

I Am the Voice:

Girls' Reflections from Inside
the Justice System



**CENTER ON
POVERTY and
INEQUALITY**
GEORGETOWN LAW

INITIATIVE ON
**GENDER
JUSTICE &
OPPORTUNITY**

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ABOUT THE EDITORS' ORGANIZATIONS:

The **Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality** works with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and advocates to develop effective policies and practices that alleviate poverty and inequality in the United States. The Center's **Initiative on Gender Justice and Opportunity** focuses on supporting low-income girls and girls of color by identifying barriers to girls' health and wellbeing, elevating girls' unique assets, narratives, and needs, and developing solutions for public systems to better support girls. In consultation with girls themselves, policymakers, researchers, and advocates, the Initiative conducts research, develops policy, identifies promising practices, and issues reports on decreasing girls' contact with the juvenile justice system, increasing girls' access to education, and improving systems' responses to the trauma girls experience.

See more at www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/gender-justice-and-opportunity/

Rights4Girls is a human rights organization dedicated to ending gender-based violence against young women and girls in the U.S. We work to change the narrative and policies that allow girls to be criminalized when they are victimized and advocate for approaches and interventions that provide girls and young women with safety and support. Our work includes advocacy at the federal, state, and local levels as well as public education campaigns, coalition building, research, and training and technical assistance. We center the voices and needs of our most marginalized girls to ensure that all of our work is far-reaching and intersectional.

See more at www.rights4girls.org.

A special thanks to Becca Shopiro, of the Center on Poverty and Inequality, for her efforts in putting together this booklet.

***Note from Executive Director Rebecca Epstein, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality:** This project was made possible by Ms. Terri Jackson, an alumna of Georgetown University Law Center. In 2017, I received a call from Terri after she read the Center's report on the adultification of Black girls, called *Girldom Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood*. She was in the midst of planning her 50th birthday celebration when she read the report, and she was inspired by our research to do something different. In lieu of a celebration and gifts, she would request that her family and friends support the Center's work on marginalized girls. I was profoundly inspired by the generosity of this gesture and of her friends who responded to the call. I hope that this booklet meets the high standard that Ms. Jackson has set for our work. - RE*

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The Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality's Initiative on Gender Justice and Opportunity and Rights4Girls are excited to present this compilation of girls' visual and written work about their experiences with the juvenile justice system.

Girls represent a growing share of the juvenile justice population. The girls who are sent into the system are disproportionately girls of color, and many are LGBT/gender non-conforming.

In most cases, the offenses that these girls commit do not present risks to public safety; instead, they reflect trauma that the girls have experienced. At higher rates than boys, girls in juvenile justice have mental health needs that most often go unaddressed by a punitive system that exacerbates their symptoms.

The system rarely provides girls with the opportunity to express themselves — or to be heard when they do. It offers few of the programs that girls need — healing-centered, gender-responsive, culturally competent, or trauma-sensitive interventions. Some of the girls whose work appears in this booklet have participated in such programs, which are named in the acknowledgement section. But, more often, juvenile justice facilities do not see the girls for who they are.

This booklet turns a lens toward the girls, providing space for them to speak for themselves and allowing their work to stand on its own. To truly support girls, we must let them lead: we must hear their stories, respect their perspectives, witness their brilliance, heed their creativity, and recognize their resilience.

This booklet reflects that philosophy.

But it is more than a statement; it is a window, a portal, into the experience of girls, and is the product of their hard work. We are grateful for their willingness to share their stories and insights, and we celebrate the skill, courage, and openness of their art. We offer our profound thanks to each contributor.

We also owe an immense debt of gratitude to our friends and partners, new and old, who spread the word and supported the artists through the submission process.

SPECIAL NOTE ON THE WORK IN THIS BOOKLET

In the pages that follow, readers will find stories of profound trauma and overcoming insurmountable odds. Experiences of violence, neglect, homelessness, sex trafficking, family separation, and abuse have led to justice system involvement for many of these young artists, and they are honest in their feelings of anger, frustration, or self-blame. Other submissions re-affirm their sense of strength and beauty while also conveying hope and optimism for a brighter future. We made a conscious decision to publish their work without censorship because it reflects the realities for those girls at the time the art was created and shows the complexity of human emotion. We must honor their truth, their feelings, and their voice.

Readers may notice that some artists describe juvenile detention centers as places of healing where they had access to essential services and support from staff members. Others view detention centers as cages and probation as chains holding them back from achieving their full potential and dreams. We have much to learn from their varied experiences and perspectives. While there are some innovative programs across the country serving girls in the juvenile justice system, we implore readers to imagine a world where girls do not have to be incarcerated in order to feel safe, supported, or have access to vital resources. We can, and we must, do better.

It is our hope that girls who read this compilation may find healing power in connection. We are profoundly grateful to all of the young women who gave voice to those in the juvenile justice system who remain silenced.

— Rebecca Epstein, Yasmin Vafa, and Rebecca Burney, Washington, DC

"LONELY HEART"

Juvenile

Damn, I never saw myself sitting in a cell,
Locked away from the loves of my life.
I thought I was untouchable.

Come home when I want
Skip school when I want,
You know, do what I want...

Now come to find out, as I sit in this desk,
I have a lot of anxiety and fear,
Especially when the doors close and it's me alone,
With my thoughts.

I cry myself sleep,
I hope no one hears me.
I ask myself am I strong enough to change?
Do I want to change?

In truth, I am afraid to change,
I want to go back to living the only life I know,
But the life I know is also the lifestyle
That can send me back to this place or worse.

Soon I will go back to my locked room.
I will pace, back and forth
I will talk to myself with worried thoughts
and again, I will cry myself to sleep.
Something has to give...

I certainly hope I find the support and love to help me change
My heart wants it now, but that may change tomorrow,
I'm a kid.

O'MAYA BECKLES

Alone

Disgrace, unfit
Maybe even a b-tch
Hurtful words make me feel like I'm in a ditch
I sit and think, "Why'd I choose this life"
My world crumbling around me as I sleep at night
I toss and turn to the left and right.

Visions of my fallen soldiers who died in the fight.

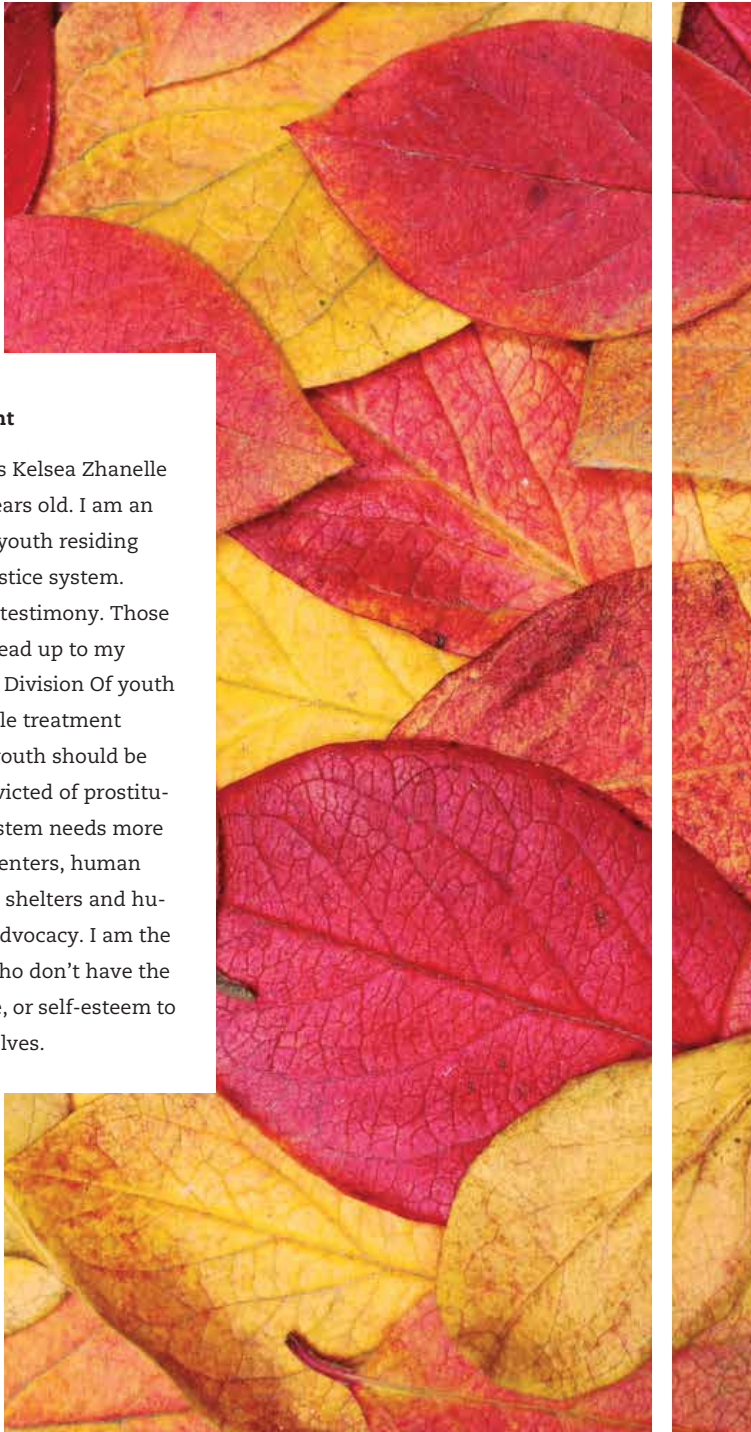
Foster home to jail, jail to foster home
No matter the situation I felt alone.

Alone, with nobody around.
Alone, left to figure it out.
Alone, the reason I need to make it out.

Used and Abused
Drunk off of booze
life's too short I was wasting it like a fool

Memories that scarred me
Can no longer harm me
These broken branches have fallen
No longer a burden to my progress
That fragile plant you once had seen
has now grown to a strong oak tree

Disgrace, unfit
Maybe even a b-tch
Those words no longer faze me cause
Success is what I've just hit.



KELSEA FOSTER

Artist's Statement

Hello, My name is Kelsea Zhanelle Foster, I am 17 years old. I am an advocate for the youth residing in the juvenile justice system. This poem is my testimony. Those things are what lead up to my placement in the Division Of youth services, a juvenile treatment center. I feel no youth should be charged and convicted of prostitution. I feel the system needs more youth outreach centers, human trafficking victim shelters and human trafficking advocacy. I am the voice for those who don't have the strength, courage, or self-esteem to speak for themselves.

Let's talk about Prostitution, & let's put it all on the table. Let's talk about all you "Escorts" that hate that dirty label. You're a Prostitute baby, it is what it is, but that's okay it's the life that we live. Yes I said we, I'm with all that too, I've been shopping with John & copped the new Truess, I've got my toes done with Bill, out to eat with Tom & yes flights booked by Brad, but I also grew up with no protection from my dad. I've got caught lacking on the strips trynna flip one last trick so I didn't have to go home to a very angry pimp. I've had to run real fast through that stratosphere lot, to duck and dodge that crooked cop. I've walked Slawson & Ingewood the Las Vegas strip too, had to take that 60 dollar date when I had no money for a room. Went from the Hilton & the Sheraton to the Motel Six, been so sore I'd do anything for a quick fix. Let's talk about the pimps though worrying about looking too hard & getting your purse snatched, oh the things us girls do for some quick cash. I'm speaking to you now & I'm coming straight forward, because I know how it feels when making daddy happy is the only thing you work toward. Let's talk about how hard it is to break yourself out even when you're "free" you're still full of doubt. Is daddy worrying about me? or has he found someone else? So busy worrying about him finding them, you cant find yourself. When helps being shoved in your face you're too busy screaming "MAN I GOTTA BEAT THIS CASE" but the real case to beat, is the one in your head asking how daddy's gonna eat. So now let's dig deep, let's talk about how grandpas not paw paw it's creep, let's talk about how you never knew one touch could affect your life so much, how at night you'd scream out & cry often wish you'd just die to put an end to how terrible you felt inside, how grandpa made it okay for your school janitor to touch you day after day then how that 23 year old at 14 wasn't just lust it was true love & someone you could trust, but really he used you, your grandpa wasn't the only one to sexually abuse you. Next the pimp, yes we're back on that you finally had someone that you could call dad, to be proud of you for all the terrible things you do, oh that love there? that love was true. No that wasn't your life story it was a small piece of mine, the trick to it was I made it all rhyme.

