da Block

I was only eight years old on my block when some enemies slid through. We was posted on da block, and it was my friend and his brother and my brother and some of da boys from da block, and we chillin' and drankin' and blowin', so we choppin' it up. We see dis brown Buick and they came down da block and called my friend's brother to da car. They said something to him, so he tried to turn around and walk away, but they grabbed him and shot him wit' a 40 caliber five times and tried to shoot up.

I dove behind a car and the big homies started shooting at the car, but they drove off. I came out to the middle of da street and there he was, just laying, gasping for air. I didn't know what to do, so me and his brother grabbed him. His brother was crying like he was da one dat got hit, so we put my wounded homie in da car and drove to da hospital, and he was dead by da time we got there. Then I started crying. I would never forget that. RIP, G-Money

-Young Rieco U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a terrible memory to carry around with you. We're so sorry you had to experience this, and that your friend got killed. But don't you think you were already doing violence to yourself by drinking and smoking and posting on the block when you were only eight years old! Your lungs and brain and body are still developing even now, so what kind of damage do you think you might have done to that development at the age of eight? You were truly a baby playing a grown-up game. Did this experience make you want to change anything about how you live your life? Have you ever been responsible for violence done to others?

Destiny

Better days are waiting for me
Off to a bad start, dreaming to live lavishly
Running forever in a maze, tryin' to find someone to hold
Not thinking shhh in this crooked ass world
This is for the homies that's been deceased
Off top, you guys will always be missed
DA is hatin' trying to give me a couple years
I write these poems to express my pain and fear
Everybody as a destiny-mines? Just read the first letter of every line

-T-Bone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So you are in the dark days/Under the system's gun/Cloudy days seem to blot out the sun/Could you see your true fate/Even when it feels like it's too late/Everyone gets a second chance to make it /Dare to read the first letter of THESE LINES — your destiny is yours to choose. Will you take it?

Doing Time

Man it's hard for me man when I get locked up
 I don't even think about me
 I think about my big sister and my lil sister and my
 grandmother,
 man because it' so hard for me
 my big sister always worried about me and you know I
 miss her
 so bad
 my granny she sick and I get so stressed and
 depressed,
 'cause I don't know what to do,
 I wish I can just stop doing wrong and just get my life
 straight
 so I won't have to go through this anymore.
 I don't want my big sister going out of her way for me,
 I just want her to be safe her and my granny and
 everybody who care about me,
 well thank you Beat.
 This might not be the right thing for the topic I just
 wanted to get my feelings out peace.

-Kevin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you really love your family it's time to drop the area that you claim from your name. If you really love your family YOU WILL stop doing wrong. This isn't rocket science Kevin. IT's actually quite easy. The time is now in the name of all the family members you mentioned in this piece to move away from the b-s that brings you to juvenile. Do it!

RIP Shadow

My earliest memory of violence was when I formed my own gang called the Waterfront Crips. I was a very young teen, and I thought everything was going to go so good, being a gangbanger, and having my own troops, but I thought wrong...

In July 9, 2006, me and my homie were strolling around Oakland looking for a rival gang who wanted a piece of us, so we ended up by some liquor store and my boy Shadow noticed these ninjas walking behind us wearing dark hoodies, so me and Shadow turned around and started doing the "Crip Walk" and one of them ninjas yelled out their set and pulled out a pistol then was trying to act like he was gone shoot, so I pulled mine out, but I was too late, before they started running, they shot twice and struck my homie in his chest and the other bullet skinned my arm and burned like hell so I shot back but they bounced. Shadow past away.

Rest In Peace Lil' Shadow you will never be forgotten.

-Lil' Shoty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We sure as hell do not support your lifestyle and the choices you have made in your young life Shoty, but the story is a cautionary tale, one most of our readers can truly learn from if we choose to. We're not sure what came out this for you, but for us we see the sickness from gangs, guns and violence. RIP Shadow. What's next for you Shoty? We appreciate the honesty that came from telling this heartbreaking story and the burden you must carry for the rest of your life. It's heavy.

I remember when she would
 be in the corner crying getting
 socked in the face and head.

Violence At Home

My earliest memory of violence was at home. It was my mom being beatin' by my dad. It messed with me hella much. I think it was over my dad thinking that my mom was cheating on him, but she wasn't.

I remember when she would be in the corner crying getting socked in the face and head. I remember running over there trying to stop my dad, but he would backhand me, and tell me to get the hell away. My mom would say, "No, don't hit him, please," and he would turn around and hit her and say, "Shut up you whore!"

That is my earliest memory of violence I can remember.

-Yung Jokes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a terrible memory to have to carry around, Michael. We're sorry you experienced this kind of violence against your mother. Lots of studies show that it is harder for a child to watch his mother get beat than it is for him to get beat himself. That word your father called your mother is why we won't let it in The Beat (except like here, where you're making a point by quoting him). Where is your dad now? Where is your mom? Are they still together?

Not Doing Time Alone

What's good with The Beat? Yeah, I am doing time by myself because I came in here by myself. But at the same time my grandma and my sister and lil' brothers doing time with me, because my family take the time to come see me. My grandma blame herself, but it ain't her fault, it's my fault. I did the crime.

When they see me up here, they cry. Then my lil' brother and my sister found out I am up here. Then they ask my grandma where I am at. She tell me she hate to tell them where I am at. Then, when I come home, they say, "I hate when you go up to that place." I tell them, "I am not going to go back to that place."

Sometime my grandma feels good when I am in here, because I am safe, and when they hear the shooting, they don't got to worry 'bout me and when I come home. My family tell me to stay in the house. I do it for a lil' while, then I go back to the old way. But when I come home, I don't got to worry 'bout going outside. I am out, Beat.

-Young Jt U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why don't you have to worry when you get out this time? Does this mean that you plan to change some things about your life so that you can avoid this consequence in the future? It's good that you're safe while you're here, but you have to find a way to stay safe (and free) when you're back on the outs. If you love your grandma and siblings — and we know you do — then you will have to make whatever sacrifices you know you must make to keep yourself out, and to keep your lil' brothers from following in your footsteps.

Happy I'm In Jury

My family are more then happy that I'm in here. Why? Because I'm not in the street and into trouble. If I wouldn't be in here, I would be out right now at a party or getting' high with my friends. I know my mom is takin' it the hardest, but she's happy that I'm doing better in here than I was doing in the outs.

But out of all of this I just really blame no one, not even myself. I was going too far with what I was doing and I thought I was hella hard for it. Not until the second time I fell on my backside and ended up here and realized that I was just a little man lost in a grown man's world. Now, when I get out, I want to see myself in some real school with some real grades and even getting through life and managing a real job, with real hard working people.

-Kris U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It is so important that you follow through on the promise you make in this piece (a promise to yourself) to get some real school under your belt so that your future can be secured. You're absolutely right — a good education is the basis of a better future. Don't give away any more of your precious freedom to a bunch of system strangers who can't possibly care about you as much as you care about yourself.

I'm sixteen years old and I have
a lot to say and I want every
one to listen to me because
I've listened for too long it's my
primetime.

Sit Down And Listen

People tell me all the time that children are to be seen and not heard.

But why is that? Why do we have to listen when we can't be listened to? What's the point of having a mouth but you can't speak?

But check this one out I'm sixteen years old and I have a lot to say and I want every one to listen to me because I've listened for too long it's my primetime. I have the confidence to talk to any one from God to the worst enemy. I have the esteem to talk to myself out loud in public (I'll even answer my own questions).

Call me crazy, stupid, ignorant or anything else and I'll take it, wanna know, my brain power will let any unnecessary words fly who am I? I am a juvenile delinquent, a menace to society. No that's what people say.

I am a female that stands five-six-and-a-half.

I've never been to Africa a day in my life so I don't claim to be African American. I'm a dancer, a singer, a poet, and a whole lot of other stuff.

Are you still listening? I hope so.

I don't wanna grow up any time soon, because if I do I'll have to be quiet and I've been there done that. I've seen pretty much everything from finding family members to dead ones.

I have a question though...why do adults tell us to be quiet and then get mad when we're mad and don't tell them why?

Then they say you're lazy, spoiled, unappreciative, and whatever else they can think of.

Man that's bent huh? A closed mouth will make the body die of hunger! A still tongue want let saliva out of the glands! Only an open mouth will get a point to someone only an open mouth will eat when there's hunger take you choice and I'll take mine. I'm using my voice until summer-time then I'm gone shut up for a little while. I'm using my way up to get out of here.

Oh yeah. Thanks.

-Nunu the system victim, 15 OCrew

From The Beat: Wow, this was more than just a piece, it was a battle cry for all youth, or rather, for anyone who has ever been told to sit down and shut up. You're right - you have a right to express your opinion, speak your mind, we all do! It's about that delicate balance, though. There are some people who talk all the time, but they are so in love with the sounds of their own voice that they can't listen to other people (By listen, we mean truly listen, as in trying to understand, as in trying to feel where other people are coming from)... then on the other hand, there are people who don't know how to speak their mind, or their emotions. But yet they want to be heard, so they act out their needs by fighting or doing violence. Imagine, if we could learn when to speak from our hearts, and when to listen to our hearts... not just the youth, but the adults. The presidents, the kings, the governors, the

This Screwed Up Life

It was on the street, and one day I ran from camp that whole week shhh was going good for the most part. One day I was at my female house and I told her I was going to see how my mom was doing. She was at the corner and said "Do you want my brother to give you a ride?"

I said yes -- the worst mistakes in my life. But anyways my friend came, and then he was talking to my female. When she got in the car and her brother said what did he say and she said he will beat your ass. Then we came around the corner and we pull up to them and they said "what" and we pulled to a stop. Then my friend got out and came to the car that I was in and the driver said "ninja you said something about my bro!"

My friend said "who is your lil bro?" and he got out of the passenger side and pull out a gun and shot and shot my ninja Lil' G. That's why I will say that shhh screwed up my whole life.

I couldn't go to the funeral 'cause I was in the hall.

-Lil' Bob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see how something this violent, and tragic, and senseless could feel like it was ruining your whole life. To have things go from talking to your friend and "all is good" - to an explosion of pain like what you just described... that's truly heartbreaking. Is the pain a little bit easier to stand now than it was when it first happened? We ask because of that old saying "Time heals all wounds." As time moves on, does it get easier to think about getting your own life together, coming close to your family, moving past revenge thoughts, and, we hope, taking this as a sign that you want your life to go down a different path?

My Family's Missing Member

When I get locked up, I realize that it is not just me doing time. It is also my siblings because they miss me while I am in here. When I am in here my family doesn't function the same because it is missing a member. It's like a human body trying to function with a missing leg.

My family also doesn't do the same type of things that they would do when I was out, like go out on trips or even do activities. When I'm here, my family worries about me because they are oblivious to what goes on in here, even though it's not that bad.

Also while I am in here, I hear that my little brother is messin' up, like not goin' to school and he quit his after-school job, I don't know what to do, and I'm confused, I really wish I was out right about now.

-Raph U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There's not much you can do as long as you're here. But there's a lot you can do when you get out of here. We hope you think about your little brother and how he is going to follow your steps by watching what you do. He won't care what you say to him if it doesn't match your actions. So it's time to think of those that love and miss you, and for you to sacrifice some of what you like doing to be able to stay with and protect those that love you. (By the way, we don't think you meant to say that your family is "oblivious" to what goes on in here, because that not only means they don't know, it also means they don't care.)

When I am in here my family
doesn't function the same
because it is missing a member.

If jails work,

then why isn't anything being solved?

If so many schools are being built, why aren't

kids staying in them?

If there are so many laws out there, then why

The Individual Brings Change, Not The Season

When spring is sprung, it is the same as any other season. If spring made people want to start a new life, then there would be many different perspectives on other seasons.

How does one season get so much praise? What about winter, autumn or summer? If a person wants to change their life, it starts first with the person, no matter the season.

-Jungle U6

From The Beat: We agree with you that change comes whenever the person wants to make a change, regardless of when that is. On the other hand, spring is a time of new life in the world — flowers poking through the hard earth, leaves springing to life on trees, animals being born — so it's a natural time to talk about bringing something new into your life. If change starts with a person's desire to change, do you have that desire?

Not Everything Got To Be A Certain Way

If jails work, then why isn't anything being solved?

If so many schools are being built, why aren't kids staying in them?

If there are so many laws out there, then why does half the population not follow them? Who makes these so-called "laws"?

Who has the right to make a law that the whole nation has to follow?

What makes their laws right? Nothing!

Why can't we all just make our own lives and build our own happiness?

All we see is the white man's dream and we're living in it.

If they can make laws that they live, so can we.

We just got to smarten up.

-Alex U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What do you think the country would be like if everyone just made up their own laws and rules? If you think these are the "white man's dream," then why are there more white people on death row than other races? When white people break the laws, they also face the consequences. If you want to change the laws, then when you're eighteen, register to vote, and vote for the people who best represent you. That's how our laws get made and get changed. If you don't vote, then you can't really complain about the laws that get made by the people who do vote!

Loved Ones Like The Feeling Of You Around Them

When I get locked up, I think it affects loved ones a lot, because they care about you and they like the feeling of you around them. They think you are not safe and that you are getting hurt. They want to see you, hear you and feel you—that's why, when loved ones see you, they hug you and say they missed you.

-Jose, Marin

From The Beat: You're right! Now that you've comprehended this, what are your plans to make your family live in peace, enjoying your presence at home? We hope your take will open other young lives to realize what is one of the most important things in life.

Time

You can't rush it and you can't slow it down.

All you can do is be like Nike, and "just do it."

The key thing is to stay busy while you are doing it
That way, you all be doing time and time won't be doing you.

So stay strong bra, 'cause you got a lot of living to do
Before you die and time is everything.

-Jesus Coleon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Once again, you step up with knowledge for all of us to chew on. Time is crucial, so tell us how you spend and use your time wisely! We're listening.

RIP Lil' Frankie

What's up wit' it Beat?

This week I chose to write about a family member I lost last year in '06. His name was Michael Frankie W. aka Lil' Frank.

Frank was a very young teen when he was killed. The same age I am today, fourteen.

Frank was shot and killed in Oakland two-blocks away from his house, and when I learned the news it broke my heart, and I believe that no one could ever put my broken heart back together, because nobody can bring my cousin back from the dead.

Before he left this earth he touched people's lives from just being around him. A grown man at the age of fourteen. My cousin was not a gang-banger but a hard working youngsta.

Frank I just want to let you know the squad is hurting and we miss you. RIP Lil' Frankie, we love you.

-Lil' Gary, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yet, another heartbreaking tragedy, that you and many in your community will carry forever. Have you thought of ways of how this violence could have been prevented? Have you been living your life differently since Frankie passed? Tell us more.



The Boy That's Trap

When I walk the street it's weird
everybody knows what I did the day before,
everybody knows me from my brother's rep.

People ask me questions
why I do the things I do.

I have to sell weed to help my mom pay rent,
my brother was a big time drug dealer.
But one day somebody thought he was getting to big
and shot him.

People tell me I'm just like my brother
but the thing is I'm smarter than my brother.
My brother sold weed for fun I sell it to survive.

-Dope dealer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so sorry for what happened to your brother. You say you're smarter than him, but selling leads to the same places no matter what reason you do it for. Also, who helps your mom pay rent when you're locked up? Hopefully you take this time to think about your other options—because they do exist—and make the choice to live a different story.

I'm Not Bad

If only the threats could stop
The terror to end
It's not fair that I get treated this way
I'm not a bad boy
I just made a bad choice
With that being said
I have a little poem
For the few people out there
That know how I feel
And feel the same...

Being a kid, only four
And your dad beats you 'til you're sore
I don't care what you say
The score wasn't even
And I was losing, losing my life
From being abused
And that makes me feel of no use
Well, here comes the end
Close and near
As you see my cell door close
I feel the last tea fall
And that's all

-Anthony, Marin

From The Beat: We're sorry about the abuse. Nobody has the right to hit another person, even if it's your mother or father. Don't let this happen again! Also don't use this as an excuse to throw your life away. Someday you will be a grown up man, and will have the opportunity to raise your children the way you want them. You will be a better father too!

School Fight

My earliest memory of violence was when I was five. I was at school and some people got into an argument (I don't remember what it was about). One person pushed the other, then the other person punched the person who pushed him until he was on the ground and couldn't get up. The teachers ran over once they realized what happened. They took both kids to the office. The cops came and took both kids off school grounds. They were both expelled.

That's all I remember. The event didn't really affect me at all. I didn't know either of the people it happened to, but that's what I remember.

-Danny Boy U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We've seen events like this get out of hand quickly... two boys who start play-fighting end up doing the real thing, and facing all the real consequences. When was the first time you were involved in some violence yourself?

I Still Have It In Me

I really feel like crap. Everything I put myself in is on me. I have no respect from my aunt, she's the person who took me in when I was young. I have been doing what I want. People try to help me, but I don't accept their help. Why? I don't know.

I did a lot of things—cut class, smoke trees and drink. I have been hiding things for years and now that people found out, I don't know what to do.

I stole my aunt's car and crashed it and act like I didn't care. She forgave me, but still, I just stomped on her. I just acted like a grown man when I wasn't. I had it good and easy. All I had to do was go to school and pass, and I couldn't do that.

I have been saying that I'm going to do this and that—I'm going to go to the college and play football, but how will I do that if I'm getting locked up and smokin'? I went to a football camp, but because I was in a group home and I was faraway, I couldn't.

I don't give up on myself. I still have it in me. I could do it if I keep trying and stop playing.

-De Andre, Marin

From The Beat: That's the problem! You are doing exactly the opposite from what is expected from you. Why not listen and follow what they/your aunt tells you? We all make mistakes when we are young. And eventually we get to the point when we realize and feel bad for all the things we're done wrong. And that's where you find yourself right now. Keep thinking and realize that your aunt has given you all, and you have taken that love, appreciation and trust for granted. Work on your flaws! It's time, not tomorrow, today! So, what's the? We see the potential and the will power in you. Use it.

My Dream

I had a dream, so bad I wanted to scream
I was locked up in a cage fueled by rage
There was no way out, so I tried to shout
But I couldn't do it. I just had to push through it
So much stress, there was no time to rest
And if I tried to escape, it's a few more years of hate
And everything turned black, and laid back
Then I woke up, it was so abrupt
I looked around, and guess what I found?
It wasn't a dream...

-Marco, Marin

From The Beat: This must have been a terrible nightmare. Have you had your chance to vent in a respectful way to the right folks? Is writing helping you get some of this rage and stress off your chest? Do you have a good person that you can talk to too?

It All Revolves Around Probation

What's up Beat? Yeah, dis ya boy Drew. Yeah man, I'm still up in here. I'm tryin' to go to Glenn Mills because they don't want me to go anywhere in California. Maybe it will be better for me, though, because I won't be on the block for a while, and I won't get into trouble while I'm over there.

I already know I'm not going home right now, so I think they might as well just send me to my placement already 'cause there ain't no point of sitting up in here if I know what's gonna happen. I think that I can do what I'm supposed to do, but then I think I got to get up every morning and go to school. I can't call in sick because I'm on probation. I can't smoke 'cause I'm on probation. I can't stay out past six 'cause I'm on probation.

So it seems like every damn thing revolves around probation. But all I got to do is try my best. To all my boys still out there still thuggin' on the block or even in the cell, I'ma holla at you on da outs

-Young Drew U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like you know what you have to do — get off probation! And we hope when you do, you decide it's not worth cutting school, it's not worth calling in sick, it's not worth smoking, and it's definitely not worth rejoining your thugs on the block...

Never Again

The first time I ever saw a fight go down, I was in the eighth grade. My homeboy saw me from the distance and then tripped up against one of the big kids on the block. My friend knew this kid and completely that he was a head case and started throwing punches. What happened after that was that they got in a circle around the two kids and started to get in a real live fight. It was actually going down and I saw the whole thing from far away. The next thing I know, I was backing my friend up and I knew he wouldn't have to throw another punch again.

I became the victim of my friend's fight and I knew that I would never let my friend get dogged on ever again. I hit him with an uppercut to the face and he was out. At that time, I knew that I had heart, and the courage to stand up for a kid just like me.

-John-Michael, Marin

From The Beat: We totally understand where you are coming from with this piece, the problem though is things like this can turn fatal, or can turn into from a simple fight, to charges placed on you. If there is a next time, on a dime you need to think about the pros and cons of such actions.

*Victimas Inocente De Violencia En El**Barrio*

Yo pienso que las personas que hicieron esto son gente que no piensan en el daño que le causan a otras personas que no tienen nada que ver con los problemas personales de ellos. El ejemplo esta con lo que le pasó a esta niña inocente.

Yo le pido a Dios que juzgue a los que hicieron esto y que les ayude y les de fuerzas a los familiares de ellos, especialmente a los padres. Yo les digo a los padres que confien en Dios, que El les va a salvar a su hijita porque El es único que lo puede hacer. Les deseo suerte del mundo y que Dios los bendiga.

From The Beat: Lastimosamente hay gente que no piensan en los demás, sólo se dejan llevar por el odio que sienten hacia otras personas sin pensar lo que están haciendo. Estamos seguro que Dios te premiara por ser tan noble y por pensar en el sufrimiento de los demás. Ese es un don que casi nadie lo siente en estos dias. Esperamos que Dios te ayude a ti también a cambiar tu vida y tener una vida más tranquila de la que estas pasando. Gracias por escribirnos!

*Innocent Victims Of Violence From The**'Hood*

I believe that the people that did this are people that don't think about the damage that they cause to other people who have nothing to do with these peoples' personal problems. The example is with what happened to that innocent girl.

I beg God to judge those who did this and to help them and to give the family members of these people strength, especially the parents. I want to tell the parents to confide in God and that He is going to save their little daughter because He is the only one who can. I wish them the best of luck in the world and may God bless them.

-José U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Unfortunately, there are people who don't think about others. They just allow themselves to be taken over by the hate that they feel towards other people, without thinking about what they are doing. We are sure that life will reward you for being so noble and for thinking about the suffering of others. That is a gift that nowadays, almost no one feels. We hope that God helps you, too, to change your life and have a life that's calmer compared with the one you lead right now. Thank you for writing to us!

Hablar Con Mi Madre

Si tubiera la oportunidad, yo hablaría con mi madre la cual yo nunca conocí. Mi madre murio hace años y crecí con mi padre.

Yo quisiera saludar a mi madre que nunca conocí y deseo haber conocido. Madre solo hay una y aunque crecí con mi madrastra no es lo mismo. Yo soy el menor de todos mis hermanos y esta es toda mi historia de mi madre que está en el cielo.

Le mando saludos a la niña que está en el hospital y espero que se recupere pronto ya que yo me siento culpable porque yo vengo de la calle y ahí no se puede pensar bien. No me gustaría que pasara los mismo con alguien de mi familia y por eso le pido a Dios que me cuide a mi familia, especialmente a mis hermanos y a mi padre que son los únicos que tengo. Es todo.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho tu situación y hubieramos deseado que hubiera sido diferente. No necesitas un teléfono para hablar con tu madre. Aunque tu madre no esté en este mundo ella está en tu corazón. ¿Crees que el no tener a tu madre contigo, ha influenciado a que tu seas rebelde y te hayas conducido a los malos caminos? Estamos seguro que tu madre no hubiera deseado que fueras de esta manera. Esperamos que Dios te escuche tus súplicas y que cuide de los tuyos.

I Would Speak With My Mother

If I had the opportunity, I would talk with my mother whom I never got to know. My mother died many years ago and I grew up with my father.

I would like to greet my mother whom I never got to meet and I wish I would have known. There's only one mother, and even though I grew up with my stepmother, it is not the same. I am the youngest out of all my brothers and this is my entire story about my mother who is in heaven.

I want to send my greetings to the girl who is in the hospital and I hope that she recovers soon because I feel like I am at fault because I come from the street and there, one cannot think well. I would not like it if the same thing happened to one of my family members and that's why I pray to God to watch over my family for me, especially my brothers and my father who are the only people I have. That's all.

-Maron U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We deeply regret hearing about your situation and we would have liked for it to have been different. You don't need a telephone to speak with your mother. Although your mother is not on this world, she is in your heart. Do you believe that by not having your mother with you, it has had some kind of influence as to why you are rebellious and why you have followed bad paths? We're positive that your mother would not have desired for you to be this way. We hope that God listens to your pleas and watches over you and yours.

When...

The last time I felt really good is when I was free.

I felt really good when I could have went anywhere I wanted to go instead of being told where or what people wanted me to do.

I felt really good when I got to see my mom any time I wanted to see her.

I felt really good when I can get up in the morning and say good morning to all my brothers and sisters.

I felt really good when I can make my own breakfast instead of eating stuff made by people I can't even see.

I felt really good when I can everywhere different and fits every day.

I felt really good when I can talk to females in my class instead of sitting at a table full of men.

I will feel really really good when I get the hell out of here.

-Willie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This list of things that makes you feel good ended up feeling more like a poem than a list. A poem or even a prayer, to remind us all of what is worth getting out for, and what is worth staying out for. There's the fun stuff, like with the girls in school, the convenient stuff, like eating good food, and then there's the deeper stuff, of choosing your own life and staying close to the people who love you....If you read this over at least once a day, we bet it would feed your soul the same way that a home-cooked breakfast would feed your stomach. We know it fed ours.

Loved Ones

I know if it affects me
it affect my loved ones more
because I know they feel the stress and pain
I'm going through.

I think it hurts them even more
if it's your first time they have never been through
what they're experiencing
so it makes it hard for them to sleep at night
knowing that you're nowhere around
as they wonder if you're okay

where your at
sometimes it's good

at least they know where you're at
all times and they know that you're not in the streets
doing something your not supposed to be doing.

I know they cry because they miss me a lot and there's
nothing they could do.

I feel that your loved ones aren't doing the time with
you physically
but they doing time with you mentally.

-A locked up loved one, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We couldn't say it any better. Being a parent and losing your child to the criminal justice system is one of the hardest things to experience. It's not only embarrassing. It's sad, it's depressing. Not only for you, but the parent too is also questioning his/her actions to how it got to this point. What it will take is a team effort. One needs support to beat the system legitly. To have an elder to push you, to guide you is ideal. DO you have that from your loved ones? How bad do you want to be free? What is your plan upon getting out?

Never Coming Back

I am leaving and never coming back.

I know you will miss me but I won't miss you.

You got me to sit in Juvenile Hall for a long time, and
now I got to think about

what I should have not did wrong 'cause of the streets.

So when I get out of this life holder

I am going to appreciate what I have instead of trying
to get what I want in life.

-Willie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Words to live by, and of course it makes us want to know more. What are the things you've learned how to appreciate, and what is it that you want to get in life? Is it about getting out of the bay area? Finishing school? What kind of a job would you want? One that lets you work alone? One where you go to an office every day? One where you build things? Travel? Would you want to learn a new language? Would you want to teach? Would you want to work days, or nights? It's a whole future out there waiting for you - if you want it!

I Am Not Doing Time By Myself

I'm not doing time by myself, because my mom's
suffering by me being in here.

She needs me to do stuff around the house and am
not there to do it. My mom needs me to help take care
of my little brother, but I am not there to do that, so my
little brother is doing time with me too.

My mom tells me every time she talks and comes to
see me she is telling me that my little brother is always
asking about me like when he is going to talk to me or
when I'm coming home, but she can't answer that for
him it's just a big question mark.

Other people in my family are asking the same
questions and they don't like to see me in here. But
to answer the question am I doing time by myself, the
answer is no!

-Joseph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes indeed you definitely answered the topic question. Now that you see how many people are affected by your poor choices, can you correct the problem? What will it take? Break it down!

Introducing Myself

Hi. My name is Terrance. I'm 17 year old. I was raised in
Sunnydale and West Point. My childhood was not so easy,
but easy because I chose not to hang around the wrong crew,
til I got older and started hanging out with the homies. That's
when shhh got hard.

First, I started smoking weed, then coming in late. I got
caught joy riding the first time I got took into custody. This
is my second time coming here. I'm here now for vandalism.
Now I'm at the point of changing my life around when I get
out. Please pray for me so I can change my life around for the
better of my whole family.

-Terrance U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a much better Beat piece because you're not just answering a bunch of questions. Instead, you're thinking about what you want to say, and then writing it. Praying to change your life is a good beginning, but it's not enough. You also need a plan, and we hope that plan revolves around going back to school and sticking it out till the end. Getting an education is truly the key to changing your life, and you owe your family and yourself a better future determined by better choices. Good luck.

It Hurts My Whole Family

I feel like when I get locked up, I am not the only one locked
up. My family is locked up too, locked away from me, limited
to only 45 minutes to see me each day. That just doesn't hurt
me, it also hurts them.

I think the hardest thing about being locked up is being
separated from my family and loved ones. Right now, I should
be at home playing with my little cousin Zion, but instead,
I'm in here and he is probably at home actin' out because his
older cousin ain't there to tell him how to act.

