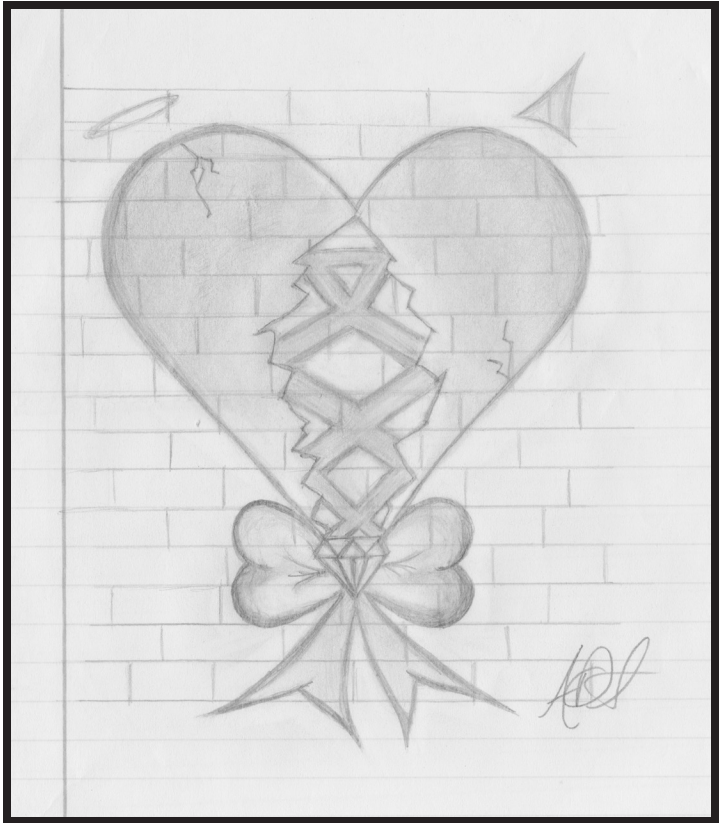


Presented by women of San Benito County Jail

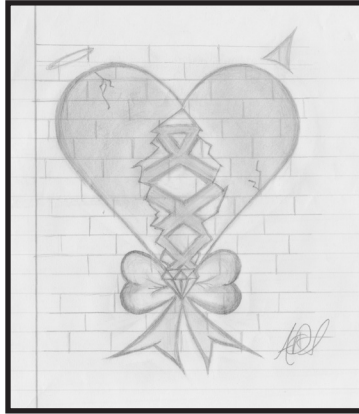


Ecstasy of the Streets

Agony of these walls

“In rain drops, in blood drops, in heartache and
delight, this wealth is the nature of everything. It is like the
sun in that it shines on everyone without discrimination.”

—Pema Chodron



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Ecstasy of the Streets

Agony of these walls

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Introduction

For some of us, the streets may seem like a dream. We are stuck with our head in the clouds. We think we can run around and do anything without consequences. We are looking for that ecstasy, that temporary pleasure. But what about when we wake up from that dream?

Yes, on the streets we do feel euphoric and invincible, capable of doing anything. Then we hit Gate Nine and reality begins. That first lonely night lying in our beds with thoughts running through our heads—regrets, wishes, what-ifs, should've, could've, would've. We are all alone in our dread until at last we find sleep and dream we are back on the streets.

In the distance, we hear a door slam. “Breakfast,” they call. Our eyes slowly open, and we see the grimy metal toilet, the off-white brick walls, and the agony begins to set in. We have fully awoken from our dream. It was not reality, after all. We begin to ask ourselves, was the ecstasy really worth this agony?

—The Women of E and F pods.

More reflections about the significance of this collection and our work as writers and artists:

“We are always waiting for God to punish us for something we are doing wrong, but our God is not a punishing God. We may keep coming back behind these walls—chance after chance. But what if these are not chances? What if these are blessings?”

—Pamela

“I am a genuine loyal person with a loving heart! Being in this place has built and put up walls around my heart, making me colder than I have ever been before. My emotions have been put down, and I’m afraid to open that door.”