Misunderstood

I'm just a soul misunderstood. All my life I've been misunderstood. Everyone just thinks that I'm a heartless girl who did not care for anyone or anything. But deep down, I do. I just grew up without what most kids grow up with, like a loving family, someone who cares for them or loves them.

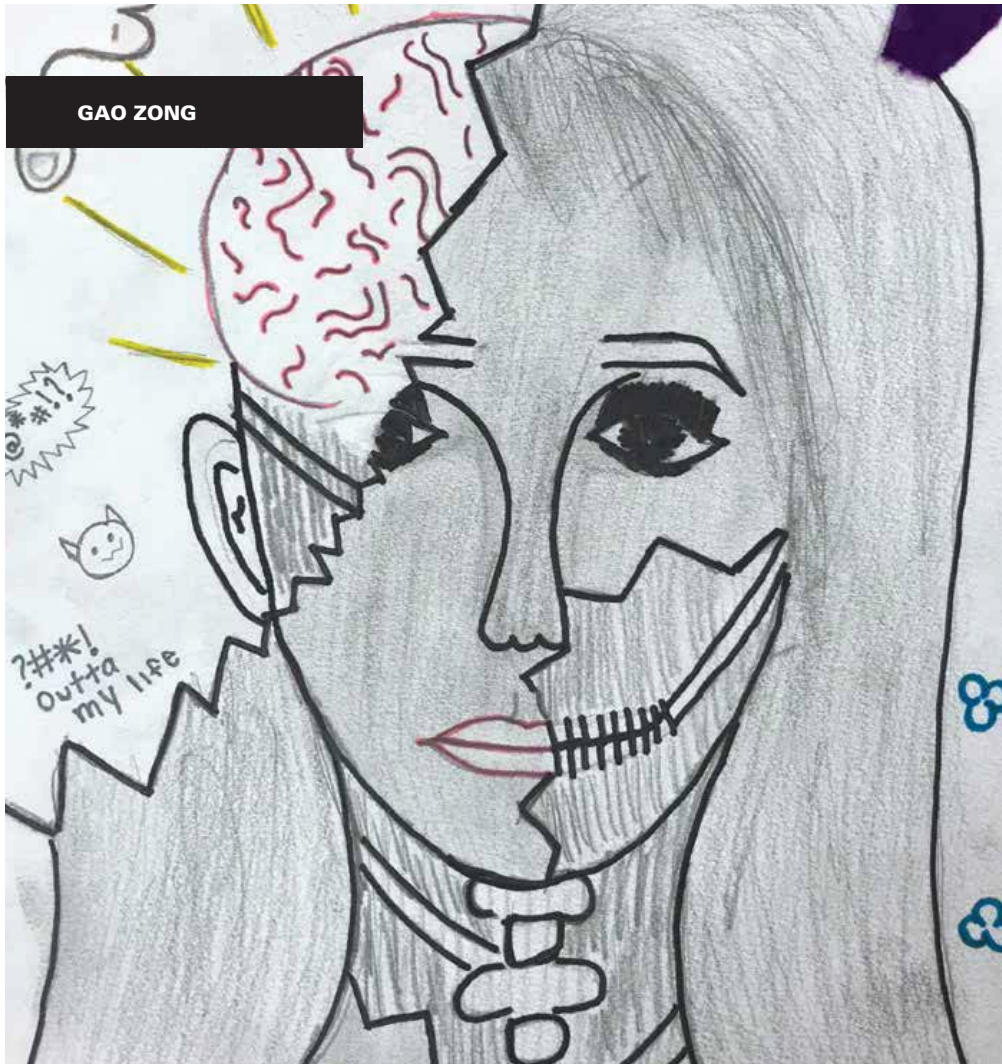
I saw my dad die right in front of me, and after that I just watched my mom do dope right in front of me, and so many other things. Now I'm falling into juvenile like an eight-ball, looking at life without bail, with three strikes at seventeen years old. All 'cause I was trying to get by to feed my family and I.



Who We Are

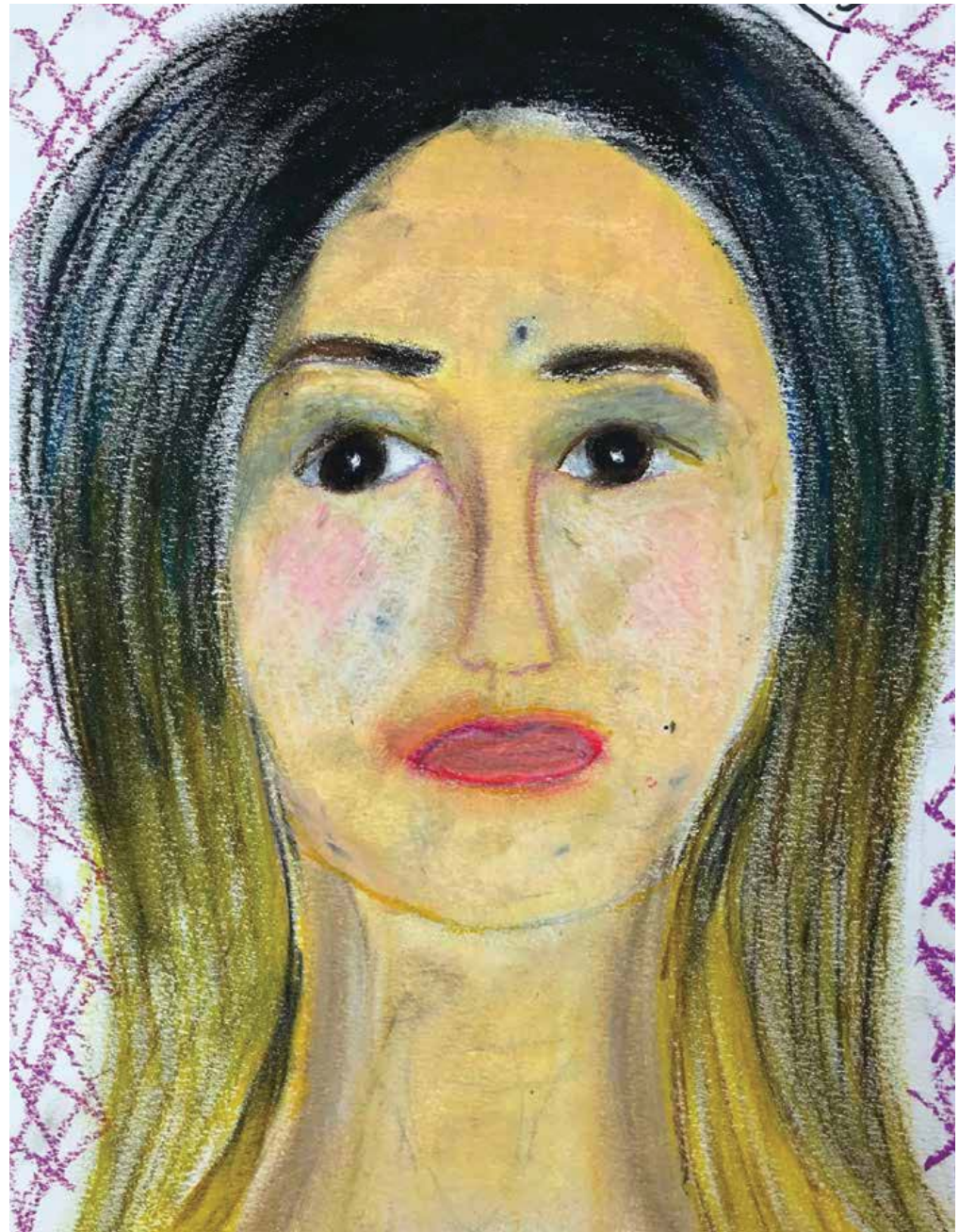
Isn't It Crazy How We All Live To Die
Or Put A Smile On Our Face Just To Cry Later On Tonight
And We All Walk Around Trying To Hide All The Pain In Our Eyes.
They Call Us Juveniles
But They Don't Know Our Pain.
They Don't Know How It Feels To Be Left In The Rain
Or How It Feels Not Eating Every Night
Struggling To Make It In This Thing Called Life.
They Tell Us To Make The Best Of Every Situation
And No Matter The Trouble
Always Remain Humble.
I Talk To God On My Knees And Pray For My Momma,
I Pray For The People Who Can't Make It Out The Streets
For Those Who Go Nights Without Any Sleep.
Many Who Struggle Say They On The Grind
But All They're Doing Is Wastin' Time.
Life Is What You Make Of It,
Things Aren't Always Handed To You
So You Have To Get It Through.
Hard Work And Dedication
But Were Just Some "Juvenile delinquents With Out Any Motivation"
No motivation To Get Through Life Trying To Find A Safe Place To Sleep At Night Because
These Parents Aren't Parents,
They Have Kids Just To Give Them Back to The State,
Now The Government Trying to Raise Money To Give Them A Hot Plate.
Man This Stuff Out Here is Crazy!
The Things Us "Juveniles" Go Through On The Daily Basis,
We Don't Get Enough Appreciation For All The Stuff We Do,
Like Fighting For Our Life Because Our Parents Don't Have The Strength To,
Or How We Raise Ourselves When No One Else Wants To,
They Think We Act How We Act Because We Think It's Cool
But They Don't Know That These Streets Have Turned Us Into Fools,
These Girls Do Anything for Some Cash,
Do Anything To Duck Off The Stash,
Calling These Grown Man Daddy Because You Never Had That Figure In Your Life
But There's No Way Out It's Like You're Trapped
In A Cage
And The Only Thing You Know Is That You Have To Fight To Get Through The Day.

GAO ZONG



HOW THE SYSTEM SEES ME

The half of my head is about stereotypes.
All people think the Asians are smart.
Half of my face are parts I didn't see as worthy.
I am now trying to make myself worthy.
The system doesn't know who I am.
They can determine who I am but they can't make me act the way they want me to act.



HOW I SEE MYSELF

ANONYMOUS

Now That I'm a Felon

Never had a childhood,
I call it 14 and grown.
Family torn by the bottle,
I am all alone.
Breaking glass and
screams
in my peripheral vision.
Dad breaks me like it's his
mission
Mom doesn't care
She never listens.
I'm stuck in this life,
I'm imprisoned.
I don't get decisions for
my life
now that I'm a felon.
It's going to stick to me
like an addiction,
even though I'm tryna
break through like am-
munition.
Truth is,
the felony will always
stay,
but I gotta hope to see
better days.



HOW I SEE MYSELF



HOW THE SYSTEM SEES ME

ADAJAH

MY EXPERIENCE OF HELL

Dear Readers,

Hey there. I want you to know this experience I am having while I am in here. This place is like hell with ice water. You can learn many new things from being where you are now.