-Justice U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you that you are hurting yourself and your family by the choices you made that led you here. And we also agree that you owe them much more than this. When you get home, it's not just what you tell your little cousin about how to act that is important, it's how you act that he will learn from. You can tell him to do right all day and all night, but unless you are doing what you are telling him to do, you'll just be wasting your breath. If you want to be his role model (and you should be), then model your own life in a way that you would like Zion to live his.

It's Me And You

A day away from your love makes me sad
Just hearin' your voice can change me to glad

Whether you gone or in my arms

No matter what you forever a charm.

Can you receive my heart so I'll forever feel this pain

It's you the woman I'll for life claim

pretty I'm sayin' I'm brightenin' the day

I'll hold you in my arms forever you'll stay

Force my love into your heart I'll hide you away from your
fears in darks

The way we talk is sweet as wine

I'll keep you safe and fine.

-Lil Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow. Can you write her letters? Can the two of you talk? Does she want to talk to you? If she doesn't want anything to do with you, then it is in your best interest to respect that. Be smart.

Head Held Tall

I've got money in my vision
But it's like I can't get it without seeing prison
Every day I wake up I see four walls
They even got me wearin' other ninjas' draws
Got to take a shower with two other dudes by the stall
But I walk around with my head held tall
I know it's a lot of people that'll like to see me fall.

-Fat Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those people that want to see you fall might end up disappointed - because every week your writing gets better, your spirit more cheerful, your maturity more obvious, and your spirit more impressive. No matter what the system throws at you, and we know they're trying to throw you heavy time, they can't break your spirit, and they can't stop your words from soaring.

My Grandfather

If I had a phone call to heaven I would have to ask to speak with my grandpa and try to have a good conversation and ask him to forgive me for always staying away and not taking the time to make him as happy as possible before he left us and went to heaven.

I would also like him to know that even though we wasn't that close, I still loved him even though I think he didn't know that.

-RIP Emanuel

-Antonio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Here at The Beat, we're not big on gambling, mostly because money is too precious, but also because it's illegal, but we would still bet any amount of money that your grandpa knew exactly how much you loved him. He knew you from before you were old enough to understand your name... a grandpa's love and forgiveness loves deep like that. We wish you'd had a chance to share this piece with him when he was alive, but we hope you know that he always knew your love, and he'll always know your love.

Hard Times

In the streets there's never silence
Everywhere you turn you see violence
Young soldiers dyin'
Bullets with no names flyin'
Loved ones cryin'
The police still lyin'
But life is hard
Everyone I know is permanently scarred
People dyin' tryin' to eat
Losin' loved ones to the street
The system can't be beat
Locked down 'cause you tried to bring home the meat
Enemies creep
They wanna see you dead
'Cause you gettin' money tryin' to feed your family
Every day of the week
Police want you incarcerated
Life is twisted and ill-fated
Every day it's homicide
It ain't really shhh but genocide
Then you get locked down for life -- it's suicide
And it ain't nowhere to hide
Whoever told you it was they lied
Sometimes I think I would be better off dead.
But I'll be better off wit' some sense in my head.

-Fat Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Looks like you've already found that sense in your head, and with your elegant rhyming, you've also done the almost impossible: Made some sort of a sense out the senseless life and early death of the streets. There is one way to beat the system - and that's to starve it. The system feeds on the ignorance and hopelessness that drives young people into its jaws, so every time you write, you create hope, you teach and strike a blow against ignorance. Think of yourself as a different kind of soldier: Now you fight for knowledge, you fight for hope. Your pen is your weapon, your heart is your shield.

FYI

My name is Alex. Some call me Lil' Al, some call me Al Boo Boo.

Most of my life I have been in and out of The Hall but this time I messed up real big. I did something I shouldn't have done. Once I get out, I am going to change my life. I have to get back on track. Me and my bra still have to get money but not the way we was gettin' money' cause that was not the right way.

The right way is to work for what you want, not steal, rob or kill ... but me I found that out the hard way, that's what got me here in the first place. Pills got me here now, but I'm sorry for even poppin' in the first place. I'm sorry for even stealing from people and robbing people.

It adds up when you really think about it. I went to court today and they want me to come back on the fourteenth of this month. I hope they say something good for me. Thank you for your time.

-Lil' Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No, Alex, thank you for your time - it's people like you who make The Beat what it is. People who share their stories and their pain, who have the heart to write about the darkest times - and who try to help others with their experience. Too many people talk about Thizz and hyphy as if you couldn't have those without the drugs, and the fact is - there's no one regulating those pills people are taking, and mixing. It's a little pill that's supposed to bring so much happiness, but really half the time it's loaded up with speed or other poisons that make good people do bad things, and bring pain into their own worlds and a stranger. What first brought you to pills and robbing to begin with? Can you remember the first time you started messing up? We bet that is another story that belongs in The Beat!

This Memory

I seen a man get shot up hell of times right in front of my face, like damn, at the age of thirteen year old on the streets of Oakland, Ca.

How does it affect me, it don't, but I felt bad for the man who lost is life because life is an incredible thing to waste. But he lost his, yeah I would be hard for me to be the victim.

-Stanford, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Not only hard if you were the victim, it would be the end. Lets strive to live! As for your piece, that is one heavy thing to witness at any age, a man get shot up. What is one thing from this senseless tragedy that you will carry with you forever?

When Family Doesn't Come to Visit

My life living in The Hall is hella hard. Bur for some of us, it's easy to be living in a place they call home. Nothing like this will be my home, never. And that new hall up there, that ain't nothin' nice. Don't nobody want to go over there, and I wish that they never made that shhh.

But they say it's better for the staff to control us!

I don't think so. I just don't want to be living up in here for hella long, like some these people up in here for real.

My mom didn't even come see me that much, that's what makes my time in here so hard and so long. If somebody come see me, it won't be so hard, and so long, because time goes by fast, if you get visits. But when you don't, it hurts to see other people get visits and not you. You wait for your mom or dad to come, and then they don't come ... it feels so bad.

-Lil' Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is so full of things that are beyond your control right now: the upcoming move to a new Hall, the visits from your family, the way you spend your days... But between the lines of what you write, there's also the things you can control. You can control whether or not to feel hate (your pieces are never blinded by hate or rage). You can control whether or not to give up (you never do)... and you can control the effort you put into expressing yourself and educating yourself (Your writing and grammar gets better and better each week). What does that mean? It means that you know how to make the best of your situation, and it means that in the most unlikely of places - jail - you are trying to grow and mature. This is an amazing thing, something that should give you pride and hope. We hope it inspires you as much as it inspires us, your editors and readers.

Cryin' Of My Heart And Soul

Pictures of our relationship are flashin' in my head
You was my lady but now I feel our relationship is dead.

I had plans for us to live life as two.

Now we apart now, "what do I do?"

I cry at night thoughts run deep in my soul

You played me, now my heart is stole like a pot of gold.

"Did you ever love me back?"

I did and that's a fact

Because of you my heart will never be the same
You scarred me like when a gun flies in a person's brains

You told we'll forever be together
And our relationship will last forever
Now the pain will never stop.

You had my heart in a place that it was on lock.

But now I'm willing to give you a chance.

I'll go down deeper than inside your pants.

Receive my heart for real this time, no games.

If you need love I'm willing to help you change.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lost love while incarceration is so hard. It is good that you are able to let loose on paper and get some of this pain onto paper. So, would you really trust her again, if you two reconnected? Tell us what makes her so special? What would you do different?

Doing Time By Myself

Yeah, I am doing time all by myself because my family is happy that I am locked up. They really do not want to be bothered with me when I am in jail. It's crazy because I do all my time by myself, no family coming to see me, no mail from them, just like I do not exist.

Mark d U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very sad piece, Mark. Why do you think your family is so unconcerned about you and your situation? When you're home, do they show you love? Do you show them love? How?

my reason for doing what I did to get
locked up was different than anything
most people do to get put in jail. I had a
different motive and a different purpose

My Loved Ones

Hey what it is Beat! This yo' boy Y-E-Ree known as Grown Man Tyrie from Oakland. Well me being locked up affects a lot of my love ones.

I been locked up for years all together. I been in and out of group homes, and it really affect me too, because I have not been home to see my brother start school, and I could not see my younger sister start high school, and I got a new born baby sister I never seen, because I been locked up so long. To tell you the truth I'm not trying to see myself at the new hall, I'm try to go home to my family. Well I got to go all right.

-Y-E-Ree Grown Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well we didn't see you the other night when we ventured into the new juvenile hall, we hope that means you are home, free, with your family. Now if that's the case, you know the drill and what must be done so you no longer have to be fixture in the hall. Rise up young man! Live a life free of the system, do this for your family, for you!

SIX TO NINE

What' up y'all, this is yo' boy Lil' Tae. I'm doing six to nine months.

At first I was going to run, but I didn't, 'cause I'm not going to be running away from my problems. Instead I'm going to just do what I got to do when I first got here it was boring, but now I got used to it, so I can finish this. All for y'all that's locked up, just try to do what you got to do, and don't get in trouble.

I'm in Camp now, and I don't got no write-ups or nothin', I'm trying to do this without getting in trouble, or get in fights, but that's hard because people always got something to say, that's why I be by myself.

Six to nine ain't that long, just do what you got to do and try not to mess up. Do what you got to do, and keep you' head up.

Don't worry about nobody else, and do what you do.

-Lil' Tae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope other people read what you say and take heart. You're handling the stress of lockdown like a man with a plan for his future, and that's a good sign, not just for how well you'll do in camp, but also how well you'll do when you get out on the streets. In the meanwhile, The Beat is here for you, through your 6 to 9, and beyond.

Because It's Not Home

I hate being in here because it's not home. Home is way better, you get to go to sleep any time you want, and go to the bathroom and take showers whenever you want to.

When I'm home and my mom cooks me enchiladas with beans and rice I'm so happy. And I'm in here the food so nasty that it makes me want to throw up.

So for all you youngstas out there be coo' 'cause this new hall up there -- it ain't the spirit. Life is BS but God bless you!

-Lil' Baby Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Next time you see your mom, you have to ask her for the recipe for those enchiladas. Reading about them in here made our mouths water. We hope you get out soon, so you can be back where, as you write, you don't have to say "it ain't the spirit"!

Why Do People Go to Jail?

What's up Beat?

I just want to ask all the people that are locked up: Why do people go to jail?

Why would you want to spend your time in a small ass room, when people that don't even know you get to tell you what to do, when to eat, when to take a shower and when to go to sleep. Why would any human person want to live their life that way?

I just don't get it and I would hope somebody that is human would want to be free. I know I do, so stop all the dumb shhh and live the life you were supposed to live.

I don't know why I didn't, but my reason for doing what I did to get locked up was different than anything most people do to get put in jail. I had a different motive and a different purpose. I just got caught, so now I have to pay for it.

When I'm back on the streets and another chance comes up for me to have what I want, I can either go for it, or give my victim a pass. I'll let my heart decide on what I might do and how I should do it.

-Travelle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a good question, maybe the best question that anyone can act because it cuts to the heart of the pain at the center of every Beat reader's life. But maybe everyone feels like you do, that their reason for getting to jail is "special", or "different" What surprised us was that after you wrote the great description of how terrible jail life is, you still end up writing that you might well repeat the very actions that got you sent to jail in the first place!!!! So we have to ask you, young Travelle, after all you say here, how could you even CONSIDER doing what you did again, now that you know what the price is?

So Beautiful

My girl is the most beautiful girl person to me. She so beautiful she make me wanna never look away, she so beautiful if beauty was a crime she would be in here... doing life without parole. She so beautiful she make a blind man see!

-Lil' Rome, 150 Crew

From The Beat: See, Lil Rome, when you are writing about how you feel, and when you're inspired by passion - for an idea, for an argument, for your girl, then you're the only poet you need!

All Grown Up Now

With my one phone call I would call my grandmother (my mom's mother) I would let her know that I'm all grown up now. I would tell her how me and my brothers are doing and update her on what's been going on. I'll let her know that I'm all grown up now. I would tell her how me and my brothers are doing and update her on what's been going on.

I'll let her know that my mom misses her and that we all miss her.

Since this is my only call, I would tell my granny to three-way my turf brother Lil' Doobie.

I would talk to him about when we was just in camp last year and how I still have dreams about us kickin' it like old times. I'll tell him how his block been lookin' and to watch over me while he is up there. Then if my time is up I'll tell my granny I love her and tell Doobie I will see you when I get there. I love you and take care.

-Diddy Bop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: RIP Lil' Doobie. You remember that story about the kid who was granted just three wishes, so the first thing he wished for was a hundred more wishes.... he was a clever kid. And that's what you are here - switching up the one phone call to make it a three way. That's exactly the kind of resourcefulness you can use to get what you want out of love legit... Your boy Doobie would love to see you shine, so how about if you use that cleverness to shine for real? By getting a good job and an education and getting up out of the hood?

Phone Call To A Gypsy

If I could call heaven I would ask to speak to my great grandma. She was a gypsy psychic. I would ask how it was reading people's fortune? How do you read palms and fortune tellin' from drinkin' tea. Why did you leave my mom one of your fortune telling cards and how do you use them? What was it like growin' up havin' this power, and knowin' how to control them? Granny can you tell my fortune, and do I have these powers like you? Great granny, I love you and I wish I would have got to meet you face to face.

I have done a card reading on me and I came up with a death card, four swords, king of wands, six of cups and some others.

The death card was caution in the future -- I ignored it and it came on me quick. I lost my drugs, started downin' drugs and come here. Four of swords was the same warning' for this. The kind of swords was the light side of me, sayin' beware of those cards and keep in mind of what you're doin'. I six of cups was present and telling me to not let me wander away. from the good I was doin'.

To not fall into the bad -- which was drugs. But I ignored all of that and the two worse cards, came. But I didn't think it would be this bad.

-Mint, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Since you know the cards, you also know that the death card doesn't only mean something bad, it also means the death of something in your own life - and end, a change. It can mean, a huge cataclysm in your life that causes the "death" of one chapter in your life and the opening of another. Maybe if you look at the cards in another way, that death card could be a sign that you was time to kill your own habits and start some new ones. Maybe this is your chance to burst forth like a Phoenix from the ashes of where you were before.

Doing Wrong

When I do wrong, I don't really think about it until I get caught for it. You know that saying "the truth shall set you free?" Well, that's not always right. And we do wrong most of the time. We don't get caught for it and sometimes we do, but my mama always told me that what's done in the dark will come to the light... and that is the truth too.

Everybody needs help in some things, even if it's on stealing or robbing people. But everybody needs help in here even me I need real help and forgiveness. Don't nobody come see me that much. I feel so stupid to be here right now, watching everybody get a visit.

And I know my mom loves me, but why do she do what she do? I think it's because I been so mean and rude to her, but I love my momma to death.

But I know what I was doing was wrong and painful.

-Lil' Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: From everything you've said and written, it sounds like your mother loves you very much... maybe right now she's angry, maybe right now she feels helpless, like she doesn't know how to keep you from hurting yourself or other people ... but look how much her teachings live in your heart. Almost every week you quote something powerful or wise that she said - she is with you in your mind and your struggle to express the suffering you feel now. She is with you in the words she has told you over the years...and she is with you in the strength you show each week when you write your truths and your regrets.

Tragedy

It's a tragedy when life is took

With no hesitation

Layin' in bed, shook

'Cause we know the police waitin'

waitin' on the judge to evaluate my cases

Tragedy-- when we call God on the phone and

He never hears that ring tone

So I leave a message.

It's a tragedy.

-Justin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The Ancient Greeks, who wrote some of the greatest plays of all time, believed that tragedy was the greatest art form. In pain and drama you discover the depths and heights of human nature, our best and our worst. As an artist - you do the same, even as you speak of tragedy. It seems like our prayers aren't answered, but when we pray, aren't we saying, in our hearts, that we believe life can be better, that we are yearning to know that someone is out there? Perhaps that's what makes us human, perhaps that's what they mean when they say "Hope in the Unseen"

It's Time to Stop

Well when it comes to homes, houses, spots, whatever you want to call them. To tell the truth I have been everywhere, from my parents on down to group homes and when you just take the time to think about all the shhh you been through, you just ask yourself when would it ever stop or would it ever stop.

The first time I ever got taken away from my parents I just knew I was going to come back. But as time goes by after the fact you have not been back home ever since you got token away, you say to yourself it's never going to end.

But as you get older, wiser, smarter in and out of jail, you have to tell yourself it's time for me to change. I have to stop this, but when you stop doing or you think you stop doing the shhh you use to do you ask yourself have I changed. But then you tell yourself it's up to you to make that decision.

Love always...

-The One You Never Thought Could Do Right, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We love the name you picked, because the depth and insight in this thoughtfulness shows that all that hard living you've done has made you wise. The question is not whether or not other people believe you could do right, but whether YOU believe it. Whoever it was that didn't have faith in you, do you now have enough faith in yourself to prove them wrong? And as for the ones who did have faith in you, it looks like you're ready to prove them right!

Time

Time is important. Every time I wake up, time is chasin' me, while I'm chasin' time. I want my case to go by fast so I can hurry up and do my time and go home, but it's always better to take time, 'cause anything can happen.

When I wake up and go to sleep in this hell hole, I take advantage of my time wisely.

-J-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your writing shows how well you use your time. It's like while you've been physically locked up, your brain and mind have been roaming free. You write about regret, love, family, your analyses of lockdown, so many different topics, it's like no lock or key can hold your soul back... So yes, so far, you have used that time well. Now when you serve out your time after sentencing, how do you plan on using that time? What are your plans?

Mi Vida in the Halls: Never Lose Hope

What's up Beat? I'm here just chillin' in the hall, I been here for like almost two months and I'm hella stressing, because I miss my family and my girl that I love to death.

I'm facing some serious robbery charges. This is my first time, but I know they ain't letting me out, 'cause it seems like my DA and my public defender is against me.

So I don't know what else to do besides think about the good ass life I had in the outs and how I messed everything up by doing some serious shhh. To all the homies in the Halls, keep yo' head up and don't let this shhh get to you. Think about the present. Do what you gotta do to get out and change your life for good.

'Cause this juvenile Shhh ain't no joke. Think about your real family before you do some stupid shhh on the streets and end up back here again and don't listen to your gangbanger homies 'cause when you end up here they ain't yo' homies no mo'.

That's just my little advice. Good luck in court to all y'all, and whatever you do, never lose hope. I'll be writing to The Beat for a couple of months 'cause I know I'm gonna be here for a cool minute.

-Brazilero, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Welcome to The Beat, young Brazilero. We're happy to have you in our pages, and sorry that we have you hear because of the troubles of incarceration. Do you think being locked up means has changed you on the inside? It sounds from what you write up here like you've changed your mind about family and gang life. But of course it's hard to break free - what would you need to do in order to do what you suggest: "Change your life for good"

Growing of My Heart

Give me your heart for life I'll care
The man in yo' life is me, no more tears.
All the pain you felt over these years,
Soon it'll be gone my dear...

I listen to the beat of your heart that's cryin' for me,
You fine as sugar candy that's forever sweet
Baby thanks for the support and love but I need
happiness and joy.

I thought we was lovers but you played with me like a toy.
Open heart and empty hands is all I have now,
My heart use to beat but now there's no sounds
Crying from the hurt of loneliness I have seen.

I'm dead without you, but now I'm gonna grow my heart
back strong

This time I'm gonna be happy, no more crying alone.

-Li'l Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Open heart, empty hands. That's an image that can keep a person's faith and trust going strong for a long time. We hope you draw as much inspiration from the words you write as you give, no matter how this relationship ends up. And we hope this inspiration keeps you on point so you can live as you say here: With no more crying alone.

What Goes Around Comes Around

I close my eyes and my face turns into blood
Body so beaten for tryin' to be a thug
Mouth stuck together so no words can spread
Blood cuts rolling from my eyes to the back of my head.
Sorry for the pain I put against you over the past years
Now I'm facin' pain and all I can do is drop tears.

Money had me doing the devil's work
I'm lying here with my whole body hurt
Cry and pray is the only words going through my brain
Before I was hurt I was money insane
Empty heart is the reason I'm lying here
And now at night, the only words is "how did I get here"
Many days pass and I'm reachin' for a friend
Only person I got is me, myself to the end.
Who I blame for this lonely death that flash
I think my death just flash past my eye real fast.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is so much deeper than your crime and punishment, your sin and guilt... It's also about how our lives work, with evil and goodness living side by side. The bad we've done comes to haunt us, but the good we've done comes back to bless us... your blessing is your baby boy, your poetry, your patience... if you truly believes that what goes around comes around, then you must also believe that if you do right from now on, you and your loved ones will eventually reap the benefits. Do you believe that?

Spring Is In The Air

When spring is sprung, my thoughts turn happy.
I feel better about myself. I feel like loving.
The things I love about spring are the clear skies
with big white clouds and green fields and big trees.
What I miss most is that I'm in here
I'm not outside enjoying with my girlfriend,
not watching the clear sky and not making out with my girl
in the nice grass field.

-Jose, Marin

From The Beat: This world has a lot of beautiful things that we see, but don't know how to appreciate, until we lose 'em. We hope that when you get out, you get to enjoy its beauty with those you love. If you're smart, you'll do your best to never come back. What are your plans?

They Want Me Bad

They want me so bad that they went all the way out of the state to come for me in Fort Myers, Florida. That's about thirty minutes from Miami. What I did was wrong too... I shouldn't have done it, for real.

All I'm sayin' is that I did something so bad that they came all the way out there to bring me all the way back out here. I wish they made me do my time out there. But I knew for a fact that was not going to happen for me. Ain't no jail fun. Don't none of us want to be locked up.

This world is crazy to live in. And if our moms and dads taught us right, we wouldn't be here, but some of our moms and dads was doin' stuff they should not have been doing, and that's why we do some of the stuff we be doing.

But we can't always blame our moms and dads, because we be the problem most of the time. And that's real too.

-Lil' Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In a way, we are happy that you were caught. We know that sounds twisted, but you know - the bad things you did would have haunted you forever. Now, you are being given a chance to make up for what you did, to forgive yourself for what you did, to understand how the pills and the lifestyle you were caught up in and corrupted your innocence and your nature. Now you have one thing you didn't have before when you were doing drugs and wildin' out - you have time to contemplate your own self and your past, you have time to educate yourself, you have time to share your experiences and express yourself as you try to become a better person. Is it possible that there is some light in all of this - something to be grateful for? Tell us if we're wrong, we always want to hear what you think and how you feel.

Locked Up With Family Support

When I'm locked up it affects life as in the people that's in
my circle
the people that want to see me make it
like when I was down and out on my death bed
those who stuck by my side
that told me it was "gon' be ok we gone take it day by day"
as if they was the one fighting for their life
as if they were the one locked up
not caring if I committed the crime or not.
Yes my family is affected by my incarceration.

-Frank Nitty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds pretty darn serious. On your deathbed? How did your life get to that point? Obviously you are physically better, so what's in store for you upon leaving the hall? Fill us in. You know where your family stands, what about you? Use that young mind to advance beyond the hood!

Hey Girl....

Since the time I seen you walking
You had me gawking
Thinkin' about stalkin'
Now that I got you in my life you can't stop me,
We shopping
I'm buyin' the things you jockin'
Oh you so naughty
I'm lovin' the way you bop me.
Whenever you ready for some mallsprees
I don't care what it cost me
As long you keep me happy I'm keepin' you all frosty.
I remember it like yesterday
You picked me up in your special way and at first you was
scared to talk to me,
Till I got out the car told you walk with me.
So there were strollin' hand in hand
and my mouth watering like the candyman.
And I stopped in my tracks and look you dead in the eyes
Took a glance at yo' ass and I was mesmerized.
You're an angel from the heaven and that best describes
For a second in my stomach I felt butterflies
that's when it all happen you started laughin' in sexy
fashion
Feelin' in my heart that I can't explain
In bed you goin' crazy got so insane
You're the cure to my fever
And my growin' pain
My sun on cloudy days make rain go away.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These are some great rhymes, and we bet your girl loves to hear them. We couldn't tell from the poem if you've got a case of love or lust (or a healthy combination of both), but one thing we did want to add - if you love your girl and she loves you, is it good to do so much shopping for the girl? It's a fine line between buying gifts for a person you love and paying for that love, no?

Are You Doing Time By Yourself

Man, I screwed up dis time. The stupid shhh I was doing on
the streets finally caught up to me. And getting locked up
didn't only affect me, it affected my whole damn family.

I got locked up for the same stuff my parents got locked
up for when they was young. So when I got locked up, it hurts
everyone I love that I'm making the same bad decisions that
my parents did, and that hurts me to.

Me and my family don't want me to turn out like my
parents. So everyone in my family be trying to help me stay
outta trouble.

-Tye U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If everyone is trying to keep you out of trouble, how did you fall? Do you feel like you've let those people down (not to mention letting yourself down)? What are you going to do when you get out of here to make it up to them?

On My Block

Ninjas got gone off coke rocks
On my block
If you touch a ninja's spinnin' rims you can be shot
On my block durin' blackouts ninjas rob houses
So they family can eat
On my block
You're born waist deep in the game of cocaine
On my block
Lil' ninjas by the age of twelve got thangs, not no nine
or even a forty-five
Ninjas got chops to eat the street
But right now I'm not on my block,
That's why I'm writing in The Beat
'cause if I wasn't in here I'd be so high off weed
I'd probably be walkin' in my sleep
My block is the streets.
Fo' all out there
That can't leave the streets
'Cause it sounds like game is steady callin' yo' name,
Even though you brother got racks of coke,
And your other brother dead, just know you're not the
same.

-Marley, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is one of the darkest (and best) descriptions we've read of street life in a while - a world where people feel doomed and fated to guns and terror from the minute they're born, where you can't make money legit, and you can't trust your neighbor, and you can't even be sure that you'll be alive tomorrow. "On Your Block" is nowhere to live, not in its mindset and maybe not even on the physical block, so would you ever go OFF your block? Or is there, better yet, a way to save your block? Put those rhyming skills to the test and answer these questions!

Haters in Here

I don't want to see that new hall before I have to. I might
go to CYA before we move up there I hope so too. How is
everybody today, my queens in unit 2, my ninjas in A,B,
C, D, and B/C? I know it's hard for everybody in here, but
just keep yo' heads up and do what y'all need to do to get
out of this place.

But for me I'm in max tryin' to handle mine -- but
you know it's haters in here, don't want to see me shine
in here. We all locked up, man, why do people want to
hate on me, and we in jail? That's what I don't get about
people in here, when we on the outs, don't nobody hate
on me but when I get in here, people gots to hate on
me.

I know what I did was wrong but I just asked the
judge and God to forgive me for what I did.

For y'all people that's in here a minute, be3cool and
keep your heads up. I don't see why some of the staff be
trippin'. What is it? Is it that they don't like me, or that
they don't like the things I do? But they act like they
don't like me.

-Lil' Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are haters in the Hall, there are haters on the outs. The secret is to not pay attention to them, like you said. Plus, remember that every single last person in The Hall, in your unit or anyone else, suffers on the inside, and is trying to hide it when they are out of their rooms. It's part of being human - for some reason, we reach out to strike our brothers and sisters, even when what we need most is their friendship. It's a great mystery, and it's one of the saddest parts of lockdown. Instead of supporting each other to be positive, we bring each other down. But you WILL find positive people who can lift you up, as long as you keep your eyes open, both in the Hall, and outside the Hall. In the meantime, be proud of how much work you've done in here so far.

Before My Potna Passed Away

The last time I felt good was before my potna passed away.

Because when he was alive we used to go out, and we used to party ride smoke, we used to go... and every time he picked me up after work, he'd used to pick me up so we could ride and smoke, but ever since he got killed, things have been so different, cause it ain't the same without him.

That's why I quit smoking, 'cause every time I get high it reminds me of him , and that shhh ain't coo'. And now every time after school I'll be waiting for him to come scoop me up, but I'll remember he's gone, so that's what hurts me the most. And that's the last time I felt good.

Forget that feeling really good, 'cause I can't feel good without my homie.
RIP Vicente

-Lupillo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a terrible loss, and what a painful situation. You capture it perfectly too - that blessed moment where for just an second you forget the person is gone, and then when you remember it, it comes back like a crushing blow, as awful as the moment they died. Too many young people are in your position, mourning losses at such an early age. Too many young people are six feet deep. There's a silver lining here, though, which is that you are still alive, and you have a future, one in which you can always remember Vicente, and show his memory that there is still beauty and life in the world. How would HE have wanted you to live?

My Life

I got court next Wednesday. My birthday is on Monday. I'm gonna be eighteen. It breaks my heart that I have to spend my eighteenth birthday (which is my first b-day) incarcerated.

I pray to God from the bottom of my heart that He let me go home and give me another chance.