—Brittany

“It is real! Everyone in here knows they’re not the only one. It’s really real inside here. I have lots of shame, and I try and make it seem like all is good and dandy, but there’s a lot

of shame. Writing brings the self-esteem up. My poem helped me.”

—Starla

“Putting my truth on paper was the hardest thing I’ve ever done. My feelings have been so undiscovered and covered up, ignored and pushed aside. It was crazy to feel again, remembering why I don’t like to feel, and know what is and isn’t real.”

—Nickie

“My writing comes from the experiences I’ve had in my life.”

—Ashley

“My writing comes from the trials and tribulations I’ve overcome in my life as well as [what’s] in my heart.”

—Rebecca

“Agony means everything that’s written on the jail walls! [But] everyone has a second chance.”

—Anonymous

“We are well-reared people. We just have hardships in our lives that push us to want to feel the ecstasy, even when we know that amazing feeling will eventually end up leaving us alone within.”

—Anonymous

“Until we come back here, it’s all a bunch of fun and games—fun until we hit reality. My reality is here.”

—Anonymous

THE PAST

702 Stanford Avenue

By Anonymous

Part One:

I come from a place...

Where I used to feel very safe. I knew everyone's

Name and can still remember their faces

I loved my little brother, he was my best

Friend. We had the best time together,

Catching lizards and running with our dog

Billie and playing with our neighbors.

Life was simple then. I see beauty when I remember

My mother and how one day I wished I could be her.

I come from a place...

Where I started to not feel so safe. I woke up to

Being carried and passed through motel windows, one jar

Of peanut butter left in the cupboard (and this

was the day we learned I was allergic) and, "You

want some help?" meant you got your ass beat.

All because I couldn't clean my room fast enough

Cause I'm five and my stupid Barbie dolls kept distracting

Me.

I come from a place...

Where I never again felt safe. There he is. Steven's

Silhouette standing in the doorway, but I can't see it

The steak knife has been pulled from his shoulder.

Where is my mother? I'm panicking. Is Kasey

Still hiding in the closet behind the locked bedroom

Door? I don't know if Edna can take very much more.

A flickering porch-light shows me angry, evil eyes

Glaring and piercing my sweet little heart. He finds

It amusing how terrified I am. The first sound

I hear breaks the agonizing, numb, silence and

Pushes past his tongue like Lucifer's laughter.

The soft skin on my little knees is

Scraped and bleeding after that scary
Shit my mind keeps repeating

19 years later

Part Two:

I come from a place...

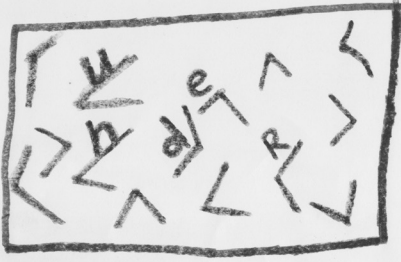
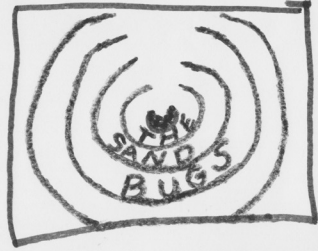
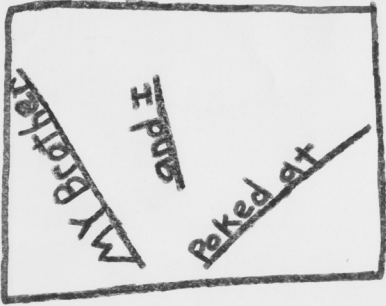
Where “Swirling shades of blue are slow
Dancing in your eyes. The sun kisses the
Earth and I hush my urge to cry.”

From “Cigarettes and open air go hand-in-hand
And I say, “Stay with me because every breath
I breathe is better than the last.”

And, “In case you were wondering, you are
Like a hurricane to me. Your violence is
Beautiful and your center is sweet. Now tell
Me this; do you know what this means?”

How does it feel?