The whole life thing changes from the second you get arrested and are in handcuffs to the point when you're in your room thinking about everything you've done.

You go through the whole getting checked-in process (fingerprints to intake). Everything you get arrested with has now been taken away from you. Even your clothes you came in. They make you take a shower and fully dress in someone else's clothes (something someone else has already worn, it's only been washed.) Once you are dressed in someone else's worn panties/drawers to bra, socks, shirt and pants, you get that one last call to your loved ones. Let's not forget you have to go see the doctor to be checked out to make sure you're healthy.

Once everything is taken care of, you are led to your unit. The girls have a separate unit from the boys, so you'll never see them unless you get lucky. Your room is four-squared, with a toilet in your room

When I'm in my room, I feel like a dog locked in a cage. Trapped with your mind racing with no way to escape.

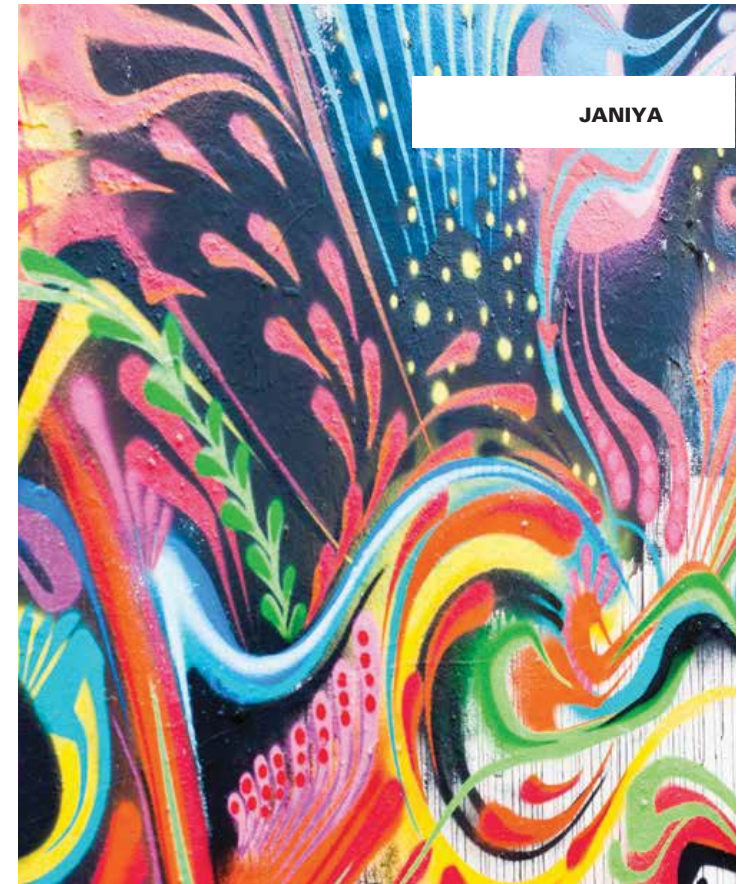
The food made me cry my eyes out when it was placed in front of me. I have to survive off of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to get me by. Other than that, I would rather starve myself.

But that doesn't stop me. I still manage to get up and go to school. Yes, they make us go to school, graduated or not.

But one thing I can say is being in here makes me realize what I have on the outside and to cherish what I have at home. To better myself for me to be successful in life, not for anyone else. This experience has been horrible but a lesson well-learned.

Thank you for letting me share my half of the story of the worst time of my life. Let's not forget I have been away from my phone for over five days. I hadn't been away from my phone for over twenty minutes, but I manage to last.

JANIYA



Just Something

Coming in and out of here is just like a pattern
Probation is like chains pulling you back from things that are important
Judges making decisions on your life that you didn't ask for
Your parents telling your PO everything you did wrong
Coming in and out of here is just like a pattern.



SARAH SCHROETER

Headed in the Right Direction

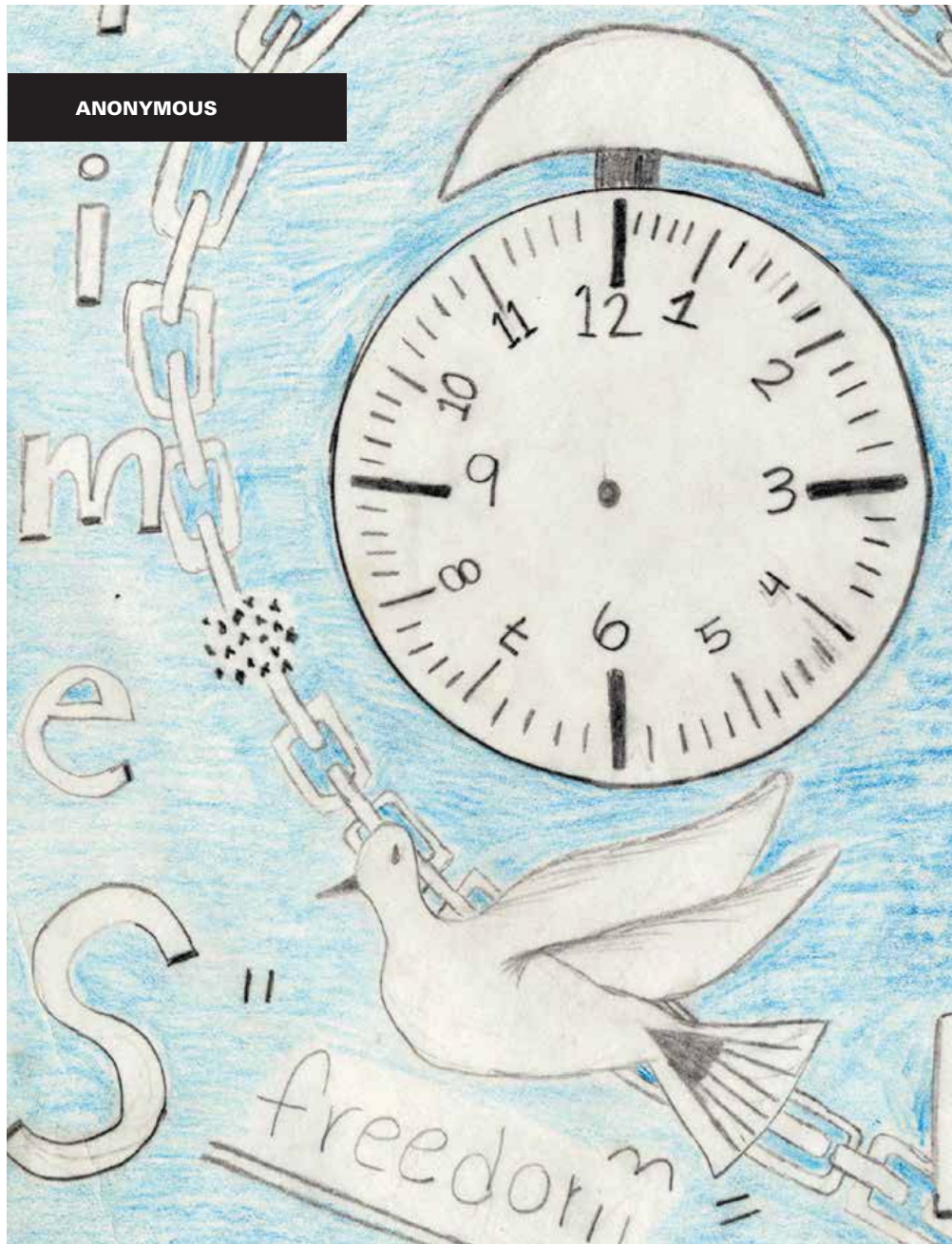
After three years of being locked up, I've come a long way, I guess. I got tired of people constantly having something to say. The way I used to be you would think oh she's never going to change. Now I use that as motivation to make that change. I finally made a choice I finally found my voice. I know it took forever but I'm choosing to be better. I've decided to make things different because now I feel more confident. After everything I've been through, I finally know what I gotta do. I was tired of the pain and the sorrow, but now I know to be my best and not take it with me to tomorrow. When somebody tries to hate on me or tries to be petty, I realize now that I can't let it get to me. I must take it to the chin because I want to win the battle that the world has put me in. At the end of the day what people say is irrelevant in so many ways. And whenever the frustration of being locked up starts to come up all I gotta do is remember this come up.

"O"

Thank you for Teaching Me

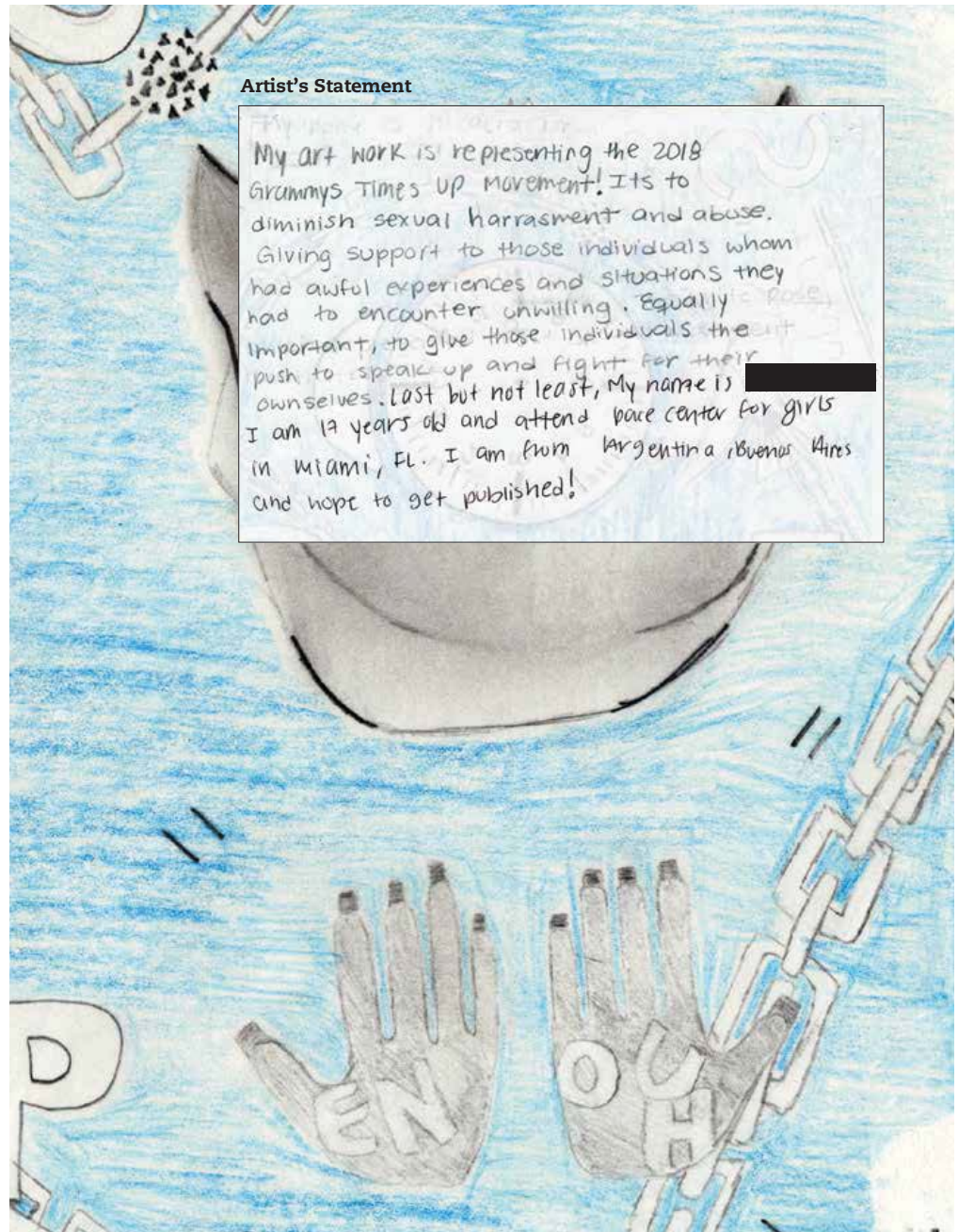
Dear Juvenile Hall,
Thank you for teaching me how
To appreciate the little things
Being locked up really got me thinking
'Bout how I take my freedom for granted.
You taught me how lonely I would be
Without my friends or family. You showed
Me how lucky I was to be able to wear
My own clothes and eat home-cooked
Meals. Thank you for showing me how
Lovely my life is. After I'm out of here,
I'll never make the mistake of coming
Back again. BELIEVE THAT!