I'm not in here for a violent crime. I'm not a violent person. I love people and I try to help them as much as I can. Even when somebody disrespects me, I just take a deep breath and ask God to calm me down and fill me with His holy spirit and give me the strength to walk away. And I do.

I just pray from the bottom to the top of my heart of each and every young man and woman incarcerated and I pray that I get a straight release so I can move on with my life and achieve the goals that I have set for myself and make up the time to my family and for myself that I have been in this place.

Thank you God for everything you've done for me and that are still doing for me .

In memory of Jose Felix Estrada Jr.

-God's Child, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ho do you help people? Give examples how different you are from the crime you came in for. We truly sense sincerity in your writing too. IF the judge were to ask you to speak on your behalf, what would you say? Could you be as articulate as you are as a writer? Now give us the details of how your life will change when you get home>

I'm not in here for a violent crime. I'm not a violent person. I love people and I try to help them as much as I can. Even when somebody disrespects me, I just take a deep breath...

I Can Imagine

It's very easy to imagine dying old in prison for bein' locked up for life. Especially since I have homies tellin' me how it is in the big house. I can imagine police catching me after committing a murder, maybe after year later after committing the crime. While I'm eating dinner, with my family, police would knock on my door with a warrant for an arrest. I wouldn't give up my freedom so quickly so I would run and try to escape arriving in a bus to my new "home"

At first I would feel scared because I would be new to the prison life, but if anybody would want to punk me, I would make it clear that I wouldn't hesitate to snap and retaliate back, never showing no fear because that would earn respect.

And as some homies have told me, after they take everything from you, the only thing you are left with only your principles and respect. I would try to keep my mind off the streets and try to educate myself. My family would cry for me, and so will I in secret.

Months will feel like days, and years will feel like months.

-a young son, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh, how we wish you'd put your name on this piece, because it's such a brilliant and tragic view of a future we wouldn't wish on our worst enemies. You paint this picture of hell on earth with perfect artistry, and it makes us feel the terror of having the police break down our doors, and the despair of a life behind bars. The most frightening thing, though, is not just what you say but the way you seem to believe it might be your future. Remember that this does NOT have to be where you end up. You have choices, you can decide to take a different path, you can make that decision today. This gift you have, the ability to make people see what you see, is a sign of a great imagination. Can you imagine a better future, and describe that one for us too?

Life Goes On

People go to jail
People get out on bail
Life goes on
People suddenly die
People's spirits rise
Life goes on
People have kids
People cut they dreads
Life goes on
People make mistakes
We all deserve a break
Life goes on

-Lil' Tonio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes the simplest poems, with the shortest words, are also the ones that tell the deepest truths. In this poem you boil life down to its greatest lessons. When you first came to the hall, you thought you might have to spend the rest of your life in jail... and now you've been given that break. What comes next? As your life goes on... where will it lead. You have the chance now to try and live your dreams... so tell us a little bit about what those dreams are?

Kindergarten Violence

My earliest memory of violence was when I was in kindergarten and we were in art class. This kid Brett spilled some paint on this kid Emanuel. Emanuel got hella mad and the next day he stabbed Brett in his arm. I was shocked by this because I went to pre- school with them both and we were all cool till that happened.

-Big John, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, we can understand how that must have been really shocking. Stabbing someone for some spilled paint sounds like a violent overreaction!

Now It's War Again

What's The Beat Within,
Walking in ice cold water no shirt
First feet within
Not carin' if life comes in a hearse
'Cause the heart stops within
What's my options then, my life on the wall connected
by pens
Now it's war again
If you have a question to ask
What's yo' beat within

-Justin , 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is your amazing second poem about The Beat, and we feel honored to have some one with your talent singing out thoughts on what this paper means, to us, to other writers, to you... Now we hope for more poems from you about other things too, your thoughts on life, freedom, the battle between light and dark that so many of the brilliant artists, poets and writers of The Beat have to face on a daily basis - in their hearts, in their families, on the streets, and in their cells. Apply that magic talent of yours to sing the songs that only you can sing, and we'll be here waiting to publish them, and praise them. Peace.

Are You Doing Time By Yourself

No I am not doing time by myself at all. I have a whole family and a girlfriend at home that is sad about me being incarcerated. They all can't visit me except my mom and my step dad. It sucks because they all used to be so close to me. Me and my three sisters used to talk every day. I got homies I used to go to for everything, now I don't ever see them. The big homies don't even visit, even though they are old enough. It be pissing me off! I think about them all every day.

Every last one of my family members do the same about me. My mom is telling me every time she visits me, everybody is thinking about me constantly and all the homies come over and make sure the family is cool, but it will never be the same without me being around.

My mom and sister's write me and tell me about problems they are having with people. I am so irritated in here al the time. I wish I could be there to handle this shhh.

So listen when I say that if you love your family, don't put yo' dumb ass in jail.

-Lewis

From The Beat: The last line says it all. So what must you do to stay out of jail? Does hanging with the homies help you stay out of jail? What's the plan so you can be there for your mom and sisters? What must you do to get out of the system? We're listening.

That Night

That night,
March 9, 2007.

I was driving a Chevy Malibu station wagon.
I was out of my body- Hennessy, tequila and gin,
I hoped in the car, trying to make my way home.
As I was going home, I fell asleep behind the wheel,
foot on the gas, ran straight into a parked car.
I cut through some nerves in my neck which lead me
to the hospital,
woke up the next day and found out I had a dislocated
shoulder
22 snitches in my neck and on my shoulder.
And that's a night I will never forget.
I'm lucky to be alive.

-Daniel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes indeed you are lucky to be alive. Yes indeed you were out of body too. What next? Can you leave the alcohol alone? How has this accident affected you? By the way, how are you healing?

God Is On My Side

When I get locked up I feel I messed up, know that I messed up, but you only learn from the decisions you make in the past. I know that there are many more years to come and a chance to change my life before it's too late.

For other people its easy to blame everybody else but my dad told me part of being a man is admitting what you did wrong and trying to fix the problem I know my little brothers miss me 'cause when my mom bring them to come see me they cry when they leave and I think that's the part that hurts me the most.

Right now I feel like I'm not setting a good example but I still tell them to do right don't make the mistakes I did but I'm just grateful that God is on my side because if he wasn't my probation officer wouldn't of recommend me to come home so even though I'm in a messed up position I still feel blessed. And I know my mom just waiting on my release until then I just got to take my days one step at a time dodge them punches and throw back when I can.

-Clappa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a heartfelt piece, and you bring up some good points about learning from the past and the implications beyond yourself. What do your actions show to those around you, including your younger brothers? You're right on that the present is the only thing that we have control over. Sometimes we can understand the present better by looking at the past.

That's Why I Love Her

While I'm locked up, I know it affects my mother deeply, because I know how much my mother loves me and cares about me. She doesn't blame the system because she knows I made my decision doing what I did and she know also that I'm make up for it in the long run. I know she still remember what I look like and I know she's doing the time with me and that's why I love her.

-Rick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It takes a lot of courage to write about these feelings. Much respect to you for this piece, and to your Mom for standing by you. How can you change things in your life so that you can live up to your Mom's hopes for your health and happiness? You write that you're going to "make up for it in the long run". What is your plan? We hope that you will stay strong, and give your Mom a big hug and a "thank you" when you get out.

Getting Locked Up Affects Many People

When I got locked up, it did affect many people. For instance, my mom, my sister, my brother, my dad, my girlfriend and myself. But they can't blame themselves for my action. But I am going to change so my sister and brother don't follow the same footstep as me, because I am a role model.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, you are a role model for your little sister and brother, whether you want to be or not. They will look up to you and want to be like you. If you make sure to live the advice you give them, then when they grow up you can be proud of yourself for the model you provided them.

My Youngest Memory of Violence

My youngest memory of violence is when I was like four and a half and I was coming out of the store --across the street from my house. My cousin's best friend got blasted within steps of where I was standing.

He didn't die until he got to the hospital, but now I don't like going there, even though it's down the street from where I stay now.

-NuNu The System Victim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't blame you for not wanting to go down that street... in a way, you don't even have to believe in ghosts to feel like a place can be haunted: By memories, by visions, by the kinds of traumatic events that sear themselves into our mind like an ugly tattoo you just can't get rid of. Do you remember what happened afterwards? Did your mom talk to you about it? Or your cousin?

Like A Dog Without A Bone

I'm locked up doing my time,
Not letting my time do me,
Coming up with another rhyme,
So I could flow to the beat,
My girl's out there in the world,
She's out there all alone,
Well, at least I hope she is,
Like a dog without a bone,
I'm da bone that makes her happy,
Now she's all alone,
I just hope she hasn't replaced me,
For a different bone,
I love her to death,
But she's eating me away,
'Cause her letters don't have that much to say,
If she found herself a bone,
Now I ain't got much to say
But keep reppin the Bay,
Rest in peace Mac Dre,
Keep repping the Bay,
Keep flowing this way,
Keep doing what I'm doing,
It's the Bay all day!

-Juan

From The Beat: If you're the bone you want her to keep/Why did you allow yourself to get buried here so deep?/Repping the Bay won't bring you wealth/That only comes when you rep yourself/If you're locked away, you'll never tame her/And if she finds another dog, can you blame her?/You're a fine poet with a first-rate brain/So how come you put yourself in so much pain?/Time to put your gifts to better use/Bad friends? Bad drugs? Cut them loose!/Do you even know how much you're worth?/If so, it's way past time for a rebirth/Imagine the man you want to be, then birth it!/Have no doubt — you're definitely worth it!

Innocence

When I lost my innocence maybe was when I was five and I wanted money to buy something. The only way to get the money was by just going in my mom's or dad's wallets or handbags. But I guess when I was small, I didn't know that was bad... 'till my mom and dad caught me. And then they told me not to do that anymore, but to ask next time.

-Juan

From The Beat: So did you start asking them for money? If you were still innocent at that time, when did you start knowing that what you were doing wasn't right? That's when your innocence fled...

Five Years From Now...

Five years from now I would see myself in ATL with a farm, a lot of animals and a green house, but with weed in it. I would have kids and a wife. And my kids would have to go to school all the time.

I would be a good father and I would have a gun case of every gun in my case. And I see me drivin' a nice car on some twenty-six inch rims on all my cars, and have a lot of money. And playin' football for NFL or basketball for NBA, things like that.

-Omar

From The Beat: Omar, these are worthy dreams, but how are you planning to get there from here. And how are you going to be a good father with weed and guns all around? What is your definition of a good father?

Five Years Ago, Five Years From Now

Five years ago I was 11 years old. I was playing soccer and going to school and chilling with the homies and my family.

Now I'm locked up.

Five years from now, I would be 21 years old. I would be working and chilling with the homies and my family in my own place and maybe a family.

-Alejandro

From The Beat: Alejandro, five years ago you were chilling with the homies and your family, and now you are locked up. Five years from now you said you will be also chilling with the homies and your family, but working. Don't you worry that chilling with the homies might keep you from the future you describe? Don't you think something is going to have to be different? What's your plan for getting there from here?

Thank You for Hating!

Dear hater of my success,
Why must you hate,
-and
Don't want me to progress,
I try my best,
But all you do is hate,
I try to rest,
And your words,
Try to suppress,
But for some reason I can't
And your words,
Are stuck in my head.

I guess I don't have much of an option,
But to wipe myself
With what you say,
I thank you for your hate,
'Cause it made me reach success.

-Juan

From The Beat: If you're motivated by hate/As here you clearly state/Then it's time to change your fate/And turn your future into something great/No reason at all for you to wait/Before you find that it's too late/Don't just use words to master debate/Let hate move you to create/You're standing at the open gate/Walk through and let love proliferate!

A Wig Story

I think I lost my innocence in 4th grade when I threw a brick at my teacher's car because she hit me in class and lied to the principal saying she never did that, all because I pulled her wig off by accident. When I pulled the map down, it got stuck on her hair and the wig came off right away.

She hit me. That fueled me to throw the brick and lose my innocence and some of my rights because I was placed on probation, which was a hard thing for a young kid because we do a lot of things wrong and grow from it. But when I got in trouble it was worse for me because I was on probation and had to suffer from mom and a probation officer.

Most kids got a slap on the wrist when I got cuffs. All of this lead me here today at nineteen. I have been on probation since I was ten or eleven, but when I get out off probation this will be the last.

-James

From The Beat: Of course, you should never have thrown that brick. But you were a child. It's the teacher who hit you who should be paying the price for that, because we can never find a justification for a teacher to hit a student. In fact, if all this had not happened, the wig story would be funny. But James, you are no longer the child who threw that brick, and we are proud of the maturity you show in the workshops and in your writing. You've been in the system a long time, so now it's time for you to live the life we know you are capable of. We have great faith that you will build a decent future to overcome a less than decent past.

Floetry

I'm blessed with this gift of poetry,
A different way bustin' flows,
I call it floetry.

I'm blessed with this gift,
Of bustin' these flows,
Line after line.

I'm cursed with a myth,
Verse after verse,
While I'm dropping a rhyme.

Call it what you want,
I'ma call it what it is.

It's a way of living,
It's a way of life,
This is how I live.

Forget all that gang bangin',
Forget all that dope slangin',
Why don't you drop a rhyme,
And we'll see who is bangin'.

I'll be the show of the host,
I'll be the King of the Hill,
When you hear my rhymes,
It's like poppin' a pill.

Feel the Thizz effect,
Just don't get a brain defect,
'Cause if you fry your brain,
You gonna live in regret.

-Juan

From The Beat: Your flows are great, no doubt about it/But they're not enough, and we want to shout it/Take back control of your life/Stop letting drugs become your wife/You've paid the price, despite your verses/It's time for you to end these curses/It's true that life's no bed of roses/And you know the challenges it poses/But you're up to them, so it's time to grow/Make your life into your very best flow!

End

Screaming crying
It's not fun
Bleeding dying
I'm on the run
I cannot run
I cannot think
Alone in the dark
I dare not blink
Save me, someone please
I fear this is the end of me...

-Ash Night

From The Beat: Sometimes when demons are chasin'/It's best to turn and face 'em/You may never be able to erase 'em/But their origins, you can trace 'em/And then — maybe — in a safety box you can place 'em.

Dear Hater of My Success

Why ya'll hate is it because I have something you want or is it because you don't like me? If you get to know me you will see, that I'm not a bad person in life but not enjoying the time I have left until I get released, you think it's a game when you get locked up, wishin' you wouldn't have got caught up.

Now I'm here and you leave laughin' at me 'cause your getting out and I'm still in but then you come back and you hate 'cause your going to a placement and I'm out in 4 months your mad 'cause now you can't say nothin' but still wanna run your mouth. 'Cause I'm gonna be out to the house, well stop hatin' 'cause you ain't got nothin' to hate but a release date but you should stop before you get shipped to another state so why ya'll hate is it because you want something you want or is it because you don't like me?

-Chris

From The Beat: Who is hating? Why does one hate? Are you part to blame as to why you are incarcerated? Forget what others think, if you can, and begin to focus on your needs, and what it will take to keep you out of places like this.

This Animal

Innocence lost me and was replaced with a raging animal.
 Guilty as charged.
 The punishment that he deserves is never ending anguish eternally.
 That man is a walking hurricane, drugs, and alcohol fuel his insanity making it possible to contribute to a world of hatred.
 He made himself as disgusting as Frankenstein.
 Bits and pieces sewn together to create monstrosity.
 His own mind is a Labyrinth of emotions
 trapped deep within is a soul that is dying
 but never gives up this psychopathic tendencies
 lead to a form of suicide that he longs for
 even though a sure death is his only option
 struggle and suffering was what he was meant for.
 Sad isn't it? It depends how you view things.
 This is hell
 your already have things won't get any worse so why even care.
 Forget the answers.

-O

From The Beat: What inspired this piece? Who is the animal you are talking about? Tell us about you! How do you deal with your connection to the system? Is it making you see things differently?

Dark and Dank (Part 2)

It was like a midsummer's night dream
 But instead of love there was misery
 People were crying, I can still hear the screams
 It was dark and dank
 It was cold and wet
 I can still hear that last breath
 You were crying and I tried to save you
 It seems like two lifetimes ago
 When it was me and you tight like bro's
 But now you're in the grave
 I can't believe this happened not too long ago
 As you bled to death in my arms
 I will never forget your eyes like stars
 So every night it is the same
 Dark and dank I step into the night
 Cold and wet to my delight

-Ash Night

From The Beat: You have a talent, Ash. You can use words to paint vivid pictures. We're so sorry that you have to carry this particular vivid picture around with you, though, and we can understand how it could haunt you. What are you doing to process this memory so that it doesn't disable you? Is this terrible event the basis of your voices? There's a reason that you're still alive. What do you think that reason is?

Pyramid

I lost my innocence when I started getting' beat downs
 I got older and got tired of it, so I had to put my feet down
 When I talked, I would get smacked, all I knew was silence
 Now I'm thinking for myself, and all I love is violence

I know right from wrong, and bad from good
 But what drives me is the negatives
 Ain't nothing like bein' loaded, trippin' off a sedative
 Some people like to get high off speed, so they start to mess with Ritalin
 Addictions born and love is formed, now they love the medicine

If you're shown something at a young age, you're more than likely to do it
 Say you won't, but when it's in your face, you tell yourself, "Screw it!"
 You swallowed your pride, but before you did that you had to chew it
 Now you sittin' where you don't wanna be, knowin' that you blew it

Young minds are always thinking, that's why they're in confusion
 All we think about is retaliation and retribution
 Your parents tell you, "If someone swings, swing right back"
 The law says, "Don't do a stupid thing like that"
 If you get whooped you say, "Next time, I'm gonna swing my bat."
 You get scared, so you think, "Should I bring my gat?"

I ask myself, "Why do people got to think like that?"

-Pyramid

From The Beat: It seems like you have answered that last question yourself — because like you say, when you show a child something at a young age, they tend to learn from it and do it themselves when they grow up. But now it's time to put away childish things. Now it's up to you and all those in this situation to decide if they want to continue down a self-destructive path of life, or change. We all know right from wrong, but knowing is not the same thing as doing. You're MUCH too smart to allow the rest of your life to be controlled by strangers in a system that cares nothing for you. You're MUCH too smart not to you're your future better than your past.

Thinking Back And Ahead

Five years ago I was barely a teen...
 Innocent at heart, sober and clean...
 Always with my pops...
 No mother at home...
 Hangin' with my girls...
 Or up all night on the phone...
 Haven't yet experienced heart break or bad luck...
 Like a Toys R' Us kid...
 Didn't wanna grow up...
 Then fresh into high school...
 My brother got me caught up with the law...
 Three years of probation...
 Left my parents in awe...
 Changed from five different schools...
 As the years went past
 Introduced to drugs and alcohol...
 Got stuck in it fast...
 Now my third time in jail...
 Wonderin' what went wrong...
 So deep in love...
 Singin' a new song
 Five years from now...
 Hopin' to do right...
 Ready for the struggle...
 Gon' put up a good fight.

-Poostie

From The Beat: Believe it or not, you are already taking the necessary first step into changing. You are already starting to fight the destructive temptations, little by little, and we hope you will continue doing so. If we have any advice to give you, it's that you take the drug alcohol very, very seriously. We know too many young men who have made long strides forward with jobs and school and families, only to be brought back down because they couldn't resist getting drunk, and then having to pay the consequences for their irresponsible choice. Good luck.

Baby, Remember Me

Baby boyplease remember,
 All them things we did together,
 From roaming around the streets,
 To being at our place, in your coach,
 Doing our thing.
 Please don't make me cry,
 'Cause you don't know the feeling I got for you,
 Deep inside.
 Baby don't break my heart.
 Baby don't forget me.
 Right now I feel a lot of pain.
 Being locked up, but I hope to change,
 The things between us.
 When I get out.
 Ain't no game.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Love is pain and pain is love. Before you give this boy your love, you have to love yourself enough to stop doing the things that take you from those who do love you and deposit you in this cold place.

Different Kind Of High

Quit doing them drugs,
 And get another high,
 Or do like I did,
 And get off a rhyme.

This is my favorite high,
 The high that gets me by,
 And I won't stop doing it,
 Until the day I die.

-Juan

From The Beat: Thanks for using your experience to teach/There are so many youngsters that you can reach/We want all your fine words to come true/Not just for them, but also for you!

Haters

Haters be hatin because they ain't from where I'm from
 Haters be hatin because they ain't who I am
 Haters gon' always hate because they just too miserable,
 and lonely so they decided to just hate on a young lady,
 it would make them feel better.
 Haters on a young lady, it would make them feel better
 Haters also be hatin' because they know that the ski
 always about stackin and rackin with a lot of mackin'.
 But I ain't trippin though because haters gon' hate all
 they want because I'm from the big city known as the
 city, and we don't hate we dislike, so get it right.

-Tati

From The Beat: Tati, the only hating going on is from you. Are you a hater? Sounds like it. Wise up, before life gets even more harder. We appreciate you writing on these topics.

Locked Down and Forgotten

This is yo' boy Young Diddy Bo, man I wish I was on the block eatin' with you boys.

But y'all know how these people keep us down, locked away and forgotten. Don't worry about me though, 'cause I got get back. Just pray that you ninja stay solid as a rock and the days keep rollin'. And I'm gon' pray that God keep y'all safe.

To all my females, startin' with my wife and all the way down keep it solid fa' me 'cause yo' boy gon' be back fast.

To all, remember business first.

-Diddy

From The Beat: This isn't exactly a farewell speech to the streets at all, because you sound like the minute you get out, you're going straight back to the messed up life that got you coming to juvy in the first place. It's a trip how you say "they keep us down, locked and forgotten" because yeah, there's a lot of injustice in the system, but at the same time, are THEY the ones that send you to jail? The way we see it, every time you do something illegal, it's like you're volunteering for more time locked down? Is that what you want? Or is there more to this story than this piece is telling us?

RIP Ruben

If I had one call to heaven, I would call my cousin Ruben to see how is he doing up in heaven.

I'll tell him that I dumb ass miss him. And all of his loved ones miss him a lot, especially his loving mom and his family are always talking about him, like how he was a good. I really don't want to keep writing 'cause I'm just going to keep it to myself. God bless you and stay out of trouble.

-Lil' Daddy

From The Beat: So long as you keep your warm memories about him alive, and so long as you remember the good things about him, he'll never really be a hundred percent wrong. So we pass on to you the same thing you wished for our cousin: God bless you and stay out of trouble.

Home Pass!

What it do Beat. I been in camp for a few weeks. I get my home pass soon, cool.

We do more stuff than the hall, some ninjas think they hard but they ain't about what they be talkin' about.

I ain't worried about it, I'm just trying to get my home pass, and do good in camp. Some new ninjas just came to camp.

-Lil' Tae

From The Beat: You've been doing great at camp so far, and now you've got HV's to look forward too. Keep it up, and we're looking forward to hearing about your first trip home!

Oakland Pride

I am from Oakland... I was born and raised in Oakland... I still live in Oakland... I have fun in Oakland... I go to sideshows in Oakland I get paid in Oakland... And I have parties in Oakland...

-Zuko

From The Beat: There's nothing greater than pride and love for your city, especially a city like Oakland, which deserves all the love it gets: The lake, the music, the weather, the people, the history, from civil rights to Black Panthers.... all of it. But Oakland is also the home of too much death and suffering, so we ask you... what can be done to save this city?

Advice From My Great Grandfather

If I could call heaven, I'd call my great grandfather. Partly because he died a little while ago, and partly to get some advice. He died a few years ago but I was hella close to him. We had one of the best conversations a couple of days before he died. So he left me on a good note.

But a long time ago when he moved out here when I was in the sixth grade, my school was right down the street from my house. So I got to spend a lot of time with him and got real close with him. But I don't think he would be proud of me being in the hall even though I'm innocent. I think he would tell me to fight it out.

-Matt

From The Beat: What was that one great conversation you had with him right before he died? Was it about your life, his life, about his love for you, his childhood? This is the kind of introduction that makes your readers want to hear more - more about this conversation that gave you such a good last memory of him!

Growing Old Behind Bars

Honestly I can't grow old behind bars. I can barely do the days that I've already done. For me it's hard to be in one spot for hella long.

-Matt

From The Beat: It's like the Bird on the Wire, in the old Johnny Cash song. Do you know it? "Like a Bird on a Wire, like a drunk in a midnight choir/all my days I have yearned to be free." There's lots of different ways to be trapped though. You can be trapped in a lifestyle, a mindset, a drug addiction, a neighborhood loyalty, etc... do you feel like when you're on the outs you are still totally free?

I'm Not Stressin'

I like dirty money, so that's how I get my dough. But my baby mama don't like it 'cause she knew I could probably get caught up and she didn't want me to leave her alone to take care of your child, but I'm not in here for drugs or even robbery. I'm in here because of a so-called potna and my big brother.

But I'm not stressin' -- I'm just doin' my time and hopin' I get out of here soon so I can get with my family and real friends and change my life. But if I have to, I will go back to the same thing I been doing.

But I want to let my family know how much I love them, and that I will never let go. I might have three and a half years, but I'm gonna do eighteen months and be back to my family.

-Rece

From The Beat: You say you would go back to the old ways if you "have to," so it sounds like you feel like this is the only way you think you can make money. Is that true? Have you ever thought of trying to make money legit? Or going to college? What kind of a job would you want to get if you could do something that made good money and didn't get you in trouble. You might have lots more options than you think you do.

Love

Love those who
Love you but don't let love
Screw up your vision.
How much love
Did your loved ones have
When you was broke
Or doin' time in prison?

-D-A

From The Beat: That's a good question. You find out who really loves you once you're locked away. Now that you're learning from this experience, who in your life seems to love you the most, seems to care the most about being there for you through the hard times? Is it the ones you'd have expected?

Really Feel Good, Come Back at Eight

I will feel good when I go home
and be with my family
and kick it with my cousin and potnas
and go get a haircut
get a good shower
and go get on some girls
--and come back at eight.

-Ruben

From The Beat: This all sounds good! Don't do anything to screw up those Home visits, and have fun (but not too much fun!)

Mac Dre and My Grandfather

If I had one phone call, I would ask to speak to my grandfather because I would like to know how he is and where some of my genes came from. He was old and he had white hair and he was a little grumpy. I think some of my anger problems come from him. And I'd ask if there's anything he'd want me to tell my grandmother, because I heard her say she misses him one time not too long ago.

If I could call someone else it would be Mac Dre, because he is my favorite rapper, and I know most of his songs, and his music brings me lots of memories of hanging out with some of my best friends that are locked up.

-Ryan

From The Beat: It's like by the choices you make, you picked two sides of yourself, your oldest history and the roots of what made your personality (your ancestry) and then the musician who was responsible for a lot of the joy in your life - Mac Dre. Family and art are the two things that keep us going in this world. What else keeps you going, what else makes you strong?

Words To The Wise

What's up with it Beat. It's your homie Sisco. All I want to say is to everyone, stay up and do your lil' program

-Sisco

From The Beat: And all WE want to say is "right back atcha." Don't just do your program, though, use it to get as much out of the system as you can - the GRE course, the tutoring, Cornerstone, Youth Radio, it's all stuff you can stick with when you get out to be more successful!

It Got Ugly

Man the last time I felt good was when I was riding around doing hella shhh ninjas was hating and shhh but they knew what was up and the day I come here I would of never known I will be here right now, 'cause I was just with my girl that day getting some good good and I was supposed to be going back to her house that night but it got ugly and now I'm in here.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: Life can shift in just a heartbeat. One minute you're looking forward to a night in the arms of your girl, the next minute the bottom drops out of your world. But yet you continue to hold on, keeping on track in the unit, writing faithfully each week to The Beat Within, and holding onto the outside world with all your phone calls. That shows how much heart and strength you have. Would you ever write a piece about how you keep that strength going, how you stay hopeful and positive, even when you've had such a stressful few months?

Back When I Was Free

The last time I felt really good was when I was free. I remember when I used to do anything I want, and I didn't have to listen to nobody. Now that I'm locked up, I have to be told to take shower, when I have to use the bathroom, when I gotta eat, and when I have to go to sleep.

When I get out of here, I'm gonna try not to go to that new Hall 'cause I don't want to leave my family. Well, this is all I got right now, write later.

-Dearey

From The Beat: There is nothing in the world more valuable than freedom. We hope you get yours soon, and that you keep it! But damn, you gotta do like Yoda: "There is no try. You do, or you do not."

Beat With-Interview

TBW: So when do you get out?
 Da President: In 2008 September
 TBW: That's when you get out of Boys' Republic?
 DP: Yeah
 TBW: What do you expect there?
 DP: To get my diploma and learn the real estate
 TBW: Where is B.R.?
 DP: On top of Chico Hill outside of LA.
 TBW: How does your family feel about it?
 DP: It doesn't matter as long as money is comin' in.
 TBW: Will they visit you at Boys Republic?
 DP: Hopefully.
 TBW: Who's in your family? DP: My mom, my brother, and Kenny Lattimore is in my family -- and he's famous!
 TBW: Why you caught up?
 DP: My so-called potna tripped me
 TBW: Well, time's almost up. Any last words for our readers?
 DP: Yeah, did ya boy Lil' Dre aka Da President. This that takeover man!