First Memory
By Toni Dunn



My brother and I poked at sand bugs under Grandma's clothesline.

FAMILY BONDS

Family First
By Starla Herrera

I sit in county once again
Missing my family all because
Of my so called friends

I chose the drugs and the streets over my
Babies, so much guilt and regret I'm hurting
On a daily.

I wish I could go back in time
A better mommy I would be,
But all I can do is move forward
And be the mother my three need.

Their smile and love is all I need. I can't
Wait to hold them when I'm free
If it wasn't for their father, who
Knows where we would be, he
Holds it down for our family and me.

He's a real man that I'm grateful
To have. He makes a good man
And an even better dad.

I had my priorities all mixed up
Never again will I fuck shit up
My family will always come
First. He always said, "If you ain't first, you're last."

And I know this too shall pass

Jayden Alexander
By Angelina Dieteman

My name strong, little king-like

I am from Andrew and Angelina
From Russian, French, and Mexican
descent.

I am full of life, energy, and love
I am a Capricorn
From infant and toddler
Toddler to boy.

I am strong-willed
I am a leader

I am a gentle soul
also a gentle man.

I am Jayden
Alexander

R.I.P. Little Brother

By **Toni R. Dunn**

If you're not there, something will always be missing, something that can never be replaced! Your eyes are irreplaceable. Your smile is irreplaceable. Your voice is irreplaceable. The way you walk, talk, and sing are one-of-a-kind-things that no one else can do. You felt so trapped by the burden of love. How hopeless is that! How hopeless and sad. You were so brilliant and beautiful. I am left wondering how long you knew, or if you knew, or if you knew everything, and how much you knew. Did you keep it all to yourself? Did you do it alone? Did you suffer in vain and work until you dropped? Did your cries for help fall on deaf ears? I know mine have. I love you forever, and I hope to see you again. R.I.P. Little Brother

From Stockton, CA
By Jo L. Pine (aka JoJo)

I'm Thankful for

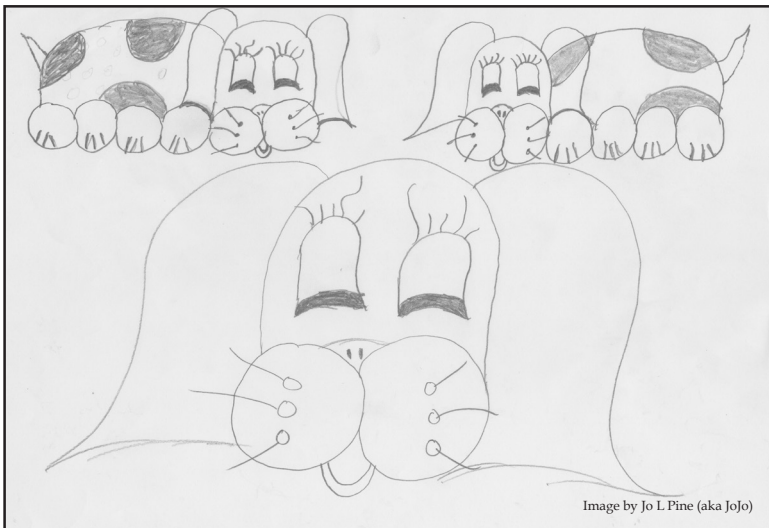
I have to say I'm very thankful
for this writing class w/Kim

I'm thankful for my 2 kids: LaVada Love and Arturo, Jr.