ANONYMOUS



Artist's Statement

My art work is representing the 2018 Grammys Times Up Movement! Its to diminish sexual harrasment and abuse. Giving support to those individuals whom had awful experiences and situations they had to encounter unwilling. Equally important, to give those individuals the push to speak up and fight for their ownelves. Last but not least, My name is [REDACTED] I am 17 years old and attend Pace center for girls in Miami, FL. I am from Argentina Buenos Aires and hope to get published!



NADIRA FRINK

My Life

I ain't have no daddy around when I was growing up, thats why I'm wild and I dont give a f*ck, My Life My Life these streets was a b*tch and I made it was my life, they took my only real one, Zanvy I love you, you stayed gold and said sister never fold, brother you reach the moon, I miss you I'll see you soon.



Tell them

Tell them that I frown but I refuse
to drop my crown

Tell them I'm in pain, I'm hurt
Feeling like I'm 6 feet buried in the dirt
Tell them that I'm me and always
will be me

Jordan C. – The real MVP

Lost and Broken

I just shrugged my shoulders
and said "fuck it"

The life I'm living is hella corrupt

The road I've chosen got me
screaming for justice

It sucks that things started off
so golden, but

Now I'm 18, lost and broken.

Me being trafficked has made me stronger
it made me instead of break me. It
made me realize even the ones closest
to you can't be trusted.

I can't even sleep at night. I sit and
think – at night the flashbacks seem so
real. I used to fear for my life day in and
day out, but now I know I'm stronger
than I know, smarter than I think and
more beautiful than they see.

JORDAN C.

Six word stories

I should've never sold my body

❖

The girl will millions of tears

❖

The day I wish I dies

❖

The day I left crystal meth

❖

Wishing I was home for good

❖

I sit and think at night

❖

July is when I touch down

❖

It's hard being black out here

❖

Now my brother's resting in peace

World won

There are many paths and you must
choose one

Gotta be the mature person and take
responsibility for what you've done

When I was out on the run

Living life, having fun

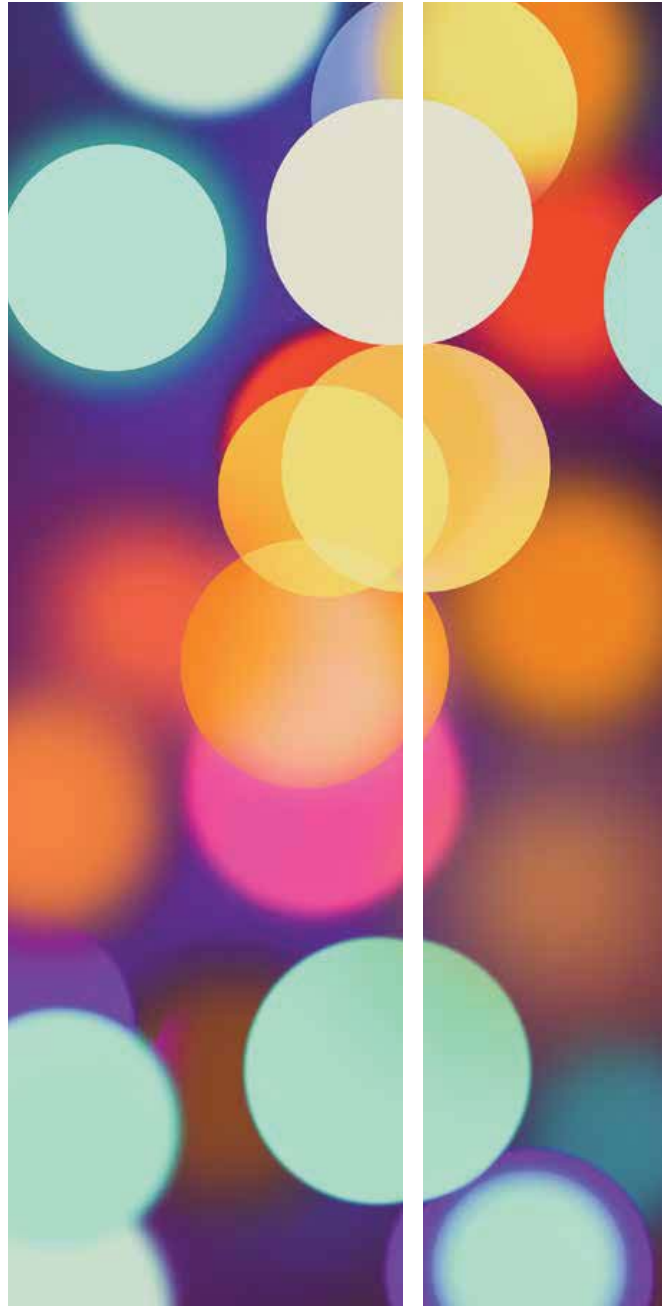
It lead to prostitution and from
there my life was done

I felt like the world won.

KAYLA VICKERY

never be okay

not being free isn't cool or fun.
when most of us see the force,
we all run
looking back at the times when
i was a kid
now i'm thinking like wow,
i really did all of this
being incarcerated has been my
whole teenager life
a thought always comes to my
head, when am i gonna get it right
when they charged me with all
the felonies
then i thought man this is the
end for me
nobody to run to nobody to call
then i went to court and they
could've charged me with all
they gave me a chance, and i
thank god every day
now i got my family, and that's
all i can say
being locked up ain't the look,
and you'll never be okay.



ZAHARI G.

Watts

Boom ! Click! BOOM!
Everybody running, can't find cover
Gunshots lighting up people
Me just standing, not wanting to leave my friends or family alone
Lost feeling like I'm the only one there
Hood calls going all around
People popping out with the sound
Not knowing kids are around
This is the life I have lived in the Nickerson Garden Projects
Squabbles everyday
Shootings, put on's and many more
Where I came from is a fucked up place called WATTS.

BRIANA EVANS

Artist's Statement

I Can Wear My Hair How I Want!

I read an article somewhere about a Black girl who had her natural hair out in an afro. She got suspended because her hair was “inappropriate” and/or “not done”. The article really angered me because I wear my hair in an afro. I wear my hair natural! And this young girl got suspended because her hair was worn in the natural state it is after it's washed? So I painted a random girl with an afro with fists coming out of her hair meaning natural hair. Girls Rock!





MIH'RENA WARD



ANONYMOUS

My experience with the system had been a journey. It all started when I was 14 years old. Rebellious and disobedient with nothing to lose. I decided not to go to school, started smoking, started drinking, and started to kick it with troubled individuals. I didn't have a care in the world, I would steal from stores, vandalize schools, get suspended and still didn't seem to care. Until the day came I finally got caught stealing and the principal at my high school took me to court for vandalizing the school bathroom. I had court for both these things and ended up having to do weekends and pay a 450 dollar fine. I started my weekends but still kept doing what I was doing. Continued to smoke, continued to drink and continued to skip school. One day I went to the store with some others girls to get bottles to drink and went to kick it at the little hill up the street from my school. We were hanging out drinking and stuff but at the time I didn't know the girls very well nor did I know their limits and how they get. We had 4 bottles I drank 2, and they were drinking the soft liquor but still got to the point where they didn't know what they were doing. One started to throw up on herself and the other started to tumble and kept falling. I was pretty drunk but not to the point where I didn't know who I was. Everything happened so fast, I turned back and saw a whole bunch of officers behind us. I tried running but it was no use. I got handcuffed and questioned but I gave them false identification and it was a wrap. But other officers who knew me showed up and that's how I got caught in my lies. I was arrested and booked into custody. I had court two days after that and they tried to commit me to [Girls Detention Program]. I thought I was going to beat the case but I actually lost it and ended up getting committed for a 6-9 month program. I did the 9 months got out and was still a wild child, in and out of the hall because to me it was nothing, It was like Disneyland. I ended up getting terminated through, a month later got back on probation. And here I am again, back on probation. Overall, moral of the story is I learned my lesson and feel like [Girls Detention Program] has really helped me choose the right route, although they can get on me for the littlest stuff. Now I'm doing much better, on the right path, about to graduate and already looking into college.

BELLA

I feel

I feel trapped when I should be exploring
the map

I feel like I'll snap while these staff's see
me take a crap

I feel like I gotta stay humble when all my
enemies are waiting for me to stumble

I feel like looking at these walls waiting
for some day

I'll know them down, see them fall and
I know i'll stand up tall

In my mind I say "fuck the law"

I feel like people are waiting for my
ending

but until now I'll be a forever pending

I feel like I should of listened to my intu-
ition cuz now i'm here in an institution.



VALERIE H.

Yesterday I was 12

I was 12 when I began to recognize
how much I was a target

A bullseye on my back walking on the
wrong blvds

It was the silence, not the sounds of
the city

That was the loudest drowning out

The awkward pauses in the joyous
laughter of boys who left me

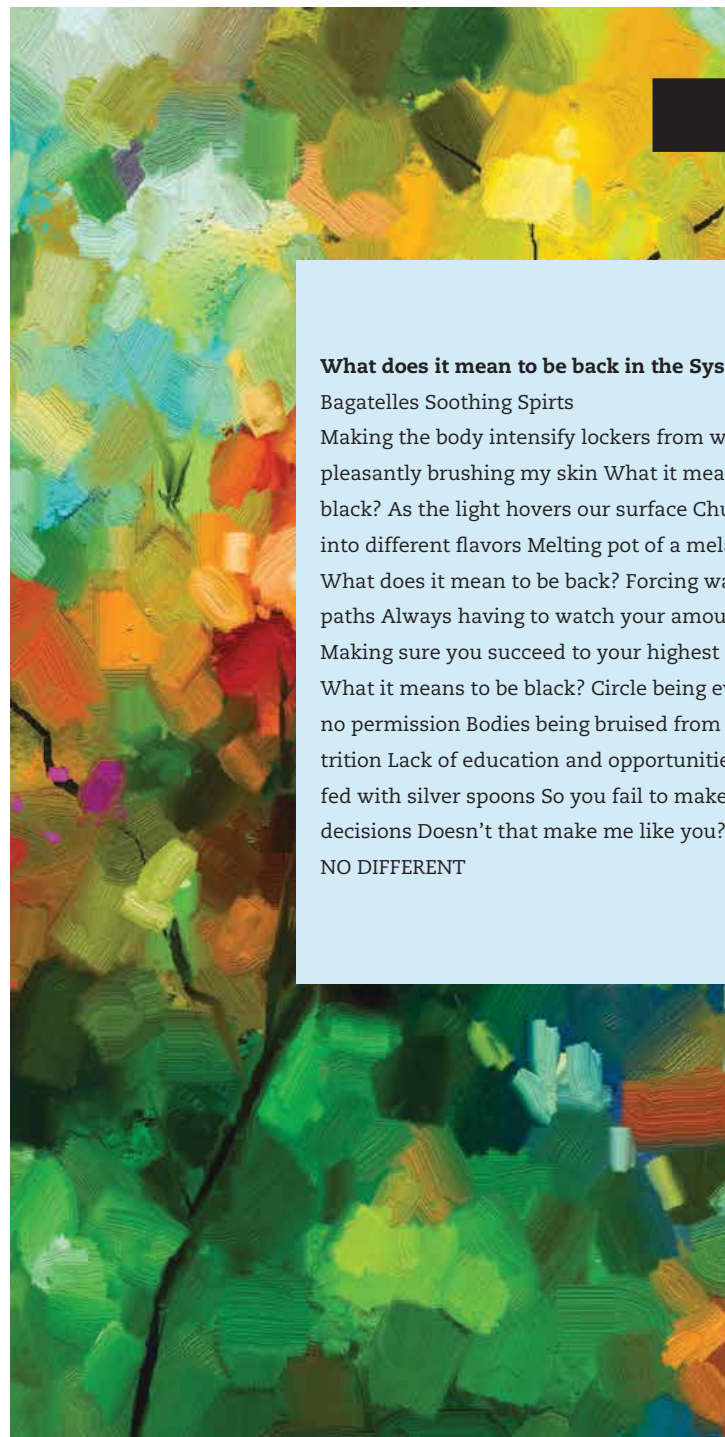
with the blues

Dancing two left shoes

I don't know when them goals I had hid

Buried in the backyard.