-Da President

From The Beat: Once you get that real estate license, come back to The Beat and hook us up! This area is expensive, and we could use a smart businessman to help us all find houses! In the meantime, good luck at Boys' Republic and while you're there, keep us updated on how you're doing for The Beat Without.

Flip a Car

Man, selling cars is quick money, you buy a car for two-hundred dollars put new brakes on it, then go profile it. By profiles, I mean stunt show what

The last time I felt good when I was on the outs, that's when I used to feel good. I used to do so much stuff.

I love being with girls, and my potnas smoking weed gong to parties and shhh, but that's getting old. I'm going to make sure I pimp this, because this is too easy, and for everybody is going to group homes and other stuff, just pimp o' program, and don't come back.

-Lil' Tae

From The Beat: Where did you learn to work on cars? Do you think you could build your own car from scrap? What are the best breaks? The best engines? A person who knows how to work on cars can build up a good (ahem, LEGIT) business -- is that something you're planning on for the future?

Free My Brother

My big bra Leon got a L(life sentence).

He ain't never getting out, he in CYA right now because he killed a lot of people.

And my other bra Ron-B, died in '06 for shooting at the police:

He went stupid. Leon, and Ron-Ron.

People already knew how they get down.

Both of my brothers was solid and militant, they was well known on the street and they still is.

Free my big brother Leon and RIP Rob B.

-Andante

From The Beat: Leon and Ron-Ron were known for being solid and militant, but don't you more wish they were known for being "free" and "alive"? We've been reading about Ron-Ron's death in The Beat for a while, and it's devastating to think about what a waste that death was. Street fame is not enough payback for a life lost -- we hope for better and happier things for you, Lil' Tae.

The Real Reason

I want to write about the real reason kids are in jail. Kids are in jail because there ain't nothing to do.

There is no movies, no laser tag, no nothing. So what I am trying to say is that kids get bored and get in trouble. The government should make more things for kids to do.

-Michael

From The Beat: Thanks for hitting on one of the deepest troubles that plague The Beat readers, writers, and editors. You head straight to the point, and you are so right. The thing is, that there's so much positive stuff to do, even in Oakland, but a lot of kids won't go, because they think it's square. There's plenty of a. free movies b. places to learn how to sail, fish, and ski c. open mike music and poetry slams c. free art classes d. tutoring centers e. free studios to teach you how to make beats. If we told you about where these places are, would you go? Hit us up and let us know.

I Would Talk To God

If I had the chance to call someone in heaven I would talk to God and ask Him to forgive my sins and mistakes and that he would let me leave from this suffering. The thing I would most want is to speak with God. I wish He could come to my cell and he that he would talk with me and forgive me.

The only thing I can say is that I have faith in God, because God is great. Even though I know it's hard to be here, we have to be strong.

-Lazy

From The Beat: Your faith obviously runs deep -- would you be willing to share some of that faith with our readers, by telling us which passages mean the most to you? What have you learned about how to live your faith on the daily? Has it changed how you treat the other detainees, or how you treat yourself? Has it made it easier to forgive yourself for your mistakes?

My Homie's Family

Was crackalacking? Well The Beat ask what's my home away from home and I would have to say my homie's Kantona. I feel like this is my second home 'cause that foo' is like one of my carnales and all his family is coo' wit' me and his little carnalitos, always like playing or fighting with me, sometimes it feels like they was my lil' brother, it basically feels like that's my other family.

I have gotten kicked out of my house and my home and they was the first to tell me to stay at his. So ever since then I've felt comfortable right there.

I've met my homie 'bout three years ago at a school in Hayward. I had a blunt and he had a blunt so we just smoked them and I found out he was from Redwood City and that he lived by my house so we kicked almost everyday, we both ended up droppin' out of school, and then we just kept on kicking it.

-Dimples

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you've got a second family of people who care about you enough to welcome you into their home. You know, there's a book you might want to read. It's called The Pact. Three friends from the ghetto make a pact with each other that no matter what, they will succeed in their dreams and become doctors. While all their homies are getting in trouble, they work to keep each other on track, and no matter what drama comes their way, they help each other stay motivated to reach their dreams. It's a true story, and you know what, today they're all doctors. Could you see you and your homies make a pact like that. It shows in this piece how much you care about each other -- could you turn that caring into bringing each other up?

What's On My Mind

When I wake up at camp the first thing that comes to my mind is stay out of trouble, don't talk when staff say 'Talk is Dead', and my family.

Before I go to sleep I think about my girlfriend.

Or when I'm on the outs I wake up and think about what I'm about to do for the day and don't bring out all my money before I spend it all. But that's all -- I'm 'bout to cut.

-Zuko

From The Beat: These are all good things to think about -- the people you love, the things you need to do to stay in check, the rules to follow if you want a clean program. So tell us, what do you are the different things you have to do each day when you're on the outs?

First Time

The first time I experience violence it was like seven years ago. I was walking home from school when some secret agents started shooting at some guys and all of a sudden helicopters came out of nowhere, and people hopped out the helicopters shooting. Then the FBI came and blew up my school and shot me a thousand times and shot my head off. I sued for two penny's and became rich. And spent all the money on Kiss albums and Van Halen concerts. And that was my first experience or violence.

-Lil' Bj

From The Beat: Well, we appreciate you writing on our topic, we just wish you would have taken it seriously. It is a serious topic. It is not a topic to screw around with, but, you did, for a laugh. Is there anything from this piece you wrote truthful? Tell us about your love for Kiss and Van Halen.

Someone I Love

I think 'cause I'm in here it affects my family some tough

I mean 'cause some shhh make you just want to give up

like the fact that you hurt yo' family so much or that person you love.

-Lil' Dizil

From The Beat: You think it effects your family?? Your actions most definitely effect your loved ones! You must not give up! You must make it your mission to get your life together! Get back into school! Get off probation! Play sports!

Violence At Five

My earliest memory of violence is when, I seen this store get robbed when I was like five. The store manger died. Well that's okay I guess his heart won't have no beat within.

-P-Stank

From The Beat: How did it make you feel to see this innocent man lose his life while his store was getting robbed? That must have been a terrible thing to see when you were only five years old. Doesn't sound so ok, for him or for you.

I Would Call My Brother

If I had one phone call to heaven, who would I talk to?

I would call my brother to see what's up I'd ttell him how much I miss and love him and how much I want to be with him.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: Even as you miss your brother, he'd want you to be making the most of this life here... and become a success for the future. That's the best way to show your love, by succeeding.

I Was Ten, When I Experienced My Earliest Memory Of Violence

The first time I experience violence I was ten or eleven years old, outside my mother's house, next thing you know we heard shooting around the corner it was a drive by on one of my cousin's close friends. These were people hating on him shot him while he was hanging out the sun roof nine times.

-Lil' Dizil

From The Beat: Oh Dizil, what a tragic way to die. Once you heard the shooting, did you duck and cover? Did you run inside? Or, did you go and see what was going down? How did this killing affect you? How did you respond to this? Were you more cautious? Did you start getting into more trouble? Did you have a lot of questions?

How Long Are Jesus's Dreads?

If I had one phone call to Heaven I would ask to speak to my grandpa and my bra Ron-Ron and my bra Rob and ask my Granny and if heaven got a ghetto, but I would really ask how do it look up and is it better than earth and I hope they save me a place and ask how long Jesus's dreads are, and I will ask if He will accept me for who I am, not what I have done in my life time, 'cause it's not how much I've done but what I believe in for myself, that's what I will ask.

-Rece

From The Beat: Do you realize that on the same piece of paper, you both asked for forgiveness for your actions and acceptance instead of who you are on the inside AND threatened seriously violent revenge on an enemy of yours? We cut that part of course, because The Beat is about communication, not violence or threats. Plus – this piece shows a better side of you, full of love and humor and insight into the idea that there is goodness inside of everyone. Your goodness is what is going to carry you through this hard time – your anger will just rot you on the inside.

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

The first time I experienced violence was when I was a kid and I was watching cartoons and they were showing things (characters) that were hitting and fighting each other 'cause one thing was trying to eat the other thing but it was not able to., so the thing that was trying to eat it kept getting hit with everything you could name of.

-Abo

From The Beat: Sounds like an old school Warner Brothers cartoon ala Tweety Bird and Sylvester the cat, or the Roadrunner and Coyote. Hey have you ever seen the Three Stooges?

From Boys' Republic To My Girl's House

My home away from home. My home away from home is my girlfriend's house. And my sister's house because I'm welcome to come at any time I need to. And I also have fun when I go to these -- but my new home will be Boys' Republic. And that's where I'll be for almost a year.

I like my sister's house, but also I love my girlfriends' house because it's in a different environment so there are a lot of white people around her house because she lives in Vacaville, so you know how that is. But when I got released I plan on going to her house so we can do the thing.

-Kev

From The Beat: Which of all these houses is the one where you feel safest, and are least likely to get out and get yourself into trouble? Do you feel safe at your mom's house as well? Which is in the safest neighborhood, your girl's? Which house brings out the best side of your personality?

We Still Out There Thuggin'

I would want to speak to my ninja Reg. and Big C on three way and tell my ninjas how we still out there thuggin', and we missin' y'all. And we still out there doin' what we do.

One love always in thug heaven.

-Lil' Jimmy

From The Beat: What a waste of time Lil' Jimmy! You don't say much here, but you say enough for us to get the picture that you continue to put your life on the line, acting the fool.

First time

When I first got locked up my mom cried very hard because I am the youngest son, and she could not believe when she got that call and they told her I was in jail. She cried so much and she told me to be good in there and I will get out faster. I came here for a violation. When I get out I am going to try my best on the outs so I won't come back and leave my mom crying again.

- Lil' Taje

From The Beat: Thank goodness you have a mother to cry for you and show you that you're loved and needed. So many of your peers have no one, or maybe worse, people who tell them they deserve their fate and can't do any better. Keep your word and don't let yourself down either—it's not just about your mom.

Waiting

I'm still in here, both of my brothers robbed somebody so they in here now, I'm supposed to go to my group home this week so I'm just waiting.

-Dennis

From The Beat: What will it take to break the cycle? Strong enough?

The Block Is My Home Away From Home

To me the home away from home is many places. My home away from home to me is like one of my girlfriends' houses, a house in which I feel comfortable enough to sleep over a couple of times and I am used to their family.

I call my block a home away from home, because out on the block the people who I hang around show you lots of love. They take care of you and make sure that nothing will happen to you. People out on the block most of them will risk their life for you like you are one of their own.

They feed you and make sure you got money or whatever you need.

-Michael

From The Beat: Who are these people on the block that show you love? Neighbors? OG's? Your co-patnas? We ask you because we keep thinking about this expression "A friend never leads a friend into danger." Do you agree with this statement? Do you think it's true? We believe that some of the people on your block care about you – a great deal maybe – but a lot of the time block love gets you in trouble. Is this block love you're talking about?

Yeah, Time, Time By Myself

Yeah I'm doing time by myself.

Yeah if affects you a lot
you have no freedom
locked up
in a small ass cell.

-Stanford

From The Beat: Does this time alone, make you think about living your life differently?

My Mom and My Sister

My first house is my mom's house.

My second house is my sister's, because she takes me as I am that is my blood sister and she will help me do right in life.

-Darius

From The Beat: It's good to know you have someone who has your back like that... when you get out will you be turning to her for support as you try to get your life together? What kinds of advice does your sister give you about how to 'do right in life'? You be staying with her, your mom, or both?

My Beautiful Family

The first thing in mind when I wake up in the morning is my beautiful family. Because I love them so much that my family comes first.

Because I love them so much that my family comes first than anything else. And my girl is on my mind too all the time, she's always there for me. And 'specially that I'm locked up inside the Hall, I'm always thinking 'bout my case and the judge, 'cause I really want to get out and start a new life. That's all I got to say. God bless you.

-Lil Daddy

From The Beat: Congratulations on your decision to make a new life, and on the people that are there for you as you make the change. Love keeps us strong, hold on to your love and get back to your family as soon as you can, be as true to your girl as she is to you. Peace.

Im incarcerated

Juvenile hall don't scare me at all
I been to the boys' side
it don't scare me.

-Lil' Stupid

From The Beat: What does scare you? Does prison scare you? Losing your young years to crime and violence all for your turf? It only gets scarier from there—at least as a young person you still have a life ahead of you if you do decide to change.

My Earliest Crime

My earliest memory of violence was when I was about ten years old, I had a fight and I came to the hall, now I got a few months for just a fight, man now I'm mad and thinking to myself that I just should have walked away.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the expression that "hindsight is 20/20"? It means that looking back on an experience (also known as "hindsight"), we often see things much more clearly than we did in the moment when we made a wrong choice. The next time you are faced with a fight you will have the same choice: fight or walk away. When you get out of the Hall, you will have a choice: keep repeating the same mistakes or walk in peace.

Time And My Family

When I get locked-up not only does it really hurt me, but it also hurts my family. I try to talk to my mother everyday, my little sister, and my older brother also they basically upset with me because I've made wrong choices to put myself into this position, that happens to be nothing compared to how much they miss me; which that I believe hurts them the most.

J-Rocastillo

From The Beat: It's really good that you are keeping in touch with your family while you are locked up. You are lucky to have a supportive family. It must be painful for you to know that they are hurting and missing you. The good news is: you have a choice when you get out. You can make them proud and follow your dreams. Or, you can repeat the same mistakes and come right back to the Hall and eventually prison. When you think about those wrong choices in your past, what ideas do you have in the present for staying out of trouble in the future? Use the pain that you and your family are experiencing right now to lay the groundwork for a positive future. Remember the pain when you're back on the outside. Remember your loyalty to your loved ones.

When Spring Is On

Man spring is on because I am going to get out and get money. You just don't know how much things I want to do when I get out but first I got to do my program at this group home right fast feel me like my brother say he if you don't got it don't talk about it man that's all for me this week.

-Sammy

From The Beat: Man Sammy, there was so much we had to cut from this piece, and you know why? Because you were talking some mess that would have gotten you sent right back up in here the minute you hit the street!!! Is that what you want, to come back? We know you want more for yourself than a roundtrip back to the hall, so tell us, what's going to have to change to get you back on track?

Spring In The Air

When spring is sprung: the thing I don't like most about being in here while its spring is I'm not able to spend time with my friends in family like while I'm in here locked up not having fun all my friends are probably out doing the things that we are usually doing together like playing sports, going to the movies, and just overall hanging out.

I also am missing out being with my family so that also makes me mad and I just hate that feeling.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We know its tough being apart from your friends and your family during your time in the Hall, but it is also an opportunity. You can think about the choices that you made that got you into this situation, and you can think about what you can do differently when you get out so that you can avoid coming back to the Hall. Remember this feeling, even though you hate it, because hopefully it will serve as a reminder to you to avoid repeating the same old mistakes that led to your incarceration.

Moms

My mom sometimes feel lonely 'cause I'm not home and she is having a hard time being alone. I miss her. I want to stop coming here, but it's hard. When I get out I am going to spend more time with her.

- Lil' Momo

From The Beat: We know it's hard once you enter the system to navigate your way out and it seems that all of the cards are stacked against you. You have your mother's support though, and your own desire to stay out. Remember that change isn't easy but it is very possible.

I Felt Bad

The earliest memory of violence is when me and my friend were at the park drinking 211 when these guys came and pistol whipped this guy for his weed. I just sat there because they are some homies, but I felt bad but he was no homie.

-Homie

From The Beat: If you see something going down that gives you that bad feeling in the pit of your stomach, you gotta think about doing something about it. The best thing would be to anonymously tip off the authorities, or to call an ambulance from a pay phone if the guy was really hurt. Even if you don't want to be a snitch, at least you can think about not hanging out with these so-called homies who would pistol whip somebody over a bag of weed. Just think: if they would do that to some poor dude, and sit there and expect you to say nothing, can you really trust them? Trust your gut.

Love

Love is so sweet

Such a special retreat

I can say this a capella, I can say this to The Beat

Love is like a song that you sing every way

And everything that I say, every thing that I mean

Such a heavenly place something soft and serene

In the dawn of the spring I say that "I love you"

And no matter what girl I'm gonna place nothing above you.

-Eugene

From The Beat: What a perfect spring season sonnet, because this little poem of yours feels like a spring breeze, light and soothing, not too hot, not too cold.

Praying For The Best

Well I'm about to go to court my P.O said she might let me on home soup. So I'm kind of happy. Bout you they still might try to send me to a group home or something. But I'm getting ready for the worst but praying for the best. I hope God let me go home to my family.

-Turk

From The Beat: We cut the last part of your piece because it was talking to people in a threatening and hateful way. We know (from the first part of your piece) that you have a new chance ahead of you, and the opportunity for freedom. But you will face a challenge whether you get out on home supervision or if you go to a group home. You have to decide whether or not you are committed to turning your life around and avoiding violence. We hope that you will avoid trouble so that your prayers will be answered and you can go home to your family. But you have some work to do. It is not an easy path.

Adrenalin

I really can't say when the first time I witness violence but I do remember some things when I experienced violence was in the first grade.

My first fight, I whooped his ass. A lot of adrenalin was pumping through my body and I couldn't control myself.

-A Memory

From The Beat: It's a scary thing when we have those moments where we lose control, isn't it? When we lose all of our judgment and let rage take over. A lot of times, horrible consequences result, including destroyed relationships, assaults, murders, and jail sentences. What strategies do you take in your life to avoid these kinds of moments, and keep your control? Do you take a deep breath and count to ten? Walk away? Was it an adrenalin-fueled moment that landed you in the Hall this time? How will you avoid this impulse in the future? Tell us what works for you, and why.

They Are In My Heart

Yes I'm doing time by myself but at the same time my family is doing time with me. Because if you look at it they are in my heart and also that's why I stay strong and don't break down and start acting like a big baby.

-Lil' Boricua

From The Beat: It's OK to break down... emotions are like a pressure system in the weather, they build up and build up and then come down as a storm. So if you feel like crying, cry. If you feel upset, talk about it... there's nothing babyish about being man enough

Mad

My mom is mad at me 'cause I am in juvenile hall . And my dad is so mad at me when I get out of juvie hall he will not speak to me.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Do you think they're angry because they want better for you? They most likely see you as full of potential and can't stand to see you going down this road of destruction.

I Was Eleven Years Old . . .

Well my earliest memory of "violence" is when I was 11 years old. My step-father had hit my mother, and just was treating her like she was a piece of dirt. I didn't like it so I got really mad and lost my mind... meaning that I couldn't think at all, I was to the point where I was going to hurt him really bad.

-Lil' Boricua

From The Beat: What happened? Did you hurt him, did you go to another family member, and uncle, an aunt, a grandparent? That must have been such a burden for an eleven year old kid. When we're that age, we still depend on our parents to protect us from violence, and here you were, just a boy, in the opposite position, where you were watching the person you depend on getting hurt by someone who was supposed to love her...Reading this story makes the way you step up each week to share your feelings with The Beat even more powerful and inspiring. Keep it up... whatever you've been through, your strong heart will help you overcome it!

Sewed To The Block

It's so hard living this life,
living this life living this life, live living this life
Surrounded by drugs and cops every night yeah
I'm in the hood posted up on the block
been there my whole life
when will I ever stop, ever stop,
when will I ever stop
me and my ninjas we oh so hungry
we ain't on that hyphy shhh we about our money
I'm sewed to the block
the block like some crosswalk lines
the whole hood love me I'm a one of a kind

-Lil' Larry

From The Beat: You are right: it IS hard living this life. We like the imagery you use when you write that you are "sewed to the block like some crosswalk lines". That definitely makes it sound permanent (like lines painted on a crosswalk), and also like you got put there by fate (like somebody took a needle and thread and sewed you onto the block!) It can definitely feel that way sometimes, right? But there are probably lots of positive things that make you "one of a kind", and that make people who know you love you for who you are. Since you have the love and respect of people in your 'hood -which is a wonderful opportunity- how can you make a positive impact when you get out? We would like to hear more about your plans for the future. You can cut those threads that bind you to the game, -if you want to.

How I'm feelin

Livin', my ninja, now a days ain't shhh, simple hallin' that shhh get you popped like a pimple but as these days go buy as these seconds keep tickin' my heads on this county pillow and my mind keeps thinking is it possible, can I do it can I leave the hood? NOPE.

I'm in this shhh fo' good I done took the step I done crossd that line not really sure 'bout a damn thing 'cause I know my life is timed but at the same time I'm back doin' time wit the same old faces 'cause ninjas drop dimes so wit' me expressin' how I feel.

I don't know bout you but this is just how I feel.

-Hollow T

From The Beat: How do you feel when you think about what a hollow tip bullet does to a human being's skull? What if a member of your family was struck by a bullet with this destructive power? How do you feel when you think about the loss of a friend or family member from a bullet? Since we have gotten to know you a little bit, and know that you are a funny, thoughtful, smart young man, it causes us pain to see you sign your writing with that nickname (and speak as if there is no way out). We hope you will think about it. Is that how you think of yourself in the world? Now, for your piece, it's ok that you don't want to leave your 'hood when you get out. But we disagree that you have "crossed that line" and can't turn your life around. You are young, and you can take steps to avoid coming back to the Hall, to those "same old faces". It seems you have got a long road ahead of you, and we hope that you will keep thinking and writing to the Beat. Honor the memory of your friends and take steps to avoid a life in prison or worse.

Down At The Ranch

TBW (The Beat Within): We were talking about how, when you in juvy or down at the Ranch, get locked up, how it can affect your families. How maybe your being here makes your moms worry about you, be sad, miss you, need you to help her with the little kids. Or how your younger brothers and sisters may not understand why you're not there helping them, that they may feel like you abandoned them, even after you explain to them that you were in juvy. How is your family feeling about you being down here at the Ranch, Lil' Lazy?

LL (Lil' Lazy): I got a brother in the halls and a brother at 850 (850 Bryant, the San Francisco adult jail.)

TBW: So what's it like for your mother to have three sons incarcerated at the same time?

LL: She's stressed.

TBW: How many are there of you, your brothers and sisters, in all?

LL: Five of us. I have a brother and a sister who aren't in jail.

TBW: Who's the oldest?

LL: My older brother.

TBW: Does he get in trouble?

LL: No.

TBW: How does he stay out of trouble?

LL: He works.

TBW: What kind of work does he do?

LL: He works in a produce market in South City (South San Francisco.)

TBW: Does he have to get up early to get the produce and set it up to sell for the day?

LL: Yeah, at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning, every morning.

TBW: Does he live in South City?

LL: No, he lives in San Francisco with our mom.

TBW: So, do you think you can stay out of trouble, when you get out, like your older brother does?

LL: I don't know. (smile) I'll try.

-Lil' Lazy LCERS

From The Beat: Your interview got interrupted because the nurse called you, but we appreciate your thoughts and you sharing with us about your family.

Inside The Battlefield

When ninjas touch back down in the hood, war zone, it's gonna be like a World War, and back to the frontline. People don't understand, but it really is the frontline.

I'm a have to be up to par, 'cause ninja's been down for a minute. But you know what it is? It's part of the movement! A lot of soldiers have fallen, but never been forgotten. And the ones still breathin' is the ones still achievin'. Only the strong survive.

-Going back

From The Beat: From this angle, you're one of the strong ones, and you're about to be off the Ranch and back in the war zone. What's the attraction? What is the movement? We've heard these takes over the years, too. You can stop your part of the war any time you want. Don't you owe it to your life to stay alive? From our angle you are one of the followers falling into the trap. See you when you return to the hall.

Promises

You should never make promises you can't keep, because you only lose respect and the person you promise loses faith. You should only make promises you know you can keep, so people know your money is where your mouth is.

-Lil' Eric LCERS

From The Beat: Yes, that is true, yet we hope the person who made a promise to you explain why he/she didn't fulfill the promise, and we hope you are big enough to understand and accept.

Go! Go! Go!

I am going home
Man, I been up here for a year
And two to three months

I am so happy

You know

I am going home!

-Weather Man LCERS

From The Beat: You've written many thoughtful little poems from your heart. We wish you the best upon touching down. What's your plan?

Growing Up

I went from fistfights to gunfights
Now you see how much is my hate

-Birdman LCR

From The Beat: Yeah we cut your piece. You didn't teach us much. You need to step up and educate while telling stories of your life. Sure you wrote about your evolution in fighting, selling drugs, running your corner and threatening people with a weapon, but you don't tell us what the appeal of all this bull is for you. What has conjured all the hate you mention in the last line? Since you've already ended up in juvy and the Ranch behind this evolution, don't you think you're taking this hate out on yourself? Maybe your hate is righteous. Why don't you write an especially thoughtful piece about the evolution of your hate? Then you can take a really good look at it, too.

Violence And Love

My life used to be violent
As I grew everything went silent
From growing up from beat ups
To learning my first slang word, "sup?"
All the hardships I had to face
Reasons for the love to embrace
Was my family and friends closest to me

Now that I'm in YGC

There isn't much left for me to see
Everyone tells me what I had outside isn't for me
In the end it's all up to me
To set myself to a better life and be free

-Chowsee U2

From The Beat: Has your life become less violent? How did that happen? What are you doing to keep the violence away from you... and you away from the violence?

Good/Bad

Well, the good news is: When I get out, I will graduate 1/28/08, and I will be going to college. I'm supposed to graduate next year—June, 2008, but even better, I graduate one semester earlier! The bad news is: I'm here.

-Lil' Eric LCERS

From The Beat: if all goes well you'll be out of high school soon and have earned your diploma. We hope you'll definitely go to college, but you'll probably have to end your career as a man in the juvenile justice system. Can you deal with that?

My Goals

My goals is to have freedom, start school, get a job and support my family and my best friend Debby dat's having a baby. So this time for-real I'm going try my hardest to not to come back 'cause I really hate being away from my mama, lil' bra, Boochie James Yada

-Kamay U5

From The Beat: If you do come back, then we will conclude that you love something else more than you love your lil' bra and your best friends. If you love them as much as you say, then you will not just "TRY" not to come back, you WON'T come back!

Who's To Judge

TBW (The Beat Within): We were talking about what might mean something so profoundly to us that we would be willing to go to jail to defend or to honor it. What do you care about so much that you would go to jail for it?

R: Equality. Quality of life. I would like to see everybody to see each other as one, not different. I would like to have the dominant culture believe in us, not have us discriminate against each other. 'Cause if Martin Luther King and Caesar Chavez can come together, we can be united as well.

TBW: In your experience, who does the most discriminating?

R: I would say: the dominant culture. The white people, but not all white people discriminate. I would describe the dominant culture as the upper class of all white people, as the American culture.

TBW: Do people of other races discriminate?

R: In some cases, as in when one race is learning about their culture, other races are learning about theirs. When other races are learning about their culture, we just stay quiet as an educational sponge and take it in.

TBW: So you like to learn about other cultures?

R: Yah, but when it comes time for others to learn about ours, all I hear is whining.

TBW: Do you enjoy learning about cultures other than yours?

R: I believe in self-education and read books to educate myself. I believe in "Don't judge us by our wrongs, judge us by our greatness."

-R LCERS

From The Beat: You're right, R. Prejudice is still profound in our culture. Not only is prejudice cruel and ignorant, it really hurts people who are the victim of it.

Complete The Group Home

What's up with The Beat? Man, I been here seven months. It's shady in this hole. I might get out around April 2-9 to pass my group home in Pennsylvania and I will get off probation if I pass. I can't wait to get back where I was at with my family and friends. To have the biggest party at my home when I pass the group home. A'right then Beat, it's time to go, so peace out.

-Whisper U4

From The Beat: We know you must be excited about the possibility that you will soon be back in the warm embrace of your family. This time, think about what you owe them and how you can give them what you owe. It's not money or cars or houses or jewels. It's you they want at home with them.

Out Of Nowhere

Right before I came in here, I was ready to go work out and go chill with friends. But out of nowhere I end up in here, and now I'm doin' my time, tryin' to get by. I miss everyone out there.

The way I left was so sudden. I wish we could chill like we used to, but shihh got ugly. I'm sorry if I disappointed you. I truly didn't mean to, but I'm a confused little boy, so don't blame me 'cause I need you.

-STD U2

From The Beat: We're not sure how coming to the hall could come "out of nowhere." Do you mean that you have no idea what you did to get here, or that you didn't do anything and they made a mistake? If you don't know what got you here, then how can you make the changes you need to make to stay out of here? We don't blame you for being "a confused little boy," but you need to know that confusion won't keep you from facing the consequences of your actions.