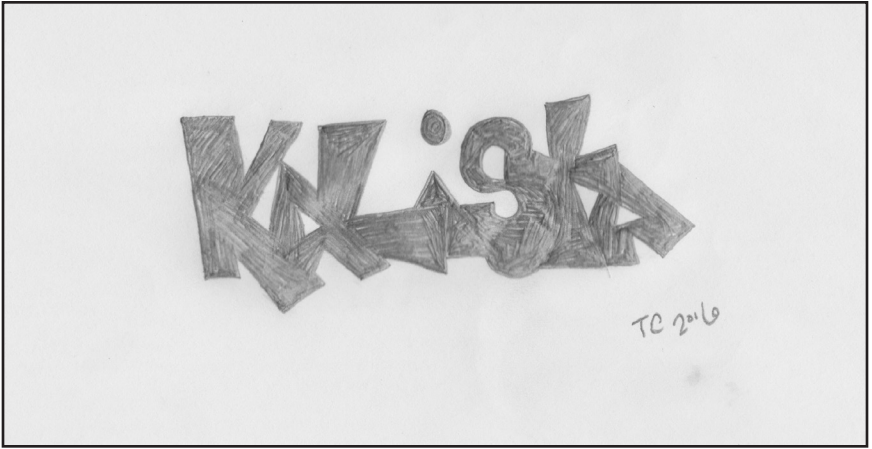
I'm thankful for all the dogs I've
had in the past.

I am really thankful for my sister,
Shannon for everything she has
done for me.
Last but not least,

I am so thankful for my babies I
Have now who are: Pretty, Q-tip, PHAT-PHAT, and Fatgirl
They are my world
and that's what I'm thankful for



Baby Bear
By Mama Bear



LOVE & DESIRE

The Body of Husband
By Erica Brooks McCullar (aka Skully Lane)

The man is the half,
but I have none.
To hear the sound
bring him near
To hold the other
is to let half go
but to see him today
that just made me glow

Within my heart all has past,
The past no longer has grasp

I truly see the other
half of me

As has been said,
true as can be.

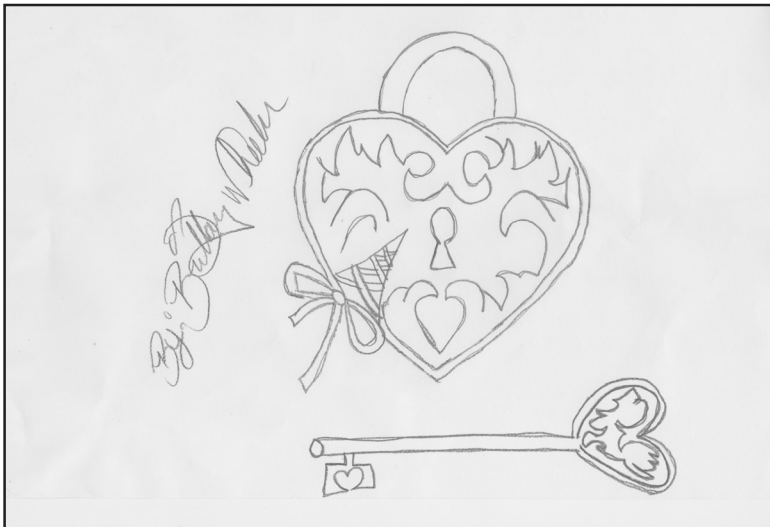
I let him go
Still he came back to me
Must have been meant to be
I am grateful
For the return of the other
half of me.

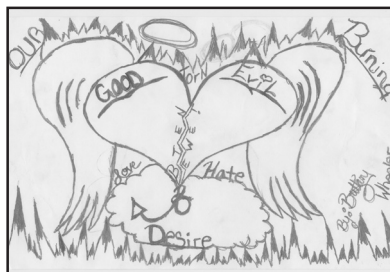
The presence of the body
of husband.

What comes next we soon
Shall see.

It's Our Burning Desire to Come Together!
by **Brittany Wheeler**

To love and to care for one another
To stop the ill feelings and lack of trust
To let go of one's impurities
To allow them to be as beautiful as they are
Not to judge one another for our differences
We are all different in one way or another
With each of our differences, we bring something different to the
table
Something that the rest of us don't have, or
A skill we do have, but are still unclear how to use it.
The ability to stand tall, and strong, and accept
One another for who we each are, without judgment.
Or shame in the what the other does, or does not have
To offer. As we are all creatures of habit, and
We all have an ability to adapt and learn and change
For the better, especially when each of us look
At what the other has to offer, and how
We can come together as one, and work in Harmony!