What does it mean to be back in the System?

Bagatelles Soothing Spirits

Making the body intensify lockers from within Wind pleasantly brushing my skin What it means to be black? As the light hovers our surface Churning hair into different flavors Melting pot of a melanin glow What does it mean to be back? Forcing ways to easy paths Always having to watch your amount of slack Making sure you succeed to your highest needs What it means to be black? Circle being evened with no permission Bodies being bruised from lack of nutrition Lack of education and opportunities Or being fed with silver spoons So you fail to make conscious decisions Doesn't that make me like you? WE ARE NO DIFFERENT

THE ART OF YOGA PROJECT



Artists' Statement:

This collaborative piece by youth in the Margaret J. Kemp Camp Program in San Mateo County, California reflects their answers to the prompt "When I let go of... I make space for...". The unglazed butterflies represent the artists' potential for change; the completed ceramic ones represent their transformation.

When I let go of pain, I make space for love.

When I let go of grudges, I make space for myself.

When I let go of worries I make space for focusing.

When I let go of negativity, I make space for positivity.

When I let go of anger, I make space for love for my family.

When I let go of lazy, I make space for doing important stuff.

When I let go of free time, I make space for a job.



When I let go of haters, I make space for real friends.

When I let go of negativity, I make space for new opportunities.

When I let go of things that get me in trouble, I make space to focus on graduation and going to college.

When I let go of the past, I make space for the present.

When I let go of stuff, I make space for goals.

When I let go of bad thoughts, I make space for good ones.

When I let go of stress, I make space for myself.



JOCELYN

I dream

I dream about bullshit all the time

Shit, sometimes about getting shot up or never waking up.

I thought it all up in my dreams

That's some of the shit that happens in life

That's crazy ASF

I know the devil is doing this shit to fuck up my life and hurt me but I'm letting him

My soul is so black

I cry at night

I wonder if I'm ever going to find the light

Every day and night, I hope soon when I wake up

I see the man that brought me into this life.

TERESA R.

Passport for the dead

It's memories from my past that come back to me in a flash that doesn't seem to go away

So I become depressed in a way

Every single day, and it's always gonna be there

But I don't speak about it cuz people pretend like they care

It's like the hurt face I walk around with and I wear and once again I remind myself my life just aint fair.



ANONYMOUS

Artist's Statement

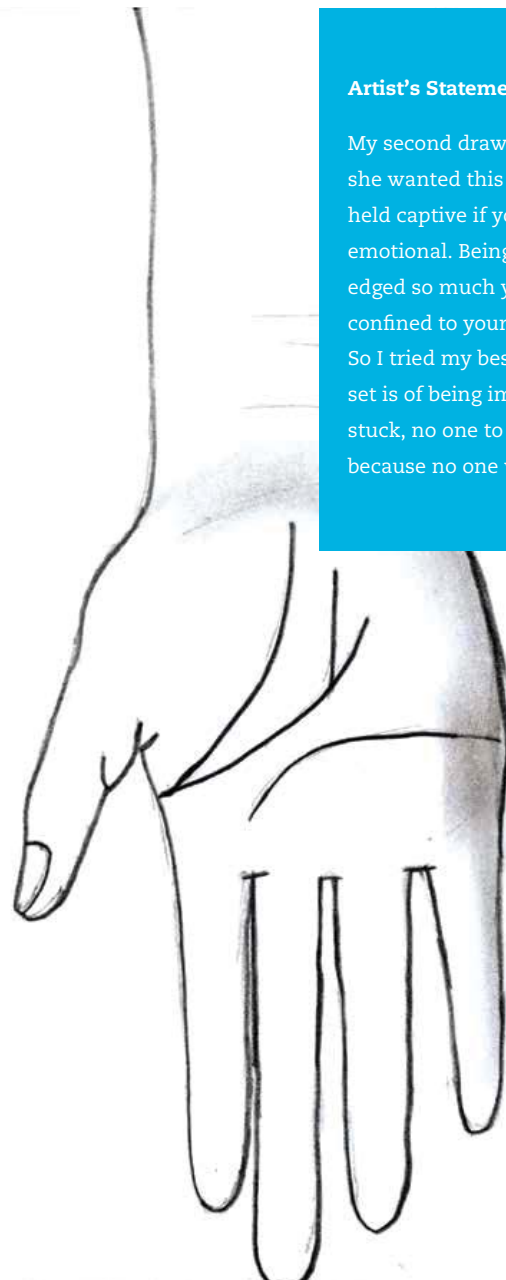
I never have been much of an artist. I'm typically best with words. However, recently I've gone through one of the toughest situations of my life. A situation where you're hopeless. People look at you with prejudice, and those in the legal system fail to want to help you – in fact they deny you of any rights or help. That's what I wanted to convey in this drawing – my coming of age & therefore absence of assistance I practically beg for in my life. How this society of the United States of America has failed to help me reach my dreams. Am I even a dreamer anymore? You have to put on your mask of being fine, but you aren't; once you show your true dark wretched colors people flee from you. I'm homeless, with a vile father & disabled mother.

ANONYMOUS



Artist's Statement

My second drawing was inspired by a friend. Actually, she wanted this idea of being trapped, with no hope... held captive if you will. Nothing physical, more so, emotional. Being rejected, denied, and disacknowledged so much you start to believe you really are confined to your situation with no hope of getting out. So I tried my best to draw that — a girl who's mindset is of being imprisoned. Where she believes she's stuck, no one to help her — hopeless & worthless. All because no one wants to help.



ANONYMOUS

My experiences with the system have created many new memories and lessons in my life. I think the best lesson I learned dealing with the Juvenile Justice System is think before you act and always ask yourself: Is it worth it? That to me was important because before my freedom was taken out of my hands I never had stopped to ask myself anything, I simply just acted. It was like my brain did not play any part in my decision making process. Once I was forced to learn differently, my life began to change. My grades drastically improved and so did my attitude. Decisions to me were no longer made in the matter of 3 seconds. Being in [Girls Detention Program] taught me to also take advantage of the resources that are presented to me. Once I began to do this, I gained knowledge and more life skills and I finally knew for a fact what career path I wanted to follow. Rather than being released from [Girls Detention Program] and getting into the same things that I was involved in before, I left with college credits from a college course provided by system, a Food Handler's Certificate, 40 Hrs of Job Training in Youth Culinary Arts, Certificate of completion from a legal advocacy program, and I continue to have above average grades. Those are just a few reasons that I will not resent the system instead I will thank it.

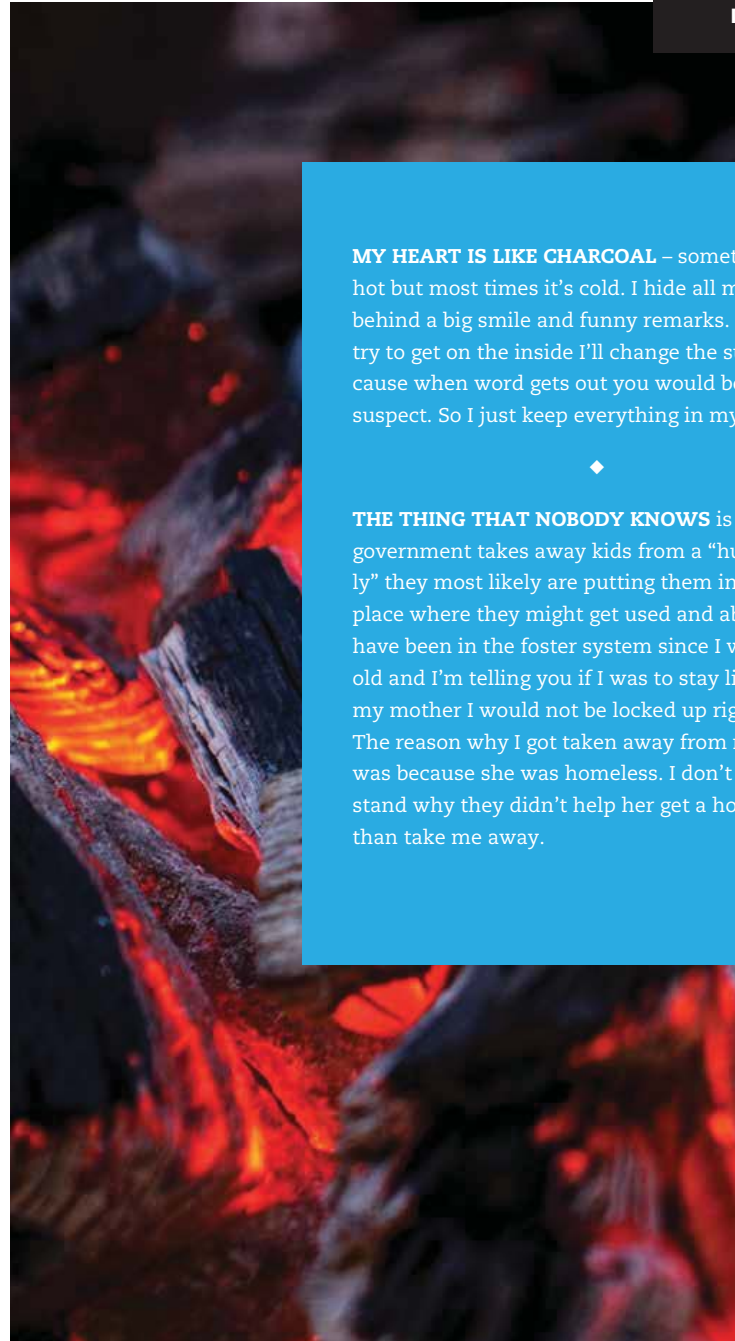


MELANIE GAMBOA

MY HEART IS LIKE CHARCOAL – sometimes it's hot but most times it's cold. I hide all my pain behind a big smile and funny remarks. But if you try to get on the inside I'll change the subject because when word gets out you would be the only suspect. So I just keep everything in my big head



THE THING THAT NOBODY KNOWS is when the government takes away kids from a "hurt family" they most likely are putting them in a worse place where they might get used and abused. I have been in the foster system since I was 3 years old and I'm telling you if I was to stay living with my mother I would not be locked up right now. The reason why I got taken away from my mother was because she was homeless. I don't understand why they didn't help her get a house rather than take me away.