Trapped

What's good Beat? I'm back up in this poo-butt place, and hopefully for the last time. I can't blame anyone but myself, because I made the choice to mess up at my last group home. I felt trapped there and always act out of line, relapsing on drugs, fighting, destroying property, and breaking a bunch of other rules. But now I feel even more desperate in jail, and not knowing what is going to happen to me. Now I regret being a bad kid and wish I could go back in time.

-D-Stiz U2

From The Beat: You felt trapped in the group home so you acted in a way that now traps you back in a cell! How smart was that? You say you regret doing the things that led you back here, but we wonder if you were able to go back in time if you wouldn't just make the same mistakes all over again. What's going to change when you get out of here this time? Will you be able to accept the consequences and do whatever program they give you? If not, you can be sure that you'll be spending a lot more time behind four walls. Sometimes we just have to do things we find unpleasant or undesirable in the present so that we can have something we do want in the future.

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

My early memory of violence is that I was 10 when a dude got stab in front of me. And it didn't affect me. I was trippin', "Shhh, it wasn't me!"

Yeah, it affects my mom and all I do is think that I shouldn't done what I did to get locked up. I regret it.

-Michael U2

From The Beat: If that violence did not affect you, why do you think you can still remember it today? What are you going to change about how you live when you get out so that you don't have to regret your future decisions?

A Sudden Death In The Family

I was on my block... not my block, but where I be. But, yeah, I was just at my house and one night somebody knocked at my door and it was like my Uncle Nitty just got killed! Me and my momma jumped up and ran to there, and the only thing I can think of was all of my cousins and my Uncle Nitty. After that I tried my hardest to stay in touch with my cousin. And all my girl cousins became my sisters and my boy cousins became my brothers. I miss my Uncle Nitty.

-Lil' D U3

From The Beat: We're very sorry about your uncle, Lil' D, but we would have liked some details in this piece. When did this happen? How old were you? Who killed your Uncle Nitty, and why did it happen? Did this violence so close to home make you change anything about how you are living your life? Like what?

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

When I was about 10 years old, I went to Amazon Park up there by Sunnydale. Well, it was a bunch of grown drunks drinking blowing and like three people passed by them. Out of nowhere the grown folks start shooting at them three young people. I did it movin' instantly and minded my own business. This memory does not affect me now, but when it happened, I was scared as hell.

-Tone Kiki U6

From The Beat: One of the reasons we hate to see people get drunk, young or old, is that it makes them do crazy things that they never would have done sober. Maybe that's why those drunks started shooting. The fact that you were scared tells us that you have some sense in your head, because shooting is something you should be scared of.

Are You Doing Time By Yourself?

It make them sad to when they cry. My mom and dad was upset. No, they blame me. Yes, they be real worried for me. No, I blame myself. I'm the youngest out of us. No they don't or I don't think so. Yes, they do cry a lot. Doing it on my own. It hurts them

-Terrance U6

From The Beat: If you read this, it's impossible to understand what you were talking about without the question in front of the reader. That is why we are telling you, DO NOT just go through the questions and answer them. That is not what The Beat is. We want you to write about the topics, not just answer questions. Next time, forget the questions we ask and look at the topic. Are you doing time by yourself? If you take that question only, then you might begin a piece by saying, "No, I am not doing time by myself. My family suffers with me." And then add some details about what that means, and what you are going to do about it.

Locked Up

Being locked up affects my little sister so much 'cause she always ask my momma where was I. My momma have to lie and tell her that I spent the night at my friend's house. My sister told me that I don't love her no more 'cause she never see me no more. Every time when I call, she always told me that she don't love me no more because she never see me in the house.

-Lovelyloto U5

From The Beat: We know you will hate to think about it, but your little sister might be right. She is looking at the choices you make, and she can see that you are choosing to do the things that take you away from her. So she believes you love those things more than you love her. And, by your behavior, it appears that she's right.

Doing Time

When I first came to YGC, I was uncomfortable. I felt awkward sleeping somewhere not called home. But every time I go to court, I hope of going home. But every time I come back to my cell disappointed and down. But now I'm used to it.

I don't have any hopes of being out of here. I am used to getting up in the morning eating crappy breakfast, going to school, coming back for break, class, PE and lunch, class and visiting, shower, recreation time and sleep. I have been used to all this 'cause I have been here for a month. But I hope to get out sooner or later, but I just don't know when.

-Kenny U6

From The Beat: We wish you would get as comfortable with a legitimate routine on the outside as you have become comfortable with the routine in the inside. If you followed just the part about going to class every day on the outs and doing your school work, you would be so far ahead of where you are right now...

Victims Actually Live The Violence

This memory doesn't really affect me
I just watch this show ("Cops") a lot now...

It's harder to be the victim of violence
Because you actually live it
It was a TV show

And I don't remember the exact one!

-Speaker U3

From The Beat: We like the art that went with this piece. But haven't you ever experienced violence in the real world?

Not Doing Time By Myself

When I get locked up, it affects my mom and my grandmother because they would like me to have my freedom back instead of doing whatever staff tell me to do. I can be on the outs with my mom and my sister at Denny's and eat whatever I want and wear my own clothes.

My mom want to kill me when I get out, but she say all she can do is appreciate me and the choices that I want to make. My mom has blamed herself one time, and that was when I came up in here my very first time. She once said to me, "I knew that I shouldn't've let you go outside because of them truant officers."

I said, "Mom, don't worry about it. It's not your fault you let me outside. I shouldn't've went outside." After that we talked about my dad, and do I want to follow his footsteps. I'm not go get into that.

-Gregory U2

From The Beat: Was your mistake in going outside (and getting picked up), or was it skipping school to begin with? How do you think you can make it in life (a job, a family) without getting a basic education and a high school diploma? We hope you think about this question as an adult and not as a child because the consequences you will face for not following through with school will follow you throughout your adult life. When you say you're not going to get into the discussion you had about following your father's footsteps, we wonder why you're keeping that part to yourself...

Are You Doing Time By Yourself?

No, I'm not doing time by myself, but basically in reality I am. But I know my mama is doing time with me because she's always there for me, even when I'm right or wrong.

Even though I give her a hard time, she's always going be there for me. And also three very close friends by the name of Boochie and James and Bebbly. I will always love them no matter what, "yada"

-Kamay U5

From The Beat: But how do you show them your love? Wouldn't a better demonstration of love be for you to find a way to stay free, so that you don't give them the stress and tears that result every time you get locked up?

I Knew It Was Over

Man, this yo' boy Phat Rat. Man, I got wrapped at six in the morning because the punk-ass police came and kicked in my door and told ya boy put his hands behind his back. And then I knew it was over. Phat Rat is going to the new hall. But it's not shhh to ya boy.

I will go back to this grouper and do five more months and go as a free man back to school and do what I do best. I will leave by next Friday. I just want to tell y'all that has been down for like six months and still do not know shhh, keep yo' head up. You will get yo' way soon. Stay down.

-Phat Rat U4

From The Beat: Thank you for piece. We're sorry to hear about the set back leading you right back to square one. We're not sure what it is that you "think" you do best to get by, but if it has anything to do with why you are back in the trap, you really need to cut it out and truly come anew. Make it a goal to find something that is in your best interest. Meanwhile, set your mind and time on figuring out a way to be one of the few out who will never come back to this new hall or any facilities. If this "is not shhh" to you, don't keep doing the things that will turn it into something major.

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

My dad used to own a restaurant in the Mission. Four Latinos jumped my father till blood blurred his vision. I remember he was holding a solid steel rod. I can't remember anything after that, thanks to God, but my mother said he got a scar on his head. He was recovering in a hospital bed. That's what I remember of my earliest memory of violence.

-Chinatown Kangaroo U2

From The Beat: How old were you when this happened? It must have scared you a lot to see that. Has your father recovered from his beating? Have you ever caused violence against anyone else? If so, do you ever think about what happened to your dad and wonder if what you're doing can be justified.

Boys

Boys make girls go crazy for no reason. I really don't understand. I mean there's otha boys in dis world. See, me, I don't argue or fight over boys. They just choose me, yada.

-Kamay U5

From The Beat: It seems like the 5-0 boys are the ones that are choosing you. No wonder you're going crazy!

I Always Fight With My Boyfriend

I am very violent sometimes, because I am always fight with my boyfriend all the time.

-Shelly U5

From The Beat: Why would you stay in a relationship where you're always fighting?

It's Cool

To my old friends from the 'hood, I want you to know it's all good. It was all good when y'all was at my mom's house when you didn't have nowhere to go, or when you needed and I gave because we were friends. Some of y'all were like brothers to me. If you needed and you came to me, you got.

But after y'all did what y'all did to my brother and said what y'all said over the phone, it wasn't good no more. Now I'm coming anew, so when you see me don't ask me for nothing because you ain't going to get nothing from me no more. But it's good.

-Gues U4

From The Beat: Isn't it funny how time will tell exactly who your real friends are as well as who they are not? Just be sure to take this as a lesson. Now that the truth about your "friends" has been brought to light, take this as means to be more of best friend to yourself and those who really love you.

Because Of Me

I feel like my whole family is in here with me. So many of my family members are going through hard times because of me.

-Pookie Babie U5

From The Beat: If you know that you are the cause of so much misery in your family, why not change up your act?

Not Doing Time By Myself

No, I'm not doing time by myself. The reason why I say no is because it affects my loved ones as in my family, goons and my boyfriend. They do the time with me. Just 'cause they not locked up in here, that don't mean they're not hurt though.

My family and boyfriend act different because they cry. They're depressed in all the little stuff. My friends, family and boyfriend blame themselves because I always get caught up with them and I go down instead of them. My family blame themselves because they don't think they raised the right. Some of them is angry and some of them are worried.

I don't have any younger brother and sister, but I have a nephew and he don't follow my footsteps 'cause he think I be out of town. But I follow my older brother and sister's footsteps. Yes, they cry, and my dude forget about what I look like and sound like and so does my friends. But it affect them real bad and I feel bad about it when I'm in here.

But when I'm on the outs, I don't be giving a damn. But I feel bad because I don't suppose to be here right now.

-Brittany Baby U5

From The Beat: It sounds like when you're on the outs you clearly love some things more than even your family, because you say you don't give a damn. Meaning, you put yourself and your selfish desires above everybody and everything else. So yes, you are responsible for their tears. Doesn't that make you want to change your act on the outs?

Violence

I don't know when my first time seeing violence was, but I have seen a lot. Like my ninjas get wacked and me feelin' steel too. But it's all good. I know it's nothing. I just got to stay on my shhh so it won't happen again. But when it come my way, it's on, an' dat's on everything. Word to my mother.

-Poon-G U4

From The Beat: Knowing that this fate is waiting for you (or much worse), don't you think that it would best to stay out of harms way? Believe us when we say that there's much more to life than senseless violence. We hope when you say you have to stay on top of your business that you don't think you can be slicker at what you've been doing and avoid the consequences. That is a child's view of the world. But the consequences that await that child who doesn't learn are anything but childish consequences.

I Can't Trust Females

It's sad to say, but I can't trust no female
On the real, I don't even funk wit' no females
Honestly, to me, that's how I know
I barely choke
Next thing you know
The next female talking 'bout this what she spoke

I swear to God I can't trust no female
Straight up, that's why I stay on my own
But it's good, 'cause every woman
Is going to reap what they sow
'Til the end, it's just me and my man
Me and him stay riding with the fam
But it's nothing—any woman could get it
I don't give a damn
If you got heart
Come with me when you out
You know who I am

-Lil' K U5

From The Beat: So, if you can't trust any female, we guess you can't trust yourself. And, the fact that you are locked up probably means you shouldn't trust yourself...

When A Man Beats A Woman

When I was young, I seen my daddy beat and also throw my momma down a two stories of stairs. He done a lot to her in front of all her kids, and try to convince us that that's what she deserved. I never thought what he did was coo' at all. I disagree and think that it is wrong for a man to beat on any female. It has affected me because every time I see a man beat on a female, it make me have flashbacks and it makes me mad.

-Lil' Bipp U5

From The Beat: We agree with you, Lil' Bipp, it's always wrong for a man to hit a woman. But then, we wish we lived in a world where men didn't hit women, men didn't hit children, and men didn't hit other men, either.

Hot Right Now

What's da word. I was looking in The Beat and seen one of the homies in the Ranch. What's up wit' cho shot ass? Me, up in here one mo' time I got kicked out the grouper. Staff played me. He took me down on my birthday, 2/22. He had a ninja thinking he was going to court, and took me down. I was hot.

I go to court 3/26. Hopefully I be out this hole. But you know we still holdin' it down. But now ta everybody still getting rapped up to da halls, stay out 'cause this my last time coming here, on mamas.

-Londezz U7

From The Beat: You say this is the last time coming here, but why will it be different this time? We have heard that promise made many, many times — but far too often, it is an empty promise. How you will make it happen?

Doing Time

When I got locked up, I thought it was just me doing time. But now that I look on it, it was my mom doing the time, too. She was stressing and all my family reacted shocked. They didn't think I would end up like this. But it all worked out for the best. With the family support, I had strength to get through with all this and move on.

-Young G U4

From The Beat: Too bad that it took for you to come to the halls to realize that you have such a strong family by your side. Knowing this, you should be encouraged to do better with your life. There's good people behind you who will hold you down as long as your doing right. Although you are in here for a mistake, don't allow it to be the reason for you to give up on yourself so early in the game. Let this be a reason for you to keep your loved ones in mind the next time you are in a predicament which can lead to a bad outcome such as the one you're in now.

Time By Myself

What it do, Beat? Did ya boy Young Majic. But yeah, when I am up in here, the people dat love me tell me like dey miss me and they can't wait till I get out. But on da flip side, even though they might not show, it affects them. It really do hurt them on da inside. But some people, it rally don't hurt them.

But when I am locked up sometimes they blame me when they know it was me. But sometimes they do blame this fake-ass system. My younger sisters be like, dey wish I was at home than in da streets and in jail or juvenile hall. But I hope they do not ever follow my footsteps.

On some real shhh, it feels like I am doing my own time because nobody in my family is not in here 24/7 doing the time wit' me. So now I am doing my own time.

-Young Majic U4

From The Beat: When your little sisters tell you that they wish you were home, then you know they are doing the time with you. Your actions affect what they think about you, and what they might do in the future. It won't matter what you tell them that they should do as long as you're not doing it yourself. Our advice: Only do those things that you would not mind to see your younger sisters doing too.

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

I was not yet fifteen years old on the streets. It doesn't affect me no more. Yes, it was harder for me when it was someone I loved. A fight broke out and a man pulled out a gun and shot my friend.

-Terrance U6

From The Beat: Terrance, The Beat doesn't want you just to go through the topics and answer each question. Those questions are there just to stimulate your thinking so you can write something that explains your answer. Also, The Beat wants you to choose only one topic, not all three topics. When you write about three topics, we don't get a chance to learn much about you. Next time, take just one topic and write as much as you can about it.

An Early Memory Of Violence

My earliest I could remember was when I was at home when I was about 12 when me and my brother had a fight. Then when my mom came in the door and she saw us, we both got in trouble and we both had to stay in for about six days. But I wasn't mad. I had a TV and the game in my room. But he had to go home with his real mom after two days, so that made me hella mad. That was my earliest moment of violence I could remember.

-Violence U6

From The Beat: What were you and your brother fighting about? If you came home and found your two 12-year-olds fighting, what would you do to stop them, and keep them from fighting in the future?

Do My Time

What's good wit' da Beat? It's ya boy Lil' Spitta coming to you live from unit 4. Still in here. Waiting to get released to ROP and knock out these 12 months. Different day same shhh is how it goes in here. All I'm trying to do right now is do my time and go back home. for real. But til da next time out.

-Lil' Spitta U4

From The Beat: Good thing that you are aware of the fact that jail has nothing to offer you other than the same old same old — dead time that you'll never get back. We hope you're thinking about what you are going to do after the hall that lets you get back into the rhythm of your life without risking giving it up again.

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

It was a few years ago. I was nine. I was a victim too. Who couldn't be a victim? I was by myself and I was around the neighborhood, and I was a quiet youngster. This kid came up to me and seen that I was alone and tried to ask me for my money. He took out a knife and poked me on the arm, and of course I started bleeding. After, I went by myself to the house to look for help

-Francisco U6

From The Beat: You were very young when this happened. Were you crying? When you got home, did you find help? Who helped you? Have you ever caused anyone else to be a victim of violence? How do you think they felt?

shhh Happens

Since I was little, I always knew shhh happened. Started messing up. Got in trouble. I'll just keep sayin' shhh happens. Got suspended from school for dumb fights. Ha ha, shhh happens. A lot of arguments and fights with loved ones and friends . I still would say shhh happens.

Got hell drunk and stupid high. Go home, get slapped up and yelled at were the consequences of that day. What was that I would say? Oh yeah, ha ha, shhh happens!

Got locked up several times. Damn, till this very day, still locked up. I don't think I'll change shhh. I still tell myself with a smirk on my face shhh happens.

-Travieso U2

From The Beat: Oh yeah, it happens all right, especially when you are making it happen. You write this as if you had nothing to do with any of it, it just comes your way and there's nothing you can do to change it. That, of course, is nonsense. You are not a leaf floating aimlessly in a river, going wherever the current takes you. You have a brain and the free will to make choices. You keep making bad ones ("shhh happens"), and you are telling us here that you plan to keep on making those bad decisions. That is up to you. But prepare to spend a lot more of your life answering to a bunch of strangers telling you what you can, and cannot, do every minute of the day. That's just the inevitable consequences of "shhh happens."

A Friend Of Mine

On Friday March 16, 2007, two friends of mine got shot. But one died. It was a girl name Antwanisha. She was 17 years old and got shot in the throat and passed away. But the boy Thomas made it.

Hopefully I get out soon so I can go to the funeral on Thursday. She was a close friend of mine it wasn't meant for her to die. RIP Antwanisha. I love and miss you.

-Kamay U5

From The Beat: We're so sorry about this latest tragedy of untimely death. It seems like every week we're reading a piece like this, and we just don't know why it has to be this way. Do you live your life in a way that puts it at risk? Do you risk your freedom? Why?

Too Militant

Too militant is me. It is also what I am 'cause the guns I bust wont never jam I am a man of violence and a man of peace But my criminal records does nothing but increase I am a beast with a wounded soul The game is to be sold not to be told

-Too Militant U4

From The Beat: Sometimes you show us that you can think deeply, and sometimes — like now — you just put down clichés that we've read a thousand times before. How many times have we heard, "the game is to be sold not to be told" — by people doing long years in prison? How many other young men have confused their willingness to resort to gunplay and violence as an example of how militant they are, rather than how limited they are? What exactly is a

One Day At A Time

You never do time by yourself, because your family does time with you. Many families care for their children.

We get it how we live it

Take it how we get it

We do it how we do until we get ended

We try to live our lives

I don't know why we follow this nine

I try to do right — not to do crime

Don't get it twisted, I ain't afraid to do time

Crime is what do, so take as give it. If you really love me, follow what I got through. If you do it right, I might just stay around just so I could see your smile. The look on our face makes me understand a lot. You want me to take this shit one day at a time. Peace.

-Nick Beam U6

From The Beat: We're not sure what you're trying to say in this piece. We don't know who you are talking to about loving you, but if you really love others — like your family — then why do you keep putting them through this pain?

Mixed Feelings

I have a lot of mixed feelings so I don't know what to say. I have a lot of mixed feelings so this is all I'm 'bout to say.

-Soulia F B U5

From The Beat: Our feelings aren't so mixed. They come down to this. If you put as much effort into staying out of the hall as you put into writing this piece, you'll be back. It's time for you to step up to the plate and not just slide by, 'cause these are the consequences!

When Spring Is Sprung

'Sup with The Beat? So you guys are saying this week and today's date is the first day of spring. Wow! Today is March 20th... tomorrow is my disposition. I hope spring really means new life like you guys are saying, 'cause I'm ready for new life. Just hoping tomorrow will be the day I start my new life.

My parents are waiting for me to get out so we can go on a spring trip. Also my older brother is graduating next month. Hopefully, I will be out for his graduation party. I also got to re-celebrate my birthday when I get out. I'm thinking my year will be perfect this time as long as I get out. Four months here... really changed me physically and mentally. I just hope I can make it out for spring, summer and fall since I missed winter.

Anyways, good-bye Beat.

-Lil' JJ U7

From The Beat: Be careful of thinking that freedom is the same as perfection. No one's life is perfect, and if you expect it to be, you'll only be disappointed. When you get out of here, things are going to be much better, but it won't be paradise. You will still have decisions to make, temptations to avoid, promises to keep. Don't let life's realities frustrate you and get you down. Just keep moving ahead, and enjoy your loving family.

Listen Up

Listen to what I gotta say, Bebeh I'm in here thankin' 'bout correction Why is that since the Terminator won the election I all da sudden need protection Showin' no affection Standin' up like an erection I gotta wide selection So listen to my suggestion Brotha, listen to my point Why every man from da Point Incarcerated in da joint It's started off from a joint Den leadin' ta sellin' rocks Sellin' flocks, an' stashin' it in socks Man, dis life is dumba dan a num nock Drinkin' rum an' scotch Talkin' to the top notch Nah, I'm lyin' I'm just fryin' Don't mind me people Just listen up And be patient fo' da sequel

-Robel Melt Like Butta U6

From The Beat: Sorry, Robel, but we can't honor your wish to keep all your spelling uncorrected. It's just too hard for us to know when you meant to spell a word a particularly way, and when you didn't. So, we have to apply the same rules to your pieces as we apply to all the pieces. If this isn't acceptable to you, then you'll just have to start your own magazine!

Doing Time By Myself?

No, I am not doing time alone. Yeah, my moms is hot about me coming back in here, but I'm madder 'cause she did so much to keep me out, and I end up coming back for one lil' mistake, and that's not thinking.

My big bra doin' time wit' me too, but he's in a different situation from me. His is worse. I talk to him here and there through letters, but that ain't enough. We should have played da game a lil' smarter and probably shhh would be different.

But yeah, the main person doin' time wit' me is the main, but I'm glad she's here fo' a ninja holdin' a ninja down 'cause them lil' letters I get keeps a ninja motivated, ya dig.

But yeah, when I get up out of here shhh gone be different, ya dig. I'ma have ta switch da game around and play that shhh a little smarter.

-Jr U6

From The Beat: We're waiting for you to learn the only truly important lesson from your experiences: the only way to play the game "a lil' smarter" is not to play the game at all. If you think you can keep doing what you've been doing, only smarter, you'll just be setting yourself up for more of the same consequences — or worse.

Earliest Violence

I was around 8 or 9 when I experienced violence. I was by myself, and there was these people arguing across the street. My brother was coming from the store and he walked right past them. One dude start running across the street, and the other dude start shooting.

I watched as my brother was in between, and he was smart enough to duck. That ain't my fist violence that I experienced, but it is the earliest I can remember.

-Chris U7

From The Beat: How do you know this wasn't your first experience with violence if you have no memory of anything earlier? Did this experience make you want to avoid that kind of gunplay? Have you succeeded?

My First Experience With Violence

The first time I seen violence was two African-Americans were fighting each other. I was about six years old. I thought it was good, but when I started growing up, I learned fighting is not good at all.

-Marcelus U6

From The Beat: How did you learn that fighting is not good? Have you been in fights? Have you learned a way to avoid fighting? What's your strategy?

Happy

What's up Beat? I feel happy right now because I got accepted to Glen Mills. I can't wait till I leave and do my real time. Also, Glen Mills has many things to do over there, like more sports, auto mechanics, photography and more stuff.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Congratulations, Kwes. You are bringing just the right attitude to your placement at Glen Mills — eager anticipation for learning new things and gaining some skills that will help you live our life in freedom. Good luck, and keep writing us.

My Mom Suffers The Most

My mom is the one who suffers the most because she blames herself for lettin' me run wild in the streets. But the reason she suffers the worst is because she let me take it this far. Every time I see her, she starts cryin'. I don't let it get to me, though, because I know she just tryin' to get me to stop bangin'. But it's not going to happen.

My youngest brother wants to follow my footsteps. When I talk to him, I tell him that this shhh ain't cool, but he be like, "I don't care. I want in." I tell him when I see him I'm going to whip his ass, and he be like, "You can try, punk." It makes me feel good inside because I know I raised him to be a killa, but I tell him, "You betta be ready for when I get out."

Last but not least is my newborn baby sister. Man, she's something else. I went to see her when I was on the run because I was stayin' in the cuts. Well, anyways, she looked at me like, "Who the hell are you?" When I tried to pick her up, she started o cry. That made me feel hella sad because I know I haven't been there for her. But I just bury all my pain inside because when you're doing time, you can't show your weakness to nobody. I'm out.

-Menace U6

From The Beat: You say you can't show your weakness to anybody, but we think you're showing real weakness here. In this piece, you almost shout out that you don't really care if you hurt your mother or not. You almost shout out that your own selfish desires are more important than the person who gave you life. If you want your life to end in a wheelchair or in a cell, that's your choice (and it's the choice you are making). But to say that your mother's tears aren't going to affect you or make you change anything about your life is to say that her feelings don't mean much to you. You say it makes you sad to see that you've left your baby sister without a brother (she doesn't even recognize you as a brother), but not sad enough to want to change anything about your life. Compared to your "boys," neither your mother nor your baby sister are that important to you. And we have no words at all for the pride you feel in turning your brother into a young man destined to give up his freedom to the this cold system, except that it leaves us shaking our head at the depth of your selfishness! What a shame! We hope you learn the treasure you're turning your back on before it's too late.

Seeing Dad Die

When I seen my dad die, that changed my life. Now I want to have baby with my girl. So when I get out of YGC, that's what I am going to do. I am going to get a job.

-Aj U7

From The Beat: We're sorry about your dad dying, but we don't understand the connection between that event and wanting to have a baby. We hope you put that decision off for some time, because the fact that you are locked up tells us that you are not yet ready for the responsibility of fatherhood. Being a decent father (which is more than putting food on the table and Pampers in the closet) is the most important job you will ever undertake, so it's very important that you are prepared and ready for when it happens. Wanting a baby is not enough. Our advice is for you to get that job and a little free time under your belt before you start making babies.

My Cousin Got Shot

My earliest memory of violence was when I was 11 years old. I was going to the store with my cousin, and a car full of guys pulls up and starts dumpin' on some dude near us. But one of the bullets hits my cousin in his leg and his waist.

It was a scary situation at the time 'cause I didn't know what to do, while my cousin just laid dere bleeding. Luckily, he pulled through, dough.

Alrato to all the homies in here doin' time. I'm off to the Ranch to do my time. I'll see al of y'all in 12 months out in da 'hood. Stay up. Do your time and don't run. It ain't worth it!

-Smokey U6

From The Beat: Yes, we can understand why that experience would have been very scary. Does this mean that by now, you are not scared when bullets fly? We hope they still scare you, because we know what they can do to entire families. (Death is just one outcome; some people end up living the rest of their lives in wheelchairs, dependent on others for everything.) We wish you good luck at the Ranch, and hope you don't spend all of your time daydreaming about coming back to the block. Use this time to read, to get some education that moves your life forward so that you don't have to give up any more of it to the system.

Going Into Real Estate

Man, I can't wait till I get out so I can do big things. I want to start my own business selling houses, going to college and play football. Love Fat Thug always.

-Fat T U7

From The Beat: The first thing you have to do is finish school, Fat Thug. Any legitimate business you want to do will require you to have that basic education. Time to stop playing for a while, and start preparing for being an adult.

Young And Thuggin'

What it do Beat? What's good with the thugs? Me, shhh, good chillin' keepin' it lit fa the block, ya heard. But I was hella young when I first saw violence, and it was somebody gettin' killed. I was with my moms and saw a ninja walk up to somebody and straight smoked like it was nothin'. Then from then on, I start doin' my dirt and start gettin' in trouble hella much.

-Al Bundy U7

From The Beat: But why did what you see on the street lead you to start doing dirt? If you had seen someone doing something positive, like carrying groceries for someone old or disabled, would that have led your life in a different direction? We don't think you've given the choices you've made in life — and the ones still to be made — much critical thinking. Instead, you've just accepted what you do as the easiest path. And it may be for the time being. But our view (which you know) is that unless you put in more effort now, you're going to wish that you had later on...

Memory Of Violence

Well, as I look back, my earliest memory of violence was on August 11, 2006, when my cousin Monte and my boyfriend Anthony got killed. I was shocked. I was just talking to them and two minutes later they was gone. And I didn't realize at the time what just happened.

So I have been shocked for at least that happen because I haven't really never seen that happen up close. But that was the first time I ever seen that happen. But I seen it happen more often, so I don't trip no more.

-Brittany Baby U5

From The Beat: We're not sure which is worse, seeing your cousin and boyfriend get killed and being shocked, or seeing the same thing happen so often that you stop being shocked. We think killing is always shocking, the result of children playing with adult toys. Yes, it is indeed a tragedy!