Images by Brittany Wheeler

Sensually Sensationable

As my tongue tickles across your lips
Tasting your strong full-flavored zest!
We have matured together, mending
Rough seasons leaving tremendous room
For improvement to advance forward
And turn over a new leaf I want
To enrich in your luscious aroma!
Inhale the sharp stinging delicacy
Of your sweet caramel, toffee, butterscotch
Skin exhale your fragrance making
Me smack my lips and bite my tongue
From the sweetness left in your after
Taste the flavor so mellow one could
Savor the tang in your taste biting
The sugar from your sweet meat
Spiced potion engulfs my entire body
As I chew the licorice from
Honey lollipop forever filling me with
Your sweet smell and wonderful
Lover's scent!

Loved
By Ashley Rae

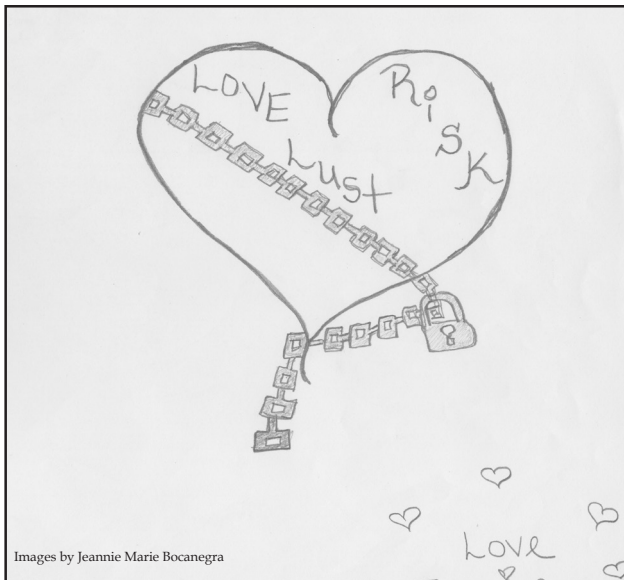
God has blessed me so much with my best friend and fiancé, Eric! I never thought I could be or was worth being loved. This gift from GOD has changed my life for the last ten years. Yes. He did bring my polar opposite, but it's the right balance. So, if you think TRUE LOVE is out there, it is!!! All you have to do is ask GOD for it. He will grant your heart's desire.

Love, Lust, Risk

By Jeannie Marie Bocanegra

I fell in love with this man. I had a falling out with my boyfriend. He left me on the streets. This man, who was my friend, helped me at the time of need, a place to lay my head. He talked to me about situations. He made me feel good about myself. For this man I would walk on fire, cross a river of alligators, and stand in front of a loaded gun! My love for this man is truly deep!

I would do all that just to get into his arms. For this man I feel he's the one for me! He's really all I will ever need!!



Robert Gidding (Lil Bob)
By Tammy Adelman

You come into my mind
All the time
As I unwind
The circle of time
Our souls combine
Our spirits define
Everlasting divine
Although confined
An infinite everlasting us
Intertwined
At times of trouble
I seek that bridge
The one you built
Underneath my skin
Underneath your clothes
I discover
I am
Within
The secret
Shall I utter
Perhaps lovers
Of the future's past
Kisses all over your face
A love within
A hopeless place
Believe
It is what it is
Truth
Proof
Love is love
Give me the beat girl
And free my soul
How much I got
Lost

Found
In your rock and roll
It wouldn't be noth'n
Without a woman or a girl
Did you know you were
This girl's
Whole world
Disturbed
Absurd
And completely
Incomplete
My perfect puzzle piece
Unique
Sweeping me off my feet
Forever has no boundary
No foreseen
Limitless infinity
An exhibit of
Endurance
Patiently
Accepting
The visions unheard
Beautiful words
A voice
So powerful
Disturbing the undisturbed
Are words
Only words
Perhaps
Communication
Of the heart
Had been translated
Fixated
Historically created
Never faded
Indicated
Or communicated