I was little
 My Parents wanted an aquittal
 All alone, feeling withdrawn
 Stuck in a place where I don't belong

I Screamed I Shout
 Let me go let me out
 I want to go home
 and this was known

My home was broken
 And we had very few
 But it was all I ever knew

"YOUNG BEE"

Eyes of an Inmate

Although, I'm unhappy to be here I would have to say I appreciate staff. I've been having a hard time being here and away from my two-month old son. I often find myself crying when I think about him, the staff is very supportive and guiding and I appreciate that the most.

Something that bothers me is how girls often like to push buttons. It really bothers me. Well, they try and I don't like how some staff, not all are sometimes rude and show little interest in the main part of their jobs. Which is to counsel us and show us better ways to better ourselves and how much good we can do.

I have been here twice. The first time I entered I was seventeen and I am currently seventeen. The hall has relatively good food and clothes are not what I'd prefer but we are not here for clothing or physical appearance. We are here for our mental image.

The showers could be longer than seven minutes and is a lot of time for a



growing female to shower. Going to class is great learning and being able to expand our minds is a great way to spend time in here. The teachers are nice and helpful and showing us education is important without forcing anything.

Visits only thirty minutes long is crazy. Why not an hour? After being here, is hard enough, emotional support from a family member for one hour would be nice. My roommate makes time pass. She helps me as well. I think it's best if everyone gets a roommate. Something I will never forget about Juvenile Hall is the lessons taught not only from staff but fellow inmates and surprisingly myself. I learned that no matter what spot you're in, or difficult



situation, we could always change it and we are meant to be someone, as you can accomplish what you set your mind to.

Something I miss most about my freedom is seeing my son and holding him while seeing his smile. Some pros about being here are taking a break to see my wrong doings and using this time to change myself and really think about what I want from life

The things that suck about being here is being away from family and the comfort of my home. I would have to say thanks and keep on with the quest to show us things don't have to be this way and how much good we could do.

Dear Juvenile Hall

Being in the Juvenile Hall is a blessing and a curse for me. The reason why being in here is a blessing for me is because they gave me the option to turn to God. It all started on a sunny morning with a choice of either being in my room for another hour or coming out and explore something new for me and go to church.

I chose to learn a new religion. I needed someone good on my side. I've learned that everything you own you don't really own. Your car can get stolen in a heartbeat, your phone as well.

The only thing you truly own is your faith. The negative part about being in here is my freedom. Whatever I do I have to ask permission. The hardest part is not being able to see my family and friends especially because I am so close to them.



MAXEY

Sinners in prison

It's like when I talk nobody hears me
My path fucked up but I had nobody to steer me
I was running on auto
Damn near on E
I was hittin the corners, I was deep in them streets
Everyday still look like yestidan mama
Still crying
They ask me if I did it
Man, I'm still lying
Yeah, I don't trust them but they talk for me
My brother says he loves me but he can't walk for me
My judge calls me a menace to society
Too bad he ain't seen the good side of me

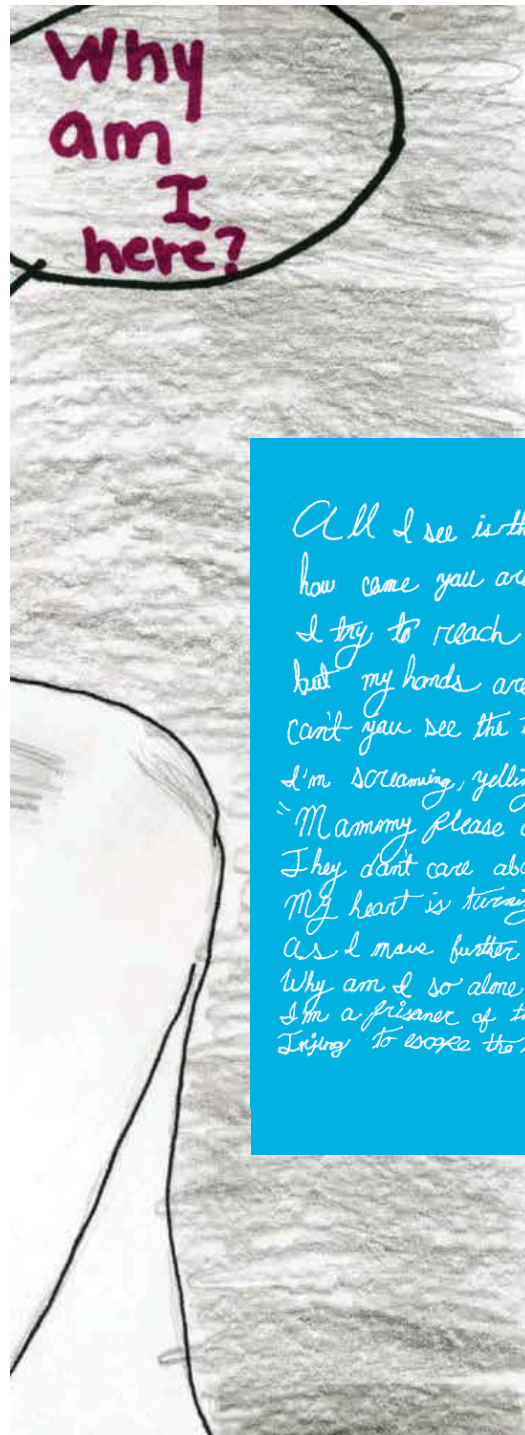
This place is all a mind game
Only you never win
At the end of the day, I ain't trippin.

Morena

Morena – a name heavily used by my father.
I was born with his skin tone.
My mother and the rest of her family
are very light skinned, pero yo?
I got the indigenous side and I'm very proud.
Out of all my siblings I am the darkest.
I am the brightest.
I am the smartest.
Soy la Morena,
"Morenaza"

Coming from where I'm from

I'm from a loving home
From palm trees growing
Nice blue skies and some interesting guys
I come from pain that sits in my veins
But I try my best to hide it away
I come from bad choices and locked doors
Respect but lost morals
Dreams that faded with lost souls



ANONYMOUS

Why
am
I
here?

All I see is the dark
how come you are so far?
I try to reach
but my hands are tied
Can't you see the tears flowing down my eyes?
I'm screaming, yelling
"Mammy please don't let me go"
They don't care about my sentiments
My heart is turning cold
As I move further away from home
Why am I so alone? I walk in fear.
I'm a prisoner of this life
Trying to escape the monsters from behind

Dear Other Kids/Young Ones

I had a very hard life. I don't have a dad. I have a mom but I don't have a relationship with her. I have two aunts. One aunt is fake and lives in Sacramento, California. I also have one aunt in North Carolina.

I don't have any other aunts. I don't have any uncles. I don't have any grandmas. I don't have any grandpas.

I have been in the foster care system since I was four years old. Which means 2005. I never got to see my family much or I didn't see them at all.

I have four brothers. My oldest brother is 25 years old and he hasn't seen me since I was ten years old. He doesn't want contact with me and I don't know why. The second oldest brother is 24. I have not seen him since a year and half ago. He tells me that he will see me but then doesn't see me at all. The third older brother is the same thing as the second older brother.

I have been abused all of my life. I would get hit by belts, hangers and extension cords. I fell out of a two story building. I was bleeding a lot out of my head and someone asked me if I was okay and I didn't speak at all.

I never had care from my family. The only family that I got who is not my blood is my boyfriend and his mom. That's all. And my baby brother who I basically raised as my own at the age of nine years old.

I always wished to be adopted. I went to a group home at five years old. Then I went back to my mom at age eight. Then I left at age nine. Then I went to my fake aunt's house from nine through eleven years. From eleven to seventeen years old, ever since, I've been in a group home. But I am trying to get out of group homes.

Just stay positive. Act right. Be proud and you will get a long way in this life. Stay out of jail.

Dear Juvenile Hall

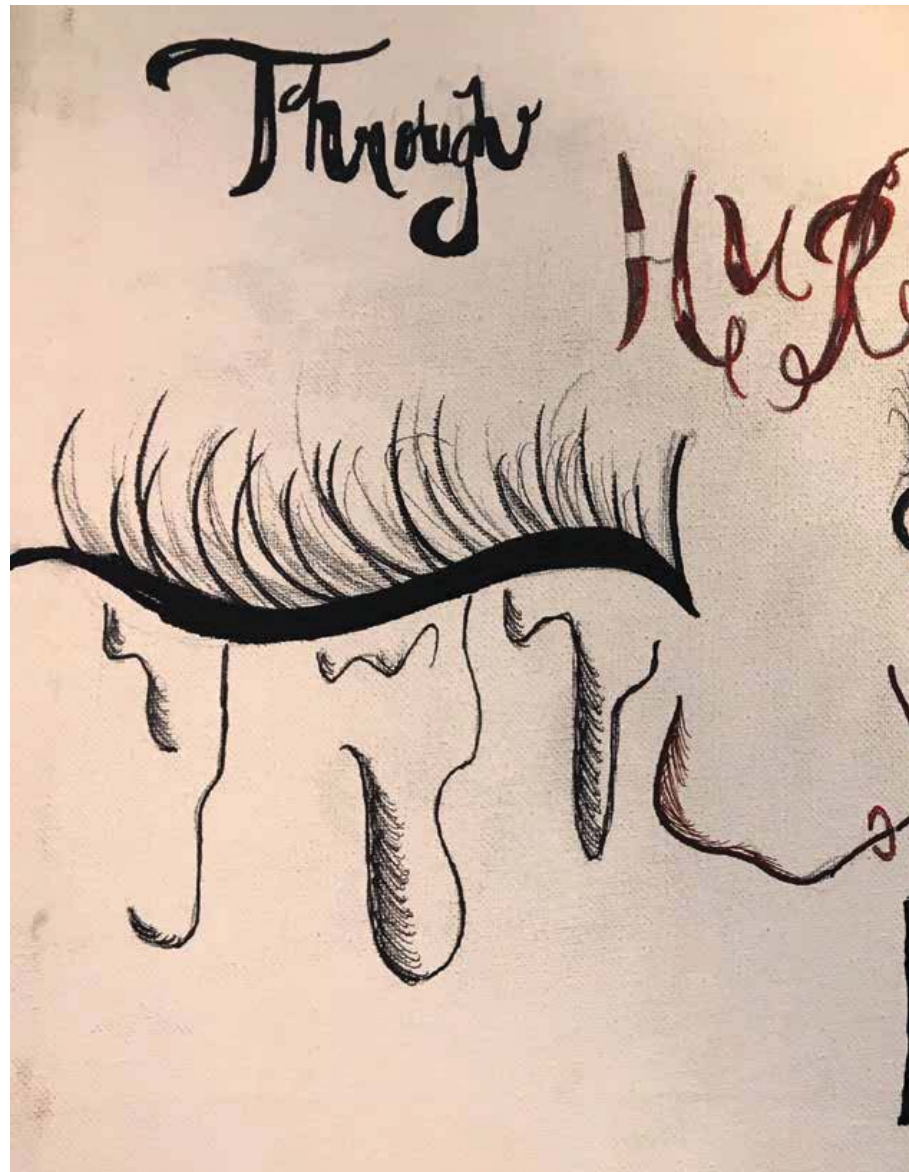
I am eighteen years old and I will be nineteen in a couple weeks, which is crazy because I would have totally thought I was going to end up in County. Thank God being my first time getting locked up. I got sent to Juvenile Hall.