Violence

The first time I witnessed violence was when I was about two. Pops wasn't in jail yet. He brought me out with him and his patnas, and durin' this time, he seen this girl who he was beefin' with. He pulled the canon out and busted a whole clip at her.

I was young, but I knew what was happenin'. I feel like I been followin' his footsteps and love the gunplay too. But I know I'm gonna end up back here or dead if I keep it up.

-Big Papa U6

From The Beat: To keep it real, we have to tell you that a father who takes his two-year-old child on a run where he pulls his gun and blasts is no father at all. In fact, we believe he has betrayed you by preparing you for the life of a slave — the life you are living at this very moment under the total control of strangers! Now, because he did not do a father's job, you have to father yourself. Which means you have to examine the life you are living and ask yourself whether you're prepared for the consequences, which include jail, getting crippled or getting killed. If you think you can escape those consequences, then your father did an even worse job raising you, because that is the thinking of a child. Grow up before it's too late!

Missing My Family In Spring

What I miss about spring is my family. I always go on trips to Water world or Six Flags or Great America. That's what I miss about spring. Especially spending time with my family, especially my parents.

-Marcelus U6

From The Beat: You have written three very short pieces, and each one of them could benefit from many more details. So, next time, don't choose all three topics to write about. Instead, write about just one topic, and write as much about it as you can.

The System Is Not For Me

What's up with The Beat? Me, just trying to get out this shhh. I going psych on ninjas because ninjas running their mouth. A ninja is mad about the big homie died and my PO was trying to play a ninja. I went psych on her about the thug I lost. RIP for Da Fool.

-Donald-D U7

From the Beat: You need to make some changes, Donald, if you don't want to experience this same kind of situation again and again. You don't like people running their mouth. You don't like your PO. You're angry. But until you change your own actions and stop giving the system power to put you in this place (or some other place like it), you will continue to be angry. Time to focus some of that angry thinking on yourself.

Get To The Top

"Get that dough"
That's what he said
Never think down
Let's get to the top!
Go work that blade
Come back we both get paid
I stay on my grind
Don't never let anyone not see me shine
Stay down for your crown
Never think down
Get to the top
Don't let anyone make you stop
Hustle hard

-Anneliese U5

From The Beat: We always find it strange (if not outright amusing) that somebody who was "smart" enough to get picked up by the system and thrown into a box, away from all who love and support her, can still think that she can't be stopped! If you keep trying to get "to the top" in the ways you've been doing it, you'll find yourself deeper and deeper in a hole, writing about how to get to the top from there. A word to the wise.

Are You Doing Time Your Time By Yourself?

In my lock-up life, I can see that me being locked up, the only loved one I think that this affects is my girlfriend. I say that because my mom comes to visit but doesn't come to court for me. My dad always putting me down like he was some angel. When he was young he was worse than me.

They say they are worried for me, but this ain't gone help. It's just gone make it worse. I just wish they can see that for themselves. My brothers still know who I am even though they haven't seen me for a few months. This time I don't really know if they would know me.

-B-Love U7

From The Beat: It's too bad that your dad feels like he has to put you down. We don't know why your mom doesn't come to court, but maybe it's too stressful for her. It's hard to remember when you're locked up that life on the outs goes on, and people have other obligations and responsibilities, too. If you're worried that your brothers might not know you when you get out, then don't get in!

clowning

Hello, hi how you doin? Well, much love. Me, I'm grateful for being alive. The end!

-Krusty The Clown U5

From The Beat: So let's get this straight... in an hour's workshop, this is all you can manage to write, but you want us to put your entire name (including city and state) in The Beat: Try writing us something that's longer than your name!

My Family Is Suffering

I'm not doing my own time. My brothers and sisters miss me, especially my parents. I suffer seeing them leave, and they also suffer when they leave me.

-Marcelus U6

From The Beat: So, when you recognize how much suffering your actions are causing those that love you, does it make you want to do anything differently when you get out? Like what?

Poetically Acclaimed

My words travel at a high velocity
I'm at the city's highest spot
All who are present
Beware of the Poetically Acclaimed One
I speak with fire
Desire me to speak more?
Don't get life on death row
And die in the hospital ward
I speak accordingly
If you think I'm playing
Ask about me, The Poetically Acclaimed
It's a shame
That you're not on black ice
In the middle of the sea
With a black beast
You bought from the black market
You heard it from me
But don't tell nobody I said it

-The Poetically Acclaimed LCRS

From The Beat: We appreciate that you speak with fire in your soul and your warnings to people not to end up on death row, but what's up with writing to someone that "It's a shame they're not abandoned in the middle of the sea on black ice?" We don't understand who you're writing to or why you'd want to condemn anyone to such a fate.

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

I was 11 years old going on 12, and on 2000, I seen my brother get stabbed two times. He was 16. Another thing my mom trying to kill herself when I was nine 'cause my stepdad was always hitting her, and trying to kill her. She was trying to cut herself in her neck and my brother stopped her.

Drives by's? That's when I was living in the projects until I became a teenager. Then I moved. Gangs, people fighting, getting jumped, doing dirt.

-Lh U5

From The Beat: Do you know anyone who has been able to stay out of the beef you describe? How did they do it?

No Mumbling

I be on beat writing what can't be ill
Can this be illustrated, hope my house ain't raided
I got to tell it, I smell the beef coming near
Got to take my girl to the house where it's safe
Got to learn what's going on in the streets
'Cause no one is near a soldjah like me
Got to hold his ground, bring food to the house
Having everybody with a smile, now can't struggle
When I talk, can't be mumbling
But get my shine on with my family

-Redeyes U6

From The Beat: To be honest, we had some difficulty reading this piece and understanding what you're trying to say. So we have to focus on that last line only, and ask you how you plan to shine for your family? Do you have any changes in mind? What?

Highly Successful

Smoke so much
You would of thought it's a forest fire
Wait...Here's another buyer
So yellow it looks like gold
But it's not
So yellow it smells like cheese
But it's not
Pockets so fat
You'd think I'm a pack rat
But I'm not
Yeah, I'm eatin'
But I'm not
But if you take it literally
Then, yes I am

-Birdman LCRS

From The Beat: So you smoke and sell crack. Do you really want to put your business out there? How are you managing down at the Ranch without any drugs to sustain you? Even if you're "fat" from selling so much crack, do you figure in your time in juvy and at the Ranch when adding up your profits? Even if you make \$3000 in one weekend, if you get arrested and spend a year and three months in juvy and at the Ranch, how much do you make an hour? Do the math—about \$3.50 an hour. How "fat" is that?

My Earliest Memory Of Violence

My earliest memory of violence was when I was 12 years old. I was walking on my way to school when two guys were fighting on the street. Yeah, it's hard for me 'cause one of the guys was getting beat up bad.

-Oscar U6

From The Beat: Have you ever been the victim of violence? Have you ever made someone else the victim of your violence?

A Haiku For When Spring Is Sprung

Summer, winter, spring
Hot, cold, fresh, breeze, movement
Ice cream, coffee, bloom

-LoYo U3

From The Beat: This is almost a perfect Haiku. The only thing is, the second line should be seven syllables long, and yours is only six. If you put the word "and" between hot and cold, you'll make it seven syllables and then it will be perfect! Where did you learn to do haiku?

Survival

As I tell myself

Ain't nothing like pissy hallways
Nocks running around tryna find their next hit s
Seeing dope fiends walking around tweekin'
People on the corner selling dope
Just to make a living

They don't care who they sell it to as long as they eating!
Groups of people just posted around the block

Some people got they moms
While their pops ain't nowhere to be found
In the 'hood, ain't nobody your friends

But like they say
"Keep your friends close but your enemies closer."
It's all life, it's a struggle
It's all about survival!

-Lil' Bipp U5

From The Beat: You say that in the 'hood, nobody is your friend, and it looks like you're right — not even you are a friend to yourself. A friend does not lead a friend into trouble, but that's exactly where you led yourself... What's the next step?

Cold And Stiff

My earliest memory of violence was when I was three. My mom boyfriend died in his sleep, seeing him there cold and stiff.

-NeNe U5

From The Beat: This is obviously a powerful memory, NeNe, but what about it is violent? Death, in itself, is not violent, but how it comes about can be very violent. Did this man die of natural causes, or was there violence involved?

The Lyrically Acclaimed

I'm gone
I worship my moms
I got five on it
Strive for it
Get it if you got to get it
Spell it out
If you really meant it
I'm a go getta, ya dig?
Or do you really don't get it?
Split it 50/50
And get jiggy wit' it
Or you can walk it out
Or two step it
You can do it all my yourself
Or buy a Yamaha
And stunt like your daddy
Or you can push it to the limit
The sky is the limit
Don't get limited
Go get one of them thangs
I got the big bang in my hand
Hence make way
For the Lyrically Acclaimed

-Lyrically Acclaimed

From The Beat: Your raps and poems have much potential, but you need to do a better job breaking down what it is you are attempting to explain.

Doing Time Together

When you are doing time, probably not all but most of your immediate family are hurt. No matter how much you think it doesn't, it does affect them somehow.

-Jungle U6

From The Beat: When you think about how your actions have affected some members of your family, does it make you want to change any of those actions?

It's Over

It's been almost ten months
We've been through hell and back
In and out of juvy
Up and down
Cheated on and straight up played
We did it all
It's been two months since I've seen him
And I don't give a damn
I am in rehab and getting help
But guess where he is still at
Locked up and waiting to hit that pipe
it's sad to say...
it took me rehab to realize this
and ten months to say it
but I can finally say...
Screw you
And
It's finally over!

-Malibu Beach Barbie

From The Beat: We think it's a sign of your recovery that you are able to look at this relationship through clear eyes and a clear mind, and realize that he, too, is something to put behind you. If he is "waiting to hit that pipe," then he is locked up in more ways than one. Congratulations on beginning to cut the past that has kept you imprisoned, and looking toward a clean and sober future in freedom!

Me

Who am I?
I'm me!
I'm a young woman that just turned 18 years of age.
I'm a teenage mother.
I'm a young woman that was almost beat to death.
I'm a young woman that's been fighting this big war by myself since I was 11 and a half.
I'm a young woman that's in rehab. And trying to get my shhh straight.

-Marie

From The Beat: This is a pretty good introduction to who you are. We're pleased that you see this rehab as a place to get yourself together. So, relying on your imagination about the future, could you tell us who you are planning to be?

Smart Nerd Gone Bad

The same question I asked myself every day I'm here:
How in the world did I go from the straight A student to one of the biggest druggies in the school? Can you answer that?

-Stephanie

From The Beat: The short answer is, you chose to be both things, so you're responsible both for the straight A student and for the druggie. That's actually good news, because it means you can choose to reverse the process. We hope you do.

A Seductive Home Girl

Oh yo, I met this girl from around the way
Said that she can ease my pain
I said, "Homegirl, now what's your name?"
She said, "Dank, but call me Mary Jane."
Now it was on running around town
'Cause you're the bomb
Didn't think love can be so strong
Took a little toke and I was gone
Didn't last too long
For I was hooked
Homeboy claim I was whooped
Love was blind
To be with her I got to come up with cash

-Nessa

From The Beat: Call her dank, weed, Mary Jane or grass/She will drain your last bit of cash/She's really the worst kind of whore/Always demanding that you give more/We know that she can help you feel good/But if you could see your lungs, we wonder if you would/We have some words, and we hope you're not a doubter/Our advice is that you can live without her!

Many Memories Of Violence

The first time I seen violence was at my grandmother house. My dad beatin' my brother with a belt and cords.

The second time I seen violence was when this boy dropped dead right in front f me in a puddle of blood.

The third time I seen violence was people fighting and fallin' over the dumbest shhh.

The fourth time I seen violence was when my sister Crystal hit my dad with a bat, and she went to jail.

The fifth time I seen violence was when a man go shot and killed in a car, and a girl that got shot being an innocent bystander.

And the last memory of violence was seein' my brother laying down in a park, shot and killed.

-Sexy Cedex

From The Beat: Man, this is a lot of violence for someone so young to experience! We are so sorry that your brother got killed. Why did your sister hit your dad with a bat? What did he do to her? Have you ever been the victim of violence? Have you ever perpetrated it on others?

All At Once

For a lonely individual,
I share a lot of space,
for me to get through to you,
ya have to notice grace,
my intentions are set
so don't overstep my boundaries
I'm crowded by the best of fools,
which make up my surroundings
if you're down for the crown,
then you probably in my crew,
it's a shame how people follow me, cant say the same
for you,
I dig the smartest brothas, that ain't lookin' for no sistahs,
when a real young lady comes around,
he'd be the only one ain't missed 'er
if you own what I seek, then a couple may be sweet,
and the cutest pair of dimples, damn near knocked me off my feet,
got my knees feeling faint, lustful minds really speak,
might not have to say a word, but yeah you are what you eat,
found some secrets in my heart, and thinking about 'em broke a sweat,
bringing back the moment now,
so how uneven is my breath?

-Purple Haze

From The Beat: Maybe like the best of poems, there are references here that are too personal and individual for us to understand. For example, we're not sure if you're speaking to a particular person, or to people in general. One of these days, we wish you would write something out by way of explanation. We love your poems, but we wish we could understand everything...

Alone

Yeah, sometimes I feel so alone and sad that I don't know what to do. But I think to myself (eventually), "Forget me? Yeah, it's forget me. No, forget you! You can take a walk if you don't like me!" All in the head to force the thoughts and feelings out of my face.

Naw, just lying. I'll tell you the truth now. When I wake up, I am alone throughout the day. I am alone when I go to sleep. I'll be alone and I am trying to find acceptance around that with every moment that goes by.

Sometimes I let myself get manipulated and really start to believe that somebody is gonna stay with me forever. But then reality smashes me in the head. How do I deal with that? Well, I let it stain my face for a minute, but then I stand up and wash it off. Once that happens I'm fine with being alone.

-Bobbi

From The Beat: We're sorry you're feeling so all alone, Bobbi, but glad it doesn't get you down for too long. Do you have any family waiting for you and worrying about you, or are you truly alone in the world? Well, of course, you can't be truly alone as long as you have you...

Why?

Why are you the one I'm stuck on?
Why are you the one I first loved?
Why are you the reason I'm the way I am?
Why did you treat me so bad?
Why did you lie to me?
Why did you tell me that you loved me?
Why did I fall in love with you?
Why did we go that far?
Why did that shhh happen?
Why can't I let go?
Why so many questions?
Why don't you ask any questions?

-Marie

From The Beat: We don't know who you had this unfortunate relationship with or how you got hurt, but we definitely don't think it's the reason you are the way you are. You were you long before you met this person, so you have to look deeper than this relationship to understand yourself. If this was just a love affair that went aground the rocky shores of lies and cheating, then maybe it is an important lesson in life — and one that most all of us have had to learn along the way. Who you are does not depend on others, but on yourself.

Feeling Him

There this fool I'm hella feelin', but I don't know how to tell him. I don't know, but there something and I can't quite figure out what. When I do, I think I will be able to tell him I'm feelin' him... So maybe one day I will be able to tell him.

-Babie Girl

From The Beat: This piece means more to you than it means to us. It really teaches nothing. If you're going to write about someone that you care about, you're going to have to put more effort into it than this. Like, what's he about? What's he like? Have you spoken to him? How do you know him? There is SO much more you could have told us...

What I Would Take Back

What I would take back...
My actions my thoughts my lies. The things I said, the people I hurt. But the one thing I would want to change the most is nothing at all because if I didn't do what I did I wouldn't be where I am. And I wouldn't be me.

-Stephanie

From The Beat: So, what's so great about being where you are? We get this "I would never change anything" answer a lot, and while we understand you like being who you are, we wonder whether you're being entirely honest about not changing some of your decisions and choices. We know we would.

On My Mind

Hey Beat, this is your girl from San Jo. Well, I'm not feeling the topics. I'm just going to write what's on my mind. I got a phone call from my mom and it's been like five and a half months since I heard from her. She was telling me that everything is going bad at home, and she told me that my lil' brother in juvenile hall is getting into fights, and my lil' 12-year-old is not coming home.

My mom is moving and I'm going to have a baby brother and shhh. But at least I got to talk to my lil' sister Star. But I just got to do what I go to do in order me to get out. Well Beat, I'm going to make this short. Your girl from San Jo!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: It sounds like your mother really needs your help. But in order to help her, you have to first help yourself, and that is what you are doing right now. So work on your program, get yourself together, learn what you need to know to move forward with your life in sobriety — and then you will be ready to be that responsible person your family so desperately needs.

I Got Lucky

I was on the block, coming out of my cousin's house. I was crossing the street and there were two people shooting at everybody. I fell to the ground, thinking that I might have been hit, but I got lucky.

-Derek

From The Beat: That was a lucky day! This could have been the wrong place and wrong time, but it wasn't. Life is precious, so what has/is your plan to living it free of the system?

When I Went To School In Richmond

My earliest memory of violence is when I went to school in Richmond. The second day there, I got in a fight and that person beat me up. The memory of it affects me a lot. I get afraid to go to a new school now, because I'm afraid to fight and lose.

-Jose

From The Beat: We understand how a fight in a new school can be a huge scar in your life. In time you will get over the fear and move on. You can't runaway from this, school is too critical in your success. Need help, get advice from those who have your best interest

For The Illest And The Realest

I'm in the halls for the second time
Doing petty time for a petty crime
People label me as a nuisance to society and as a bad kid
My PO and judge are trying to say I'm gang related
But they are just some straight haters
Hopefully, I won't have to see them later
They label me
But in reality
They don't even know me
And what I'm about
A gang is a gang
And a click is a click
And I kick it with one crew and one only
And that is my school
And my neighborhood click
We don't rep colors
We say "forget" that drama
Then the system connects me to that bull
Now ain't that some shhh?
Anyways, I'm on the outs in two weeks
Ready to keep things straight
And keep it for life and get that scratch
Yadadi?

-Jacob

From The Beat: Falling into the system's trap is all-bad. With it comes labels, accusations and hard times. The time is now to peel off that mask, and show the real you. What does the real you want? What are your plans for the future?

Me

Me, I'm the best
Me, I'm real
Me, I'm me
Me, I'm that boy
Me, I step it up
Me, I'm a stunna
Me, I'm like bra'
What's up wit' it
It's ya boy, Sb
Get on like me

-Sb

From The Beat: No thanks! We're cool! Keep being you and your seconds, minutes, hours and days will be longer and longer.

Wonder?

I wonder what my mom is thinking.
I wonder what my dad is thinking?
Do they hate me?
Do they love me?
The possibilities are endless.

-Luis

From The Beat: Ask them! And stop wondering. Call them! Write them!

Back Again

Back from what I strived, so much to get away from. They caught me slippin' once, fine, ok. Then I get out on that home supervision, burn violation of bracelet, and back two days later to this hell.

Now nobody believes me what I'm going to be doing on the outs, so they just keepin' me in here, caught in the system, and they won't tell me when I'm gettin' out.

Still I sit here and wait for the day that I'm released to the outs and do good. I prove to every one that said I'm a punk ass hoodlum, that they're wrong. I'm whatever I wanna be.

-J

From The Beat: OK J, you are not what the system says you are, but you sure don't help matters by not living up to the court orders/probation. Why should the system trust you again? Will you burn them again? Will you finally take some responsibility? Time will tell.

Mom And Dad

My family feel sad I'm here.

My mom is sad.

My dad, he's crying, and my brothers are missing me.

Also, my family supports me a lot in anything I need.

Also, they're always in court for me.

-Dony

From The Beat: What's going on with you? You have a supportive family who is suffering and you were taking that for granted. Not every single person in this world has what you got. Start appreciating what life has given you.

I Seen People Die

I was always gettin' in fights.

I also seen people die.

One time, I saw two kids walking and some cars came in a drive by one kid was killed and the other kid survived.

They shot him in the leg.

I was in the apartments when this happened.

I saw the kid crying who was shot in the leg.

The other kid was dead.

Problem - gang problems.

They were my homies.

I went to one funeral.

-Dony

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss! You have to know that this is what anyone related to gangs or hangs around them will get. We hope you have woken up and will now stay away from these hot spots. It's on you.

I Don't Know My Fate Yet

I've been in here for about fifty-plus days, and I still need about seven more days 'til I have court. They said I am going to Virginia to live with my aunt, but I don't know what's going to happen, because they recommended placement, so I don't know.

-Placement bound

From The Beat: We hope by now you know your fate. How do you feel about the outcome?

Love

Love is passion

Love is what every girl lusts

Love is when you don't cheat

Love is when you know your man is number one

Love is passion of sexual feelings

Love is what everyone wants

Love is just a beautiful thing

-Annie

From The Beat: Do you have a love like this one?

The memory of it affects me a lot. I get afraid to go to a new school now, because I'm afraid to fight and lose.

En La Casa De Mis Amigo

Cuando yo iba a casa de mis amigo, me sentía mucho mejor que en mi casa porque ahí me divertía con ellos haciendo cosas divertidas.

Cuando estaba en su casa, no quería regresar a mi casa porque yo no me divertía tanto como lo hacía en casa de mis amigos. Por eso, cuando me iba a casa, me iba triste porque no sabía cuando iba volver a pasarla bien con mis amigos. Por eso, para mí los amigos son importantes porque te diviertes, platicamos, salimos a buscar chicas y jugar futbol con ellos. Por eso no quiero regresar a la mía.

From The Beat: Todo esta bien cuando haces cosas divertidas que no lastimen a los demás ni te metas en problemas. Si te gusta estar con tus amigos, esta bien que estes con ellos, pero en cada hogar hay regulaciones que se tienen que cumplir. Tienes que seguir el reglamento de tu hogar. Algún día cuando crezcas más te daras cuenta de lo importante que es el hogar.

At My Friend's House

When I would go to my friend's house, I would feel much better than in my own house because at my friend's house, I would have fun with them doing fun things.

When I was at my friend's house, I would not want to go back to my house because I would have so much fun doing the things that I would do at my friend's house. That's why, when I would go to my own house, I would go home sad because I did not know when I was going to go back to have a good time with my friends. That's why, for me, friends are important because you have fun with them, you chit-chat with them, we go out to look for females, and play soccer with them. That's why I don't want to go back to my house.

-José U-2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Everything is always good when you do fun things that don't hurt others nor do they get you into problems. If you like to be with your friends, it's fine that you spend time with them, but in every home, there are rules that have to be followed. You have to follow the rules of your house. Someday when you get older, you will realize how important one's home is.

I never knew my grandfather, but I want to get to know him in my dreams because that's where I can see him because that's the only place where I see the people that I have lost. I miss you, grandpa.

A Mis Abuelos

Si yo tubiera la oportunidad de hablar con alguien en el cielo, llamaría a mis abuelos porque nunca tube la oportunidad de conocerlos. Cuando ellos muriero, yo no había nacido. Solo supe la historia de la vida de ellos. Mis padres me contaron que eran buenas personas y por eso me siento orgullosos de ellos. Yo sé que ellos desde el cielo me cuidan y me protegen.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho lo de tus abuelo. Lo bueno es que dejaron en tu memoria una buena reputación. Así como desde el cielo te cuidan y te protegen, estan deseando y resando por ti para que busques el camino correcto que necesitas para vivir una vida tranquila. ¿Que opinas de eso?

My Grandparents

If I had the opportunity to talk with someone in heaven, I would call my grandparents because I never got the opportunity to get to know them. When they died, I had not been born yet. I just knew the story of their lives. My parents told me that they were good people and that's why I feel proud of them. I know that from heaven, they watch over me and they protect me.

-José U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We believe it's unfortunate that you didn't ever get to talk with your grandparents. The good thing is, they left behind in your memory good reputations. Just like how from heaven they watch over you and protect you, they are longing and praying for you so you can find the right path that you need in order to live a calm life. What do you think about that?

Ver A Dios

Yo quisiera ver a Dios para darle un abrazo y andar siempre con El. Yo les digo que busquen a Dios porque Dios es el único que puede cambiarlos.

From The Beat: Segun las creencias de Dios, a Dios no lo puedes ver, solo sentir y oír hasta que logres ir a cielo. ¿Crees que lo logres?

See God

I would like to see God so I could give Him a hug and always be with Him. I want to tell y'all to seek God because God is the only one who can change y'all.

-Zaogo U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Your higher power will be lucky to have a devoted follower like you.

A Mi Tatarabuelo Y A Mi Abuelo

Si yo tubiera la oportunidad para hablar con alguien en el cielo, yo llamaría a mi tatarabuelo porque cuando tenía dos años, el fallecio por tomar mucho alcohol. Yo le hablaría para pedirles consejos, para poder cambiar mi vida. Yo no quiero vivir así como la estoy viviendo. Yo sé que él me va a escuchar y me va a ayudar para cambiar.

Mi abuelito nunca lo conocí, pero lo quiero conocer en mis sueños porque es donde lo puedo ver porque es donde nomas miro a las personas que he perdido. Te extraño abuelito.

From The Beat: Esperamos que llegues a tener la oportunidad de conocerlos en tus sueños y te lleguen a dar los consejos necesario que necesitas para que cambies tu forma de ser.

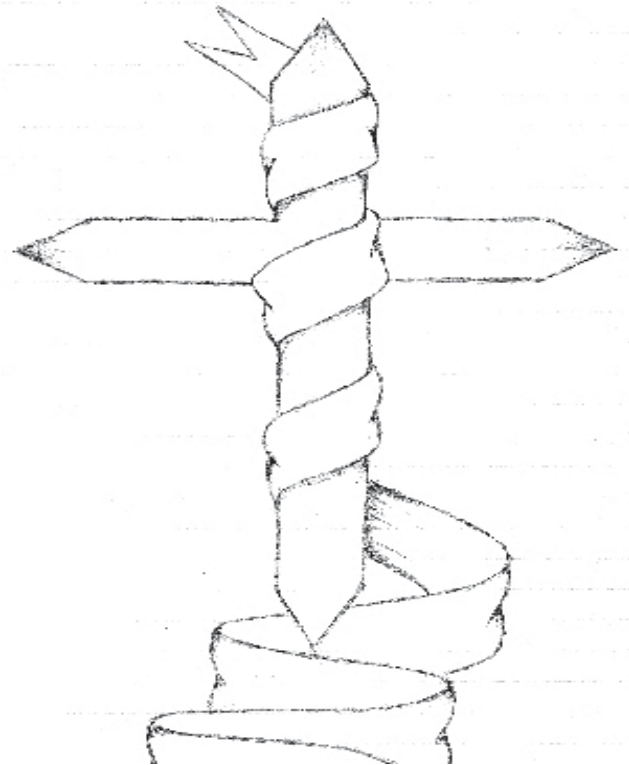
My Great-Great Grandfather And My Grandfather

If I had the opportunity to talk with someone in heaven, I would call my great-great grandfather because when I was two years old, he passed away from drinking too much alcohol. I would talk with him so I could ask him for advice so I could change my life. I don't want to live the way that I am living. I know that he will listen to me and is going to help me to change.

I never knew my grandfather, but I want to get to know him in my dreams because that's where I can see him because that's the only place where I see the people that I have lost. I miss you, grandpa.

-Roylan, Marin

From The Beat: We hope that you're able to get the opportunity of getting to know them in your dreams and that they are able to give you the necessary words of advice that you need so you can change the way you are.



RYAN INAMASU

Writing from North Kern State Prison in Delano, CA, we give you an old friend and contributor from Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall, who just recently got sentenced to some time in the California Department of Corrections. He's written in The Beat Without section a couple of times before, but he wanted to keep us updated on his whereabouts. We really appreciate it because it's a messed up feeling to be forgotten. We're glad he kept us and all you readers in mind. This week, he hits us with two poems. The first is a call for people to open their eyes and we think it's a pretty brilliant thing to call people on. He closes with a spin off of an old Tupac Shakur poem, which was also made a song. "In The Event Of My Demise" is a great title to remix if you can make it all your own. And even though Pac is a legend that is always a tough act to follow, we think Ryan did a pretty good job. Again, we appreciate being updated and can't wait to hear from him again.

In The Event Of My Demise

When my heart can beat no more
And my character has determined my destiny.
I shall move on not afraid and untouched;
For I know God stands next to me.
I hope I die for a purpose;
Not one that revolves around a war,
But possibly for a belief;
One in which only I stand for.
I have come to grips with what will one day happen
For I already know that God has chosen my destination
Before I was smashin'
From the day I was born,
To the second I took my first breath,
It was obvious to me;
That I'd be loved until I reached my death.
So when the day of my death comes
And leaves me paralyzed,
Much love and respect to all who have strived with me
In the event of my demise.

Open Your Eyes

I live my life from day to day
By blocking out my problems from which they sway.
From every angle to every crack
There always comes a time when you eventually look back.
Seeing is believing and as you start to learn the truth,
Just open up your eyes to see what's around you,
That's the living proof.
Advancing at a fast rate in a positive state of mind,
While allowing your soul to sour; can easily pass the time.
Don't ever be afraid to learn because you can never know enough
And later on down the road is where the going gets tough.
Thing's don't always make sense when they first occur,
So remember to open your eyes to avoid that sudden blur.