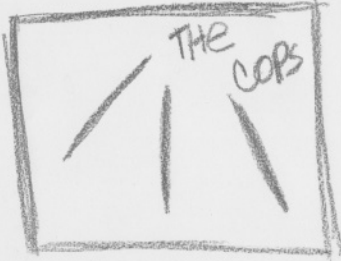
The knowing
Of the unknown
The mystery
Of such chemistry
Destiny
You'll get the rest of me
You'll get the best of me
The all of me
The concept
The notion
Devotion
Reality
Like the motion
Of waves
On the ocean
Or in
Your skin
On mine
In time
Because I believe
In this
I'd never miss a moment
Cherish every kiss
A glimpse in your eyes
Would prove
The notion
Love is you
Love exists.

TODAY & TOMORROW

By No Author Listed

I miss my cat, Chan
And my home. My friends.
And my smokes. I pray
I have done all I
Can to prevent loss of
Anything or anyone
During this stay.

How I Got Here
By Leticia R. Gutierrez



The cops brought me here.

Passion
By Angelina Valenzuela

I've always lived by the quote tattooed on my back, "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about dancing in the rain." Before my arrest "dancing in the rain" was more like, "prancing in the hail." On a positive note, this trip to hotel SBC woke me spirit back up. I am back to "dancing in the rain." Definitely the me I love to be...you know where you can find me. Remember, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Luke 12:34

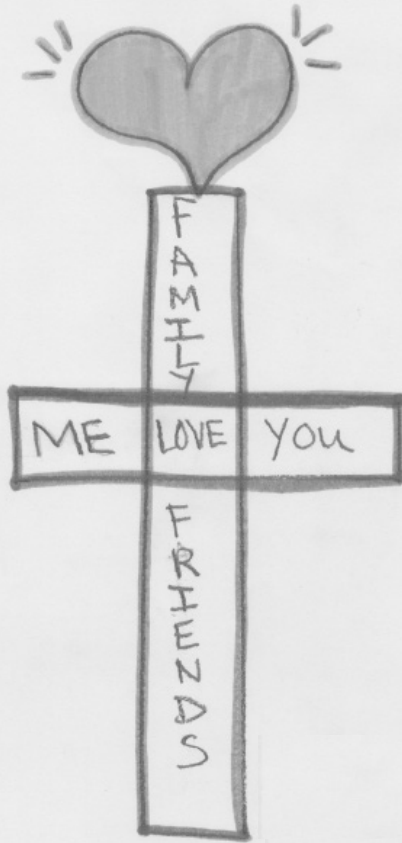


Image by Princess Priscilla Castro

If There is Honesty
By Princess Priscilla Castro

Truth is harder than a lie
The dark seems safer than the light
and everyone has a heart that
Loves to hide. I'm a mess, yes
It's true, I've built walls nobody
Can get through, yeah, it may be
Hard, but the best thing we could
Ever do is bring your brokenness,
And I'll bring mine, cause love
Can heal what hurt divides
And mercy's waiting on the
Other side, "If there is honesty"
Don't pretend to be something
That you're not, living life
Afraid of getting caught.
There is freedom found
When we lay our secrets
Down at the cross. It
Would change our lives
It would set us free; it's
What we need to be.
Bring your brokenness, and I'll
Bring mine because love can heal
What hurt divides and mercy's
Waiting on the other side.
"If there's honesty"

Lyric and Poet
By Anisha Torres

I'm here and I'm happy
My thoughts I've now changed
I stopped thinking about hurt
I stopped thinking about pain

My past is my past
So I let go of the mess
I'm finally happy
I let go of the stress

I'm waving bye to the bullshit
And bye to the tries
Bye to the idiots
And bye to the lies

Better days are ahead
It's never too late
To learn from my mistakes
And make my life great

I can't wait for my future
And what it may bring
I'm going to get to my goals
And reach all my dreams

"I love you like all the stars in the sky,"
The line you say
Tends to make me cry

You're my best friend
You have always cared
Through ups and downs
You always were there

Through the years us two
Have cared for each other
Be we never expressed love
To one another

I took you for granted
I won't do it again
I'm proud to call you my
My homie and friend

