

Exchange For Change
Poems from Homestead Correctional Institution
Spring 2016



Apologies

"I'm guilty," she says,
"and that's why I'm here."
"I'm sorry," she says,
as she wipes away tears.
Remorseful emotions
cloud her mind.
So many lives affected,
she just wants to rewind.
"I hope they'll forgive me."
She cowers in shame.
But loved ones stand back.
They're done with this game.
"Prove it!" they say.
"And say what you mean."

So slowly but surely
she works on herself,
proving to others
that she's worth the help.
Little had faith
that she'd make it out there.
They'd tell her quit,
but she didn't care.
Fighting and climbing
her way to the top
overcoming it all,
success her next stop.

So if to this girl
you can relate,
make a change in your life
before it's too late.
For tomorrow's not promised,
some like to say,
we live for the moment,
just for today.

—by *Olga M. Montes*

Dark Reality

The time we shared together,
so special in my heart,
because of my behavior,
we are now apart.

Losing you has shown me
that even rocks divide.
You were my rock, my stronghold,
a place for me to hide.

I thought you'd always be there.
This is so hard for me.
Without you, it's so cold here
in this dark reality.

A love affair from hell
that wasn't worth the pain.
At least I know the choice I'd make
having to choose again.

With you gone, I'm all alone.
No liquid company,
just held now against my will
in this dark reality....

—*Lorraine Loftis*

Lost Girl in a Bitter City

The bitterness of the cold frosty air,
in the wee hours, the city looks bare.
Still people of the unseen hour out prowling,
when the wind blows, you can hear it howling.
I've walked these streets a thousand times,
never thinking I will make it out alive.
As I walk alone, box cutter in the pocket
of my hooded balmer coat with the fur trim.
Lost in a world I never should have been
caught up in.
Dope, boys, drugs and pimps, where do I even begin?
The situations I've gotten into time and time again.
Lost girl, looking to the streets for shelter.
Can anybody help her?
I'm not sure if anyone can.
'Cuz every time I'm safe, I go back again.

—*Melissa R. Bopp*

I Get A Lot of Ass

As I find myself
standing alone in the dark,
I find myself calling out to you.
Suddenly I feel a warm summer rain,
smells familiar, like asparagus or spinach.

I remember yearning for your touch, your smell,
even the shit you put me through. As you
enter my presence, I feel a shade envelop
my head as my thoughts start to swirl around.

I get a lot of ass, you say,
and that I can't deny, but in retrospect,
I guess I get a lot of pussy too,
so you can call me bisexual,
but I would have never thought of myself as that.

I love that perfume you wear,
what's it called again? "Eau de toilette"?
Mmm... like the Campbell's soup you
sometimes feed me, you can't forget it.
The taste is delightful and tangy.

—*by Jennifer Arnold*

What is my family?

Mornings getting ready for school
All types of noises
Mother yelling, "Get up."
Father lost in thought
with his café con leche.
Sisters trying on different clothes.
Then me
wondering how people
can go to sleep mad
and be cool the next morning...
I think of these mornings and wish I
can go back to them.
Nights come and go,
thoughts come and stay,
morning comes again.
It's silent. Nobody's home
so I think.
Downstairs, no eggs and bacon smell.
No bickering, silence.
Where is everyone?
Gone. Lost. Disappeared.
Like I am at this very moment
in an unknown place where I've never been
before. In the corner, I see shadows.
My hope is restored.
It's my family. Yay!
But soon disappeared knowing that
it was all dreams.
I know that at the end of my
tunnel and long drawn out journey,
my family is always the same
no matter what I've done or who I am.
That is family.

—by *Isabell Greenberg*

Recliner

Ahh... I love it when you lean back into me, all soft and warm and squishy. Yes, of course, by all means, put your feet up, relax. Take a nap. I'll keep you warm and comfy. It's not always this gratifying for me. I can definitely distinguish between you and him. Your scent is soft and peaceful, gentle even as it lures me into your self. He's rugged and has most times loud while sleeping. And he slobbers as well, ugh! I hate it when drools all over me. It's so disgusting. You're different. You're quiet, often murmuring softly, not moaning actually but purring. Oh, yeah, it's actually quite sexy in an innocuous kind of way.

—by *Carita Corpoz*

Get up, stupid.
You know you're no good.
Worthless, trash, ignorant, bitch.
These words hurt? They should.

You won't amount to nothing.
You're not loved, not even friends.
Go kill yourself, you piece of shit.
Bring your worthless life to an end.

Go ahead and cry those tears
and shut the whole world out.
Nobody really cares for you
no matter how loud you shout!

Nobody will ever want you.
You're a disgrace, you're ugly and smell.
What a poor excuse for a human.
I hope you burn and rot in hell!

I don't care if you're only six.
Was never gonna have kids, I swore.
Get away from me, I can't stand you,
should've aborted you before you were born.

These words don't hurt as bad
as hearing them as a kid,
but this was my life growing up.
Even though nothing mattered, I always knew I did.

—by *Jennifer Arnold*

The Cheater

Legally joined
What does it mean
when you're cheating
and lying
with no conscience
in between

a marriage denied
like I don't matter
while you eat well
and sleep well
spewing mindless chatter

look where you live
as I suffer in prison
you're in my mother's home
so blessed and forgiven

a disease in your body
that I didn't cause
as you fight it without me
magnifying my flaws

my love is true
so solid and forever
it hurts to know
you're in bed with another

conservative, methodical,
natural born leader
I may the prisoner
but at least I'm not the cheater.

—by *Jaclyn Galczynski*

Your Today Becomes Your Tomorrow

Who am I?

Umm... that is a deep well.
I can change who I am
from moment to moment,
from minute to minute even.

Situations occur and like
the chameleon that I am, I change
my colors so to speak.

So many factors play into the
person that my mind conjures up.

What matters most I think is that
whoever I am today I will be
the best that I can be. I
will live my life with integrity
and honor.

Perhaps identity problems stem
from people trying to set
stipulations or guidelines. To try
and set and figure out who
you are is a ridiculous absurdity to
me because who you are today
will not be you are tomorrow
because to me it is the life
you live, the roller coaster
of events that you go
through and see that shapes
and molds you into the person
you become so I don't focus
on who I am but what I do
or what I can do because
that to me is one's true identity.
Not who we are today but
how we live today because
that will effect who you
are today and become tomorrow.

—Crystal Lawson

I want to extend my sincerest gratitude to each of the women
who allowed me the privilege to read and respond to their work.

I will never forget any of you.

Don't forget that you are poets. Keep writing; never stop writing.

“The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.” —Sylvia Plath

*Thank you, truly,
Emily Jalloul*