SHAWN MONTGOMERY

This first time writer in The Beat just recently came across our newsletter and really enjoyed reading the essays and poetry. How do we know? Well, because he told us in his letter. He also told us that he wants to reach people through his writing. He wants people to look at his writing and be able to then look within themselves and relate to what he's written however they can. And that's what The Beat is all about. Not only do we attempt to give a voice to the voiceless, but in doing so, we're also creating a roundtable of great ideas that every one of us can lean on when we're going through the same. We appreciate this new writer for recognizing that. He's recognizing that from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida.

Dependency

Not criminal minded, but subliminals blinded,
Perception yields trust, but I struggle behind it,
Trusting the wrong people can lead to your death,
Worse than dependency on coke, smack, and meth,
Depending on people, trying to hold them accountable,
When they fallible, and every thing they saying doubtful,
People give in easily, how can you tell,
Who's on your side and who's not in this world of hell?
Too much trust, in truth, is bad for your health,
That's why the only one I trust to this day is God and myself.

SHARK

This next writer sends us a poem, "which reflects the friendships and relationships of a lifer. People can have a heart full of good intentions but after a year or two they fade away. It's very rare that anybody sticks around longer than that." We wanted to quote his letter to show you what was meant when the poem was written. Unfortunately, he's waiting for a bed in the SHU, so he hasn't had the resources to keep us posted. Luckily enough for us, he found a way to write a couple lines letting us know what's going on with him. He's in the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, Washington. It's difficult maintaining relationships with people while we're locked up, so all we can hope for really while we're incarcerated is that people think about us from time to time. Well, if you're reading this, you're thinking about him, so writing is not a bad place to start. Us and our readers are keeping you in our thoughts. Can't wait to hear from you again.

If

If I ask you softly
Whisper in your ear
Pease help me find tomorrow
Would you want to hear?

If I gave you sorrow
To cleanse the soul of pain,
Would you understand me
And do for me the same?

If I close my eyes now
Will you fly away?
Spread your wings in earnest
For I can't make you stay.

If I write this poem
Will every word belong?
I can play the melody
If you will sing along?

Spread your wings in earnest
For I can't make you stay.

DONSHAY

Heartbreak is one of the worst feelings in the world because sometimes no matter how much you don't want to think about it, you recognize that not wanting to think about it is, in fact, thinking about it. This feeling gets amplified when isolated from the outside world because there's nobody there to console you. But at the same time we can't force people to do anything, especially to love us. So if that's the case, we must accept it for what it is even if separating is what it is. This heart broken young man is writing from the SEF unit in Maricopa County Juvenile Hall in Mesa, Arizona.

Hole In My Heart

Baby you burned a hole in my heart
I really thought there's nothing that could tear us apart
Baby I gave you all my love
When you left me you're all I could think of

I know I did you wrong
But I never thought you'd be gone for so long
You left with no remorse
I don't know why but I tried to get you back by force

I'm sorry baby take me back
I'll be a better man and that's a fact
Just give me one more try
And we can fly together and let our love pass by.

JUCE This next writer has lost a lot of loved ones and he speaks about a couple of them in two of his poems — his mother and close friend. Grief is a crazy thing to deal with because at first you feel like it's your fault and then you plead with whatever god you believe in to bring them back. There's not a lot of glory in losing a loved one, but what it does do that isn't too bad is allow you to remember all the good times you had with that person. Every lesson that person told you and every foolish moment you had together comes to the surface and this next writer depicts that like no other in those two poems. Then he brilliantly goes into a poem where he repeats the line, "Mama said there'd be days like this..." We really enjoyed that one. And he closes with our personal favorite about why he feels lock down is so shady. We really appreciate his words and we're sure you will too. He's writing from the Main Adult Detention Facility in the Sonoma County Jail in Santa Rosa, CA.

Lock Down So Shady

I feel like an animal locked in a cage
Put behind bars like the words on this page
Push too far, look at the beast they made
Stressing out, got my hair turning grey
Eyes wide open, but I see nothing like Ray
Clouded mind, had me holding on to a thirty-eight
Doing time, I'm trying to hold on to my faith
Doing time, cause of the choice that I made
Three months down and my baby on the way
Palm itching, so out there, I had to get paid
Jobs wasn't messing wit' me so I was back to pushing yay
Out of retirement, they got me on them tapes
So it's back to jail man, violated with a new case
Posted in this cell, eating on county cake
These cats a tell, got to watch the ninjas in your face
A ninja doing too much you better put him in his place
Before he checks you and makes you his mate
Disrespect you, taking food off your plate
Ain't no talking got to take flight from the gate
I hate this b-s but I made riding my fate
You can get tough, even with money like Bill Gates
O.G.s say I'm doing to much but forget what they say
Two play this game, your going to have to pay
Vice versa and they'll do it everyday
But I'm out this "b" for my thirty minutes a day.

R-I-P

Blood drippin' off my tee
Tears drippin' off my cheek
It's cold but inside I got so much heat
Pushing yo' guts back in, I can't stop the leak
You shivering, dying to speak
I'm holding on to my ninja, don't you go to sleep!
His eyes roll back, may his soul the Lord keep
But I ain't ready for all that
So I had to hit the streets
Ready to get them ninjas back
But it won't bring J-5 back to his feet
But they goin' feel my pain, when I bust this beat
And if I go down for the game, my soul at peace
You keep me cool, but now you deacease
I got a temper man, counseling I seek
I tried that shhhh, they couldn't understand me
You been gone a few years, but you still help me see
My anger made me sick, it's time to live right for my family
This shhhh started to click, when yo' baby around me.

Momma said there'd be days like this

Getting told that loved ones is dead

Momma said there'd be days like this

Wishing I could take back all the hurtful things I said

Unconditional Love

Momma said there'd be days like this
Locked down and my minds starts to reminisce
Momma said there'd be days like this
Wishing I can go back to being a kid
Momma said there'd be days like this
Getting told that loved ones is dead
Momma said there'd be days like this
Wishing I could take back all the hurtful things I said
Momma said there'd be days like this
When it rains, it pours, so cover your head
Momma said there'd be days like this
Having nightmares and waking up in a cold sweat
Momma said there'd be days like this
People do shady shhh just for kicks
Momma said there'd be days like this
They'll be up and downs but most of the time you goin'
pick
Momma said there'd be days like this
Runnin' the street, you'll get stuck in the world mix
Momma said there'd be days like this
Hell bound, but don't give the devil his wish
Momma said there'd be days like this
You goin' bury me, I ain't going to bury you
Momma said there'd be days like this
Forget what them boys say, to your heart stay true
Momma said there'd be days like this
Keep your faith in God and you'll get through
Momma said they'd be days like this
No matter what you do, I'm gonna always love you
Momma said there'd be days like this
Momma got your back, when its days like this

but I see nothing like Ray

Momma Please, Don't Go

If I go ape, you know why, cause my momma just died
And I wish that I, can bring my pops back alive
So much pain, got me not caring who die
Bodies fall like rain, I see nothing but homicide
And yeah I cried, for all my ninjas didn't survive
And I can't lie; I got these thoughts of suicide
My soul's demise you can see the death in my eyes
I pray in due time that God give me a sign
I'm holding mine, but it seems no humanity left in
mankind
So I'm ready for funk, paranoid out of my mind
I've peeped too much death, in this short lifetime
My heart feels this apathy and is slowly dying
My son, is my ambition for a better day, so yeah I keep
trying
Holding these feeling inside and to myself, I keep
lying
I'm asking why my life messed up, real shhh
When I'm living to die and dying to keep living
So I stay high, cause this messed up world I was given
Just to let my pain go, I'm killing my brain slow
I'm going insane, trying to stay on a path that's right
When death bring pain, just like a shark bite.
A piece of me is missing
My momma on her death bed, got me out here trippin'
Death is inevitable, so this is my premonition
Save my momma God and "I know you listening!!!"

Life Is Everything In The World

Life can be found everywhere in the world. Its not where you are at what makes the thought count. It's you have a life, and with that life you can be free anywhere and everywhere. Even in prison you can find life and even make a better life for yourself. Cause you have more time than a little bit and it does not matter what the situation may be at hand or how rough the going may get. No matter what the predicament may seem to be at the moment, no matter how unpleasant your life may seem to be these are the times to have faith and thank God that we have a life and put our mind to work to make whatever life we have left within us better than what it already is.

'Cause different times are what help sharpen our life if we only allow them to, with the help of God, so lets stop worrying about where we are cause that's not what life is all about cause it's much more to life then what the narrow mind thinks. So if we want anything in our lives to be better then we must start a learning process so we could know how to make a life for yourself when even being locked down in a one man cell, cause life are also there and what have inspired me to write about these thoughts cause I am doing life and some in the Florida Prison System, and over the last ten years and six months of my life has been spent behind a big steel door, in a little caged one man cell at Florida State Prison in a control unit call closed management and in the prison culture that I have lived in for years, and from day to day I hear inmates and convicts who are short timers speak about how they would not care and what they would do if they had life in prison, as if time had something to do with life, or as if life is over with cause of how long of a prison sentence one had to do

And I have learn if there is a way into something there is a way out of it, it may take years to fight your way up out of it but as long as you have life you have a chance, with a chance anything can happen and for some years at one time I was feeling as if there was no future in prison with the thought of having to do a life time in prison, but this was something I had to live and learn and gain more insight of this the hard way that one can also live free in prison with life or whatever else time they may have, can also make a very meaningful life for myself right here in prison cause true freedom starts within the heart and mind and spirit, cause if we take the chains off our minds and souls, that's a big step to having freedom and so many dudes I be hearing call the outside world the free world, but I don't see that as being true cause there are a great number of people who are in the outside world who are not free, and don't know if they are coming or going in the so called free world, but they still do have a life, just not doing much to make something out of it, and if I ever make it out of prison or not, I'm thinking to have a life where I am at and to be a part of life.

No Love For The Younger Ones

The kids of the world today are our up coming generation. They are some of the most important people in the world they are our future. They are the younger ones, and I think about them all the time, when I do read about how these kids are losing their lives in the streets by guns about drugs, money, sex and so on, and this hurt me to my heart to know how these younger ones are being destroyed out there in them streets without having any kind of chance to make something out of they life.

And before the younger ones even know it, they would be done joined some kind of street gangs with no sense of direction. They are shooting and killing up each other for all kinds of unknowing reasons. These younger ones run in these gangs for so long until they become notorious thugs with no love and not many of these younger ones go to school but the younger ones who go to with guns bigger then them, playing target practice with anything that gets in the way at the wrong time. And ain't no love for the younger ones they get caught up in the life of the streets running them each and every day with no direction, using drugs, from smoking weed, to using cocaine, heroine, crack, and so on. And they become dope dealers while they are still kids letting the bigger time dope dealers use them and pimp them for a little or nothing. Cause they did not know better.

And the bigger dope boys who have these younger ones working for them and looking up to them when they do not have any love for these younger ones. They want to use the younger ones to they advantage get rich off them. With no love for them at all. Leaving them in the hands of the law while they are very young and ain't no one there for the younger one's to teach them the art of responsibilities teaching them how to work for a living. Someone to push them through school so they could get them an education cause knowledge and information is power the more they know

MICHAEL MCKINNEY We're sure everyone knows this next name as he's been our most consistent and persistent writer recently. He writes long run on sentences because we think he's speaking directly from the heart. We know he has a heart for the younger generation because he makes it evident in his latest installment where he concludes with a piece titled, "No Love For The Younger Ones." He has a passion to teach the young ones from his experiences as many of our Beat Without writers do. He's writing from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida. We're sure we'll hear from him again very soon.

the more they would be able to do. And the streets turning these younger ones into cold-hearted human beings.

Always going down the wrong path. Learning nothing but the ways of the street life. And that become the way of surviving. Stealing, robbing, breaking into houses, and I'm not saying these kids are right for their action, but I do not blame them, cause they do not know what they stumble. So there for they are not responsible for their own actions, and society are not shoos much concern with the way these kids life are turning our to be in the streets. People in society fear these kids and they are dealing with these younger ones out of fear instead of dealing with them out of love.

These younger ones need some real love in their life. And the reason society is afraid and so frightened of these younger ones cause they do not understand them. And I have learned that people are afraid of what they don't understand and these younger ones need to be understood. They need more positive role models in they life. We need to reach out to these younger ones with all of our hearts and all of our minds and give them our all and undivided attention. These younger ones need some attention from the ones they look up to, they need some productive people in their corner. To pull them out of the street life of selfishness and self-destruction.

We must struggle along with these younger ones to show them how to make something out of their life other then what they have been taught in the streets. We must step up in more ways then one to help save these kids. Cause if there is a will there must be a way. These younger ones need to gain some control of the self. Cause knowing true knowledge of the self would help these younger ones live with some love in they heart. Cause they have been taught to hate kill and destroy other and anything around them. And I have three lil nephews who are consider to be younger ones and all of them are 17 years old now and will be turning 18 years sometime this year. And they are growing up in that outside world and I never had the chance to touch or meet anyone of them in person my greatest hopes is for them not to follow in my footsteps.

I have always had a big heart for the younger ones. And the system gets their hands on these younger ones and reach out tot hem in a form of punishment locking them up at a very young age and tender age. And this does not help them find a meaningful direction for themselves. Cause they system end up sending these younger ones to one group home to another group home from one half way house to another half way house, from one start center to another start center, from one reform school to another reform school by the courts, cause of delinquency, and when these younger ones are set free from these home's they was committed to by the courts before you know it these younger ones be locked right back up the law and everybody does not try to understand these younger one's are not being taught any reform.

They are being taught only punishment cause that's all the system use on these younger ones is punishment. Instead of dealing with them in a much loving and caring way giving them the chance to be accepted for who they really are. Cause once the Florida Prison Judicial System get a hold of these younger one's they try to wear house some of them in prison for the rest of they life making them bitter then ever. Angry and hateful, they become they become more arrogant and aggressive, not knowing anything about their true nature. Prison becomes these younger ones homes. Homosexuality becomes their way of life. A chain gang homosexual becomes their wife. Something they would kill another man about. Someone they think loves them who keep their life on the line all the time.

These younger ones need some help. They need some true love in their life. Other then the so called love that prison life had to offer them, other then the superficial friendship prison life has to offer them. Its sad how these younger ones grow up in prison hurting so bad on the inside. Just crying out on the inside for someone to love them, care for them, and just be there for them. Something that has been missing out of their life for so many years.

EJ These incredible poems were emailed to us from someone who really has an invested interest in The Beat. And the person who sent these to us isn't even the writer. Talk about dedication and compassion. We wish there were more people out in the world like him. Well, on to introducing the actual writer. His name is Estephen, but his friends call him EJ, so that's what we'll call him. He's not only a writer, but he's also a gifted artist. He can send his drawings also and we'll do everything in our power to make sure they get added to our wonderful publication. He shares a lot about himself in these next several poems from "How He Feels," which is a painful poem to "When He Opened His Eyes." There is a ton of insight and wisdom in these poems, so we hope our readers take a minute to focus on something other than their own pieces and take a look at this next writer who we can tell that through the madness will find a way to hold his head up regardless. We envy his strength and courage and just wish for the day where we can hold the same in such a magnitude. A special thanks goes out to Jim DeVenezia, the counselor/advocate at the group home Parc Place in Chandler, Arizona who encouraged EJ to send pieces our way!

When I Opened My Eyes

When I opened my eyes,
The first thing I saw was the white light,
Everything was all-bright.
When I opened my eyes, I saw the ceiling,
Then the doctor's face and he said, "He is healing."
They asked me who I was,
But I had no thoughts in my mind,
The doctor said, "Let him rest. We'll give him some time."

How I Feel

I feel like I'm a mess,
I can feel it in my chest.
It's dark,
It's slowly falling apart.
I feel like I was never meant to be born,
I'm a heroin baby, my heart is torn.
I feel like running away,
I get lonely so I pray.
This is how I feel,
I feel like a disaster.
Here comes more pain,
And now my heart is beating faster.
Sometimes I feel like dying,
I think about my life and I start crying.
And this is how I feel.

If I Could Make It

If I could make it,
I would be something new
For a change, something
That's not the same.
I would no longer be ashamed
Or the one to blame.
It would be something new to see,
Especially for me.
As I look up on the mirror,
All I see is reflection
Trying to get my attention.
But sometimes what you see
You cannot mention.
It would take away your perfection.
So there's some things
That I cannot mention.
All I can tell you is
If I could make it,
I would know how to live,
And no longer have to dig.

In The Dark, Part 2

In the dark, I can't see,
I'm not me.
I'm not free,
I smoke G.
In the dark,
There's no lights,
There's just fights.
In the dark,
I'm lonely,
I have nobody.
In the dark,
I pretend it's all just my
imagination,
So it won't stop my
motivation.
In the dark,
It can't be... this is my
destiny.

The Life Of A Young Kid

This is the life of a young kid,
Always out high smoking weed.
This is the life of a young kid,
Never got to do all the things you did.
Now the young kid doesn't understand,
He's out on the streets and he's only ten.
He has no home, his momma is all gone,
And now he is all alone.
Pops was never around,
And momma's nowhere to be found.

If I Had A Chance

If I had a chance I
Would take it but don't know
If I could make it I'll start
All over from scratch and
Try not to go back. Back to
What you'll probably ask. Back
To smoking, smoking that
Glass they're filling me up
Giving me pills trying to make
Me chill but that's all
Right that's ok I'll just
Pray, pray for a better day
I never get to see a sun
Shine all I see is drive bys
All I do is get high and I don't
Know why so if I had
A chance I would
Take it but don't know how far I'll
make it.

What I Want To Be

What I want to be, I want
To be somebody. I
Always wanted to be
something
But don't know what it was.
Too much tripping, too much
Drugs, too high to buzz.
I always wanted to be
Somebody but have to be
Lonely. What is it, what
Could it be that's holding
Me from my journey?
As I walk up the steps, I'm
Trying not to fall but next
Thing you know I lost it all.
So what I want to be, I want
To be me, just a thug
But I want to be loved.

A Seed

A seed,
Life came out of nowhere,
And the seed grew.
Life came,
But who knows where it came from?
By now,
The little seed is real long.
Where did the life come from... who
knows?
A seed grew,
And it's now a rose.
There are only a few chosen,
There are only those.
Those who believe there's a God,
Those who have faith,
Follow Him... it's not too late.
A seed, it is now a rose,
It is given a life, a form.
A rose needs a home,
But some are all alone.

In The Dark

In the dark I'm all alone
I can't find my home.
I'm too high, too stoned
My life is gone
And I'm just done.
In the dark I have no vision
There's no way of living
In the dark I'm blind and left behind.
In the dark there's no hope
So I do dope.

My Family

My family is always there
They're always fair.
They love me and want to help
me
When I need something they'll
come
They get sad when I run.
When I run away they pray
Even when I don't run they
pray
They make sure I'm ok.
My family is cool
They just get mad when I act
a fool.
My family, they probably love
me because I tried
But feel sad because I died.

Some Friends Of Mine

Let me start with Jessica
A friend from the block
When she was seventeen
Had a beautiful son named Josh
Told me how much she loved him
But she just couldn't have him
So Josh went up for adoption
Soon as she had him
Everybody supported her
But no one quite got it
Until one drunken day
She said she wanted free of her
problems
Went on to tell me
She was confused inside
Because it turns out Jessica
Was molested her whole life
She said she was sorry, cried
And asked me not to judge
But said that Josh is her father's son
And that's why she gave him up.

Then there's little Alex
But jerks call him Joe Dirt
And don't take into consideration
He's only nine and hurtin'
Never had a clean shirt
So he never went to school
And was already accustomed
Getting beat and called a fool
His mother was a dope addict
Lifeless prostitute
His daddy was his mom's pimp
And stayed high too
They were trying to raise Alex
(If you can call it that)

MICHAEL CABRAL

With clinical precision, Michael Cabral describes a few of the "friends" he grew up with in San Luis Obispo. Keeping his own emotional responses to a minimum, he touches our emotions by describing four friends whose young lives were crippled (or ended) through the circumstances of poverty and neglect. When politicians at every level spout platitudes like "leave no child behind," they should be made to read this wonderful poet's work. Here are the real children being left behind everywhere. The poet's job is to remind his readers that the emperor has no clothes — and there is no poet in The Beat who does it better than Michael Cabral from his cell at Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA.

In a dope spot
Where all the friends and alcoholics
are at
Alex's bedroom was the basement of
the pad
Which means he fell asleep every
night
In his daddy's meth lab

My homegirl Shannon
God, she's so pretty
But the ugliness of negligence
Made her so silly
Every time she walked by
Homies would stand at attention
Got to hootin' and hollerin'
Trying to grab her attention
Showed her no respect
But she never objected to it
'Cause all she ever learned about sex
Was how to do it
By the time she was fifteen
And in the tenth grade
She already lost count
Of how many dudes she'd laid
Said she was just looking for love
Thought she'd find it in the sheets
But all Shannon (Rest In peace) found
Was H-I-V
She never told a soul

Until right before she passed
So her memory lives on
Through every condom left in its
wrapper

My best friend was Danny
In the streets we called him Konan
The only kid as poor as I was
But he had a plan
Said he was tired of being broke
And swore dope would be his savior
Promised himself he'd only sell
enough
To never be a failure
He started pushin', looking for riches
But never slowed down
He lost sight of his dreams
All he saw was the pain
And went from pushing drugs in the
streets
To pushin' drugs in his veins
Then his connections cut him off
So Danny decided to rob them
Promised he was going to get high
And kill all of them
So he hit the spot and shot
The first thing moving in the house
It was a cop though
Now Danny's serving life without...

BELTRAN

We hardly ever hear from people who have been banging for a long time that believe banging was the right course of action to take with one's life. We usually hear from people like this next writer who wants people to think twice before they continue banging and probably for good reason. As a way of life, gang-banging can put people in many destructive situations they may have not had to deal with if they weren't banging. But who are we to judge, right? There may be plenty of good reasons why one would want to bang, we just haven't heard any. So as you read his "thoughts," remember to have yourself in mind as he probably had you in mind while he was thinking these thoughts. As always, we are grateful to be able to catch a glimpse of such a mind. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. We thank you for your thoughts.

My Thoughts

Man, homies and home girls who ever might a chance to read these thoughts hopefully you would realize that banging, robbing, just doing your thing won't get you nowhere but boxed up and put away and all because you were trying to prove a point to the next man. But check this out you don't have to prove nothing to anybody just prove something to yourself and be yourself, be a leader not no follower me entienden check this out.

As I sit here in this penitentiary behind walls and electric fences I never thought this would be my greatest destiny. I guess I'm a hardheaded soul never understood advises because I always let them go.

As I wake up every morning I thank God for another day to look up to the sky and say I'm okay even though we are all sinners I know that you know we all can be top winners if you follow the right line you would be led to a kingdom above in the skies I ask myself plenty of times why, why, why, do many people struggle for their lives you guys take care and may God bless you alratos homies and home girls!

DAVE KODET

Writing from an institution of the Wisconsin State Prison System in Winnebago, Wisconsin, we give you a man who's well aware of The Beat Within's mission and is on the prowl to assist us in that mission. We'll quote his letter to give you a sense of where his heart is. "I live in the Mid-West but we too have a high murder rate and as I write this we had a school shooting in which the principle was killed, even a failed school bombing plot that could have paralleled Columbine. Point blank, it's rough all over. I agree we need to come together to show unity for our world is unstable." Struggles are struggles and many people are struggling all over the world. So let us play our role in offering a positive piece of ourselves as Dave Kodet has done. Learn from his experiences because we're sure he's learning from yours. Thank you for being a part of the treasure that is this publication.

Warrior Call

Let the great brainwashing begin
In order to do this I look within
Who'd imagine the world was my enemy
When I was growing up I left no envy
Call me an addict cause I write to forget
But I don't forget I remember shhh
Like a membership of insults and hatreds
It's all so real so who would fake this
I'm meeting out my justice in reverse
Too many times I fell victim to the curse
Y'all want in but I want out
Screw the world is what ya' hear me shout
Taught through life to stay away from human contact
Sat out 8 months with 10 I'm back
Leading this war, a war at first sight
Round up the troops we ride at first light.

JR. This next writer read an article about the California Youth Authority by Lil' Ant on our webpage and that inspired him to write an email to us. Well, we thought it was a great piece and so we're publishing it. We thought it was great for many reasons. First of all, he's responding to one of our favorite Beat Within writers and reiterating how important it is that we all stay connected to one another. Secondly, he gives his own experience with Y.A. as someone who was there about 25 years ago. And lastly he offers what made him successful upon his release. We really enjoy lessons like that because they are extremely relevant nowadays. Especially when we're under the false impression that once we get out we can kick our feet up and just enjoy freedom. But when we get out, we're hit with a rude awakening — freedom brings responsibility. We're glad he's been able to take that head on and it is our hope that you can learn from his story. Hey Jr, please don't be a stranger, for even in your old age (smile), you're an important writer/teacher...

My Y_A (Youth Authority) Experience

Hi, I found this article "CYA Life At O.H. Close" by Lil' Ant and then I started to explore your website and I was very impressed.

I am a former inmate of O.H. Close, and I was curious to know if a former inmate could write as well? I feel my experience could be very helpful for anyone going through juvenile incarceration.

If I can write then here it is.

I go by Jr. I am 40 now, I have a family, a boy who is 12, and I have a new business making custom aftermarket products for Harley Davidson motorcycles, ie. custom tail lights and accessories. I also own Geekster domain and web hosting, www.geeksterdomains.com

I have been to college, I have owned three successful businesses in the past twenty-three years since I have been out of Y.A., and one of the businesses which I closed years ago had me working around movie stars, ever heard of Halle Berry? How about John Travolta? Hugh Jackman? Vinnie Jones? Larry Hagman? And some of my work from a business I started right out of Y.A. ended up in a Playboy centerfold shoot, and I have worked with many, many more Hollywood stars.

I have learned how to build computers, I can install operating systems and I can install several different operating systems on one machine. I have taught myself web building and I can work on any car on the road, I can rebuild automatic transmission, engines, drivelines, I can weld, fabricate, prototype, I have a small shop and it has tools which I use to make anything I want, I have grinders, vertical band saws for cutting steel, I have a 12 inch atlas metal cutting lathe and a Sherline jewelers lathe and milling machine, I taught myself and went to school to learn how to do all of this, I have many other skills which I use to make my way in life.

Despite my juvenile experience, I am not the smartest person in the world, after reading what you just did you may think you can't do that because you are not smart enough, or from the street, or someone is holding you 'down,' it is not true, you CAN learn all of this and more if you want despite any limitation you think you have, including a physical disability, well I am dyslexic, I spent my entire childhood in special education, it took me twice as long as everyone else to get through college, but I never quit, I never gave up, and you must not either

My life has been hard but I have learned a lot, my learning began when I was in Y.A., since I was released from Y-A, that was Sept 10, 1984, I have struggled to find my place in life, I by no means am giving a "success story" here, I am given you a glimpse of what waits for you when you're released, so please take these words to heart if you wish to have a different life when you are released.

I ended up in juvenile hall at the brick yard in Sylmar, and a brief stay at central, my friend and I had stolen a car and run away from abusive families, three days later we were in a car accident and my friend was killed.

I was arrested and brought to Sylmar Juvenile Hall where I would stay for the next six months, it was a shock because I was not from the city and everyone there was, I had never been around a "gang banger" before, and I never seen tattoos on anyone my age before, I was sixteen at the time, we had murderers, rapists, burglars, robbers, man, I was scared, so I kept my mouth shut and minded my own business and in time I made friends and everything settled down. I think the hardest thing was missing my freedom and missing all that food I used eat, cake and ice cream, barbeque tri tip, home made spaghetti, we talked about food all the time, it was never who was baddest,

it was what we wanted to eat when we got out.

I was going to be sent to fire camp but I was not done with court yet and someone thought I was going to camp so I was sent to Miraloma in Lancaster, at that time it was being used as a juvenile facility, and nothing but desert surrounded it. And I was from Lancaster, born and raised. This was not a good mix.

I knew however that I was going to be sent to Y-A and didn't know why I was being sent to a pre camp county facility in the first place, while I was there three of us planned an escape, and without helpful details I will say that I was the only one that was able to escape, the other two were caught right away. And no they did not snitch me out either. They were loyal to the end.

Well I made it to freedom, I made it back home, but I knew I had to go back and face the music some time, and I was looking at a long time. Two weeks later I turned myself in to the court I was to be sentenced at.

I was sent to Y-A but today I wonder if the escape was worth the effort, because before the escape I had a fighting chance for six months at a camp facility, closed or open does not matter, six months matters, by escaping I hammered the nail into the coffin and secured for myself a trip to Y-A.