I don't care about our past
Our problems or troubles
Together we will get through
All of our struggles

One day we will be together again
I will love you forever
You mean more than a friend,
You've seen my messy past
And accept all my mistakes,
Now I can't wait for our new lives,
The new memories we will make!
"I love you, Lyrics"

I'm a Real One
By Priscilla Levario

LIKE TUPAC SAID,
NO 1 SEE MY STRUGGLE
ALL THEY SEE
IS THE TROUBLE
STRESSING ON THE DAILY
10 MORE MONTHS
BEHIND THESE WALLS THAT ARE SHADY
GOING INSANE BKUZ
I JUZ CAUGHT A NEW CASE
MIDDLE FINGER UP 2 MY SNITCHES
SAYING FUCK YOUR EVIL WAYS
IM RESILENT AND AMBITIOUS
YOU'LL NEVER GET ME DOWN
IM PLOCS LAST OF A DYING BREED
YOU CAN NEVER WEAR MY CROWN

ME AND MY SQUAD STAY ROCKIN
WITH LOYALTY AND LOVE
THEY THE GOOD AND THE BAD
EVEN WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE
THRU THE THICK N THIN
WE STAY DOWN FOR EACH OTHER
HAVING EACH OTHERS BACK
AND LOOKING OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER
WHETHER WE R OUT ON DA STREETS
OR BEHIND THESE JAIL WALLS
WE KEEP OUR MOUTHS SHUT
AND OUR DIGNITY NEVER FALLS
WE STAY TRUE TO DA GAME
NOT MANY CAN SAY THE SAME
AS SOON AS THEY CATCH A CHARGE
THEY QUICK TO PASS THE BLAME
HERE'S A SHOUT OUT TO MY
LOVE LIL MAT'T AND MY BEST FRIEND
GREG WE ARE LAST OF A DYING
BREED "I WONT BE RIGHT TILL MY NIGGAS FREE"

Un Dia a la Vez
By **Liza Marie Gonzales (TAZ)**

Life truly is a mutha fuckin bitch, then you
Marry one!
Life ain't always just about fun
People come and people go
Never put your shit out there; keep it on
The low
Spitting game like a song it's just a
Flo
Down for yours 'cause you're down for mine's
I've said I'll stay sober, just one more time
We gotta do it for ourselves and no one else
Stand for something or die for nothing
Keep your head up and never give up
Stay on top your game
Be who you are without no shame
Thug life is my life
Get with a bad ass bitch and make her
My wife
Married to the money, I ain't ever letting go
Keep shit real

Just for you, Lil Frankie
By Pamela Smith-Stephenson

As lay here and think of you
Please believe these words I'm saying
Are from my heart and true
I'm not the perfect mother I needed to be
But I promise you, I will give you all of me

Life is going to be a struggle for both you and me
As long as we have each other and God, we will survive

I'm so anxious to meet you as you take your first breath of life

It's you and me against the world, my baby
Just you and I

Love,
Your Mommy

Chances Are
By M. Thyne

If we could all just have one more chance,
If we did get that chance, would it make a difference?
If it could all be that simple, when we do get that chance!
All we need is one more chance then after this chance...
It can be our last chance!



Just one last chance! Maybe it could be our last chance,
To stay out or just to stay and get that chance to get everything
over and done with—
Chances are?
Time will tell!

Crooked Smile
Words and Picture by Starla Herrera and
Jodi Bravo Martinez

You're still
beautiful, Starla.
It's just a tooth!



Laying in bed, I was debating with myself. Should I give Pam and her precious unborn baby my spot on a bunk because, at that moment, her bed was on the floor. I made up my mind and decided OK. I'd make the trade.

I was feeling good about myself, but just as I was switching bunks thinking I'm doing a good deed, I hit the cement bed with my mouth and chipped my front tooth. My self-esteem went from so high to so low. I wondered, why did this happen to me?

Instead of being quick to be mad, though, I thought about how things could have been worse.