I have to say I am not much of a complainer. The food is alright and the staff says, remember where you are. I am very open to things so I enjoy the programs very much.

Being locked up isn't for me, but something I will never forget, is the wise words I get from these amazing staff. I truly feel like they care about us and some of them really see more in me than I ever did.

I will never forget my experience in here, both the good and the bad. The staff nearly wishes I can stay because I literally always have a smile on my face to the point where people try to push my buttons to see me mad or sad. But it never works. Fake it until you make it. I'm grateful for everything Juvenile Hall has taught me, especially not to come back.

What do I think about being in the system? I think about the system as a setback, it is just a really long, tough, and tiring setback. I have to deal with not going to parties, not hanging out with friends, and just always paranoid about something. I have been in the system since I was 13 and a half, I am 15 now. To be a Freshman in high school and be on probation is just embarrassing. I had been in custody for a while and I had to deal with people who love me being disappointed in me. I mean being on probation has got me changing in many ways, I've cut off negativity, I have a job, and my parents trust me more. I got to see my "Best Friends" stab me in the back and I had to witness so much fake love. Like I met my 2 best friends while I was in custody, that kind of says something. But as you know this is just a quick setback, I will for sure bounce back.



VANESSA

My experience in [youth services program] has been surprisingly good. They have helped with a lot of things and has also made me look at things differently now that I'm getting closer to being a young adult.

For me Court was just dumb. I feel like they based my court case on a lot of things it shouldn't have been based on, so I got committed. To be honest I got lucky getting committed at 17, just 7 months before my 18th birthday. I say that because I know girls that have been committed ever since they were 13. That's 5 years they have to deal with the aggravation of getting pulled in and going through the same process each and every time. Some people would say, "oh just stop getting in trouble and things like that wouldn't happen," but we're teenagers, things are going to happen and we're going to get in trouble. I have been to 3 different programs. I'm not going to say they were their best places ever, but they weren't the worse places ever either, but I personally didn't want to be at any one but I had to and things weren't so bad. Yes, there's a lot of restrictions to things that you're just not used to but sometimes it's good to have structure to keep you on the right path to doing good.

Get people on your good side, let people in, I'm not saying let everybody in but if you have a chance to get close to people do it, because then you have a bigger team of positive people who are not going to say negative things about you on purpose. All on

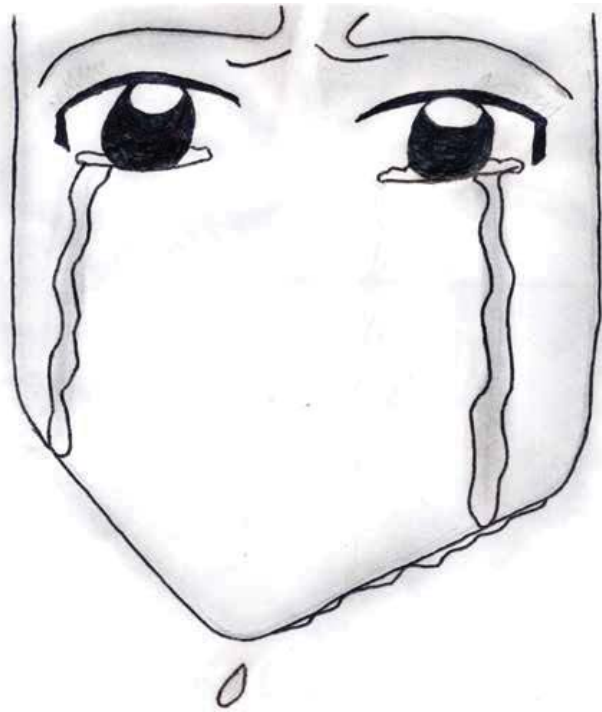
your side ready to back you up if anything ever happens. If you're not getting what you need and possibly what you want they will advocate for you. When I said people, I was mainly talking about your workers, clinicians, and staff at a program.

The only recommendation I have for the system for future girls is letting our friends be on their phone list and maybe visiting us every once in a while. Yes, I understand it's a liability but a lot of things are a liability to us, going on passes are a liability, staff are a liability, family are a liability, the program itself is a liability but we have those things. Some girls like myself don't have or feel as though they don't have a connection with their family and don't make phone calls to their family or want them to visit them because all they really have is that one friend that they have that they're close to for their own support system.

Don't get in trouble. I'm not saying that. Get in trouble. I'm not saying that either but if you get in trouble and get to a place where you're dealing with the juvenile justice system stay on track they help with a lot of things. Things you may not have thought would ever happen take advantage of them in a good way because I did and I feel like I'm getting all the things I wanted that I couldn't have just last year. So yes my overall experience with [youth services program] has been positive.

A'DANA FRENCH



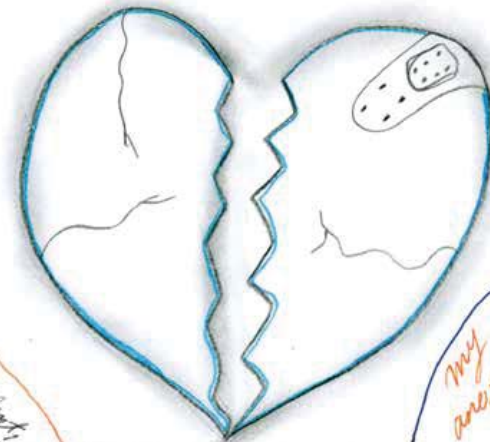


ANONYMOUS

You smile, but
you wanna cry.
you talk, but you wanna
be quiet. you pretend like
you're happy, but you aren't.

When I'm Silent

didn't get enough sleep.
waiting for something to be over.
don't have nothing to talk about.
over thinking/over analysing a situation.
upset or worried.
falling apart.
or all of the above.



when I am silent,
I have thousand
miles.

my silence is just
another word for just
my pain

ANONYMOUS

When I first got locked up I was fourteen. A fourteen year old with nothing to lose. At first I had an “I don’t care” attitude but that attitude didn’t get me anywhere but to [Girls Detention Program]. That was my first experience within the system. My first Arrival at [Girls Detention Program] was terrible because I had a bad attitude, but once I would do yoga I would feel calm. Although there was days when I wouldn’t do yoga because we would do it everyday, at least it felt like everyday. Once I started getting used to the [Girls Detention Program] I started looking at the bigger picture of my life and I wanted to change for the better. I started having a better relationship with my mom and my siblings. I learned a lot from this program learning patience, letting the smallest things go, and learning to understand that life doesn’t always go my way. It took a while but you know what they say I’m making progress slowly but surely.



ANONYMOUS

I was arrested at 15. Each time I had a different type of punishment. Some of the programs I was sentenced to helped me manage my impulsive, angry juvenile behavior. Just the fact of entering the foster care system, being taken away from my family, was traumatic and caused serious emotional damage. The state just isn’t equipped to be a parent. Foster children have no control over their lives, and that lack of control causes continual insecurity. They don’t know how long they’ll be in a particular foster home or where they’ll be going to school next month or next year. Foster teens aren’t allowed to do many things other teens do, like getting a driver’s license or going to sleepovers. Just the act of entering foster care can cause serious emotional trauma. What can foster kids like me do about it. I would like that the foster kids that get taken away from their family they should not go with a random family they should get placed with family members or with their siblings.



ANONYMOUS



MARKAYLA

Do You Remember?

Do you remember when I first held you?
Do you remember me crying too?
Do you remember you taking your first step?
Do you remember the scrapbook I kept?
Do you remember your first blankie?
Do you remember your first birthday party?
Do you remember me taking you to Disneyland?
Do you remember the beach and the sand?
Do you remember your first day at pre-school?
Do you remember the lunches I packed for you?
Do you remember me picking you up every day?
Do you remember how I would kiss your booboo's pain away?
Do you remember how mom was never there?
Do you remember that mom never really cared?
Do you remember mom being on all those drugs?
Do you remember mom bringing in all those thugs?
Do you remember what those men did to me?
Do you remember mom spending all the rent money?
Do you remember all the bruises I used to have?
Do you remember all those men mom made us call "dad"?
Do you remember them taking us to foster care?
Do you remember mom losing all of her hair?
Do you remember all those things breaking?
Do you remember us in the corner shaking?
Do you remember the day our mom died?
Do you remember me on my knees begging God why as I cried?
Do you remember all the good times we had?
Or do you remember how the good never outweighed the bad?

ANONYMOUS

My experience with the system has been very crazy, yet kind of an okay experience in a way. I believe that everything happens for a reason, so this is why I'm here. It started with my bad habits and bad acts which lead me to probation and getting incarcerated. I wasn't happy at all to be a part of this but now I'm in a place that I never thought I'd be in, succeeding. I've met people who I never thought I'd meet and reunited with people who I'd never think to see again in a place like this, but everything happens for a reason right? I always thought it was a weird coincidence until I reminded myself that it's just a really small county. The system brought me closer to others I would've never thought to see in my future. Now look, I met the most amazing (very few) people throughout this journey. Life's a beautiful struggle and if I got through this incredibly tough path, then I can get through anything as a stronger me.

THESE ENTRIES WERE SUBMITTED BY GIRLS WHO PARTICIPATED IN
A TWO-PART WRITING WORKSHOP: JUSTICE WHEN IT'S JUST US

Describe how you felt when you were first arrested.

I was really upset in I was crying I did not thik I'll never see my family

I was scared and nervos. I felt like I shouldn't be coming here. I wanted to know why!!

I felt like it was un-necessary because I wasnt doing nothing I just said some-thing to some-body but they took it to another leval.

I felt like I was just another bad person they pick up everyday. Just a diffrent case. I was angry.

When the police officers talked to me I felt very nervous. I felt that I had to lie to try and get out of trouble.

Describe how you felt when you were first brought to GVRC.

I was so pissed off an ready to fight every-body

I wasn't really nervos, I just had the thought of I didn't care because I knew I was gone do right then go home. So I basically had that IDC attitude.

I was mad and I wanted to fight the person who snitched on me... But later I didn't care because I did what I did to be here. I was also emotional because usually I was loved and can get J's and Chinese food and now I cant do nothing.

I felt like I was going to be in a cold room everyday all day

I felt sad, mad, ashamed.

I felt sick to my stomach, like I was going to throw up. I was nervous to be ordered to do everything in a certain order all day every-day. I just felt like I wanted to hide from everyone here.

Describe how you felt when you first went before the judge or a referee.

I was so scared I was thinking that I was never ever going to see my family because I messed up real Bad

I didn't know what they might had planned for me. But all I know is that I was nervos and afraid.

I was low key nervous cause I didn't know what she was gone be like.

I felt scared, and I felt as if my voice didnt matter. I didnt want to admitt what I had did.

I felt like they were immeditally at to get me. I felt like the whole court system was against me.

Describe how you feel when you speak to your probation officer.

I wanted to slap her because she was been real rude

Well I just let him know things that was going on with my situation. But I knew that he wanted to help me out for me to better myself.

I feel depressed because I dont want to talk to her I want her out my life. But I understand why shes here. I also feel like she dont listen to the whole story sometimes when I talk.

I feel very open and willing. I feel as if I can tell them anything. I feel like they are on my side and they want to do whats in my interest. I feel I have enough time to say what I need to say.

Nervous, because I knew I messed up every time I have to speak to her. But if she talks to me first she usually tells me Im doing a good job. I feel like she wants the best for me and my family.

Describe one incident (if any) that you have had in your encounters with the Juvenile Justice System that you feel has had a positive impact on your life/future.

Staff helped me chang my attitude

I had got good advice from my probation officer, my mom, dad, and granny.