I was sent to (CYA) Norwalk, SRCC, I would spend six months there, hmm, could of been out by that time. Instead I decided I needed to find God and I ordered every free piece of Christian literature I was allowed to have and keep, and I read the bible as much as I could. SRCC was not bad, we had a lot of stuff we could not have at the hall, radios, magazines, we had movies every night, we could have our own shoes too, and in them days, I don't know about now, they let you smoke, I never did because I have Asthma but others did and that was the norm.

I finally left SRCC for my new home at (CYA's) O.H. Close. I was sent to Butte Hall, as soon as I walked in the door I felt free again, no more court, no more evaluations, no more needles, no more board for a while at least, but I had my time I knew what I was going to do and now it was time to live a bit, and in those days there was no crip or blood killer stuff, but there was crips, bloods, north and south Latinos, whites and one Vietnamese, I will call him TB for his initials.

In Butte Hall we had committees, if you were on non-committee then you went to bed at 7 and had no privileges at all, everyone started out on non-committee and applied to be on another committee to get your life back.

Everyone got along, I grew up a country white boy from the desert, and now I was learning how to play chess from a hardcore gang banger, and, I taught my son chess, he is pretty good. But everyone got along despite all the racial divisions, north got along with south, crips got along with bloods, and I figure because deep down inside we are all really the same, why everyone could get along despite the differences I cannot explain except that everyone was willing to do that.

While I was in Y-A I earned the trust of my teachers and they let me take back books and encyclopedias back to the dorm, I would then spend my time flipping pages and stopping only when I found something interesting, I would read it and if I really liked it I would copy it, by hand, word for word, page by page so I would always have it to read. I did this the entire time I was in Y-A From a set of old encyclopedias I taught myself the basics of nuclear physics, I learned chemistry, I learned what the valence level of an electron is, I studied history, politics, culture, religion, I studied it all.

For me, unfortunately, Y-A was the best experience of my youth, the whole reason I ended up there was because I was trying to flee an abusive home where I was verbally and physically abused, in Y-A I earned the trust and respect of the staff and my peers, and they treated me like a real person and they made me feel like I was worth something. And to this day I remember them, all good.

When I was seven my mother tried to kill me with a large butcher knife, um, because I cut a piece of the wrong cake, it was a special valentines heart shaped cake she made, I asked her for a piece and as a seven-year-old would do, or not do in this case was communicate very well, she thought I meant the chocolate pan cake, I wanted the heart shaped cake, and I cut the bottom of the heart so I had a big corner piece, well, my mom seen that and went insane, when my mom threw me over the back of a chair and stuck that big knife to my neck and screaming at me in a rage I died inside, at that point I was

continued on next page

continued from previous page

changed, 2 days later protective services showed up at my house because a neighbor heard yelling and screaming, hmm, fast response, two days later.

I was scared, I thought they were there to take me and punish me because I cut the cake, this kind of abuse continued my whole childhood, my mom told me I was 'THE' anti-Christ, and if the government finds out who I am they will eliminate me, I was 7 when I was told that, by the time I was in my teens I couldn't take it anymore, my family are big people, and I do not mean fat either, my dad in the army could do 65 pull ups with full gear on, he was a jungle expert, I never seen anyone mess with my dad growing up ever, I seen plenty of people back away when he would confront them.

When I started running away I had to steal to eat and get what I needed, I was 15 when I started running away, I would get caught and returned home and my dad would beat the crap out of me, he broke a police nightstick over my head one night, broke it in two. The broke piece hit my record player and broke the record player.

When my friend and I had run away he was fleeing religious zealots who were overbearing and controlling and would not let my friend out for anything, he had to sneak out late at night and only after I taught him how to do that, we did that for months and we never got in trouble, we never did drugs, we never drank, we didn't go out fighting, it seems his parents had no trust that their own son could make a right decision.

When we decided to run away I of course being the street wise one tried my best to convince him it was not worth it, I was already planning on my last get away which would be for good, my friend made it clear he was coming with me whether or not I liked it, so the plan was hatched, I gave up and figured lets go, so we took his dads car and split, Three days later while I was asleep and not buckled in the passenger seat the car flipped, we had been lost on a dirt road following the Colorado river and he had fallen asleep at the wheel and the car went off a 20 foot drop and flipped upside down in the Colorado river.

The force of the water pushed me to the back of the car where I knew I was going to die, I was breathing in water, 2 or 3 minutes had gone by and I was getting dizzy and then I seen my friend swim by and I followed him, I made it out of the car which was now at the bottom of the Colorado river, and the river was flooding and was full of silt.

My friend was already dead, I don't know what I seen, I guess it was his spirit guiding me out of the car, he had impacted the steering real hard and was knocked out and had no way of holding his breath, the three minutes I was in the car underwater he was already dead.

My life had flashed before me, and the odd thing was, what I saw, was every moment in my life when I had been or felt the most safe and secure in my childhood. I even thought of my warm bed. I did not see any of the bad, and to this day that event is all I have to draw upon when I am asked to remember the best times of my childhood.

When I was finally released from Y-A I was released back to the home I had tried so hard to escape. I got a job, I worked all the time, I worked from 7am to 2pm, then my next job I worked from 2:30pm to 6pm, and I started my next job from 7pm to midnight, and an hour to get home and take a shower and get in bed, I did that for the first three years out of Y-A because I could not take living at home with these still abusive people, although my dad was not beating me anymore, I was bigger than him now. But I did get all the previous verbal abuse. After that three years I left home and became homeless just to get out, but I did not have to break the law anymore to get away, I could work, live, eat and pay my way. I did eventually find a place to live with some college students and there I would meet my wife of today.

So I worked my ass off. My adult life has been hard, kids, I have had to work hard to get to where I am at, through all of that I found out that I suffer from severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), since I was young I have had very graphic nightmares, loss of sleep, anxiety, depression, all from PTSD, and today I have permanent brain damage from it.

Kids, listen to me, if in fact you have read this, because my story left out the hardships I went through in the system, I was there for my reason, you are there for yours, but in the end if you have the power of knowledge, and understanding, then you have the power to make a decision that can create positive things in your life, or negative things in your life, but only YOU

JR. (CONT.)

can take the initiative and make an effort to change, it took MY effort to find a counselor to see when I was in my early 20's, and kids, this is the time when you need to make a right decision, because what you mess up in your 20's will not be sealed, it will not go away, it will follow you in life and prevent you from your dreams, this is the information age, EVERYTHING you do is recorded and is easily found by anyone, especially employers. I can tell you a college education is not enough, I did go on to college, I held a 3.8 grade average, it was a struggle, it took two times longer for me to get through because I am dyslexic and have bad eyes, it was not easy, especially for me, and the same will be true for you.

Take this time to make some good decisions, act on them when you are released, give yourself a good life, trust me, it is not cool to be cool if being cool means being broke and on drugs and in and out of jail. Each and everyone you, north, south, crip, blood, white black or purple poka dotted I don't care, you each have the ability to do ANYTHING you want, IF and only if YOU want to.

It takes work, hard work, it takes time, a long time, but I promise you, if you do these things, you WILL be rewarded, get counseling when you are released, get a part time job STAY AWAY FROM THE PAST CROWD, and get into the community college and start talking to a guidance counselor, you will have to get an education if you plan to be any kind of success, technology is here and the money is in technology, the highest incomes in the U.S. are from technology jobs.

Your choices without an education are this, the military, and they will require you to go to college and keep passing tests for your whole military career, (I was in the Army too, I know) If at any time you fail to hold a certain amount of college units and or military courses, they will kick you out, AND, being in the military is like being on probation all the time, you will live by the U.C.M.J. which is the Uniform Code of Military Justice and if you screw up in the military you go right to Leavenworth, I kid not here, and the military guards there are brutal, you WILL leave there with broken bones I promise you.

After the military you will either work for Walmart or a gas station, or landscaping, and, you will make no money, the last option if the lottery does not work is crime, stealing, selling drugs, etc.

So, if I can do it, you can do it too, you are all smart enough to do what I have done, I am not in prison, I am not on parole, I have done it despite the PTSD, despite my past, despite everything - I have done it, and I am telling you that you can too, I come from where you are at now, I am here now, I was you at one time, it all starts with 1 choice, the RIGHT choice, because when you get out, no one will care about you, no one will help you, your past life will be there waiting to eat you up again and spit you out, the county and state is taking this time to treat you like a human being, and help you not to come back to jail, once you are an adult, jail is jail man, state and county will not spend the time to coddle you and tell you not to do this or that, there are no programs like what you have available to you now, and when you are 18, 19 and in adult jail, well, lets just say you better know how to fight.

You all can do it, I did it, I know others who have done it too, ever heard of Tim Allen? Albert Einstein? Yes, Tim Allen was in prison, had nothing, he came out of prison and made it big, Albert Einstein was learning disabled, he failed school all his life, he even dropped out at one point, Thomas Edison was severely dyslexic, also a drop out, and most of the worlds greatest inventions came from poor disadvantaged people.

You are all very smart, don't limit yourself because of your past, it takes work, hard work, you CAN do it, just say that over and over, "I can do it, I CAN do it, I WILL DO IT!" Write down what you want to be, then write down what you will have to do in order to do that, it may take years and years to check off some of those things, but one day, you will make that last check, you will remember this day, you will frame that paper and show it to your kids one day, as a lesson to what they can do if they set their mind to it, and you will have a good life, your kids will have a good life and the past will be gone never to return, it is all up to you. Thank you for your time. Never give up. Please excuse my spelling, I am getting sloppy in my age.

ISRAEL PEREZ There are multiple layers to the story our friend and long-time contributor Israel Perez tells below. Beginning with a lamentation that young "gangsters" have lost any sense of "honor among thieves" or any sense of conducting themselves with any kind of internal moral code, he then relates a story of violence that tragically punctuates the prison experience. We feel sure that many of our young writer/readers will approve the merciless beating administered to the "rapist" at the heart of this story, (though we find even that level of violence terrible to "witness" and unable to be justified). But, the beating these prisoners justify turns into something else, something unexpected, something terrible. Mr. Perez experiences and writes about the violent reality of prison from his temporary home in Salinas Valley State Prison.

"Shut Up And Follow"

Not many weeks ago, I awoke to prepare my morning shot of strong black coffee, as I routinely do. The swirling hot steam wafted up from the scalding cup of Folgers and cleared the night's cobwebs even before I took a single sip. Turning on my television set to catch the morning news from the Good Morning America crew, I immediately found myself as outraged as the rest of the nation must have been. Because playing across the TV's screen was the grainy footage of an obviously young, strong male pummeling a frail, one-hundred-year-old woman.

With unrestrained viciousness, the "man" delivered devastating punches to the elderly woman's face, long after he had her purse securely in hand — long after he could have simply wailed away from the defenseless senior without fear of her mounting any form of counterattack. If there were not enough, the insensitive cold-hearted bastard left his now battered victim, only to commit a similarly heinous attack on another elderly woman.

Sitting on my prison bunk for quite some time, I sat there dumbfounded at what I had just witnessed. I played back the episode in my mind visualizing the assailant as I remembered him. And sure enough, I recognized his wardrobe to be that of today's thug, G, gangsta...

And that's when it hit me square on the head. It dawned on me suddenly just how far the definition of a gangster has deteriorated. I realized what a truly negative view society has on today's gangster. Because whether most law abiding citizens wish to deny it or not, there was always an infatuation with the American gangster. From the East coast's early "Black Hand," to Chicago's Al Capone, New York's Lucky Luciano and John Gotti, Americans understood these organizations and gangsters were ultimately bad for their society. Nevertheless, they secretly admired the guilelessness of these men, their sense of honor and justice. And they especially liked that their violent ways were mostly practiced on one another.

However, the same can't be said for today's "gangster." How can it when these men (sometimes women) behave more like low-class hoodlums? For there's no sophisticated style about these criminals, no honor, no pride, and surely no sense of moral fiber. These men have no qualms about recruiting nine-year-old boys who've yet to develop the ability to make intelligent decisions about the life they want to live. These gangsters have no problem with committing sex crimes against women — even children! They see nothing wrong with pushing drugs on the innocent and ruining already struggling families.

In short, these new criminal organizations aren't worthy of the term gangster. No, they're only worthy of the disdain reserved for the lowliest of criminals: child molesters, kid killers, rapists, predators of the elderly, and governments who abuse their citizens.

Now, I don't level these charges because I think myself some kind of saint. God knows I done my fair share of extortion, racketeering, home invasions, hijacking of merchandise-laden trucks, and countless other lucrative crimes. And as the following tale will reveal, I've done my share of sins against the innocent. I only wish that those of

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us who can't help but live outside society's laws would get back in touch with that gangster honor, pride, and moral code.

It was the kind of weather only those who are familiar with California's Salinas Valley could appreciate. It was one of those days, which surely inspired many a John Steinbeck novel. The morning sun was bathing me in a pleasant warmth while the lingering chill from the previous night prevented a scorching heat. In fact, the world around me would have been perfect if it weren't for the cruel trademarks which screamed prison: he razor wire-topped cyclone fence catching the morning sun rays just right, twisting them into something ugly; the mirrored windows of the gun towers doing their job perfectly, hiding the rifle toting guards completely, thus intimidating all but the most determined prisoners from committing acts of violence; the steady whack whack sound of blue handballs echoed from the handball courts where tattooed Hispanics competed almost religiously.

Several yards away from them played out two separate games of basketball. On one court were black prisoners who shook and feigned and dashed, dribbling with an athletic grace as they drove to the rim. While the opposite court held white prisoners who shoved and jabbed and slapped, violently pushing with uncoordinated attempts to score a rare basket.

All around the prison yard were groups of huddled prisoners. Some laughed and joked. Others horsed around, playfully pulling on a shirt, a jacket. But some groups spoke quietly, conspiratorially, standing together off to the side, out of the way. Some squatted on the grass looking in a certain direction, listening as one prisoner whispered. They conspired on a drug deal, whispered about an unpaid gambling debt, or like the group of men I found around me, debated the fate of a prisoner who was rumored to have transgressed against prison law.

The offending prisoner in question was a young man newly arrived at our Salinas Valley State Prison. And I listened carefully as a huge prisoner who went by the name of Hitman leveled charges against him. With unblinking eyes, Hitman continuously punched the palm of his hand, exclamation marks to each of his condemning words. "I swear on everything! That's Ol' Boy from New Folsom," Hitman said repeatedly. "The homies blasted him 'cause he's a rapist. That's on everything, folks," he went on.

The several wisest of our prison group shook their heads with disappointment. Like me they were probably thinking, "If it isn't one thing, it's another." Yet, being the wise counsel we thought ourselves, we all dismissed Hitman's request to immediately have someone go into 1 Block (where the suspect prisoner was housed), and take violent action against him. Instead, we all concluded patience was the best course. After all, we reasoned, there was no "paper work" (official documentation) in our possession, which confirmed the prisoner was "no good."

And that is where things would have rested until the proper paper work was obtained. However, fate had other plans. For right as the "yard recall" was announced, the cellmate of the suspect prisoner came hurriedly out of 1 Block. Nearly out of breath, he informed us his celly was

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attempting to 'roll-up' (move off the yard). This bit of news served as an alarm to take immediate action.

Haphazardly, a plan was rapidly hatched to assault the now condemned prisoner before he could escape. Quickly, it was concluded any attack would be carried out by those who were also housed in 1 Block. And being that I was one of several prisoners housed in the building, I picked two "homies" I thought most trustworthy to rush into the target's cell, and another to keep watch outside the door.

And just like that, everything in my life was set to the side. All my personal plans and goals had to be put on hold, had to take a back seat to what was best for "the car." Nothing else was more important at that moment, and the crowd of other prisoners seemed to sense that mindset, as we moved through them.

Reaching the guilty prisoner's cell, I waved a white T-shirt to catch the alert eye of the guard in the control tower. This action was to signal the guard who controlled all the building's doors, to "pop" the one I stood in front of. The trick was to appear not only confident that you lived in that cell, while your adrenaline is surging through every limb, but to come off as relaxed as well. And because I was already a veteran of prison life, despite being in my mid-twenties, the tower guard popped the door without a second thought.

Calmly stepping into the cell, I was confronted with the medium-sized inmate who had upon his bewildered face a look of uncertainty. He took an unsure step forward, then just as quickly stepped back. I imagine his confusion was mainly due to the big smile I misleadingly wore upon my own face, as I continued to calmly approach. Yet, I could see exactly when his confusion cleared up, and just by his eyes, I knew when the other two prisoners entered the cell behind me.

Hearing the heavy steel door get slid closed to hide the scene, the hands of our target came up in a protective manner, knowingly. And the explosive violence that erupted with shattering speed imploded within the small cell. With crushing force, we began to strike blows to our cornered prey. And no matter which way our victim turned, he was unable to escape our punishment. And ear got exposed and a smashing blow landed... an eye, a nose, a cheek bone, a lip, even the hard back of a skull. Within devastating seconds, our wounded and dazed prey crumbled to the concrete at our feet.

Then it was hard, unforgiving state prison boots kicking him, stomping him. We struggled against each other for clear space, room to deliver powerful kicks. And our victim

ISRAEL PEREZ (CONT.)

cried out no more. His yells for us to cease were silenced, and all that was left were the sounds of impact blows, until even they were replaced by our heaving deep breaths.

One by one we exited the bloody cell with its now numerous boot scuff-marked floor. Other inmates looked, while they didn't look. And the 4 ones who didn't see, looked about, sensing the violence, smelling the prison tension the way one eventually learns to.

The next day found broken prisoner removed from "our" yard. Sadly, y two friends who also rushed into his cell were now gone as well. But this sad news could do little to diminish the glow which surrounded me, the glow that engulfs a "solder" who has "just put in work for the cause." That usually takes a couple of days to fade. After other prisoners stop giving you that approving nod, that "handle-your-business-homeboy" pat on the back.

However, upon reaching the yard after the morning's yard release, it was an entirely different matter. For it was there that my big smile was met with the last thing I wanted to hear. And that was the paperwork (retrieved from the Captain's office) stating that the prisoner who I attacked was no rapist at all. In fact, his case showed he was not only innocent of any forms of sex crimes, but that he was a "good homie," a soldier, a ryder, a warrior who had put in his fair share of work for the cause.

Strolling the yard with a couple of the wise homies, they tried to console my morose depression. They repeatedly assured me that anyone of them could have been placed in a precarious position. Yet, their words could do little comfort my sense of guilt. For they didn't have the crying man's pleadings in their ears, pleasing that only came after he had attempted to calmly ask why we were beating him. The other prisoners didn't hear how hard we kicked him. They didn't see the amount of rage I poured out on him. They didn't wipe the blood from their boots while laughingly retelling the events of the beating to their cellmate. No, I did.

I did those ugly things. And no amount of comforting consolation could ever change that. The crime as mine, not theirs. The sin was seared into my own soul, and I would now be condemned to carry the guilt with me all my days. There would be no going back and correcting a wrong. There could be no going back. And because I was so willing to follow the crowd unquestioning, I would hold in my heart forever a terribly deep guilt.

Uncomfortable silence

Your contact with me stopped

Silence

Nothing

Not a call, a letter, not even a simple message

I think to my self, and I think that my love for you has
gotten lesser and

Lesser

'Cause see you have gotten lesser and lesser

I sit here watching my eyes bleed while I write this poem to
you

I hope that it gets to you but I will never know

But yet again I will never know 'cause you contact will stop

Silence

Nothing

Not a call, a letter, not even a simple message

You were my every thing

I cared for you; I did the things you needed when you
needed it

But at the time I needed you the most you were no where
to be found

Lost

A missing person

So I go searching for you

Only to find you a home with the rest of the family

Then again your contact stops

Silence

Nothing

Not a call, a letter, not even a simple message

So I sit here watching my eyes bleed, and my heartthrob

I say to my self that my words mean nothing

My care, and love for you is silent

So silent

Nothing

Another issue went unsolved

Shhh... silence can only last so long

I'll be here when you want to talk

But for now I'll be like you and sit in uncomfortable
silence

RAYMOND This next writer is going to be free by the time we publish this, so we're really happy for him. This is another writer who was sent to us through email from his counselor/advocate Jim DeVenezia who worked with Raymond at the group home Parc Place Chandler, Arizona. We were informed by Jim we helped make Raymond feel special by showcasing his earlier works. That's such a reward to us because we feel like the feelings mutual. Raymond helped us feel special by sharing so much about himself and we commend him for the courage it takes to do that. For those of you who don't know him, we'll give you a little introduction straight from him. "I'm doing pretty good in here. If you don't know my name, it is Raymond J. I am now 16, turning 17 in May. I was born and raised in AZ. I am 100% Navajo from West Whitecone. I came out to Phoenix when I was thirteen. That was when I started to get arrested." Well now he's out and hopefully he'll keep in touch because though we don't agree with some of the things he told his friends in the poem, "Stay Up," we appreciate all his caring words like the ones in his letter to us. In conclusion, his girlfriend also writes a poem and gets published. We can tell who taught him about poetry. Naw, just playin'. But seriously your words will truly be missed if you decide not to keep us posted. We hope you enjoy your freedom without enjoying it to a point where you're breaking the law again. With freedom comes responsibility, and if you're anything like the young man we've got to know through writing, we think you'll be okay. Thank you for your dedication to us and to our readers.

Words In Mind

Drama is a book about a person's life,
Pleasure, the greatest pleasure in life is doing what
someone says you cannot do.
Ambition — if you wish to reach the highest, begin at
the lowest.
Knowledge — strange how much you got to know,
before you know how little you know.
Here's a little heart for every fate,
Fault and so much bad in the best of us, grief, heavy
hearts, like heavy clouds in the sky.
The best relieved by the letting of water.
Crime society prepares the crime, the criminals
commit it.
There are two tragedies in life,
One is not your heart's desire,
The other is to get it.
So, what's yours?
Written by Auralia M. (Raymond's Girlfriend)

I'm going to go back to school,
and start to get a education.
I can't wait to leave,
I even stopped my medication.

If I Could Go Back In Time

If I could go back in time,
I would go to when I first got arrested.
I would leave Brian alone,
And I would go get wasted.
I would go to the time my mom got arrested,
And I'll make sure she don't drive that truck.
The cops didn't come that fast,
To me that was luck.
I had a warrant,
Because I got into a fight.
Now I was running from the law,
In the middle of the night.
Then I got arrested,
I only saw four walls and a window.
There's 86 bricks,
And the room is hollow.
They have metal sinks,
And the toilet can suck up a sock.
You have to read all day,
And at night you can mop.

In The Rain

In the rain,
It feels good.
It feels like a shower,
like it should.
The drops fall softly,
It looks like tears.
Its nothing but water,
but so pure.

Farewell

Farewell,
to all the listeners.
Everybody likes to talk,
but some whispers.
I'll miss everybody,
but I'll be free.
I'll run all over,
and I'll be me.
I'm going to go back to school,
and start to get a education.
I can't wait to leave,
I even stopped my medication.
But sometimes I sit by my window,
I just sit there and ponder.
I was locked up too much,
but I don't want to stay any longer.
The world is vast,
but it is also crazy.
I'm going to get my brother to work,
'Cause I don't want him to be lazy.

To The Beat

What's up, Beat? How you doing? I'm doing pretty good in here. If you don't know my name, it is Raymond J. I am now 16, turning 17 in May. I was born and raised in AZ. I am 100% Navajo from West Whitecone. I came out to Phoenix when I was thirteen. That was when I started to get arrested. I was arrested four times.

The first time I got arrested was because I stabbed my mom's boyfriend because he hit her. Then that's when it went downhill. I could not stop drinking and smoking weed. So that's when they sent me to Parc Place. I was gang-affiliated when I was 10. I started to have a family that is not blood-related. I know I did bad things and I'm not proud of it.

Beat, I will leave on April 2 and I hope that I can keep in touch somehow when I am as free as a bird. So, Beat, all I got to say is I hope my poems do something good to all you thugs and hustlers and help you change your ways. And Good Luck. I hope my poems let people think in the cell and let people change. I hope my words get to somebody. It was a surprise that I made it in The Beat. The only thing I used to do was read The Beat. I was always told that I was worthless and could never do anything right. But it shows you guys that I did something right this time.

I am almost finished with my treatment and I am going to be off probation when I leave. I hope I can do better when I leave. I wasn't doing good because I was locked up most of the time I was out. I'll keep writing and doing good, but I hope you guys do good too. I will miss all my homies in here and hope they do good too. But most of all, I hope my girl does good and not get dragged down like me. I will never mistreat her like I did my ex-girl. But most of all "I love you, Mom". You know that I'm going to always be here for you. Peace to all of you. Thanks, Jim. Thanks for all your help.

MVP

Most Valuable Player,
That sounds like Steve Nash.
Everybody likes his game,
It's probably because he's fast.
My MVP is Ralph,
He plays good ball.
He's very skilled,
He can also draw.
You have to work hard to get MVP,
You don't get it eating chips.
You can't get arrested,
And be on JIPS.
You have to work your hardest,
Then get fit.
Make sure you go for the ball,
But most of all, try to get it.
It's not all about the money,
It's not even about the fame.
It's about how you play ball,
It's even about your game.

Hustling

I hustled every day I was out,
I'll go sell a fat sack.
I'll run all over,
And I'll be a mack.
I'll go pimp my girl,
Have her get me money.
I mistreated her,
And my friends thought it was funny.
It was messed up,
How I did her wrong.
I'll take her to eat,
Only at Long Wong's.
This rhyme is all messed up,
I can't write no more.
I'm getting tired of this,
I'm going to walk out the door.
But I'm not going to forget my girl,
I'm going to treat her right.
So all I got to say is "Peace",
But don't forget to turn off the light.

Vanished

I never knew what I had,
Until it was all gone.
It seems like I lost everything,
But sometimes I think I won.
I had this girl,
She was really kind.
She never lied to me,
Not even played with my mind.
Now I'm in a treatment center,
I'm here because of drugs.
But I'm not other people,
Going around giving hugs.
I wasn't raised like that,
I was born to be a "G".
You guys might not understand,
But that's just me.
I was raised to fight,
And get money.
You guys might think it's a joke,
But it's not funny.

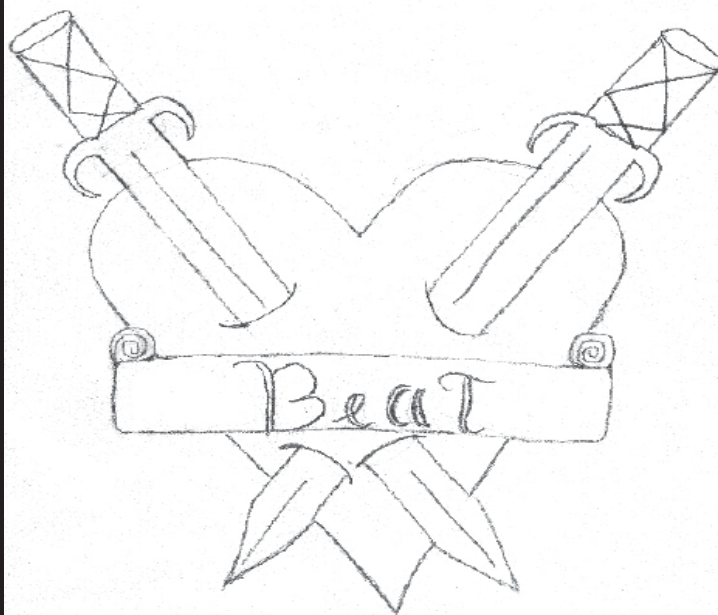
RAYMOND (CONT.)

Stay Up

Stay up,
Try not to kill yourself.
My mom is in prison,
But I have her picture on my shelf.
People would annoy you,
But just ignore them.
Someone would jump you,
Just try not to shoot them.
People would act all "G,"
Just try not to get punked.
Go down like a "G,"
Then go get drunk.
If they say something,
Make sure you stand up.
Go down with a fight,
Just try not to get cut.
Just chill, homie,
Go and smoke weed.
Go and get a fat sack,
And smoke all you need.

Today Is A Good Day

Today is a good day,
I didn't get chased by a cop.
If I did, I would run my fastest,
And I would never stop.
I didn't have to worry about money,
I didn't have to watch my back.
I got full on the food,
I even got an extra snack.
My meds got me tired,
I'm ready to go to sleep,
Sometimes I think I have a clock,
And I would hear a beep.
Someone from 200 came over,
And turned the TV on,
She just used the remote,
Then she was gone.
I just chilled,
Today was a good day.
The thing that tripped me out,
Is today was a Monday.



Not a call, a letter, not even a simple message
You were my every thing
I cared for you; I did the things you needed when you needed it
But at the time I needed you the most you were no where to be found

read the rest of Israel Perez's BWO piece on page 45