I accepted it and moved on, deciding not to care about what other people think about how I look. No matter what, with or without teeth, God still loves me, and that's all that matters. And that's what keeps me smiling.

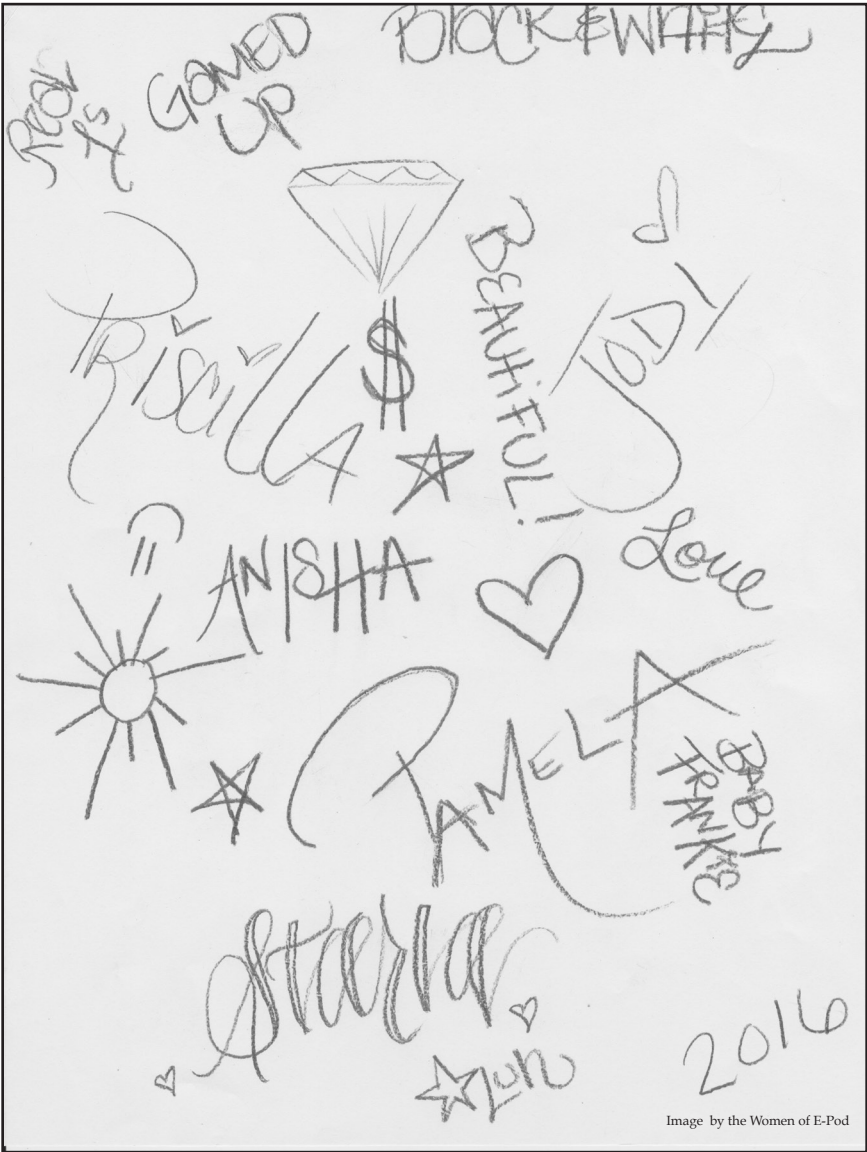


Image by the Women of E-Pod

My Life
By Jodi Bravo Martinez

I know:

I'm going to be released today, and it's up to me, and only me, to and complete what's being asked of me, or I will be taken away from my children once again.

I don't know:

If I made the right decision in court to be released, to complete the things being asked of me.

I wish I knew:

The outcome and the effect this will have on my family.

I should have known:

My actions would have these consequences.

If I only knew:

READ THIS BOOK!

The strongest, bravest, and most brutally honest thoughts, feelings, and emotions ever put into writing by some of the most powerful, beautiful, and intelligent women locked behind walls.

Gavilan College, Spring 2016