They basically told me to try to think before you do because it's only going to hurt you in the end.

It had a positive effect on my greatfullness. When I was in jail before it helped me be more greatfull. It wasn't a lot of positive impact because Im back here.

Now, I feel like me going to placement even for the 2nd time, I feel like its an opportunity for me to take time out and understand my problems and deal with them. Instead of getting released and doing the same things. I feel as if Im looking forward to a better life

I met all the girls that have been in detention longer then me and realized that I will be okay while I was there.

Staff made me realize its not cute to be sassy and have an attitude.

Six-line Poems

They treat me like a animal when I'm not.

People out here getting shot when yall worried

bout me steady calling da cops when

People should worry bout taking care of they

kids and just stop cause you cant even afford to buy a pop, at big lots.

I learn that I am not weak every day in the gym room it smell like feet but I keep on going and cant be beat, while Im doing backflips on the concrete. You know you cant compete. Im an athlete.

I shouldn't be here.

It all gives me fear.

One day I will grow up and be free from this place.

I will be with the birds and I will be with the bees.

I will love myself one day and live under the trees.

Suggestions for improvements to the Juvenile Justice System

1 - Get to know juvenile better.

To realize where there anger is coming from. It will make juvenile feel more comfortable.

2 - Help them with rehabilitation.

To help them stop their behavior with rehab. It will help the drinking/smoking substances.

3 - Get them involved in stuff. So they wont want to act out because they will feel free. I will help build community support.

- I would have animals that we can use to our advantage
- I would give juveniles the treatment they need in detention
- I would help out all the hurt kids that are not noticed
- I will build my own juvenile detention real beds
real teachers
I'll take the kids outside
I'll get better judges

I would not leave juveniles locked up for 2 or 3 months for violating probation. I would keep them there for 2 weeks then send them home. They mess up I'll send them back then fourth time they would be going to placement. And I would get the girls some cats and dogs.

Describe how you feel when you are put in handcuffs and shackles and taken to court.

I am not a threat to my community

I feel upset and dont want to go

Describe how you feel about your stay here at GVRC.

I should not be here

I feel okay here before I go to placement. I'll stay here

What do you miss most when you are locked up?

My kitten, dogs and brother, and my bed

I miss my family and child

What have you learned about yourself while in detention?

That I am very strong

That I can do whatever I put my mind to.
That I'll do what I have to do to stay away

#5. What changes would you make to GVRC?

That there is no counselling

What changes would you make to the juvenile justice system?

That they dont see both sides of the story sometimes

I don't think girls should be locked up if they did not do a muder

JOCELYN

Sinners

Sinner in a prison

That's all they need

Taking over our lives

Melt all the breva

Quick to say we fuck-ups

All we do is gangbang and smoke trees

We start to play more games because that's what we see

Want to feel free but these prison walls make us go crazy

Shit, we wish this world would stop brain fucking us

We are not sinners

This world is just fucked up.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of these pieces would not have been possible without the support and guidance of the facilities and arts programs that worked with the girls to facilitate submissions. In recognition of their efforts, we list their organizations here:

The Art of Yoga Project (Cal.): The mission of The Art of Yoga Project (AYP) is to lead vulnerable and marginalized adolescent girls involved in the California juvenile justice system toward accountability to self, others and community by providing practical tools to effect behavioral change. They are leaders in the treatment and rehabilitation of justice-involved girls by offering gender-responsive, trauma-informed, culturally-responsive, and strengths-based programming. AYP has over a decade of experience providing direct services to more than 8,000 girls involved in San Francisco Bay Area juvenile justice systems. They send specially trained trauma-informed yoga and art educators into facilities to deliver their mindfulness-based curriculum. Their goal is to break the cycle of violence and victimization for marginalized girls and guide them to empowerment and well-being. Their work has been featured in the Washington Post, NPR, Yoga Journal, The San Francisco Examiner, The Mercury News, the International Journal of Yoga Therapy, and The Huffington Post.

Artistic Noise (Mass.): Artistic Noise exists to bring the freedom and power of artistic practice to young people who are incarcerated, on probation, or otherwise involved in the justice system. Through visual arts and entrepreneurship programs in Massachusetts and New York, our participants give voice to their experiences, build community through collaborative projects, and learn valuable life and job skills. Artistic Noise creates safe spaces where court-involved youth can be seen, heard and supported on their path to adulthood. We believe the practice of making art offers opportunities for young people and communities to transform. The artwork displayed in this book was created in the Art, Entrepreneurship and Curatorial Program (A&E). In this intensive program, participants develop their creative skills as individuals and collaborators as well as their business skills as paid artists, entrepreneurs and curators. Once hired, youth earn an hourly wage as they work with their peers to create, market and sell original artwork and curate an annual art exhibit in a gallery. In NYC this program is held at Artistic Noise's headquarters, a storefront space in the heart of Harlem.

The Beat Within (Cal.): Since 1996, The Beat Within, based in San Francisco, CA, has been committed to its mission to provide incar-

cerated youth in the Juvenile Justice System and beyond, around the United States, with one of a kind forum where they can write about the things that matter to them, explore how they have lost connection with those things they value, and consider how they might re-connect to positive situations in their lives through the power of the written word and visual art.

Our primary commitment is to provide detained youth with a consistent weekly writing and conversation workshop that provides them with a safe space to share their ideas and experiences while promoting literacy, expression, critical thinking skills, and supportive relationships with the community.

From this work comes the national award winning publication, *The Beat Within*. The 60-plus page magazine, which comes out twice a month, is given to each young participant and our many subscribers.

Buckham/GVRC Share Art Project, HerStory: Unlocked Project (Mich.): The *HerStory: Unlocked Project* is a gender-based arts program for incarcerated girls ages 10-17 in Flint, Michigan. Led by women artists and educators, the Project creates unique opportunities for this underserved group of girls to develop their identities; build self-esteem and confidence in their academic, creative and social abilities; develop supportive and mentoring relationships with Project members; and express their authentic and unique voices through the mediums of poetry, dance, theatre and visual arts in a non-judgmental, safe, and gender responsive environment. The workshops give these girls, many of whom are victims of child abuse, sexual exploitation, as well as physical and emotional neglect, the chance to change their course in life and a foundation on which to build a strong future for themselves and their communities.

The works published here were written during two writing workshops entitled "*Just Us*." During these sessions we asked the girls to reflect upon their own experiences with the juvenile justice system as well as to make recommendations for changes within the system.

Department of Youth and Rehabilitative Services (DC): The District of Columbia Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) established its first Achievement Center in 2014 in Northwest DC to provide a full continuum of rehabilitative programming to young people committed to the agency. With the addition of its MLK Achievement Center in Southeast DC, DYRS is able to offer social, vocational and recreational services and resources consistent with the

Positive Youth Justice (PYJ) model to committed youth across the entire District of Columbia. The Achievement Centers exemplify “what love looks like” in juvenile justice, focused on care, compassion and commitment with an emphasis on identifying and developing young people’s strengths. Each center partners with vendors to provide an array of programs that are tailored to at-risk youth and their families, intended to stimulate and empower them by fostering education and career development, life skills and healthy living. These partnerships with community organizations, agencies and educational institutions yield a collaborative effort to reduce high-risk behavior in guiding youth as they develop the self-respect, fortitude, discipline, coping skills and overall capability to navigate the world around them in positive and productive ways. The process propels young people to take responsibility for their thinking and actions and calls for overall community engagement and capacity building.

DYS Arts Initiative (Mass.): The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) provides high quality arts programming in both residential and community settings. The DYS Arts Initiative promotes positive youth development and community building by fostering creativity, collaboration and expression. The DYS Arts Initiative encourages young people to find and share their voices and provides opportunities for young people to work with professional artists.

The Girls Focus Program at the Hennepin County Home School (Minn.): The Girls Focus Program at the Hennepin County Home School, located in Minnetonka, Minnesota, is a gender and culturally-responsive treatment program that focus on the unique needs of justice-involved girls. The Focus program provides a safe, structure and therapeutic environment that promotes growth and recovery for girls ages 13-18 who are at risk to themselves or to the community.

The Focus Program is fortunate to work with many amazing community volunteers including a talented and compassionate artist who was instrumental in helping the girls with this project. Michèle provides a safe space for girls to engage in the arts in a way that they may not have had otherwise. She uses art as an outlet for learning new skills, developing new talents and helping the girls express their thoughts and ideas in creative and therapeutic ways. Art has also provided a venue for self-reflection, emotional regulation, and cultivating strengths and assets the girls already possess. Having their artwork published has provided them with a huge sense of accomplishment and has had a noticeably positive impact on them.

Grace Cottage (Del.): Grace Cottage is a Level IV staff secured residential program focusing on the unique treatment needs of adolescent

females in a safe, gender-sensitive environment. The youth participate in an array of evidence based programming which include but is not limited to: Gender-Responsive Life Skills and Trauma Informed Individual or Group Counseling. The youth participate in a comprehensive drug and alcohol counseling program called Seven Challenges. Grace Cottage offers programming by various community partners, and the youth participate in therapeutic-driven off campus outings which also enhances their pro-social skills out in the community. Cognitive Behavioral Training, or CBT, is the behavior management program used at Grace Cottage. The goal of CBT is to change behavior by helping the youth examine their beliefs and thinking patterns before they behave in an inappropriate way. In 2017, Grace Cottage won the Barbara Allen-Hagen Award that best demonstrates success using Performance based Standards’ (PbS) data-driven improvement model to treat all youth in custody as one of our own. Grace Cottage won for developing and implementing improvement plans that resulted in sustainable positive outcomes for youths, staff and families.

PACE Center for Girls (Fla.): PACE provides girls and young women an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training and advocacy. PACE values all girls and young women, believing each one deserves an opportunity to find her voice, achieve her potential and celebrate a life defined by responsibility, dignity, serenity and grace.

Street Poets, Inc. (Cal.): Quiet as it is kept, in Los Angeles county there are nearly 16,000 youth under the jurisdiction of the Probation Department, including more than 1,800 held in detention facilities. This is the largest number of youth in the juvenile justice system in America. **Street Poets Inc.** is a non-profit poetry-based peacemaking organization dedicated to the creative process as a force for individual and community transformation. In partnership with Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network and over 12 weeks in 2018, a young of young women ages 16-18 were led through a poetry residency at Camp Scott, instructed by Lead Teaching Artist and Poet, Natalie Patterson with support from Matthew Cuban, Mandeep Seti and Kahlil Almus-tafa. The submissions for this project are the stories of these brave and beautiful young people.

WriteGirl/Bold Ink Writers (Cal.): WriteGirl is a creative writing and mentoring organization that promotes creativity, critical thinking and leadership skills to empower underserved teen girls.

WriteGirl currently serves approximately 500 teens through programs across the Los Angeles region and has recently expanded programming to work with boys and co-ed groups through the Bold Ink

Writers Program. WriteGirl and Bold Ink Writers are founding members of the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network (AIYN).

WriteGirl's innovative In-Schools Program brings creative writing workshops to alternative school sites and youth detention facilities throughout Los Angeles County. The workshops help girls develop vital communication skills, self-confidence, critical thinking skills, deeper academic engagement and enhanced creativity for a lifetime of increased opportunities.

In the WriteGirl Core Mentoring Program, WriteGirl pairs teen girls from more than 60 area high schools with professional women writers. Girls participate in one-on-one mentoring, monthly workshops, public readings and publication. WriteGirl provides college and financial aid guidance to every participant, and since 2001, 100% of teens participating in the Core Mentoring Program have graduated from high school and enrolled in college.

WriteGirl was honored by First Lady Michelle Obama with the 2013 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award.





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